

CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

1.1 Inclusion: Where Are We Now?

The call for social change in the education of students with special needs is at a critical juncture. Although Inclusion has been mandated by the British Columbia government and has become common language at every level of school planning, it remains largely at the concept stage. In fact, the prerequisites for successful educational integration and inclusion of students with disabilities are so frequently ignored that the very principle of Inclusion has become threatened. Instances of inclusion do occur, of course, but with a level of good will and commitment on the part of teachers that it is clearly the exception not the rule. Is it realistic to base a standard on what only a fraction of teachers deem to be possible and the rest do not agree with?

1.2 Clarification of the Main Concepts

Few issues in education have generated more debate and misunderstanding than the topic of inclusion, with confusion over the very definitions of the terms *inclusion*, *integration* and whom the term *students with special needs* is actually referring to. While terms such as *inclusion* and *integration* are often used interchangeably as terms describing models of Special Education their fundamental differences are the cornerstone of the debate. *Integration* involves placing students with special needs in regular schools, with resource room support and services available, but with programs designed so that students can spend some portion of their time with regular peers. The pupil must adapt to the school and there is no necessary assumption that the school will change to accommodate a greater diversity of pupils (Mittler, 2000). The underlying premise of integration, as the basis on which many understand and accept it, is *avoidance of segregation*.

Inclusion, on the other hand, advocates for the placement of students, regardless of the severity of their disability, in the regular classroom. Any special services or supports required are brought *to the child* and all aspects of a child's specialized

educational program are carried out in the classroom setting. Inclusion “implies a radical reform of the school in terms of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and grouping of students. It is based on a value system that welcomes and celebrates diversity arising from gender, nationality, race, language of origin, social background, level of educational achievement or disability” (Mittler, 2000, p.12). The underlying premise of inclusion is one that stems from a human rights perspective for those with disabilities.

In this dissertation, the terms *integration* and *inclusion* will not be used interchangeably. When *integration* is used in reference to the educational model it will be capitalized. Hence, *Integration* (capitalized) will always refer to the model of Integration. Likewise, *Inclusion* (capitalized) will always refer to the model of Inclusion. The same terms otherwise used will be employed in the more commonly understood sense, *integration* - students with special needs interacting and sharing a school setting with their non-disabled peers; *inclusion* - the participation of students where the experience is one of being welcome and feeling a sense of belonging.

The terminology used to describe those with disabilities and approaches to their education becomes a point of confusion for those inside and outside the field of Special Education. For consistency and clarity, *students with special needs* is the term which will be used most often in this research. This refers specifically to those students who have been designated by the Ministry of Education as having some identified chronic health issue, physical disability or intellectual impairment that warrants special or additional educational services. This encompasses a wide range of intellectual impairment including mild, moderate, severe and profound as well as physical and developmental disabilities. The differences between them are important to an overall understanding of where Inclusion goes from here. Within this research, if a discussion is limited to a particular sub-group of *students with special needs*, the author will be explicit. Unspecified, the term will refer to any student on the broad continuum just described.

1.3 The Hypothesis and Intended Outcome

Guiding this research project, the hypothesis that what has held the concept of Inclusion from becoming positive action in classrooms under the leadership of teachers,

is a misalignment of organizational values and practice. The intended outcome of this research effort is to propose better ways to meet the educational needs of disabled learners, based on a new understanding of where misalignments exist within one school district. Through close examination of shared values within the district, and observation and feedback on what is thought to be and what is *actually* happening in classrooms, the researcher hopes to gain new insight into the stalemate of Inclusion as a first step towards eliminating areas of incongruency and facilitating movement toward positive action.

1.4 Assumptions

The notion that this research would examine the alignment of values and practice came with a major assumption at the outset of the project – that the values were set, and that it was the practices that needed to be examined and reorganized in order to be brought into alignment with the values of the organization. The social change was essentially the changing of attitudes.

Without the framing lens of Social Construction and prior to Appreciative Inquiry-led dialogue, the author's discussions were circular narratives; repeated monologue, both self-made and created by Special Education colleagues and researchers, becoming more and more set with each encounter or reflection in which connections were made between values, practice and the topic of Inclusion in schools. The author tried to stand with the Special Education community and listened to the telling and retelling of the story of how the only way to avoid the evils of segregation for those for whom the Russian roulette wheel of life spun them circumstances of disability would be via the extreme opposite. Anything short of Full Inclusion would fall short of acceptable practice. No cost would be too great. Needs would be accommodated and everyone would be inclusive in what they did and said.

This research began with an assumption that change, organizational, social, and practical, would need to occur in the hearts and minds of teachers. Thankfully, the viewing scope of Social Construction allows one to look beyond the cross hairs of their personal vision and beliefs into the perspectives and realities of others. Despite that the author had set off on an expedition to change attitudes and practice, the site that was

continually resetting itself was on the values behind Inclusion. Like a diamond jarred loose from its setting in a piece of jewelry, the notion of how the entire project of social change would proceed was suddenly an empty set of clasps and the author was down on hands and knees searching for the displaced stone. The primary focus of the Inclusion project had changed and the research was faced with a new prospect that was no less challenging than recovering that diamond off the floor. The assumption that the values behind Inclusion were correct was no longer valid. Any correction of existing incongruency between value and practice would require a careful consideration of *both*.

1.5 The Canadian Context for Inclusion

In an effort to put into perspective the present educational practice and attitude towards those with special needs in schools in one British Columbia school district, a brief look at the larger social landscape and history of education in Canada is warranted. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms drafted in 1982 established that no one shall be treated unfairly because of race, religion or disability. Historically, Special Education had begun in Canada back in the mid 1800s with the emergence of specialized schools for students with visual impairments (Webber & Bennett, 1999). By the time the Charter was written, Special Education in Canada had evolved beyond segregated schools and integration into the regular school setting was adopted as the prevailing approach to the education of students with special needs. In the early 1990s, as government funding to schools, universities and social services underwent cutbacks, parents of children with special needs began heading for the courts, demanding inclusion in regular classroom settings in the name of social justice and equality.

A major aspect of the Canadian approach to Special Education is that unlike the American system of federal regulation, each of the ten provinces and three territories sets its own policy. Consequently, there are some key differences that exist in balance to some equally notable similarities. One of those similarities is a Canada-wide emphasis on Inclusion. It is in the interpretation of the term, Inclusion and the individual policies that have resulted, that reveal important information about how education for students with

special needs manifests itself differently as we move from province to province across Canada.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education policy of *Inclusive Education* is a significant contrast to the neighbouring province of Alberta's policy of *Most Appropriate Placement*. In central Canada, the province of Ontario is definitive in its policy of *Regular Classroom First*. While all three of these provinces are advocating an underlying philosophy of Inclusion, how the resources within the separate systems are mobilized to move from concept to actualization is revealed in the individual policy statements.

Ontario has clarified that its model works from an assumption that a child will be in a regular classroom and that if there are reasons why a student may not be successful in the regular classroom, full time, other individualized options can be considered. At very least, the policy implies with the use of the word *first* that there may be a second or third option. This in itself may be a significant motivator for regular classroom teachers to participate in placement and program decisions since placement default is set for the regular classroom and not a resource room.

By contrast, Alberta's approach begins with the student and makes the placement at the appropriate level for that student. There is no default placement, and no obligatory starting point for the placement discussion, as in Ontario. The remaining provinces offer varying degrees of clarity on how Inclusion should play out, and British Columbia, like the much smaller maritime province of New Brunswick, has chosen a policy statement that is significantly more open to interpretation than either Alberta or Ontario. Some might even call our policy statement of *Inclusive Education*, vague.

All Canadian provinces require an individualized education program under the jurisdiction of a provincial or territorial Ministry or Department of Education. The financing, curriculum and delivery of Special Education programs, as well as all other aspects of providing a compulsory education program, come under the control of the provincial or territorial legislative assembly (Winzer, 1996). The head of the Ministry or Department of Education is an elected member of parliament appointed by the premier of the province or territory. At the local level, school boards are elected. Although individual school boards do have some autonomy, they are obligated to adhere to the

province's education acts, regulations and the dictates of the Minister of Education (Dworett & Bennett, 2002).

1.6 The British Columbia Context for Inclusion

At the provincial level, British Columbia has endured multiple decades of acrimony between government and teachers. Since the first BC Teachers' Federation was formed in 1917, government and teachers have argued and fought over economic, professional and social concerns including bargaining rights, salaries and classroom conditions. Various pieces of legislation passed by British Columbia governments, such as Bill 3 in 1983 that allowed for the dismissal of public employees without cause, outraged the teachers and served to further create a province that was politically polarized. In 1987, then Premier Bill Vander Zalm's government introduced Bills 19 and 20, legislation that was viewed by teachers as an assault on their organization and an attempt to split the BCTF. In angry protest, teachers closed schools across the province and eventually joined the rest of the BC Labour Movement in a gesture of solidarity against what they felt was the government's heavy hand. The legislation required teacher locals to decide whether or not to choose the union model with the right to strike or to opt for the association model with limited access to resolution rights. Teachers in all seventy-five school districts across British Columbia chose the union option and in a massive voluntary sign up of members more than 98% of all teachers in British Columbia joined the BCTF.

In the decade that followed, teachers had provincial bargaining imposed on them by a Public Education Labour Relations Act, a step that has steadily eroded the progress and improvement previously made for teachers salaries and working conditions in British Columbia schools. As recent as 2001, a Liberal government passed legislation which brought K-12 (Kindergarten to grade 12) education under the Essential Services Legislation of the Labour Code and then imposed a funding freeze which forced forty-four schools across the province to close and lay-offs of more than 2000 teachers. In the eyes of teachers, the flexibility long sought by school districts thus became the flexibility to determine how the system should be dismantled (British Columbia Teacher

Association, *Bargaining History*, n.d.). In the past nine calendar months spanning through 2005 and 2006, British Columbia teachers have voted to strike on two separate occasions, exasperated by the tactics of a government that offered less than the cost of living increase for teachers and concurrently gave itself a 20% wage increase.

Teachers who have trained as regular education teachers, both elementary and secondary, are philosophically unopposed to inclusive schools and classrooms that support all kinds of student needs but they are ill-equipped to provide what is necessary in resources, expertise and time. One would hardly expect teachers to be motivated in a climate where they earn up to 20% less than teachers in the province next door and spend an average of more than \$1000 of their personal earnings annually to purchase resources and supplies to ensure that students have what they need to adequately learn – more than twice what teachers spend in other provinces. It is not surprising that the Special Education student who arrives with complex learning, medical and behaviour management needs is met with waning enthusiasm by teachers in British Columbia schools.

The district that was the focus of this study is among the largest British Columbia's school districts, with an enrolment of more than 64,000 students. With enrolment expected to peak in the year 2011, it is an organization characterized by growth and diversity. Ninety-two different languages are spoken. While presently the district provides service to 2200 special needs students with Ministry funded designations and another 4200 students with special needs who receive core funding as regular students (primarily those in the mild intellectual delay range, and students who are gifted or learning disabled) the percentage of enrolment growth projected for ESL, Aboriginal and Special Needs combined exceeds the district enrolment growth projections. The socioeconomic profile of the district is varied. Some schools serve students who are privileged, while others are situated in neighbourhoods where crime, substance abuse and poverty are the norm. In general however, the district encompasses a lower middle-class suburb that enjoys its close proximity to the city of Vancouver with its world-class profile.

1.7 Doubts and Concerns

Many teachers enter the profession for their love of learning, only to discover that few students are equally as keen about learning. As for teaching, it is the very least of what teachers spend their day doing. When the administrative work is done (counting and depositing the fee money, on-line attendance, marking assignments, recording marks, ordering supplies, following up on disciplinary referrals, attending department meetings, supervising detention hall, etc.) the lessons for the following day must be prepared and left for the morning. Ironically, by the time all of the peripheral responsibilities of a teacher are fulfilled, there is little time to plan and limited energy to execute it well. When it comes to being the best that one can be, teachers are the first to admit that the goal of personal excellence as an educational professional is at risk of becoming buried beneath a stack of paperwork that absorbs both a teacher's time and energy. While certainly not for all, for some it has become an exercise in survival – of getting from September's Labour Day to the October Thanksgiving Day long weekend... from the day off for Remembrance Day to the Holy Grail of education: Christmas vacation.

With this history as a backdrop to the present realities of being a classroom teacher in British Columbia, the district in focus for this study also has its own personality and culture. A management focus on overcoming the stigma brought on by lagging student achievement has meant that teachers in the district have seen and done it all in the name of school improvement. As trends of intervention and improvement strategies and processes reinvent themselves and re-emerge with new names every ten or so years, many teachers have endured multiple cycles; those nearing the end of their careers have lost count and one can not blame them for their negativity. If they were not skeptical, with all they have been exposed to and forced to participate in, with huge promises which are forgotten in favour of a different direction and a different plan the next year, then there would be something wrong. Like the little boy who cried wolf, the culture in the district is one of dwindling interest in new initiatives. Therefore, in approaching this research, the author considered if it would be reasonable to expect teachers to add to their responsibilities and workload, the added burden of another project – another initiative... another meeting for the purpose of fulfilling a Ministerial mandate which assumes both a value and a capacity that in actuality exists as a vision owned by a

small contingency of advocates, many of whom are not even classroom teachers. On a list of pressing responsibilities and a calendar of commitments, it was important when designing this research project to consider where the topic of Inclusion or the educational needs of those with disabilities would rank in priority for regular classroom teachers. Would the model of Inclusion simply be viewed as an easy and politically correct and safe position for policy makers? Have the experiences of teachers with students with special needs sparked teachers' interest in an opportunity to build cooperative capacity in a direction that is strength based and needs driven, or done irreparable damage? In a system characterized by shortages of time, money and resources orchestrating meaningful teacher participation in the research would be the biggest challenge of all. In a climate where opinion about people with disabilities tended to be hushed by political correctness and in a culture where teachers were feeling undervalued and overwhelmed, the wrong approach could generate no response, or unleash a monster.

The goal of this research was to tap into teacher opinion in a way that would allow the researcher to deconstruct the current compromise of mediocrity that is presently accepted as the standard for education for students with special needs. If the author's hypothesis is correct, then the identification of incongruencies between the beliefs about the educational rights of children with disabilities and how we can best provide for their needs in schools is a critical step toward moving beyond the present vision which so few have been able to carry forward into the reality of the classroom. The Ministry mandate of Inclusion has not served our children with special needs at a level that is on par with the educational standards of their non-disabled peers. This research project endeavors to be a catalyst for change by pinpointing the places where ideals have become stuck, releasing them into a new course of action which will allow the bar to be raised.

CHAPTER TWO – Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to analyze the findings of previous academic based literature in order to explore what research has already been conducted, and to review critically those findings that are related to this thesis. The first part of this literature review focuses on four main themes that have arisen while examining the literature on the Educational Model of Inclusion as it pertains to implementation in British Columbia, Canada and other parts of the world:

- i) Theories and Models of Inclusion
- ii) Outcomes Related to Educational Context
- iii) Experiences, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusion
- iv) Teacher Preparation

The second part of this chapter will examine literature from the field of organizational theory, specifically concerned with the implementation of theories, ideas and concepts and the interrelationship between organizational values and practices:

- i) Leadership
- ii) The Alignment Process

The final section will consider the background writings pertaining to the project's basic theoretical idea, Social Construction:

- i) Social Construction: implications for organizational practice
- ii) Social Construction; implications for educational practice
- iii) The Social Construction of Intelligence, Disabilities and Mental Retardation
- iv) The Social Construction of Inclusion

2.1 Literature on Special Education and Full Inclusion

i) The Theory and Model of Inclusion

There is widespread agreement amongst Special Education professionals and parents of students with disabilities, that the most acceptable model of education for students with special needs is one of *Full Inclusion*. Pudlas (2005) credits this latest round of Special Education advocacy to the ideology of normalization. This idea was first proposed by Wolfensberger in 1972. In 2005, research completed by Kenneth Pudlas of Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C. was presented at an International conference in Glasgow, Scotland. *Inviting Inclusive Education: Affective Consideration* explores the notion of Full Inclusion from the perspective of teachers and students; those he deems as the “primary participants” as they are directly involved in both the building and experiencing of community. Pudlas’ determination that teachers and students are the key stakeholders of Inclusion is consistent with a definition of stakeholder held by those with an organizational theory interest (Pudlas, 2005). Only those individuals or groups without which the organization would cease to exist, are stakeholders at all (Ruddra & Arora, n.d.). From the perspective of those he sees to be the important players, Pudlas attempts to assess the efficacy of the Full Inclusion Model. On the basis that “at its most basic level, Inclusion is predicated on the belief that all persons should be fully functioning members of the community - regardless of their ability or lack thereof” and is “more than just physical proximity, but rather a model that requires a sense of belonging, common ownership, and commitment to commonly held values,” he concludes that Full Inclusion has been a failure (Pudlas, 2005, p.4).

While the sample size used for Pudlas’ research is not statistically significant, he did successfully show that the specific students who participated in his study did not *feel* included or accepted by their peers and hence the goal of Full Inclusion was not met.

“Merely placing students in the same physical space does not ensure that they develop the kind of community that is at the heart of the ideology of inclusion” (Pudlas, 2005, p. 4). His findings of teacher behaviour and attitudes toward Full Inclusion are consistent with the general trend of non-Special Education trained teachers reporting that they believe Inclusion provides social benefit to students with special needs, despite that research has

demonstrated that students with learning challenges require social skills training as part of their educational program in order to realize their social potential in the regular classroom (Schoyen, 2004). Moreover, social skills programs which are prescriptive to the educational needs of exceptional children are rarely taught in regular elementary school classrooms and virtually *never* taught in regular high school classrooms. Unfortunately, Pudlas does not go beyond the issues of social learning in his examination of the efficacy of Full Inclusion. However, he suggests that the premise of Full Inclusion is likely to remain an ideology if it cannot be shown to be educationally sound.

The current debate on Full Inclusion is less about students who have a specific learning disability or whose intelligence is in the gifted range than those whose educational needs are significantly different than those of the regular classroom. It is generally agreed that students who are learning what the class is learning have a rightful place in the classroom along side their peers, and have been treated as such for many years. More recently, students who are labeled special needs by virtue of the fact that they sit in a wheelchair, not in a desk, have come into the discussion of who belongs and how Inclusion should be done, but even they have been fully included and accepted as members of the learning community for some time. Our non-cognitively impaired student population is a group, however, that highlights the confusion and misleading elements within the body of research used to promote Full Inclusion.

The guiding principle is that ordinary schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic and other conditions” (UNESCO, 1994, p.1). Those students who perform academically on par with the grade expectations of their classroom and peers are part of the Inclusion principle, but do not pose major issues in the regular classroom and are really not central to the debate or the challenge at hand. The Inclusion debate is one that is centered on those students for whom segregated classrooms are an option on the continuum of service options, even today. In other words, those students who do not easily fit into the regular classroom context – whose needs are complex, for which educational response is an integrated team effort and whose learning needs are not the same as the regular population of their same age peers. Ironically, the aspect of Full Inclusion which is most fundamental to the ideology, *that students will have their unique learning needs*

individually met within the context of a full time placement in the regular classroom, is the same issue that research by Pudlas, The University of Cambridge and others have identified as educationally unsupportable, and the explanation as to why Full Inclusion has never really been successfully embraced or implemented by teachers in classrooms.

The recent philosophical and legislative discourses about Inclusive education are a result, in large part, of the UNESCO's Education policy that was adopted in 1994 at the Salamanca Conference, Spain (Subban & Sharma, 2006). The participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations agreed on Inclusion to be the norm for educating all children with disabilities (UNESCO, 1994). However, in the paper presented at the conference, *Building Inclusive Schools: A Search for Solutions* in November 2005, Naylor reveals: "No Canadian province has a fully inclusionary system of education." An estimated 40% of students with special learning needs are still attending special classes and special schools (Naylor, 2005, p. 6). These are the 40% whose extreme needs have held them outside of classrooms, in hallways, under stairwells, and in storage rooms as a protest against segregation. These are the students over which the Inclusion debate rages.

ii) Outcomes Related to Educational Context

A 1993 study highlights the need to differentiate between the inclusion of those students who are mentally handicapped and/or emotionally and behaviourally fragile or otherwise disturbed, as well as those who are cognitively at or above the level of their peers but who have disabilities which are not related or which are only peripherally related to their learning needs (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, Schattman, 1993). Presently, in British Columbia schools and schools across Canada, students with physical and sensory disabilities, with learning disabilities or with chronic health issues are fully included in regular classrooms and have been for some time. While they may continue throughout their school years to struggle with social interactions, in British Columbia they perform academically on par with their non-disabled peers. There is little need, in the future or when considering current and past research material to further the debate on the Inclusion of students who have average to above levels of intelligence since they are fully included and accepted in classrooms by their teachers and peers by the

simple fact that their educational programs and needs fit with the British Columbia Ministry's prescribed learning outcomes with only minimal concessions and supports referred to as adaptations. Adaptations may alter the instructional strategy or assessment format a teacher uses but the lesson content remains the same. Even though these students fall within the umbrella term of special needs, they do not have special *curricular* needs and the classroom teacher is not expected to modify the Ministry curriculum, follow a special curriculum or develop an individualized one.

In a Canadian published survey of recent research on Inclusion, Bunch and Valeo (1997) systematically reviewed 49 separate studies. Whether the students were on regular school programs or required an individualized or modified curriculum was a significant factor not only in the outcome of the research data itself but also in the interpretation and implications for Inclusion. Only eleven of the articles/studies reviewed by Bunch and Valeo included students who would be considered mentally handicapped beyond the mild range (requiring specialized or modified curriculum) in their research. One study presented a scenario of severe behaviour. Of the remaining research teams, eight focused on students who were assessed as having learning disabilities, ten concerned their research with students who were visually impaired, hearing impaired or physically disabled but with no subjects with cognitive delays lower than mild. Twenty of the research projects were unclear by their descriptions of whether students in their study were intellectually impaired. One study used descriptors such as "high degree of challenges in learning" (York and Vandercook, 1991 in Bunch and Valeo, 1997, p. 157). Another referred to "students with challenges" (Wetters, Wolery, Snyder, Caldwell, & Salsbury, 1996 in Bunch and Valeo, 1997, p. 29). Not knowing the intellectual functioning range and capability of students involved in studies related to Inclusion leaves the reader with a wide range of possibility of interpretation and belief about Inclusion. By comparison, when Dadson and Horner present a case study of a student in a special class, the reader is informed that the student has "severe intellectual disabilities" with "un-predictable verbal and physical outbursts" (Dadson and Horner, 1993, p. 53). While disruptive behaviour was found to "significantly decrease over the course of the school year" with implementation of a support plan both at school and at home, the implications for placement of a student with this profile are entirely different than for a

student who shares the “exceptional child” label, but who is intellectually capable but visually impaired, as identified in a study of social participation by Erwin (Erwin, 1993). This author is critical of studies that are supporting the benefits of Inclusion without being clear on exactly who they are benefiting. Support (or lack of support) for the educational model of Inclusion by regular classroom teachers is directly related to the specific differences between Dadson and Horner’s (1993) “exceptional child” and Erwin’s (1993).

Additionally, studies made in association with elementary level programs and students have little or no bearing on the realities or problems encountered when applying the principle of Inclusion to the high school setting. The developmental gap between mentally handicapped and regular students in the primary classroom measured socially, intellectually, physically, verbally or behaviourally may be insignificant in the overall expectations of students. The difference between a student who only recognizes ten or so words and a peer who can read fifty words is not comparable to a high school classroom where the class is solving high level math word problems and the included student has a cognitive impairment, recognizes ten or so words, and can only count to twenty. The inclusion of a severely cognitively impaired student in high school classroom demands a completely different level of planning, teaching and assessment on the part of the math teacher, which is not comparable to Inclusion of a similar ability child in a grade one environment. Likewise, a child whose behaviour is developmentally on par with a 4 year old might stand out slightly in a grade one classroom, but not as dramatically as in a high school classroom where, as typical adolescents, students’ social interests are primarily concerned with their developing self-image and looking cool.

Unlike other studies, a conference paper by J.M. Walsh (1997) presented at the Council for Exceptional Children in Salt Lake City describes a scenario of Inclusion which encompasses a full range of intellectual ability as well as settings spanning the elementary, middle and secondary school levels. Walsh describes the first two phases of an ongoing five-year research initiative. While this study does not claim to provide scientific data, its scope makes it an important research contribution.

While an abundance of studies focused on students with learning disabilities,

physical and sensory disabilities not affecting cognitive ability and students with mild mental handicaps, Elliott & McKinna (1994), Eshel, Katz, Gilat, & Nagler (1994), Dyches, Egan, Young, Ingram, Gibb, & Allred (1996), Karge, McClure, & Patton (1995), Rodden-Nord, Shinn, & Good (1992), Vaughn, Schumm, Klingner, & Saumell (1995), studies that considered the educational progress and placement of students with cognitive delays in the severe to profound range are a minority. In general, these studies were limited to an integration versus segregation comparison, rather than consideration of implications related to Full Inclusion placements. They also focused almost entirely on elementary settings. The study by Cole and Meyer on the relationship between social integration and severe disabilities is one such exception. Of 91 students between the ages of 6 and 21 years with IQ scores estimated as not greater than 30, the majority were in segregated placements while 36 were in integrated situations. On tests to assess social competence (Assessment of Social Competence) and self-help, fine and gross motor, expressive and receptive communication skills and socially appropriate behaviours (Topeka Association of Retarded Citizens) those students who had spent two years in integrated settings showed no difference in intellectual functioning but higher than their segregated peers in social functioning (Cole & Meyer, 1991). Although both groups spent the same amount of time in classrooms, the integrated students spent significantly less time in the school building and more time in the community. Although both groups spent approximately the same time with Special Education teachers, there was a significant difference in how segregated children spent the remainder of their time as compared with integrated peers. While the integrated students spent more contact time with peers (both disabled and non-disabled) the segregated students spent more time either alone or in treatment with therapists. What this author interprets from the reported findings is different than the perceptions and conclusions offered by the researchers. The standard allowed in the segregated resource room that was used in the comparison study was below a level that is acceptable for an educational setting. For example, it is not acceptable that students are simply left sitting on their own passing time. The author is alarmed that this would be incorporated as data, implying that this is acceptable practice in segregated resource rooms. If as researchers we continually use poor examples to reinforce certain outcomes, then the research is not useful.

The small minority that supports fully segregated settings for students with severe disabilities believes that the concentration of resources offers significant benefit for students with disabilities. Cole & Meyer's longitudinal analysis provides strong evidence to suggest that this is not the case. The researchers provide evidence that a number of important social competencies such as "self-regulation, following rules, providing negative feedback, accepting assistance, indicating preferences, coping with negatives and terminating social contact" were enhanced through exposure to a range of settings including integration into regular classrooms and the community (Cole & Meyer, 1991). They confirm the findings in other previous studies of segregated settings of negative change reported in the area of social competencies for segregated students. While Cole and Meyer note themselves that the study is based on "narrow outcome criteria," they have nonetheless provided important and useful evidence to show what features of an integrated educational program provide benefit and what aspects of segregation are negatively impacting for a relatively unstudied group of students, typically subject to the findings of studies which were completed on non-cognitively impaired or mildly cognitively impaired students. Most significantly, the key features of programs for students with severe to profound intellectual disabilities do not entirely align with the educational model of Full Inclusion - namely opportunities for community integration which are extremely limited in the regular classroom and teacher contact time which is greatly lessened by the regular classroom teacher-student ratio.

iii) Experiences, Attitudes and Concerns Related to Inclusion

The following study introduces a trend that has emerged within Special Education literature and research. In a study by Giangreco, Edelman and Broer (2003) the researchers made generalizations based on statistically insignificant samples. They both embraced and dismissed participant responses, depending on what view they support. A study by Eshel, Katz, Gilat and Nagler (1994) examined the academic achievement, self-concept and classroom climate in self-contained and inclusive elementary classrooms that included students with IQ ranges indicating a mild intellectual delay. Teachers rated students in each setting according to their level of motivation, academics and social adjustment. The higher teacher ratings of the students in self-contained classrooms were

dismissed as “yet another example of teacher tendency to believe that Special Education placement due to smaller numbers and specialist teachers” is better, while the lower teacher ratings of students in self-contained classrooms were used as evidence in support of their obvious pro-inclusion interest (Eshel et al. 1994).

A 1993 study on the experiences of general education teachers who have integrated students with severe disabilities into their classrooms credits attitudinal transformations of all but two out of 19 volunteer regular classroom teacher participants to “openness and willingness” on the part of the teachers. Giangreco and his colleagues observed that teachers became involved and did not defer to their teaching assistants, while teachers reported that they became more reflective in their teaching (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993). Bunch and Valeo reported in their own evaluation of the study that it is “well documented with every effort made to ensure that teachers’ perspectives were accurately summarized,” but they caution readers that due to the specific circumstances of this study, namely that there were a small number of participants and that each *volunteered* to participate in the study, conclusions do not generalize to other settings (Bunch and Valeo, 1997, p. 37).

The author notes an additional element of this study that warrants scrutiny. Giangreco et al. report findings that are, at first, exceptional and encouraging to those supportive of inclusive practice. Amongst all but a couple of teacher participants, positive changes in attitude were noted, confidence grew and discovery that the task was much easier than first thought was made. In their classrooms, teachers reported that “having an exceptional student in the class did not increase disruptions in class, and their presence had a positive effect on everyone” (Giangreco et al., 1993, p. 36). They reported that “the most successful approaches used focused on the similarities between them and the regular students and on teachers’ efforts to treat them like everyone else” (Giangreco et al., 1993, p. 36). In general, teachers reported that the acceptance levels of these severely disabled students ranged from “commonplace” to “occasional deep friendships resulting” (Giangreco et al., 1993, p. 36).

The author would support the conclusion that these results are extremely encouraging in favour of Inclusion, if it were not for one critical element of the study: *the students*. The students in the study are characterized as having “dual sensory

impairments” with some also having “severe orthopedic disabilities.” These students were identified as qualifying for “statewide services” for “intensive special needs.” The students described however, were not identified as students for whom the regular classroom teacher was required to modify the learning outcomes, provide alternative programming, individualize the goals, objectives and assessment, or deliver resource-specific, specialized instructional strategies, all while teaching and assessing the other students in the class. For those for whom the terminology is obscure, it speaks to visual and hearing impairments. Consequently, these students were not cognitively impaired and despite their high level of need for adaptive strategies to compensate for vision or hearing loss, their programs were the same as their non-disabled peers. In today’s classrooms, thirteen years after this study was carried out, assistive technology has advanced significantly allowing students more independence and increased ability to keep up and compete academically with their non-disabled peers. But even at the time of the study, considerable technology and supports to assist visual and hearing impairments were widespread and non-intrusive. In keeping with the students’ level of need, the teacher participants reported that these students did not disrupt the teaching and learning in the classroom. That the teachers in the study mention that this was a positive aspect of their presence suggests that if they had been distracting and disruptive, the attitudes of the study participants might have significantly less positive. Furthermore, in numerous studies on teacher attitudes towards Inclusion which reported that teachers were optimistic or willing with certain provisions or conditions in place, the students who were identified as “special needs,” “severely disabled,” “students with challenges” and as having a “disability” were not actually cognitively impaired or mentally handicapped. Hence, the studies are misleading.

Lastly, the author brings forth a trend that has emerged over the duration of this research project and is, in the author’s opinion, an important consideration in much of the literature and in the debate on Inclusion in educational circles. Amongst those engaged in the pedagogical research and advocacy literature on Inclusion are parents of children with special needs. A second group of educational leader in the teachings, writings and advocacy for the model of full Inclusion in Canadian schools are university pedagogues who have had no experience in or training for teaching in the K-12 system. While both

groups share unique levels of expertise about the disabled child and the complex needs accompanying disability, they do not have the classroom experience in carrying out that which they believe children with disabilities have “the right to.” They are rooted in the theoretical, while promoting the practical. While granted, each of us brings to any discussion about students with special needs, all of our past experiences, cultural and educational biases, the author believes that it is important to evaluating and assessing a body of research to know when one is audience to a parent speaking from a social justice advocacy position, or when a speaker is a theorist versus has experience firsthand of that of which he or she speaks. Also, implicit in much of the research and literature promoted by parents and other theorists without practical experience, is that successful Inclusive practice is already a reality in schools. This position, that Inclusion is a growing trend that is rapidly becoming the norm not the exception, is challengeable, if not mistaken.

iv) Teacher Preparation

Effective Inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms in their neighborhood schools presents multiple challenges to regular classroom teachers that reach far beyond the simple logistics of adding one more student to the roster. Experience has proven that teachers require systematic and extensive training to successfully include students with special needs; training that needs to be developed on a foundation of research that investigates the variables that are fundamental for the effective Inclusion of students with special needs.

One area that has been established by numerous studies is the pivotal role of classroom teachers in promoting and achieving inclusive school experiences (Naylor, 2005). There is a mounting body of research that attests to the crucial role of teacher attitudes for successful implementation of Inclusion. What teachers believe to be true about the nature of teaching and learning is the shaping force behind their attitudes towards education in general and Inclusion in particular (Jordan & Stanovich, 2002). Villa and Thousand (1995) explicate that presuppositions such as ethics, beliefs and values as well as misconceptions of human learners, teachers included, are pervasive barriers to change. Teachers appear to have more positive attitudes towards Inclusion

after they receive extensive training in instruction of students with diverse needs (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

Willingness of general educators to include students with special needs is critical to the implementation of inclusive policies and successful practice (Soodak, Podell, Lehman, 1998). In a study that examined the attitudes of Canadian principals and teachers towards Inclusion, Jordan and Stanovich (1998) state that there is significant research that attests to the fact that certain teaching behaviours are directly connected to student achievement. In a subsequent study, *Preparing General Educators to Teach in Inclusive Classrooms: Some Food For Thought*, Jordan and Stanovich (2002) show that the role of classroom teacher is a key variable to the successful Inclusion of students with disabilities; the success of students with disabilities who are included in regular classes depends in part on teaching factors. The results indicate that students may fare better in some classrooms than in others, in part as a result of different patterns of instructional interactions and of teacher beliefs and attitudes towards students with learning difficulties (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001). Despite the fact that there is this well established link between what teachers believe and what they practice, the perspectives of general educators on inclusion of learners with special needs “has been conspicuously omitted from discussions of changes in policy and practice” (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998, p. 495).

Recently there has been an increased focus on teachers’ attitudes towards Inclusion (Elhoweris & Alsheikh, 2006). In a study that synthesized twenty-eight investigations of 10,560 teacher surveys that spanned from 1958 to 1995, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) examined the attitudes of general education teachers towards Inclusion. According to their analysis, the majority of teachers agreed with the concept of Inclusion in general and a slight majority was willing to include students with special needs in their classes. However, willingness aside, less than one third of respondents believed that they had adequate expertise or training to teach in an Inclusion model classroom.

Similarly, the research conducted by Bradshaw and Mundia supports the notion that teacher-related variables are influences to Inclusion identifying teacher efficacy, training, in-service, experience and teacher attitudes as important factors. Courses in

Special Education, acquired pre- or in-service were associated with less resistance to inclusive practices. Teachers who completed at least one course in Special Education or inclusive classroom practice were reported to have a substantially more positive, open and accepting attitude toward people with disabilities (Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006). Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000) confirm the essential role of training and education in developing positive attitudes towards Inclusion. The authors reveal that teachers who had completed university-based formal coursework appear to hold positive attitudes as well as they seem to be more confident in meeting the needs of students with special learning needs. Moreover, the researchers have shown an apparent association between the teachers' perceptions of their skills and the attitude toward Inclusion. The analysis of the data indicated that skills were correlated with attitude components.

While teacher capacity is convincingly linked to the success of inclusive education, many teachers believe that the available teacher preparation remains inadequate despite the government's mandated policies of inclusive Education (Naylor, 2005). The authors of *Effective Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms* argue that even though greater numbers of students with special needs are included in regular classroom settings, regular teachers have received little or no training (Smith, Tyler, Skow, Stark & Baca, 2003).

Beh-Pajoooh (1992) and Shimman (1990) examine the role of training in the formation of positive attitude towards Inclusion. In an examination of the role of teacher training by Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000) the authors cite a number of surveys: Bowman (1986), Center and Ward (1987), Leyser et al. (1994). Their own research sustains the findings of these studies. "Our study supports these findings because it not only revealed that teachers with substantial training were more positive to [Inclusion], but also indicated that their confidence in meeting IEP requirements was boosted as a result of their training (Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden, 2000, p. 192). Elhoweris and Alsheikh (2006) indicate that it seems beyond argument that teachers' attitudes towards Inclusion are directly related to the amount of training that the teachers had in the area of teaching students with disabilities. Their research also confirms the notion that the attitudes held by the general education teachers are a critical indicator for the success of Inclusion.

While a positive correlation between training and attitude of teachers has been convincingly established within the current research and literature, the author cautions that this does not automatically assume that best-practice special needs education and an inclusive classroom environment will necessarily and spontaneously occur. There is yet no significant body of research documenting a correlative effect between teachers' improved attitudes and increased levels of achievement by students with special needs designations. Furthermore, as highlighted earlier in this literature review, the variable of severity of disability has significant impact on all aspects of Inclusive education as a viable model, from teachers' attitude to their actual ability to plan, implement and oversee best practice programs for students with exceptionally high and complex needs when this is not their area of expertise. The precarious element that emerges similarly in each of these attitudinal studies is that attitudes were measured by asking teachers how they felt in general and not in relation to particular students before and after teachers' experiences.

As a result of the practice of placing students with special needs in regular classrooms some major implications for regular classroom teachers have come to light. Compared to expectations and responsibilities attached to teachers prior to the model of Inclusion, the role of the regular education teacher has changed (Subban & Sharma, 2006). "The new, more direct role of the general education teacher has demanded an increased understanding of various types of disabilities, types of appropriate curricular and instructional modifications, and interactions with the students with disabilities" (Turner, 2003, p. 493). Teachers who are to promote and practice inclusive education need to acquire the skills, knowledge, dispositions as well as performances required to effectively manage inclusive classrooms and school environments. As one researcher points out, "teachers have the right and responsibility to be prepared for the task at hand" (Turner, 2003, p.494).

The circumstances surrounding the issue of inclusive education in many countries around the world parallel what is taking place in Canada and specifically, British Columbia. Despite the fact that the regulations of the British Columbia College of Teachers require that teacher education programs include the education of students with special needs many teachers who are currently employed in British Columbia have no

formal training for working with these students (Siegel & Ladyman, 2000). In fact, many teachers state that they do not have the required knowledge to address the diverse needs of this student population (Siegel & Ladyman, 2000). Thus, after almost twenty years of prescribed inclusive education, almost half of a sample teacher group reported that they do not feel confident teaching students with special needs (Naylor, 2005). The British Columbia Ministry of Education *Special Education Review* indicates a number of issues that need to be addressed to improve the status of inclusive education in British Columbia schools. In the recommendation section of the document the review team states: “a well prepared workforce with skills needed to address the students’ educational needs is fundamental to an inclusive vision” (Siegel & Ladyman, 2000, p. 5). Additionally, the team points out that all teachers need to be prepared to teach students with Special Educational needs. As has been the common practice to date, inclusive education is not just a matter of placing students with special needs in regular classrooms and hoping for the best.

Teachers need to be trained to teach all students according to Bunch & Valeo, (1997). However this is a critical point within the literature and research; a place where there is a gaping hole around a fundamental assumption. Are teachers trained in their area of interest and specialty able to provide *best practice Special Education* after completing a course or two in differentiating instruction or foundations in disabilities? The research to date has been a comprehensive focus on the skills and knowledge needed for teachers to successfully *integrate* students with special needs into their regular classroom. There is an abundance of literature providing information about how to include all students and how to differentiate instruction. There is a number of “how to” books that outline the process of building inclusive communities. While the general need for teacher training has been addressed by researchers who consistently point out the inadequacy of teacher preparation, far fewer studies examine specific skills and knowledge required for teachers to effectively include students with special needs in regular classrooms. Timmins talks about five areas of focus which educators need to consider in order to prepare teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms: “deal with attitudinal barriers, look at role models, challenge assumptions and perceptions, focus on problem solving, promote collaborative practice, illustrate that inclusive practice is excellent teaching” (as cited in Naylor, 2005,

p. 19). Soodak, Podell, and Lehman (1998) suggest that successful Inclusion is more likely to become evident in classes taught by teachers who apply effective instructional practices such as use of flexible groupings, meaningful participation of students with special needs, peer support, as well as cooperative and activity-based learning. However, the existing research on a link between inclusion and instructional practices is vague and inconclusive.

According to the survey *Teacher Perceptions of Inclusive Settings*, training should include: “information on modifying classroom structure, curricula, and teaching methodology” (Taylor, Richards, Goldstein, and Schilit, 1997, p. 52). Guetzloe (1999) provides a more comprehensive list. He suggests that regular classroom teachers need to be trained in teaching techniques such as cooperative learning and direct instruction. They also need to obtain training in “(a) Special Education procedures and requirements (e.g., IEPs, due process, and evaluation), (b) the characteristics and needs of students with disabilities, (c) classroom management of disruptive students, (d) learning strategies and social skills instruction, (e) therapeutic group procedures and affective Education, and (f) crisis intervention” (Guetzloe, 1999, p.34).

Integration of a student on a modified program does not guarantee individualized developmentally appropriate curricular outcomes delivered with specialized resources and instructional strategies. Teachers’ levels of familiarity with developmental curriculum, resources and instructional approaches is the domain of advanced training in Special Education, far beyond the scope of a single course or workshop. The absence of research into what level of teacher expertise it takes for a special needs learner with complex behavioural, intellectual and management needs to realize his or her full potential is alarming when weighed against the vast body of literature promoting Inclusion and its advocacy for seemingly superficial levels of teacher education. If through some Herculean effort, every teacher was suddenly trained and proficient in that which the current research suggests is needed, would that equate to the educational needs of students with special needs being met? Is an inclusive classroom with a teacher who is accepting and understanding of students with special needs able to bring the expert knowledge of trained specialists to the daily management and implementation of the educational program of a student with complex needs? Is anything less acceptable?

Research has not adequately examined the risks that accompany turning a student with special needs over to non-Special Education teachers. This does not seem to be an area of concern or awareness on the part of those who are aggressively and skillfully arguing educational principles and practice from a social justice and human rights perspective and stating that the Full Inclusion of students with complex special needs is not only the ideal educational option, but the *only* acceptable one.

2.2 Literature from Organizational Theory

i) Leadership:

In a short article by Daniel Mulhern written to an audience of readers interested in leadership, two essential commitments of leadership are proposed. The first, attributed to Kouzes and Posner is clarity about personal values. The second commitment is “setting an example by aligning actions with shared values” (Mulhern, 2003, p.1). Explicitly, these are essential practices for both the organization and the individual. “In truly exceptional organizations values are worked into practice like you work oil into a baseball glove – like a masseuse works her hands deep, deep into the muscles” (Mulhern, 2003, p. 1).

In their book, *Built To Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, Collins and Porras (2004) examine what it is that organizations that have beat the odds, lasted more than a century and are the object of admiration by both employees and the public, share in common. At Disney for instance, “imagination and wholesomeness” are not just values on a card or a wall but the basis for decisions about hiring, advancement, new products and customer service assessments. It is vital to an organization such as this that its members are more than just aware of the company values; they are hired and promoted on the basis that they share and live the values of the organization.

In such a values-based organization, an equally values-based leadership plays a key role. Where there is no room for the “talk” without the “walk,” the leader must not only “actively work the values into their talk and walk,” but also “assess themselves with a clinical, critical eye, watching for the behaviours that just don’t fit” (Mulhern, 2003,

p.1). It is reasonable to assume that there will be a group of followers who devote their efforts to finding and highlighting each misalignment but Mulhern points out that instead, “human nature in general causes most of us to take the leader’s failures as an invitation to loosen our own standards” (Mulhern, 2003, p. 1).

This observation of how organizations respond to leadership is nowhere truer than in schools. While it dovetails with much of what has been described in educational leadership research on the role of the school administrator in creating inclusive schools, it also lends insight as to why so many school cultures are described as toxic or dysfunctional in schools where administrators are generally not well-regarded because they are perceived to have poor follow through, do not mean what they say, are inconsistent and make decisions based on values and priorities that are unknown to staff.

ii) The Alignment Process

In his article, *Aligning Action and Values*, Jim Collins suggests that instead of spending valuable hours and days revisiting and redrafting values statements, time is better spent gaining understandings about the organization. Additionally, Collins recommends that a much smaller amount of time should be devoted to documenting that understanding; and the majority of time spent creating alignment. Core values are not something that you sit down and develop or “decide to set” (Collins, 1996, p. 22). They are those values that exist within an organization as shared values, and they are “discovered”, not “installed” into people (Collins, 1996, p. 22). When challenged as how to create an organization where all of its members share core values, Collins explains that it is done through the hiring process; “you attract and retain these people and let those who are not predisposed to sharing your core values go elsewhere” (Collins, 1996, p. 23).

Collins describes a two-phased system for creating alignment, first identifying and eliminating misalignments. “The misalignments occur because years of ad hoc policies and practices have become institutionalized and have obscured the firm’s underlying values” (Collins, 1996, p. 20). Leaders are charged with the responsibility of creating an “environment and process that enable people to safely identify and eliminate misalignments” (Collins, 1996, p. 20). The second phase is to create new alignments. Effective alignment mechanisms “have teeth” – like the example cited by Collins in 3M’s

approach to alignment. They could simply say, “We don’t get in the way of innovators”... but that’s very different from creating mechanisms – like requiring 30% of revenues be generated by new products ... to actually *stimulate* innovation “(Collins, 1996, p. 23). Successful alignment is the translation of a vision into concrete mechanisms.

Collins uses the example of the tenured professor who refuses to consider changing the tenure system or the President of the United States who insists that Medicaid cannot be touched because changes to either system would go against established core values, to show the widespread confusion between what constitutes our values and the practices and strategies that, in fact, *need* to change with the times to prevent outmoded practices from betraying core values as the years pass.

In *Corporate Codes and Ethics*, Ruddra and Arora discuss the relationship of values and practice at the personal, professional, organizational and global levels through the lens of ethics theory. They suggest that ethics programs “align employee behaviors with those top priority ethical values preferred by leaders of the organization” and that a gap between the values which an organization deems most important and what is reflected in workplace practice is all too common. By contrast, when employees “feel strong alignment between their values and those of the organization... they react with strong motivation and performance” (Ruddra & Arora, 1997, n.p.). The authors however, do not propose a process or approach for creating alignment.

For those readers who do not spend their working lives inside for-profit corporations, they may find as this reader did that the forthrightness of discussion of profits, legal issues and public relations seem almost vulgar. It is easy to forget that corporations exist for profit – they do not apologize for it. In a discussion of ethics programs as insurance policies, Ruddra and Arora claim that they ensure highly ethical policies and procedures in the workplace: “It’s far better to incur the cost of mechanisms to ensure ethical practices now than to incur costs of litigation later” (Ruddra & Arora, 1997, n.p.). They describe how ethics programs help manage values associated with quality management, strategic planning and diversity management; “Ethics programs identify preferred values and ensure organizational behaviors are aligned with those values. This effort includes recording the values, developing policies and procedures to

align behaviors with preferred values, and then training all personnel about the policies and procedures” (Ruddra & Arora, 1997, n.p.). As well, they submit that ethics programs promote a strong public image. Attention to ethics is also strong public relations; “people see those organizations as valuing people more than profit, as striving to operate with the utmost of integrity and honor. Aligning behavior with values is critical to effective marketing and public relations programs” (Ruddra & Arora, 1997, n.p.). Donaldson and Davis, in *Business Ethics? Yes, But What Can it Do for the Bottom Line?* (1990) explain that managing the Doug Wallace Company asserts the following characteristics of a high integrity organization:

1. There exists a clear vision and picture of integrity throughout the organization.
2. The vision is owned and embodied by top management, over time.
3. The reward system is aligned with the vision of integrity.
4. Policies and practices of the organization are aligned with the vision; no mixed messages.
5. It is understood that every significant management decision has ethical value dimensions.
6. Everyone is expected to work through conflicting-stakeholder value perspectives.

In theorizing about moral excellence within corporations, Ruddra and Arora point out that one must distinguish between “espoused values” (those written in mission statements, or encompassed within codes of ethics, etc.) and “values in practice.” Again, they do not offer a way of creating alignment between the two sets of goals but merely suggest that “values produce a sense of direction for employees and help to guide and control their day-to-day behaviour” (Ruddra & Arora, 1997, n.p.).

In *Implementing Culture Change in Health Care: Theory and Practice*, Scott, Mannion, Davies and Marshall (2003) reviewed key debates relating to organizational culture and culture change in health care organizations and systems. They examined both processes and outcomes documented in prior research. They propose two culture change strategies, one aimed at ‘doing what you do better’ and a second approach demanding a

more fundamental shift of the culture itself – an overhaul if you will. While many successful corporations have employed the first approach and built upon their past successes, the authors suggest that health care systems in many countries are nearing a time when such fundamental change is needed for the system to adequately function that the organizational culture requires the overhaul approach. If left for the disparity between values and practice in educational circles to continue to grow, then the education system might also find itself faced with the same need for fundamental and sweeping change. This research into approaches to better linking theory and practice within health care provides important lessons for the public education system that is similarly incapable of moving forward without change.

Mercy Hospital in Miami, Florida is an award winning facility, a recipient of the Health Grades Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence™, as well as the J.D. Power and Associates Distinguished Hospital for Service Excellence in 2003 and 2004. An initiative entitled, *Partners in Excellence*, set out to create a culture of caring through excellence defined by the five pillars of Service, People, Quality, Finance and Growth. The Hospital's core values are the foundation of this strategic initiative and the activities supporting the five pillars uphold the mission of Mercy Hospital. One of nine principles focused on service excellence, leadership development and commitment to excellence was the alignment of behaviors with goals and values. Reminiscent of Jim Collin's "alignment mechanisms with teeth" (Collins, 1996, p. 23), Mercy Hospital employees implemented the following six "must haves" as a part of the day-to-day business operation:

1. Rounding with Reason
2. Thank You's
3. Transitional Communication
4. Key Words at Key Times
5. Selection and the First 90 Days
6. Leader Evaluations

These six concepts support the ultimate goals of *Partners in Excellence* to "enhance

organizational effectiveness as well as making Mercy Hospital a better place for patients to receive care, a better place for physicians to practice and a better place for employees to work”(Mercy Hospital, n.d.). Seven service teams were formed to ensure that each of the concepts were successfully implemented and became action institutionalized as expected norms within the culture at Mercy: Diversity Council, Employee Satisfaction Team, Leadership Development Team, Patient Satisfaction Team, Physician Satisfaction Team, Reward and Recognition Team, Service Recovery Team, and Standards Team.

A final example of a program designed to align values and practice, moving theory to action is staged in Canada and closely parallels the dilemma that faces Inclusion. *Moving Forward*, an advocacy group for Aboriginals, had plenty of good intentions and plans without the substance of measurable change to follow in the wake of planning and policy making. In Canada, “six in ten aboriginal students quit school before Grade 12 - a concerning failure rate in the Canadian Education system. *Moving Forward* represents a bold attempt to convene key stakeholders and decision makers to forge an action plan for improving aboriginal learner success. Fifty invited experts from across Canada assembled at Concordia University on February 22, 2005 to build on the research and exchange constructive solutions to address systemic issues such as literacy, curriculum and culture, the assessment and reporting of results, governance and resources, teacher supply and retention, and community supports for learning”(SAEE, 2005, p. 36). An action plan was generated as an outcome of the conference and pre-research, establishing the following initiatives:

- Improve support for Aboriginal Education at all levels
- Obtain better data on Aboriginal Education and make better use of these data
- Promote a culture of learning based on Aboriginal content and approaches
- Improve the recruitment, preparation and support for teachers of Aboriginal students
- Establish regional centers of excellence to provide research and development support for Aboriginal Education
- Take short-term initiatives to improve communication, coordination and the sharing of information about best practice.

The following seven principles were agreed upon as principles to guide action:

- Recognize the urgency of moving forward on Aboriginal Education issues.
- Recognize the need for policies and actions at the pan-Canadian level but also the importance of regional and provincial/territorial differences.
- Respect the need for equal partnerships among the three main stakeholders: the federal government, Aboriginal organizations and communities, and provincial/territorial governments.
- Move beyond jurisdictional disputes to fashion policies and structures for the benefit of all Aboriginal children and youth.
- Recognize the links among control-accountability-responsibility-capacity.
- Base policies and actions in the fundamental Aboriginal rights found in our treaties and other Canadian Aboriginal agreements.
- Give priority to networks that promote better communication, closer collaboration and more generous sharing of information, resources, expertise and best practices.

The conference follow-up documents “a move forward in many ways, in shared understandings, in explorations of alternatives and possibilities, and above all in hope for progress” (SAEE, 2005, p. 29). SAEE, Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education used Mercy Hospital’s approach of building on its existing strengths, when *Moving Forward in Aboriginal Education* began its process by closely observing that which 10 districts across Canada were “doing right” as a guide to what strengths they could build on. If however, Collin’s proposal that effective alignment mechanisms must “have teeth” has merit, the list above is unlikely to bring about the much-needed change that brought the group together. It seems that the “exchange of constructive solutions to address systemic issues such as literacy, curriculum and culture” (SAEE, 2005, p. 36) is a methodology just short of going through the motions. At very least, like those who have dedicated themselves to Inclusion as a model of education for students with special needs, their unwillingness to consider values beyond those which they espouse as the right and only values, has left them planning in a self-created vacuum. Perhaps, given the huge success of so many corporations who have invested handsomely in these types of culture

adjustments and re-alignment initiatives, educators could benefit significantly by following their lead.

2.3 Social Construction Literature

The notion that there is “growing doubt in universal and authoritative standards of truth, objectivity, rationality, progress, and morality” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 7) is the central theme in the social constructionist approach to understanding human existence and the world of ideas in which one co-exists. At first introduction, post-modernism or social construction is simple enough to grasp: “We construct the world” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 8). The implications however are far reaching and demand that we set aside all that we have come to believe and understand to make way for a new understanding of a world constructed out of social relationships, shaped and defined by what we bring to them.

In Mary and Kenneth Gergen’s book, *Social Construction, A Reader* (2003) the authors show how “social construction and pragmatism are closely linked” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 158). The Gergens propose that constructionist ideas have application in social work (Chambon, Irving, & Epstein, 1999), religion (Hermans, et.al. 2002) organizational management (Anderson et. al. 2001), evaluation (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), counseling (Sexton & Griffin, 1997), grief management (Neimeyer, 2001), gerontology (www.healthandage.com/html/res/gergen/contenu/newsletter.htm), pain management (Frank, 1995) and feminist psychology” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 158). Their immediate writings of interest here focus upon pedagogical practice, as well as organizational and community change practices.

i) Social Construction: Implications for Organizational Practice

Mary and Kenneth Gergen present the Social Constructionist approach to organizational efficacy as one where the “success of any organization depends significantly on the capacity of its participants to negotiate meaning effectively” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 52). This rings true as one reflects back to experiences in organizations fraught with conflict or headed by individuals whose ideas and priorities were unappreciated by those within the organization. Furthermore, organizations have

their own history and culture within which a set of narratives perpetuates an organization's destiny. The Social Constructionist sees those narratives as an important alternative to the traditional problem solving approach that stands in the way of organizations becoming inspired and moving in positive directions toward shared goals. "From a constructionist perspective, problem talk is *optional*" (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 57).

"The single most prolific thing a group can do, if it aims to consciously construct a better future, is to discover what the 'positive core' of any system is, and then make it the common and explicit property of all" (Cooperider in Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 57).

ii) Social Construction: Implications for Educational Practice

In *Social Construction, A Reader* the Gergens propose that "perhaps society's chief investment in transformation is located in schools" (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 159). What happens in schools – not just what is taught, but how what is taught is framed is deemed questionable and concerning by constructionist subscribers. The Gergens submit that constructionist concern, indeed criticism of the school agenda, lies in the fact that "contemporary curricula are typically wedded to traditional beliefs in a singular truth ('the correct answer'), a singular vocabulary of reason ('correct thinking'), and an individualist ideology ('every student for him/herself')" (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 159). This generates a knee-jerk reaction of defensiveness when one is oneself an educator. And yet, upon reflection, examples of the latter are the more accessible. It is indeed a challenge to think back to an assignment, a unit, an activity that did not boil down to the same essential black and white, true or false bottom line and approval or disapproval of the inevitable teacher's red pen.

The educational mandate of some countries may be to produce cooperative citizens, but that of the North American continent is to ensure that every student reaches his or her *individual* potential. Accordingly, the Gergens express constructionist concern for how "diverse voices and logic are suppressed or obliterated by standardized school curricula, evaluation systems hold students alone responsible for their poor performance, schooling suppresses challenges to the status quo, and school curricula are cut away from the local community needs" (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 159).

J. Bruner's concept of schools as creators of "better architects and better builders" (Bruner in Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 169) so that they have the tools to fashion their own reality presents a stark contrast to a system where school success is defined by a student's ability to be neither. Students who complete tasks as given, who are complacent and do not challenge the status quo are preferred. Those whose needs the system is not designed to meet are "problem students". Bruner implores educators to conceive education as "aiding young humans in learning to use the tools of meaning making and reality construction, to better adapt to the world in which they find themselves and to help in the process of changing it as required" (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 169). What is ironic about this invitation is that that would require teachers who did not see themselves as victims of the very system in which so many remain stuck and unhappy as adult educators. Cultures within schools are very often places where members tell and retell a specific narrative and where plausible realities are not only created, but self-perpetuated. The prospect of *creating one's own reality* is not a typical staffroom mindset, especially in school districts where class sizes and workload are perceived as unmanageable and teachers' wages seem to have fallen far behind less educated professionals in the private sector. Hence, it is as both the Gergens and Bruner articulate, something to shoot for, and not the way schools are today. They are optimistic.

Bruner proceeds to describe a system that "specializes in learning among its members" (Bruner in Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 170). He proposes that learners helping learners would be preferable to the "transmission of information" approach that has typified education for a century. Similarly, Kenneth Gergen is critical of the traditional concept of teaching as one where teachers possess the knowledge and are to "pour knowledge into students' heads" (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 60). Instead, Gergen envisions a model where teaching and learning become one in classrooms that are respectful, accepting and engaging. "Through dialogue [learners] are most likely to graft onto their personal perspectives what it is we offer from our tradition of knowing" (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 60).

iii) The Social Construction of Intelligence, Disability and Mental Retardation

The single reality of what it means to be disabled is challenged by the social constructionist lens:

In the pool Sam is like a playful seal, holding his breath to slide beneath the water's surface, emerging suddenly in another part of the pool. He is happy and carefree. He is fast, mobile and unencumbered in his explorations of both the surface waves and the quiet world below.

When it is time to get out, the large boy with hemiplegic cerebral palsy is hoisted by mechanical lift from the weightlessness of the water world into his chair. He needs help to dress, help to communicate and help to use the bathroom. Sam is considered dependent handicapped; category A, 319.

Is Sam disabled in the swimming pool? He can swim, but he cannot walk. What of someone who can walk, but cannot swim? If Sam is disabled because he cannot walk, is one not then disabled because they cannot swim? Social Construction “draw[s] our attention to limits on existing practices” and invites us to consider “multiple worlds over singular realities” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 158).

The Constructionist lens applied to the educational setting has significant implications for Special Education and the clientele that Special Education programs serve.

It is principally through interacting with others that children find out what the culture is about and how it conceives the world. Unlike any other species, human beings deliberately teach each other in settings outside the ones in which the knowledge that will be taught will be used. Nowhere else in the animal kingdom is such deliberate ‘teaching’ found – save scrappily among higher primates. To be sure, many indigenous cultures do not practice as deliberate or decontextualized a form of teaching as we do. But ‘telling’ and ‘showing’ are as humanly universal as speaking.

(Bruner as quoted from Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 169)

Bruner goes on to acknowledge that language is in large part the facilitative factor in this specialized ability unique to humans. However, it is equally because of our

“astonishingly well-developed talent for ‘intersubjectivity’ – the human ability to understand the minds of others, whether through language, gesture or other means” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 169). In Special Education, this is referred to as Theory of Mind. Many students who are identified as special needs because of cognitive impairment have deficits in this area. The Constructionist lens, held and adjusted by Bruner and the Gergens, has led us to the crux of the debate over the value of integrating students who have no capacity for understanding the minds of others. Unlike students on a schedule of what has been socially constructed as “normal development” in our society, proximity to non-disabled peers is all but irrelevant for the purpose of learning for those whose brains do not work the way they are “supposed to.” How useless is de-contextualized instruction for a group for whom context is so key, where meaning relies on the concept being experienced and understood for each possible scenario they might encounter in their life? An inability to generalize means knowing not to talk to a stranger at the bus stop has no bearing on what to do when someone talks to you in the fast food line up. Knowing not to talk to a stranger in the line up at MacDonald’s may or may be not helpful in a Burger King line up. And so it goes. From a Constructionist perspective, de-contextualizing the learning because we do it for other students becomes a weak argument for the education of students with limited capacity for learning and an enormous need for skills and tools they can use in life.

The ramifications for Special Education offered by Gergen and Bruner’s view of education through the Social Constructionist lens does not end there. Further to the absurdity of de-contextualizing learning for students lacking a capacity for Theory of Mind, Social Constructionist thought challenges the entire notion of “normalization”. A model of instruction based on this notion of “normalizing” students with mental handicaps makes limited sense. Yet, normalization plays a powerful role in the dominant discourse of community living and calls for “socially valued roles and life conditions for people” (Wolfensberger, 1983, p. 234).

In her research, *The Social Construction of Profound Mental Retardation*, Shannon Boon recounts the experiences of a group of profoundly disabled individuals. Boon says that the prevailing philosophy calls for “community integration” to make her clients “less abnormal”. “Thus, these people have access to a myriad of activities including “wheelchair square-dancing”, “wheelchair bowling”, “wheelchair ice-skating”,

“Bloomin’ Humans” (art class for the disabled), “Social Club” (a weekly dance for people with disabilities), “Easter Seals Camp” (summer camp for people with disabilities), “Special Woodstock” (a musical event for the disabled), “Operation Trackshoes” (track meet for the disabled), and “Operation Wheelchair” (X-mas shopping for the disabled). On the surface, their experience of “community” seems to be rich; on the other hand, their experience of “integration” may leave something to be desired” (Boon, 2001, p. 9).

Boon has documented the lived experiences which demonstrate not just how her profoundly mentally retarded clients are devalued daily, but how the quality of their reality is dependent upon the how their worth is perceived (or not perceived by management personnel), “being instructed by a supervisor not to put clients on commodes because “it is an extra lift” and “they are used to doing it in their pants.” Or by group home staff who “spend the client’s money to buy themselves deluxe coffee drinks (and the client plain coffee)” (Boon, 2001, p. 12). While Boon describes the lives and indignities of adults with disabilities, the situation in schools is the same. The opportunity for a special activity in the community is all too often an afternoon of personal errands for the aid, often returning with bags of bargains shown off proudly to co-workers.

While a proliferation of writing exists on Social Construction in relation to a wide variety of topics, its application to disabilities, specifically the mentally handicapped and the controversy of inclusion, less readily appears in the literature. However, in a paper by South African, Susan J. Lea, *Mental Retardation: Social Construction or Clinical Reality*, issues relating to the Social Construction of intellectual disability are raised and explored. Lea uses the writings of six moderately mentally handicapped individuals to support her contention that the use of labels does not benefit her subjects. “This process [of labeling] establishes and perpetuates the notion that people so-called are incapable of acting in their own best interests” (Lea, 1986, p. 63). Lea demonstrates through these writings that her subjects are both aware of their own needs and able to communicate them coherently. Similarly, the participatory action research of Rita M. Valade (2004), *Oh my God! Look Out World!* explores ways in which persons with mental retardation have been hindered from being regarded as “unique individuals with various abilities” (Valade, 2004, p. 9). She recounts the history of today’s persons with disabilities, beginning with being abandoned in the countryside by the ancient Greeks and Romans, spanning identity as objects of “God’s displeasure in the ancient Judeo-Christian tradition”, declared possessed (Mackelprang &

Salsgiver, 1996 as cited in Valade, 2004, p. 9) in the New Testament, a social problem referred to as “idiocy” or the “menace of the feeble-minded” by the early part of the 20th century, and the “burdensome imbecile of the post-Civil war years. Valade paints a clear picture of how a societal belief that “mental defectives” were “a menace, the control of which was an urgent necessity for existing and future generations” came to be (Trent, 1994, as cited in Valade, 2004, p. 11). With rationale for separating these people from mainstream society in place, the institutions which housed them served only to benefit from increased business by perpetuating fear of the “menace of the feeble-minded” (Valade, 2004, p. 12).

Subsequently, a proliferation of theories grew to support it. “The integration of religious creationism, the newly established discipline of psychiatry and evolutionary thought resulted in a new classification of ‘moral imbecility.’ An indirect result of this was that people with mental retardation were stripped of their humanity and associated with crime and poverty” (Valade, 2004, p. 12). Today, persons with mental retardation are identified under a plethora of euphemistic terms while terms of past generations have been incorporated into mainstream language: “You idiot!” “You moron!” As society continues to construct what it means to be mentally handicapped, in North America (and despite the Inclusion movement) the mentally handicapped are often considered “little more than perpetual children” (Sulpizi, 1996, as cited in Valade, p. 12), “as persons to be pitied and granted charitable kindnesses” (Goodley, 1997; Stainton, 2001, as cited in Valade, p. 13) or what should have been “aborted fetuses” (Stainton, 2001, as cited in Valade, p. 13). Valade argues that regardless of how society chooses to construct the mentally handicapped – “as children, deviants, imbeciles or criminally moronic, they are and always have been individually as diverse as the general population with needs, desires, dreams and abilities” (Valade, 2004, p. 13).

In her research initiative on the Profoundly Mentally Retarded, Shannon Boon presents the Social Construction of the disabled as linked to a variety of current models and perspectives. The medical model sees people with disabilities as sick and in need of a cure. The sociological model labels and stigmatizes those with disabilities. The psychological model individualizes and pathologizes the experiences of the disabled. Boon identifies the common element as pointing to “individual limitations found within the disabled person as the principle cause of the multiple difficulties experienced” (Boon, 2001, p. 2). Boon suggests that in contrast to the perceptions bred by these traditional approaches, social construction “does not deny that there are differences, either physical or mental, between people, but rather argues that “the nature and significance of these differences depend on how we view and interpret them” (Bogdan & Taylor, 1994, as cited in Boon, 2001, p. 2).

In Boon's portrayal of profound disability, Social Construction "assumes that the various forms of 'disability' are not physical absolutes but social designations that are made by people in interaction and relationship" (Danforth & Rhodes, 1997, as cited in Boon, 2001, p. 2).

The issue of intelligence is widely accepted as truth in society, despite that what is considered intelligent behaviour in one culture may be deemed crude in another (Nuttall, 1998). B.A Ogot (1981) documents that in the Suba tribe of Western Kenya, children born in what would be our mentally retarded range were believed to be a reincarnation of a deity, and treated well. Similarly, the Pokomo of Kenya and Tanzania believed such children were guarded by supernatural forces and brought blessings.

"Since cognition is highly valued in our Western society, it seems that those who do not fit intellectually into the societal norm become one-dimensional components of a large stereotypical pattern [...]. All persons struggle with some dimension of life or expectations, but generally are viewed within the context of their entire range of abilities. If a diagnosis of mental retardation has been made, however, persons tend to be seen only as their category" (Valade, 2004, p. 14).

Boon begins her Social Constructionist reveal of the fallibility of the IQ (intelligence quotient) as a measure of truth by examining how the group in her research categorized as "profound mental retardation" were assessed as such. With normal or average IQ considered to be 100 and mentally retarded at 70 or below, Boon challenges how her clients could have a reported IQ score below 20. At this level, individuals are deemed to be "un-testable." Boon finds the "educated guess" method which is applied to those deemed un-testable troublesome (Boon, 2001).

iv) The Social Construction of Inclusion

The legacy of Special Education as a nexus of psychology and education has significant roots in the work of a pioneer in Social Constructionism, Lev Vygotsky. His interest probed not only the nature of handicapping conditions (defectology) and the principles of psychoeducational assessment of the disabled, but also a "theoretical framework for the comprehensive, inclusive and humanitarian practice of special education" (Gindis, 1995, p. 155). Vygotsky conceptualized the challenges of the disabled into "primary defects" (organic impairment) and "secondary defects," (distortions of higher psychological functions due to social factors) believing they could have different psychological effects depending on culture and environment factors

(Gindis, 1998). He also believed the social inclusion of handicapped children was critical to their “effective rehabilitation and compensation” (Gindis, 1998, p. 190). Vygotsky, however, would not have embraced our contemporary model of Full Inclusion for all. While he identified the need for separate curriculum (today’s individual education plan) and differentiated instructional practices consistent with our current day expectations of a Full Inclusion classroom, Vygotsky also acknowledged that Special Education requires a “systemic approach, which should take place in a learning environment where the student’s needs were fully understood and where specific methods were adopted to ensure the learners received specifically modified programs” (The Mozart of Psychology, n.d.). While he was highly critical of any educational model which watered down the existing curriculum, lowered expectations or socially isolated children, he more importantly insisted that only a “truly differentiated learning environment can fully develop a handicapped child’s higher psychological functions and overall personality; a specially designed setting where the entire staff is able to exclusively serve the individual needs of the handicapped child; a special system that employs its specific methods because handicapped students require modified and alternative educational methods” (Gindis, 1995, p. 80). Vygotsky did not gloss over the fact that many handicapping conditions are indeed caused by biological factors. What he did argue, however, is that “defects are not subjectively perceived as abnormality until they are brought into the social context.” The human brain, eye, ear, or limb are not just physical organs: impairment of these organs “leads to a restructuring of the social relationships and to a displacement of all systems of behaviour” (Vygotsky, 1983, Vol. 5, p. 63). Accordingly, in “the Fundamentals of Defectology” Vygotsky wrote: “A child whose development is impeded by a [mental] handicap is not simply a child less developed than his peers; rather, he has developed differently” (Vygotsky, 1995, Vol. 100(2), p. 214). It was Vygotsky’s contention as a Social Constructionist that it is not the “sensory or neurological impairment which defines the disability, but its social implications” (Gindis, 1995, p. 155). Within this theory of disontogenesis, the primary goal of Special Education was compensation for primary defects through strengthening of intact functions, while correcting and rehabilitating secondary functions with the “adequacy and timeliness” of the methods employed being key.

In Suzanne Carrington's paper, *Inclusion Needs a Different School Culture*, (1999) she examines the relationship between the values and beliefs of teachers and movement towards a universally delivered inclusive education model for schools. Viewed through the lens of Social Construction, Carrington acknowledges that "teachers have their ideals and this knowledge influences their actions in the implementation of inclusive schooling" (Carrington, 1999, p. 257). Furthermore, the context is one which is both social and cultural, both at the school and the community level. Carrington proposes that inclusive schooling will not become a paradigm in practical reality until the necessary changes occur, and until the voices of teachers become a part of the dialogue, and the development of the plan. What is most noteworthy about Carrington's position is that there are dozens, if not hundreds of research papers and articles that state the identical position. In contrast to the well-stated position that the key to successful Inclusion is contingent upon a change in values on the part of teachers who are being asked to change their classroom practice, Claes Nilhilm of Sweden argues that the issue is not *what* is to be decided with regard to inclusive practice, but *who* is to decide. (Nilhilm, 2006) Nilhilm uncovers a wide range of varying notions about inclusion – what it should be and how it should be done, amongst those who support it. This in itself has fueled his argument for the necessity of considering a discussion about special education in general, and inclusion more specifically, as part of a broader discussion about the role of social science in democracy. More urgent than how can we convince teachers to support Inclusion and do it well in the classroom which is the prevalent concern of researchers who align themselves with Carrington and a long list of others, Nilhilm urges us to seek a better understanding of the relationship between Special Education, democracy and Inclusion, and to direct research at that understanding. Both Nilhilm and Carrington's perspectives on what is needed suggest a common realization; that in many ways, the cart has been put before the horse.

As the literature review comes to a close, a sense of what has been established within the research on Inclusion previous to this study has been broadened. In that this has been a critical review, an observation which cuts across all of the research has been left outstanding. That is, that within discourse involving Special Education topics, there is

a trend for researchers to build studies and research models around forgone conclusions and existing positions. While one can understand that research would be highly motivated by an endeavor to “prove one’s point”, a significant gap in the research exists where its intent is other than to bolster a pre-existing conclusion. This was true in Special Education in general, but especially in the research and writings on Inclusion specifically. The challenge of sifting through data which has been *constructed* with the purpose of supporting a particular view becomes a redundant enterprise at best. At worst, it means that progress in any direction is lacking, save for perhaps that Special Education has become paradigmatically polarized. From the perspective of an advocate for students with disabilities, one can hardly call that progress.

The author’s conclusion, at the culmination of an intense look at what has been thought, said and so-called *proved* so far, is that the call for research which begins with a question sincerely posed, is louder than ever.

CHAPTER THREE – Research Methodology

3.1 The Purpose of This Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a framework of what the researcher did, how it was done, and why it was done that way. As the scope and aims of the dissertation are described in detail, the reader is provided with a description and evaluation of the methods, techniques and procedures used in the investigation stage of the research. The framework is completed by a justification of the methods used.

3.2 Approaching the Design... The What

The author's primary goal in this research was to gain understanding of what a large educational organization (a school district) would need to change in order to move a Ministry mandate for the inclusion of students with special needs beyond the concept stage. A secondary objective was to confirm or deny that inclusive practice was alive and well in the organization. Students were already being placed in regular classrooms according to the Full Inclusion model of Special Education. But were students being included?

A third objective was to explore the organization's formal and informal values and beliefs with respect to disabled learners. Were there values held within the organization that were not consistent with the personal and professional values of its members? Were there values that the organization stated and sanctioned as its core values and guiding principles that were at odds with policies, procedures, or other leadership supported initiatives or actions? With these objectives as the road map, the author set out to locate those areas of incongruency between the values and practice within the organization, believing that their strategic realignment would be prerequisite to moving from Inclusion as a concept stuck at the theory stage to positive or meaningful action within the organization by its members.

3.3 Approaching the Design... The How and the Why

The design of this research is a contingency of three main factors; who the researcher was, what questions were asked, and how the researcher went about seeking answers to her questions – the methodology.

The researcher initially attempted to enter the research arena objectively, but a Social Constructivist research framework demands that instead, full cognition of how the researcher's own understandings and experiences shape the interpretations, perceptions and beliefs about which questions should be asked, of whom, and how the data should be collected. These factors become elements of the data, rather than problems of bias or subjectivity. In other words, objectivity in the researcher is not possible and possibly not even desirable.

The questions that were chosen were formulated in a process that interfaced with methodological decisions. Similarly, methodologies were enlisted to address questions – complements in how they illuminated different aspects of the whole picture. By employing several separate methodologies some triangulation was achieved. For instance, a perspective which may have been shared in an on-line survey comment, may have also been described by interviewees, and then noted in a field observation.

3.4 Qualitative Methodologies

Qualitative methodologies were favored as a way of gaining insights into what was anticipated would be complex interactive processes within an organizational structure and a population large enough to parallel a small city. While there are obvious similarities between methodologies in the qualitative realm, their goals differ, and hence, where a culture needed describing, a theory was created or a specific case was documented, corresponding methodologies were called into play in a commonly used “mix and match” approach.

A qualitative approach allowed the research to take place in its natural setting. Fundamentally interpretive, it engaged the researcher in the role of interpreter, inviting reflection upon the researcher's proximity and location to that being studied and

interpreted, and most importantly allowing the researcher to view social phenomena holistically when attempting to make meaning from it.

Ethnographic data from a variety of natural settings allowed the author to gain a sense of whether what interview subjects and survey participants reported about inclusive practice was actually happening, or whether subjects were telling and retelling stories that were conjecture, hearsay, organizational myth, or even skewed perception; valid realities through the lens of Social Construction, but nonetheless different.

3.5 Appreciative Inquiry

A common aspect of organizations is their propensity towards research and reflection as a way of improving or finding answers to questions needed to move forward. In *Appreciative Inquiry, A positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity*, authors, Barrett and Fry propose that “the questions we ask determine whether we eventually diminish our capacity to grow and develop, or increase it” (Barrett & Fry, 2005, p. 14). Their book is “about framing questions with a positive stance and focusing on topics that enhance organizational learning which results in increased cooperative capacity (Barrett & Fry, 2005, p. 15). This is the essence of what Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is and why it has been so successful at transforming organizations.

A key distinction in the AI approach to performance improvement is rooted in differentiating between “fixing” what is not working well in an organization and “building capacity” or expanding upon that which is already being done well. The first approach is more typical and familiar to organizations and the people within them. It is an approach that involves identifying or diagnosing a problem, analyzing it and then developing a solution to fix the problem or improve the situation that is problematic. The uniqueness of AI is its strength-based perspective; a “process of elaborating and expanding on a system’s strengths – usually closely tied to cooperative acts – in order to move that system from good to great, from doing well to always winning, from constantly correcting to forever innovating, and so on” (Barrett & Fry, 2005, p. 20).

While AI was not the predominant approach used in this social change initiative, it was a tool that was employed at a specific stage of information gathering that called for

an understanding of what was already working. The switch to conversations that were designed from an AI framework was orchestrated to gain an understanding of values and practice at the school culture level.

3.6 Ethnographic Approach

Data collection oriented towards documenting district culture, values and practice occurred through ethnographic research methods. Ethnography assumes the research interest is primarily affected by understandings of organizational and community culture; in the case of this research this understanding informed both sides of the equation needed for aligning values and practice. “Ethnography [also] assumes the researcher is able to understand the cultural mores of the population under study, has mastered the language or technical jargon of the culture, and has based findings on comprehensive knowledge of the culture”(Ethnographic Research, n.d). The researcher in this study was fully acquainted with schools, the professional language of Special Education and the sensitivities and sensibilities of both school-based issues and district protocols. By spending time immersed in the field, the author was able to take part in aspects of school life as well as district office activities. First-hand observation notes for all activity and observation related to secondary schools were maintained, while second party observation notes were collected as data in the elementary venues by a research colleague. Field notes in both elementary and secondary were maintained for those times when a specific observational focus was not before the team. The effectiveness of this method is demonstrated in *Helping or Hovering?* (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, MacFarland, 1997). The study used direct observation and field notes to collect data on the effects of instructional assistant proximity on students with disabilities.

In this dissertation, a collection of data representing a cross-section of understandings about current practice was obtained in the form of anecdotal reports from classroom teachers. Their direct experience with district practice provided a facet of current practice representing one set of realities; the field study and direct observation approaches yielded another facet linked to that seen by the researchers. Data obtained through interviews would be used to discover patterns, derive themes and eventually make interpretations related to the guiding questions - what are the organization’s values

related to inclusion, what is accepted as average practice and where do values and practice not align? Different interview sets were characterized with different levels of formality, ranging from small talk to scheduled, in-depth interviews to ongoing, purposefully dialogical conversations that endured throughout the data collection period of ten months.

3.7 Interviews

i) Interview Set One - Skills and Knowledge Interviews:

A series of twenty-four interviews with individuals that were identified by colleagues within the educational community as “leaders” or “experts” in Special Education or in providing inclusive experiences for students with special needs were used to create ten survey categories for a later data collection initiative. Also included in the interview roster were administrators who were Special Education trained and experienced and who oversaw the Department of Special Education in their assigned school. Each interview participant was asked to talk about what he or she thought were the skills and knowledge needed for a teacher to successfully support and include a student with special needs in the regular classroom. These interviews took place over a period of one month in late Fall. While those with noteworthy expertise in Special Education were easy to connect with and schedule given their roles typically as consultants and non-enrolling teachers, the “inclusive classroom teacher” was a rare breed, difficult to identify, and next to impossible to schedule time with due to teaching duties, commitments and general lack of available time to spare. As a result, the large majority of the twenty “Skills and Knowledge” interviews were with itinerant teachers and district staff.

This set of interviews consisted of a single, open ended question, and as much time as the participant was willing to spend to answer it, all completing within a range of 30 to 60 minutes. Rather than use the three-interview structure (Seidman, 1991) to increase validity, the author increased the sample size, and maintained a single interview format. The rationale for this logistical decision was rooted in what was under pursuit. The respondents were asked to share their opinion of what skills and knowledge teachers

would require to integrate students with special needs into the regular classroom setting. They were not asked to report on how they had observed that done, but rather, from the perspective of a person with their advanced level of expertise, what did they *recommend* was needed to be in place as a skill set for regular classroom teachers? As for what teachers believed they *needed* to carry out inclusion in their classrooms, teachers would be asked this en masse, by on-line survey. For now, the author was simply on a mission for picking brains to generate a body of material which could be the basis for future survey questions, as well as to gain a sense of what theoretical starting point the district's practice had as its substrate.

ii) Interview Set Two - Inclusive Schools Interviews:

Additional data was obtained through a series of meetings held at 14 of the district's 19 secondary schools in the Spring semester. The meetings included the author as a coordinator representing the district, the vice principal in charge of Special Education, the Special Education Department Head and the teachers who worked either full time or part time in the resource room program for students with physical and intellectual disabilities. The primary purpose was to share with the school team a rubric of best practice that summarized the district's expectations for teachers and administrations for the delivery of Special Education services in three specific areas: curriculum implementation, IEP (Individual Education Plan) development, and program organization. The rubric was designed and shared in an effort to establish standards, increase consistency and improve accountability. In conjunction with the provided rubric, teams were provided with a checklist version of the rubric contents as a tool for team self-reflection and goal setting within the program, department and school.

This discussion of best practice in secondary Special Education was a natural lead-in to a further dialogue about successful inclusive practices. Using Appreciative Inquiry-type questioning, members of each team were asked to share stories about inclusion from their school and then uncover the conditions or elements that were in place at the time. The resulting dialogue was a school-by-school distillation of Inclusion in action, as it could only occur within the specific cultural and dynamic of each school community.

iii) Interview Set Three - A Meeting with the Superintendent:

The third interview was conducted with the District Superintendent. The decision to invite senior management to the interview table was based on a desire to represent several levels of the organizational hierarchy, so that if differences between subgroups existed, they would reveal themselves in the comparison of data from the various organizational levels.

The interview was scheduled weeks in advanced and a thirty-minute appointment was granted in early May. The Superintendent was made aware of the role and the objectives of the interviewer, to ensure that he was clear that the interviewer was coming to him as a researcher and not a district employee. The time constraint on the interview meeting necessitated careful planning. Six questions were asked. The specific questions were designed to guide an exploration of the Superintendent's particular understanding about values and practice as related to his district's special needs population, adding yet another layer to this formation of local beliefs and perceptions. The first four questions probed values and practice, while the final two questions used Appreciative Inquiry to move from perceptions and beliefs about the district, to the Superintendent's personal experiences and vision for the district:

On Values:

- 1. On the issue of Inclusion and the integration of students with special needs, can you describe the district's collective value?*
- 2. Do you believe that the district's value, and the actual individual values of its teachers, administrators, students, and parents are fairly consistent?*

On Practice:

- 3. From what you have seen and heard, how well does the practice of teachers, administrators and students align with the values you talked about earlier?*
- 4. Are you satisfied that the "talk" about the district's practice and values matches the "walk"?*

Appreciative Inquiry:

5. Tell me about a time when you experienced inclusion in a way that really stood out for you... what was it about the way participants acted, thought, etc. which made this story stand out?

6. What would it take for the entire school district to engage in a way that would make schools meaningfully inclusive places for teachers to teach, and students to learn?

3.8 Field Observation

i) Weekly Consultant Team Meetings:

Weekly, over the ten-month school year, the team of five Special Education consultants met with the administrative principal who oversees Special Education services across the district. The format of these meetings was casual and unstructured, and the absence of a formal agenda allowed extensive debate and discussion to unfold on topical issues related to Special Education and Inclusion. Minutes were taken and distributed to the team members.

ii) Consultant Team Planning Retreats:

In order to set goals and priorities, team build and evaluate, the same team met three times during the year in a retreat setting, away from the telephones and interruptions at the district office.

iii) High School Visits:

On a frequent basis (1 to 4 times each week) the author was sent to visit a school program and/or a specific student to complete a support needs assessment, complete a functional behaviour assessment, or draft a safety plan to address dangerous or threatening behaviour by students with special needs towards staff. These visits varied in duration and purpose but were the catalyst for regular dialogue with teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals. They also provided opportunities for extensive first hand observation of physically and mentally handicapped students in 19 different high

school settings. These students were from a variety of program support models depending on the type and severity of their disability.

iv) Elementary School Visits:

Feeding into the 19 secondary schools, the district has 100 elementary schools. Service to students with special needs was carried out at the elementary level through a service model that was different than that in place at the high school level. Students with special needs were placed, with only a handful of exceptions, in regular kindergarten and grade one through seven classrooms with their same age peers. A paraprofessional was assigned and worked under the direction of the classroom teacher. A student with high needs, such as a student with Autism or who was labeled dependent handicapped was assigned to the caseload of an integration specialist who spread his or her time and expertise between a number of different school sites and classrooms. Data collection was through regular interviews with integration teachers who shared information on their caseload students and the classrooms and schools they were included (or not included) into.

3.9 Collection of Artifacts

i) School and District Mission Statements:

Every school in the district, elementary and secondary, develops a mission statement. While the mission statement of the district is *to provide safe and caring environments in which all learners can achieve academic excellence, personal growth, and responsible citizenship*, each school community develops its own. One hundred-thirty school mission statements were collected as indicators of what schools had decided their core values and guiding principles were.

ii) The District Vision:

To further gain a sense of the district's commitment to and intention toward Inclusion outside of the Department of Special Education (where Inclusion and related

issues are central to its very existence) data was obtained in two main ways. The first was obtaining a document written in 2005 outlining all of the district's goals and priorities for the next half decade. The second initiative to obtain data was a face to face interview with the district superintendent who willingly met and shared his personal beliefs and impressions; this ethnography would be incomplete without a conversation with the district's top man to compare and contrast with school-based observations and impressions.

iii) District Policy and Philosophy:

The final data collection method used to compile an ethnography of values and practice in Special Education in the district was through analysis of a number of district and provincial documents. A philosophical statement by the both the Assistant Superintendent overseeing Special Education and his Director was obtained. As well, the statement of purpose and vision for the department of Student Support Services was examined.

iv) Ministry Policy and Philosophy:

Copies of the British Columbia School Act, and the British Columbia Ministerial Order for how British Columbia schools must address the educational needs of students with special needs were obtained. Also, a document reporting statistics on the academic achievement of students with special needs was collected as data related to the variability in definitions and interpretations that exist within the Ministry mandate (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2006).

3.10 Quantitative Methodology

While the qualitative aspects of this research data were useful in gaining a sense of the overall phenomenological landscape of the district and its approach to Inclusion and Special Education practice, inviting the researcher to tease out themes, discover patterns, and ultimately formulate theories quantitative research allows for the testing of those theories. As described in *Mixed Methods*, (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) quantitative data can be used hand in hand with the qualitative research efforts to enhance

what can be learned. Reflecting on how research has played a role in scientific development, Kuhn noted that, “large amounts of qualitative work have usually been prerequisite to fruitful quantification in the physical sciences” (Kuhn 1961, p. 162).

In a similar quantitative blended with qualitative methodology, where a survey was used to back up an interview series, a comprehensive study on the costs of Inclusion was completed by Cambridge University in the UK, (Macbeath, Galton, Steward, Page & Macbeath, 2006). In an effort to assess the situation there for the National Union of Teachers, the resulting cross referencing of both data types in this research provided a convincing enough snapshot of the UK scenario that upon receipt of the study, the union halted twenty years of social change in the direction of Inclusion and terminated their program to gradually close the last of their segregated schools.

As a demonstration of the risks of presenting quantitative data without the context that qualitative data can offer, the author cites the case of a Canadian school district in New Brunswick, celebrated for its continent-wide leadership in inclusive schools. In their study, a pattern was noted was of how in the schools that were most celebrated for best practice Inclusion - where teachers worked collaboratively and prided themselves on always going the extra mile for students with special needs - these teachers almost all went on to become administrators or district personnel. Their leaving the classroom was explained as extraordinary leadership, suggesting that their leadership either developed as a result of affiliation with the inclusion initiative, or led to it in the first place. Either way, neither explanation postulates that the high rate of teaching staff moving out of the classroom in inclusive schools might have been related to excessive demands of a classroom that provides for the additional and often challenging needs of a student with a disability or that their willingness to join the initiative may have been motivated by a desire to be selected as an administrative candidate, both likely scenarios. If the qualitative piece had been completed in follow up, we might have an entirely different picture of teachers bailing from classrooms due to burnout and fatigue or joining the Inclusion initiative to build up their resumes. It is this author’s hope that the field study portion of this research will shed enough light that the survey responses can be fit into a reliable context, rather than be left to the interpretation of the reader as in the New Brunswick scenario.

3.11 The Survey Approach

In the organization of the school district teachers are the key stakeholder group. While they may be outnumbered by students in mass, as stakeholders they are the group who ultimately decides what classrooms will or will not look like. A research tool was designed that would approach the issue of Inclusion philosophically and practically, probing teachers for specific information about their training and skill set, as well as creating an anonymous forum for voicing their opinions and raising concerns at a time when teacher opinion is not perceived to be a factor in the policy decisions made at the provincial Ministry level or the procedural decisions made within the district.

The survey was designed to investigate the skills and knowledge required for best practice Inclusion and to examine teacher beliefs about the practice of Inclusion. (Appendix A) Questions asked in the survey included open-ended questions, closed questions, scales, lists, categories, and rankings. Likert-type scale (Denscombe, 1998) was used throughout the survey to organize the data so that it could be compared with the data in other categories as having different quantities and qualities. The importance of giving respondents the opportunity to express what they really think (Coolican, 1994) was addressed by using three open-ended questions to which they could respond at any length using their own words. A decision was made to utilize a completely anonymous survey with no means of identifying respondents. A letter written to explain the purpose of the study was designed and a direct survey link was embedded in the letter.

Following the advice of Bell (1993), information that might be regarded as sensitive by some respondents was placed towards the end of the survey with the “theory being that if respondents abandon the questionnaire at that point, you at least have answers to all the earlier questions” (Bell, 1993, p. 78). Likewise, since age might be possibly considered a sensitive question, rather than asking the respondents’ exact age, they were asked to indicate an age category.

In keeping with guidelines for ethical considerations, permission for this study was received from district management.

i) Piloting the Survey:

According to Bell (1993), data-gathering instruments should be piloted to test how long it takes respondents to complete them, to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to enable the research team to remove any items that do not yield usable data. Thus, the study was piloted. The pilot group consisted of seven teachers. The participants were asked to answer the following questions upon completion of the survey:

- *How long did it take you to complete the survey?*
- *Were there any questions that were unclear, ambiguous?*
- *Were there any questions that you did not feel comfortable answering?*
- *Was the layout of the survey user friendly?*
- *Do you have any other suggestions?*

Responses received allowed the research team to revise the survey ready for the main distribution. Piloting of the survey enabled the team to ascertain that it was free of grammatical, spelling and typographical errors. The team was also able to eliminate ambiguity and imprecision, as well as remove any double, leading, presuming and hypothetical questions. It ensured that desirable kinds of responses were obtained. Achieving a plausible standard of design and presentation required a considerable amount of time and collaboration within the team and with the pilot group.

ii) Distribution and Return:

Survey Monkey, an internet survey service, was opted for as the most desirable format. Compared to other formats it is time and cost effective. The survey link, a letter of explanation, and an invitation to participate were emailed over the LAN (local area network) through which all communication in the district is shared and all teachers have full access. Nearly half of the 1000 teachers randomly selected from the email directory responded with 475 completed surveys returned. The survey was sent out two weeks prior to schools shutting for the annual Spring break vacation and left online until the end

of that one-week break since many teachers have access to the email system from home. This gave a three-week opportunity for replies.

iii) Survey Sections:

The survey consisted of five sections with Section A asking teachers to indicate their level of familiarity with ten areas relating to the support of students with special needs in the regular classroom:

- *Roles and responsibilities of the regular classroom teacher and others involved with students with special needs, such as paraprofessionals, Occupational Therapists, Integration Support Teacher, parents, etc.*
- *The B.C. Ministry of Education Policy on Special Education*
- *Special Education philosophy*
- *The topic of physical and intellectual disabilities*
- *Strategies for adapting and modifying the learning outcomes for students with special needs*
- *Resources available for supporting students with special needs*
- *Developmentally appropriate curriculum for students with special needs*
- *Strategies for supporting behaviour of students with special needs*
- *Creating and implementing IEPs (Individual Educational Plans)*
- *District Safety Plans for students with special needs*

Section B asked teachers to indicate the extent of their education, differentiating between professional development and post-secondary course work completed, in the same ten areas used in Section A.

Section C inquired about the teachers' beliefs about Special Education. The statements in this section were:

- *Teacher opinion on integration and inclusion is important even though a Ministry mandate is in place.*

- *The practice of inclusion is consistent with my personal and professional values.*

For both statements, there was space provided for those who desired to add additional comments.

In a fourth section, Section D, teachers were asked how interested they were in receiving additional training and asked to identify their preferred format for future learning from a list of standard and innovative options. Available choices included:

- *Staff meeting presentations*
- *Single day workshops supported by Pro-D funding*
- *Monthly workshop series with release time provided by school or district*
- *PB+15 or Masters Program*
- *Special Education Diploma*
- *Tuition-subsidized Integration Diploma (release days provided by school or district)*
- *On-line Conference Site*
- *Mentorship*
- *Other*

The fifth and final section was the teacher profile. Respondents were asked whether they were regular or Special Education teachers, elementary (grade K-7) or secondary (grade 8-12) as well as specific grades taught, gender, age, and years of experience. A final opportunity to provide a written comment was offered at the end of Section E.

The format used to build and collect the survey, *Survey Monkey*, allowed analysis of the data by subset of any question response. Effectively, it was possible to look at all the male responses, for example, or just the responses of males who were non-Special Education teachers, or just the responses of males whose personal and professional values were inconsistent with the practice of inclusion, and so on.

As noted in an earlier description of qualitative methodology, the ten survey categories from Sections A and B were obtained through a series of twenty interviews with individuals – administrators, classroom teachers, and consultants, who were identified by colleagues within the Special Educational community as “leaders” or “experts” in Special Education.

3.12 Documentation from Other Stakeholders

i) Pre-Service Teachers:

In British Columbia, there are only a handful of post-secondary institutions which grant Bachelor of Education degrees and train pre-service teachers. Many teachers in training complete their practicum requirements in schools with the district. Both the training they receive from the universities and the mentoring they receive as practicum students bear significantly on how Inclusion is supported and achieved in the district. On this basis, 35 pre-service teachers were surveyed and invited to share their personal reflections on their attitude, readiness and confidence with regards to providing classrooms that would provide a sense of belonging and meet the needs of exceptional learners.

ii) Students With Special Needs:

Three final stakeholder groups remain, certainly emerging as lesser stakeholders in a process that has focused almost exclusively on teachers. Students with special needs, their parents, and paraprofessionals are the three stakeholder groups who, inarguably, know those for who we are advocating better than any teacher, administrator or district specialist. Informal interviews were conducted with a small sample of students with special needs. An electronic questionnaire was sent to 10 dependent handicapped, non-cognitively impaired high school students. The questionnaire used an Appreciative Inquiry approach to invite sharing stories and experiences of inclusion. All ten students had computer email access and assistive technology.

iii) Parents:

Asking parents questions regarding their attitudes and experiences with Inclusion or their beliefs and concerns about their son or daughter's needs was unnecessary given ongoing access to parents through the processes of IEP planning, positive behaviour support interviews, transition planning and writing safety plans. In the context of the researcher's consultation role, dialogue with parents, either by telephone or in person, occurred two to three times each week. Standard protocols to document all conversations with parents were followed.

iv) Paraprofessionals:

Paraprofessionals were engaged on a similar level with conversations imbedded into the education process and not made complicated by scheduling a meeting for the researcher's purposes on their unpaid time. The underlying reality of why students, their parents, and paraprofessionals were only peripherally engaged in dialogue during the pursuit of data was because they ultimately exert so little influence over any potential concept to action shift. This perspective is consistent with the position that Pudlas (2003) takes in his research on Inclusion; that is that the primary stakeholders in Inclusion are the teachers.

CHAPTER 4 – Presentation of the Data

4.1 The Purpose of This Chapter

This chapter summarizes the data that were collected during a ten-month period from September 2005 to June 2006. The data are organized and presented thematically rather than by data collection method. Within a single theme, several data sources may be presented in an attempt to reveal trends related to a particular matter of concern or interest. This chapter presents the findings. The interpretation and analysis of these data with regard to the central research questions will follow in chapters five and six.

4.2 The District Vision

The District Strategic Plan was a response to a recent emphasis on accountability put in place by the British Columbia Provincial Government and the Ministry of Education. Fully documented School Improvement Plans (SIPS) are tied to formalized district accountability contracts with the Ministry of Education, which are in turn tied to educational funding. Vision 2010, a four-page color brochure, outlines strategies, responsibilities and timelines for creating a *Pathway from Vision to Action* as part of the Ministry mandated need for short and long term district planning. The first of four themes states the district vision of providing quality educational programming. Goal 1.3 states: “Our students will have their diverse educational needs met through relevant learning experiences; students achieve success in an inclusive learning environment.” Additionally, goal 1.3 is supported by three strategic objectives that specifically address diverse learning needs, Aboriginal student achievement and students’ sense of belonging and membership in their school community. The key progress indicators for each objective are specific and measurable but ignore students with special needs who are mentally handicapped. The objectives do have relevance for students with disabilities who are on regular academic programs.

In a second document of Annual Goals and Objectives for the 2005/2006 school year, Goal 3 is restated, but here the supporting statements offer relevance and

implications for students with special needs: “Our students will have their diverse educational needs met through relevant learning experiences; increase district and school capacity to meet the diverse needs of students.”

In the same document, Annual Goals & Objectives 2005/2006, resource programs for students who are mentally handicapped are specifically addressed in STANDARDS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY:

- *Review, affirm, and where appropriate, develop standards describing best practice in the delivery of educational and administrative support services, specifically library services, [resource programs for students with intellectual disabilities ranging from mild to severe/profound], as well as emotional and behavioral support programs.*

Under a section entitled SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY, the district plan for long-term sustainability includes reviewing and planning for:

- organizational structures
- levels of service delivery
- provision of material resources
- provincial and alternative funding sources

In all documents of the district and the Department of Special Education which oversees services for those students with special needs, wording refers to Inclusion in the context of making a person feel welcome and never to Inclusion in reference to the Special Education model of Full Inclusion. Student Support Services strives for *meaningful inclusion* of the students it supports, as described in the introductory paragraph of the department manual.

4.3 The Ministry of Education on Inclusion

The British Columbia School Act, Ministerial Order 150/89 states that:

A (school) board must provide a student with special needs with an educational program in a classroom where that student is integrated with other students who do not have special needs, unless the educational needs of the student with special needs or the other students indicate that the educational program should be otherwise.

In a 2006 Ministry of Education publication entitled, *Students with Special Needs: How Are We Doing?* the Minister reports on the academic achievements of students in the province who have special needs. Upon closer scrutiny, this author discovered that the data on school achievement is only included for:

Sensory Disabilities (Visual or Hearing Impairment)
Learning Disabilities
Behaviour Disabilities
Gifted

Students with developmental disabilities – those who are mentally handicapped, are not included as students with special needs in this Ministry report. Hence, the author construes that when the British Columbia Ministry of Education refers to the Inclusion of students with special needs, they are not referring to students who are mentally handicapped.

4.4 The Emotion of Inclusion

The twenty *Skills and Knowledge* interviews were an introduction to the views of some of where some of the district's Special Education personnel stood not just philosophically, but emotionally on the issue of Inclusion. Several interview subjects included as a part of their list of skills and knowledge needed by teachers, that teachers "must have the right attitude" or "need to change their attitude." Discussion about attitude change came with a marked increase in the intensity with which they delivered their

words. Similarly, most dialogue about Special Education model schools versus Full Inclusion model schools or Inclusion as a principle typically sparked the same immediate intense emotion and even anger in a number of non-administrative district personnel when engaged in water cooler chat or in meetings. This was the author's first flag that there was a hotspot beneath the surface of official discussions that would need monitoring and perhaps some probing as time went on to interpret this anger and emotion which the topic of Inclusion invariably brought to the surface. At very least, as these unanticipated occasions of emotional eruption began occurring, the author was cued to listen, watch and document.

On more than a dozen occasions, conversation participants became animated, raised their voice and became visibly upset and angry when discussing Inclusion. The specific contexts of such conversations never involved an attack on the concept or philosophical stance by the author but rather hints at the possibility that Inclusion was not widespread practice, or questions of why the concept was struggling at the implementation stage. That there were individuals who did not agree with Inclusion was not only offensive to these individuals, but unacceptable. Within the district office that was responsible for the administration of Special Education related services, the researcher – a newcomer to the building and the district role can best characterize the intensity of this expression of opinion as fervent. There seemed to be little openness to the debate of Inclusion as an intellectual exercise, nor any interest in examining what stage of implementation Inclusion was at, or what factors might be holding it back. The topic of Inclusion quickly emerged as a conversational mine field within the first month of research.

On the other side of the Inclusion issue, a similar intensity of emotion was evident in the optional written comments provided when teachers responded to the survey that was sent as a part of this research. It seemed that for some the mandate of Inclusion was also offensive and equally as unacceptable. Of the 485 on-line survey respondents, 106 (22%) reported that *the practice of Inclusion was not consistent with their personal and professional values*, although not all these respondents communicated strong emotions through their written comments. Of the group of teachers who did not support the

philosophy of Inclusion, 72% were regular classroom teachers, while 29% were Special Education teachers.

The elementary/secondary distribution was 60/40, with a large majority of 73% being women. More than a quarter of these teachers had taught over 25 years, and another 20% had taught between 15 to 19 years. Only 9% of those who were not in support of Inclusion were in their first 5 years of teaching. One very experienced teacher responded that she used to support Inclusion but

...not any more! I used to believe this, and passionately, but since cuts have been made to the support of students with special needs, I believe it is a crime to abandon these students and their teachers under the veil of 'inclusion'.

Another teacher shared strong words on the model of Full Inclusion for dependent handicapped students with wheelchairs.

...They take up too much room for the already small classroom and make it difficult for everyone else. What is the purpose of having a child who cannot talk, walk, feed himself, etc. in the regular classroom? Who are we fooling and why should the already overburdened classroom teacher be the one to accommodate a stupid philosophy made by those that do not work with these children. By the way, I am not a classroom teacher – thank God!!!!!!!!!!

Another teacher who strongly disagreed with Inclusion accuses those who support it as “not being very professional.” The teacher goes on to express her disapproval in dramatic terms, going so far as to say that students with special needs should be protected from the insensitivity and superficiality of other teenagers.

In a society where image and success are highly reflected in our teen groups, forcing special needs students to be subjected is cruel.

A high school second language teacher conveyed her frustration of having a severely physically disabled student and a full time paraprofessional in her classroom for the past

semester. She was mildly annoyed that she received no support from any case manager within the school and that the student and her support worker arrived late and left early each day. The teacher, who felt that her primary responsibility was to the student's learning, was frustrated and disappointed that the student's oral language skills had not progressed due to missing the daily start up activities and the closing home practice assignment for each next day. She reported feeling uncomfortable making repeated requests to an adult paraprofessional, believing that she had made her expectations clear and they were simply not followed. When the school semester drew to a close the teacher felt that there was little but hindsight to hold on to. She believed that the student could have been more successful if others had done their jobs properly; if the case manager had consulted with her prior to the placement and throughout, if the paraprofessional had managed the student's out of class needs better, and if the administration had taken a more active role in overseeing, setting expectations and demanding better accountability for staff. Yet, she recognized that these were all facets of the system beyond the teacher's control.

The teacher was able to maintain an air of moderate annoyance and frustration when reporting on the difficulties she encountered with this placement. However, when asked about she felt about others with even greater ability limits being placed in her classes as a future possibility, her negativity escalated until she angrily pronounced her beliefs about Inclusion:

If a student cannot do the work or learn the way I already teach what I teach, or if they cannot keep up, or if they aren't listening or they're fooling around and misbehaving – that's it. Get them out! They don't need to be there! I don't want them in my class!

Within the collection of artifacts supporting various aspects of the field observations are letters from parents of special needs students who had decided that expressing a concern to a teacher or administrator about their son or daughter's school program was not enough. A parent of a grade twelve student with a developmental disability in the moderate range became irate at the lack of compassion and accommodation for her daughter when she found herself on the receiving end of a

philosophy similar to that of the language teacher. The parent drafted an angry letter of complaint impugning all involved in her disabled daughter's exclusion, and sent copies to multiple levels of administration and management. Another letter by the parent of a high school student diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and a mild intellectual delay addressed members of the school board and the assistant superintendent with an angry attack on the professionalism and conduct of the school personnel involved and an investigation ensued.

An itinerant teacher who provided integration support at the elementary school level shared her story of what had occurred in the schoolyard that afternoon at one of the schools where students from her caseload attend. As she described how the staff had excluded a deaf student in a wheelchair from the school photograph, the anger eventually manifested itself as tears.

4.5 The Story of Janet

The special day arrived and the annual tradition of the school group photo had all of the students at the elementary school excited. Every student looked forward to receiving their copy of the photo of the more than 400 students huddled in a huge mass but no one more than the members of the grade seven class since this would be their final year before graduating to high school. It was fun that the photographer, with the custodian's help, climbed to his vantage point on the school roof – a forbidden destination on any other day of the year. Any student who kicked a ball onto the roof accidentally or on purpose could consider it swallowed up and delivered into oblivion. For no student would be brave enough to violate the threshold of the Stay off the Roof Rule, and face the wrath of the school principal if caught. So it was fun for the students to see the roof rule broken. Once the tripod and camera were set into place and orange traffic cones temporarily marked the outer limits of where the many classes of students could stand when were brought to the outdoor photo area several classes at a time, organized, and then joined by the next ones.

Janet is severely disabled with Cerebral Palsy and is in a wheel chair. Also profoundly deaf, Janet is a grade seven student placed in a regular classroom with full time support from an aid. As Janet's class was being assembled and readied for the photograph, she became excited, began waving her useable arm, and making her groaning noise. In the close proximity of the crowd of students her excited arm was knocking other students. On a panicky directive from the classroom teacher, the support worker rushed in and Janet was immediately removed from the photograph area.

When the last of the classes had arrived and were in place, the photograph was taken and students were led back to their classrooms in an orderly fashion. Janet was never put back in. As a memento of her years there, she received her photograph of the entire student body; her testimonial to the fact that she never really belonged.

Field observation found that anger and frustration were not the only emotions being evoked by the topic of Inclusion. The author's attendance at a presentation by the new district superintendent was in conjunction with a district initiative for potential leadership candidates. For many of the teachers present, it was their first time meeting the new leader and hearing him speak. The evening's topic was differentiated instruction, with approximately 200 teachers grouped at tables of 10 to 12 with a pair of administrative team leaders at each table for some case study group work later in the evening. While differentiated instruction is only peripherally tied to the issues and implications of Inclusion, the superintendent's presentation ended with a video that he warned in advance would not leave a dry eye in the house. He did not disappoint. The school-made video took the audience along on a journey with a group of high school students who endeavored to make a steep climb to the top of a local mountain. The planning and implications of this overnight trip were involved enough, but the students and faculty would include with them a young man from the class whose Cerebral Palsy confined him to a wheelchair. The video documents the preparations made, the challenges faced and ultimately, the rewards won. An interview with the disabled teen from the peak of the mountain is the emotional high point. He has been physically carried by revolving teams of fellow students in a custom-designed and fabricated transportation device that they have created themselves. It was a deeply moving story of sacrifice, friendship, commitment and trust, and of inclusion. It was shared with the district's future leaders as a tribute to what their new leadership believes is important in schools. When the short video was over it was obvious that it had been successful in evoking the emotion that the superintendent promised it would.

In the midst of interviews, in meetings, in impromptu and professional conversation and dialogue both in the field, in the district office, in survey comments, letters from parents, and presentations, opinions on Inclusion are emotionally charged. Opinions on Inclusion for those who support it are characterized by angry intolerance of those who do not. For those who find that Inclusion is inconsistent with their personal and professional values, they express feelings of resentment and frustration that what is being asked of them is unrealistic and inappropriate. Examples of inclusion and stories of exclusion have the power to evoke deep emotional responses.

4.6 Teacher Profiles

In Section E of the survey, information about each respondent's profile was summarized as follows:

i) Teaching Assignments:

Regular classroom teachers made up 72% of respondents, while 29% identified themselves as Special Education teachers. 61% of respondents reported to be elementary school teachers and 39% were high school teachers. The number of respondents was higher for teachers who taught the higher grades. (Table 1)

TABLE 1: Grade Levels Taught by Respondents

Grade taught:	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Percent of respondents	12%	13%	19%	17%	19%	20%	20%	15%	26%	25%	30%	31%	27%

ii) Gender:

Male respondents constituted 18% of the sample. 82% were female respondents.

iii) Age:

The largest age group represented by survey respondents was in the 45 to 54 age range, followed by a second large group of teachers in the 35 to 44 age range. Teachers under 25 years of age were the smallest percentage of respondents, while those at the start of their career (aged 25 to 34) and those heading for retirement (55 and over) were represented evenly. (Table 2)

TABLE 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Category	Percent of Respondents
under 25 years	1.3%
25 to 34	21%
35 to 44	27%
45 to 54	33%
55 and over	18%

iv) Teaching Experience:

The number of teachers with 5 to 9 years of experience, 10 to 14 years of experience and 25 or more years of experience was similar. The smallest percentage of respondents was in their first year of teaching. (Table 3)

TABLE 3: Years of Teaching Experience of Respondents

Experience Category	Percent of Respondents
First year	3%
1 to 4 years	12%
5 to 9 years	20%
10 to 14 years	20%
15 to 19 years	17%
20 to 24 years	9%
25 and over	21%

4.7 The Skills and Knowledge Teachers Need for Inclusion

The initial twenty *Skills and Knowledge* interviews were centered on the question of what classroom teachers need in order to successfully integrate students with Ministry designations into the regular classroom environment. The term, integration was used interchangeably with *Inclusion* and discussion of inclusive classrooms and schools. The literature distinguishes clearly between Integration Model Schools and Inclusion Model Schools, as defined earlier. However, few teachers are aware of the distinction and even fewer are concerned with the differences. Furthermore, in this school district the philosophy of Inclusion was so distinctly different in the elementary grades and in secondary schools, it was clearest to use *integration* to describe a student's physical proximity to the regular classroom, and to use *inclusion* as an attitudinal descriptor of how a child is treated when integrated. The following question and terminology contained was put to the organization's experts:

What skills and knowledge are required by the regular classroom teacher for best practice integration?

As a result, the skills and knowledge required for best practice integration were identified and categorized. These areas included:

- *knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the regular classroom teacher and others involved with students with special needs*
- *familiarity with provincial expectations of teachers, as expressed in the British Columbia Ministry of Education policy on Special Education*
- *knowledge of the school district's own philosophy of Special Education*
- *background on the topic of physical and intellectual disabilities*
- *having and using strategies for adapting and modifying the learning outcomes for students with special needs*
- *knowing what resources are available for coordinating support for students with special needs*
- *knowledge of strategies for supporting behaviour*
- *ability to create and implement Individual Education Plans*

➤ *knowledge of how to implement and follow through on safety plans*

The skills and knowledge theme areas were organized and formulated into a survey question format (Appendix A) to determine what level of familiarity respondents had with each theme area. Regular classroom teachers reported being most familiar with roles and responsibilities, creating an implementing IEP and strategies for modifying and adapting the learning outcomes for students with special needs. They reported being least familiar safety plans for students with special needs and the British Columbia Ministry policy on Special Education. (Table 4)

TABLE 4: Familiarity with Skills and Knowledge by Regular Classroom Teachers

Indicate your level of familiarity with...	Not at all	Somewhat	Very familiar
1. the roles and responsibilities of the regular classroom teacher and others involved with students with special needs such as Occupational Therapists, SEAs, Integration Support Teachers, parents, etc.	4%	55%	41%
2. the B.C. Ministry of Education policy on Special Education	34%	61%	5%
3. the District's Special Education philosophy	25%	62%	13%
4. the topic of physical and intellectual disabilities	10%	67%	23%
5. strategies for adapting and modifying the learning outcomes for students with special needs	7%	56%	37%
6. resources available for supporting students with special needs	21%	65%	14%
7. developmentally appropriate curriculum for students with special needs	22%	61%	17%
8. strategies for supporting behaviour of students with special needs	11%	60%	29%
9. creating and implementing IEPs (Individual Educational Plans)	15%	49%	36%
10. District Safety Plans for students with special needs	41%	46%	13%

Teachers were then asked to indicate the extent of education they had received in each of the areas indicated by the expert interview group to be crucial for Inclusion of students with special needs. The statements and teachers' responses are shown in the order set out in the survey. Table 5 shows that the largest group (34% to 82% of respondents) reported that they had received no training on the topics in question. Relative to the numbers of teachers who reported no training at all, a small group (1 to 15 %) had received instruction on these topics while completing a diploma or degree. The remaining teachers (14 to 42%) had participated in a professional development activity or in-service training on the topics in question.

TABLE 5: Extent of Education in Required areas by Regular Classroom Teachers

Indicate the extent of education you received in the area of...	None at all	In-service / Pro-D	Diploma / Degree
11. the roles and responsibilities of the regular classroom teacher and others involved with students with special needs such as Occupational Therapists, Aids, Integration Support Teachers, parents, etc.	45%	42%	13%
12. the B.C. Ministry of Education policy on Special Education	82%	14%	4%
13. the district's Special Education philosophy	76%	23%	1%
14. the topic of physical and intellectual disabilities	40%	42%	18%
15. strategies for adapting and modifying the learning outcomes for students with special needs	34%	34%	12%
16. resources available for supporting students with special needs	60%	33%	7%
17. developmentally appropriate curriculum for students with special needs	61%	27%	12%
18. strategies for supporting behaviour of students with special needs	45%	40%	15%
19. creating and implementing IEPs (Individual Educational Plans)	63%	27%	10%
20. district Safety Plans for students with special needs	82%	17%	1%

4.8 Teacher Opinion is Important

The issue of the importance of teacher opinion was addressed in section C of the survey. Teachers were asked two questions in this section and given the opportunity to add comments following each. The first question asked whether the respondent believed that teacher opinion on integration and Inclusion was important, given that a Ministry mandate was already in place.

In the *Skills and Knowledge* interviews, several district staff had expressed a point of view that teachers' opinions were unimportant on the issue of Inclusion since a Ministry mandate was in place and on the basis that the district's policy was a reflection of that mandate. To supply context, only elementary schools follow the Inclusion Model for cognitively and physically disabled students. All secondary schools in the district base their Special Education delivery for students with cognitive disabilities on an Integration Model.

In the on-line survey section entitled, *Beliefs about Special Education*, teachers were asked whether they thought that teacher opinion on integration and Inclusion was important even though a Ministry mandate was in place. The survey results were a departure from the notion that because the Ministry mandated a policy of Inclusion, what teachers think is not important. A large majority of survey respondents agreed that teacher opinion on this issue was important and 100 of them provided comments on this statement. As one teacher put it, *mandates don't influence beliefs*. Another teacher suggested,

Teacher opinion based on informed and experienced professionals in the field must be valued, heard and used to build policy around mandate.

Table 6 compares the beliefs of Special Education and regular teachers, showing that they are not only similar in their beliefs that teacher's opinion is important but their support was nearly unanimous.

TABLE 6: Beliefs of Special Education and Classroom Teachers on Teacher Opinion

	Agreement that teacher opinion is important
Regular Classroom Teachers	94%
Special Education Teachers	93%

The notion that the Ministry of Education is building policy without having sufficient knowledge of what they are mandating is a theme that has long since been central to teacher criticism of government in British Columbia and is a sentiment reflected by this teacher in his survey comments

Teachers are the ones who deal with special needs students everyday, the Ministry does not.

In addition to teachers being on the “front line” with the first hand knowledge of the realities of classroom life that come with such a daily proximity, one teacher alluded to the impact that teachers have to potentially effect the outcome of any mandate:

Teacher opinion affects actions, so it is important.

Another teacher approached the issue of teacher opinion with a comparison to government involvement in other areas of expertise:

Teacher opinion is more important than Ministry mandates as is proven through the existence of mandates based on political aims rather than good science. Many Ministry mandates are the antithesis of good pedagogy, and are clearly intended to weaken the power of the union. We do not let politicians decide engineering standards, or medical diagnosis, so why do why let them determine pedagogic mandates?

While teacher opinion tended to vary widely, there was all but consensus on the importance that their opinion has value, whether there is a Ministry mandate in place or not. The subsequent chapters will explore the criticism of the mandate and the concerns with implementing Inclusion that exists within that important teacher opinion.

4.9 Teacher Attitude

The second question which was addressed in the *Beliefs about Special Education* section of the survey examined whether the philosophy of Inclusion was consistent with teachers' personal and professional values. Overall, 74% of teachers responded in agreement. When response data was separated to compare the responses of regular classroom teachers with Special Education teachers, the result was essentially the same. When responses of elementary school teachers were compared with the responses of secondary teachers they were similar with a majority reporting that Inclusion was consistent with their existing personal and professional values (Tables 7 and 8).

TABLE 7: Beliefs of Elementary Teachers

Survey Statement	Agree	Disagree
The practice of inclusion is consistent with my personal and professional values	68.9%	31.1%

Table 8: Beliefs of Secondary School Teachers

Survey Statement	Agree	Disagree
The practice of inclusion is consistent with my personal and professional values	75.6%	24.4%

A comparison of rates of agreement with the philosophy of Inclusion, teaching experience and formal training in the area of Special Education yielded both expected and unexpected results. Table 9 below shows consistency between the rates of agreement and disagreement with the philosophy of Inclusion between elementary and secondary teachers. This trend remains fairly constant between subsets of gender as shown in Tables 10 and 11, with a slight gap of 10% between male elementary teachers and their secondary counterparts.

TABLE 9: Comparison of Views of Elementary and Secondary Teachers

Teacher subset:	Agreement with Philosophy of Inclusion	Disagreement with Philosophy of Inclusion
Elementary Teacher	68.9 %	31.1 %
Secondary Teacher	75.6 %	24.4 %

TABLE 10: Comparison of Views of Female Teachers

Teacher subset:	Agreement with Philosophy of Inclusion	Disagreement with Philosophy of Inclusion
Female Teachers - Elementary	76.6 %	23.4 %
Female Teachers - Secondary	78.2 %	21.8 %

TABLE 11: Comparison of Views of Male Teachers

Teacher sub set:	Agreement with Philosophy of Inclusion	Disagreement with Philosophy of Inclusion
Male Teachers - Elementary	56%	44%
Male Teachers - Secondary	66.7%	33.3%

Female teachers, as a group, were more supportive of the philosophy of Inclusion than male teachers by a margin of just more than 14%. The greatest inconsistency in values appeared to exist between male and female teachers in elementary with a difference in rate of support for Inclusion as a philosophy of over 20%. While an explanation for this trend could be constructed fairly easily, more importantly the risk of having factions of the staff polarized over a philosophical issue remains a possibility and a potential factor in the success of efforts made by elementary schools to provide inclusive settings for students with disabilities.

Another trend that emerges from the tables is the negative correlation between experience, education and support for the philosophy of Inclusion. Table 12's comparison of years experience shows that agreement with Inclusion is highest amongst teachers with the least amount of experience in the classroom, while teachers in their first 4 years of teaching had the highest rate of agreement (91%) of all teacher subsets examined in the study. This group of survey respondents were predominantly female (85%), aged between 25 and 34, (61%) with an even distribution of teaching assignment spread over Kindergarten to grade 12.

TABLE 12: Comparison of Views between Teachers based on Years of Experience

Teacher subset:	Agreement with Philosophy of Inclusion	Disagreement with Philosophy of Inclusion
1-4 years of experience	91%	9%
5-20 years of experience	47%	53%
20 + years of experience	63%	37%

Table 13 below shows a negative correlation between the level of training received by teachers on specific Special Education related topics and support for the philosophy of Inclusion. Teachers with the least training supported Inclusion at a rate of 44%. However, as teachers reported increased exposure to in-service and professional development topics related to supporting students with special needs, the rate of agreement dropped by more than 10%. An even more significant rate of decline is noted

where teachers obtained skills and knowledge in a diploma or degree format. At a rate of 80%, teachers with diploma or degree level training on the key skill and knowledge areas probed by the survey reported that the philosophy of Inclusion was not consistent with their personal and professional values.

TABLE 13: Comparison of Views Based on Level of Training in Special Education

Level of training:	Agreement with Philosophy of Inclusion	Disagreement with Philosophy of Inclusion
None at all	44%	56%
In-service or Pro-D	35%	65%
Diploma or degree	20%	80%

In support of this trend, Table 14 shows how the views of teachers correlate with their familiarity with Special Education related topics, rather than the level of training they had received to date. Where there was no familiarity with Special Education topics, the lowest level of agreement of any teacher subset was noted. Where teachers reported their level of familiarity with the presented Special Education topics, their rate of agreement increased significantly. As with those teachers with high levels of skill and knowledge obtained through formal coursework such as diploma programs or degrees, the group who reported being *very familiar* with the topics showed a marked decrease in support for the philosophy of Inclusion.

TABLE 14: Familiarity with Special Education and Support for the Philosophy of Inclusion

Teacher subset:	Not at all familiar with Special Education topics	Somewhat Familiar with Special Education topics	Very Familiar with Special Education topics
Male teachers in agreement with the philosophy of Inclusion	13.5%	56%	30.5%
Female teachers in agreement with the philosophy of Inclusion	13%	51%	31%
All teachers in agreement with the philosophy of Inclusion	13%	51%	36%

Correlation between male teachers who supported the philosophy of Inclusion and familiarity with the topics related to Special Education was highest amongst teachers who were *somewhat familiar* with the Special Education topics. Few male teachers (13.5%) who supported the philosophy of Inclusion indicated *no familiarity* with the topics. The expected high correlation between support for Inclusion and an indication of a high level of familiarity with the topics again did not appear. Instead, with the male teachers, only 31% of Inclusion philosophy supporters indicated a high level of familiarity with Special Education topics. The identical trend was documented for female teachers, and as demonstrated in Table 15 below, for elementary and secondary level teachers.

TABLE 15: Comparison of Elementary and Secondary Teachers Who Support the Philosophy of Inclusion - Level of Familiarity with Special Education Related Topics.

Teacher subset:	Not at all familiar with Special Education topics	Somewhat Familiar with Special Education topics	Very Familiar with Special Education topics
Elementary teachers in agreement with the philosophy of Inclusion	11.5%	54.5%	34.5%
Secondary teachers in agreement with the philosophy of Inclusion	16.5%	48%	36%
All Teachers in agreement with the philosophy of Inclusion	13%	51%	36%

While a significant teacher population from every subset analyzed responded in the question section of the survey that the principle of Inclusion was consistent with their personal and professional values, an equally significant portion of those completed their response with a qualification in the comment sections that followed. The comments typically followed a format and ideological position similar to these teachers:

I do believe in inclusion but not without support for the teacher and the student.

If a child is severely disabled, I don't see any benefits of inclusion.

I agree with the notion of inclusion. However, I disapprove of the inclusion if it results in constant disruption of the regular running of the classroom.

Integration is an excellent practice in theory. However, given class sizes and compositions and teacher workloads, many special needs students are not adequately served in mainstream environments. I'm saying if you want me to do this well I need less kids and more support. Otherwise we are just paying lip service to a nice ideal and harming everyone in the process.

[I agree with inclusion] when the resources are available to me, make it possible for me to carry out the job and enable me to maintain a learning environment for all my students.

Since the model of support is different in elementary and high school, in Tables 16 and 17, the comments of elementary and secondary teachers have been reported separately. To expose existing trends in how they qualified their agreement with Inclusion, responses of female teachers, male teachers, regular classroom teachers and Special Education teachers have been presented separately within the elementary and high school groupings.

Tables 16 and 17 reveal that there is a predominate area of concern shared by both elementary and secondary teachers, namely that there is not enough time, energy, support, resources, communication, or training to make the model Inclusion one which they can support in practice. The second most important concern to elementary teachers was that Inclusion inadequately provides for the educational needs of students with special needs. For secondary teachers, the second most important concern was the negative impact on the classroom. These differences provide a context for later discussion of how the elementary and secondary models function differently and what the impact of those differences are.

TABLE 16: Summary of Qualifying Comments by Elementary Teachers

Teacher subset:	Agrees with Inclusion	BUT. depends on students' ability and needs.	BUT feels some negative impact on classroom.	BUT Not enough time, energy, support, resources, communication, or training	BUT also believes... Inclusion inadequately provides for the educational needs of some students with special needs.
Female Regular	78%	8%	16%	42%	25%
Male Regular	54%	8%	4%	42%	37.5%
All Regular Teachers	76%	8%	14.5%	42%	26.5%
All Special Education	68%	10.5%	14.5%	52.5%	17%

TABLE 17: Summary of Qualifying Comments by Secondary Teachers

	Agrees with Inclusion...	BUT, depends on students' ability and needs.	BUT feels some negative impact on classroom.	BUT Not enough time, energy, support, resources, communication, or training	BUT also believes... Inclusion inadequately provides for the educational needs of some students with special needs.
Female Regular	79%	14%	17.5%	37%	12%
Male Regular	62%	16%	25%	25%	23%
All Regular Teachers	73%	15%	21%	31%	17%
All Special Education	76%	13%	3%	38.5%	27%

The qualifying factors that were shared in the comments of teachers concerned issues related to the special needs students themselves, the teachers' needs and the classroom. Some teachers felt that Inclusion matched their personal and professional values so long as the needs and abilities of students with special needs were not excessive. For instance, these teachers were not able to support integration or be inclusive when the students with special needs were a source of disruption and distraction, when their needs were too great, or when their capacity for participation or learning was too limited. This teacher highlighted the issue of serving medical needs in the classroom and stated his position clearly about what he would and would not allow in his classroom:

Although I agree generally with inclusion and integration of some special needs students, there are some students with such severe physical handicaps and mental disabilities that would be better served in a special classroom setting. Gurneys in the classroom should not be allowed. If the child on a gurney needs to be rotated several times a day, then a child is probably best served in a separate classroom situation with a nurse on hand. Teachers should not have valuable classroom space used to have gurneys in their rooms.

All teacher subsets qualified their support for the philosophy and practice of Inclusion when the presence of a student with special needs negatively impacted the ability of

others to learn. Also, teachers shared their belief that certain circumstances foster negative stigmatization and encourage negative peer perceptions and relationships between students with special needs and their peers.

Integration of some special needs students is distracting to mainstream students and may not always promote tolerance.

Several teachers talked about a balance of the needs of students within the classroom:

The needs of low incidence students must be balanced with the needs of other students in the classroom. Where the learning needs of the other students are being negatively affected by special needs students then we need to take a look at where program delivery is taking place and the classes where inclusion is to occur. This comes from observations in both the elementary and high school setting and from teaching at both levels.

Teachers were concerned about the ability of their other students to learn in a safe, calm, distraction free environment. Comments containing concerns about Inclusion being harmful to other students were made by a few teachers.

I do not believe every case should be acceptable. When a child is screaming and screeching all day, and unable to absorb any of the lessons, at what point do we say, "This is absolutely stupid to integrate this child." It affects the learning for all the other students, and makes the work environment almost unbearable for the teacher.

The need for schools to uphold the rights of all of its students was highlighted.

...but some exceptions should occur in light of certain disabilities that are too disruptive to the rest of the class. The other students also have rights which I have seen ignored in favour of inclusion. I have been very unhappy at this time and I would not accept to keep such a student in the class again.

A common theme amongst the teachers' comments was a questioning of the benefits at the point when the Inclusion of a student with special needs was perceived as a burden;

The benefit of inclusion is for the child with special needs and for the understanding, acceptance, personal growth and tolerance of everyone else. But it should never turn into a burden for the teacher or the rest of the class.

The concern for safety appeared in the comments of some teachers

I believe that inclusion can be beneficial to both the child with special needs and the rest of the class. However, we must ensure that properly trained and experienced [paraprofessionals] are in place to support the teacher in his/her efforts to educate everyone in the room. In the cases where the special needs child regularly disrupts the learning environment of his/her classmates or exhibits aggressive behaviours that compromise the safety of others in the room, we must revisit the notion that all children must be included in the same classroom. Their needs do not supercede the needs of the group. In the same way that each child is an individual, each situation should be carefully examined to determine how to best serve the needs of all the children – those in the classroom and a child with special needs.

This teacher's confusion is typical of a number of respondents who seem to want to endorse Inclusion as *the right thing to do* but struggle with the reality she sees in their classrooms. The author has included this quote because it captures the sincerity and depth at which teachers are personally wrestling with Inclusion, as the realities and ramifications of implementation repeatedly challenge what they so badly want to embrace as their philosophical position and at the same time come to terms with what they believe is possible and beneficial.

I am confused about this issue. Although I do feel that inclusion is the correct way to go for many, and possibly most, I do feel that there are many students who are not benefiting a great deal as a result of inclusion. In many cases I do believe that it is too much of a strain on the classroom teacher and the other students, with no great benefit to the student with special needs. Often times, students are placed in classrooms with many

varying needs already. The more special needs there are, the more difficult it is to cover the curriculum. What about the average students who end up with no teacher time, and less coverage of the curriculum as a result of the many special needs in the classroom? My concern in stating that I disagree [with Inclusion] is that it doesn't seem to be a yes, or no question. I don't agree or disagree all of the time, yet I do feel something needs to change.

Regular classroom teachers, who live the realities of Inclusion and integration in their classrooms daily, stated a variety of reasons and scenarios of when they believed a placement of a student with special needs was not the right placement.

Teachers at both levels of elementary and secondary also focused heavily on their own needs as teachers charged with the responsibility of providing inclusive experiences and education for students with special needs when qualifying the terms of their support for Inclusion. Ranging from one quarter of the male secondary teachers who positively responded to the Inclusion question, to more than 50% of elementary Special Educators who offered their support, teachers were clear. While philosophically they could support Inclusion as a concept, it was not a viable educational option without the provision of adequate time to meet, plan, consult, and receive training, without resources in the form of specialized teaching materials and environmental adaptations, or without adequate coverage by skilled support personnel and ongoing outside expertise.

4.10 The Need For Time

The most prevalent need identified in the on-line survey comments and raised in the field was *time*. The actual time that having a student with complex physical, sensory or intellectual special needs integrated into a class requires on the part of the regular classroom teacher was documented. A detailed breakdown (see Appendix B) estimates that the addition of one student with typical IEP requirements would require 5.5 hours of teacher preparation time over and above the preparatory and administrative activities for the class, prior to the student arriving. Tasks completed in the 5.5 hours could potentially include:

- an initial meeting with the resource room teacher to discuss the student profile of strengths and needs
- attending the IEP meeting as a member of the student's support team
- requesting, retrieving, reading and returning the student's file to the office
- meeting with the assisting paraprofessional to set expectations and define roles
- planning a lesson to introduce the class to the student's disability as part of creating an understanding and informed classroom community
- researching background information on the student's disability
- reviewing and revising the unit plans to ensure applicability to this student's needs and goals
- planning for classroom set-up, instructional strategies and authentic assessment
- finding and obtaining the necessary resources and specialized materials
- meeting to read, understand and sign a safety plan if one is place
- meeting to review, discuss and plan for implementation of a Positive Behaviour Support Plan if needed
- in-service training to operate a wheelchair, for seizure management or other medical issues
- consultation and documentation of emergency evacuation plans specific to a student needing assistance

Despite the fact that the list is long, it does not address reporting or regular daily classroom issues. While realistically a teacher could spend many more hours per special needs child over a semester, the author is not suggesting that teachers are doing this or that they should be doing this, but rather that this is what is required to properly have the critical aspects of integration and inclusion in place at a good practice level.

One teacher suggested that teachers would be less reluctant to put in the out of class preparatory time that meaningful integration demands if they received compensation. At its simplest level, a teacher with 12 years of experience and a Master's Degree in her own subject area would yield compensation of approximately \$840.00 per

child. While such a simplistic formula is absurd and would never be entertained by the district, the notion of compensation tied to Special Education course work and a per special needs student stipend to acknowledge that these students generate a significant additional workload and stress on teachers was thought to be reasonable by teachers whose reaction the author sought.

Bill 33 of the *Education (Learning Enhancement) Statutes Amendment Act*, recently set limits (3 per class) on the number of students with special needs that a regular classroom teacher could enroll. In May 2006, an unprecedented letter of positive support for Bill 33 was sent by the President of British Columbia Teachers' Federation to the Minister of Education. (Appendix G) While on the one hand the BCTF acknowledged class composition guarantees as a positive step for its members, it also conveyed "the Federation's commitment to successful Inclusion of students with special needs" and its "firm belief that all students deserve a quality public education experience, with the opportunity to be included and succeed" (BCTF, 2006, n.p.).

Data obtained from pre-service teachers in training to be English, Social Studies or Physical Education teachers at the high school level, demonstrated that even with the extensive training they had received to support them in the task of planning for three hypothetical students with complex needs, the time it took them was excessive, averaging between 3 and 5 hours per student to complete the assigned preparations. The trainees had completed units of classroom instruction with simulated practice in small groups in writing individual education plans, assembling student profiles, and designing simple lesson plans in their specialty area which demonstrated planned use of appropriate instructional strategies and understanding of student needs. The time that the student-teachers reported that it took them to complete the teaching preparation for each of their three students included writing an brief form IEP and a short profile of student strengths and needs, however it did not encompass any of the meeting time that *actual* preparation for *real* students would entail.

Teachers had very specific ideas and opinions about what they need to better support students with special needs in their regular classroom. They were acutely aware of the knowledge and skills that they lack and believe that more resources and materials, more paraprofessional in the classroom, and more specialized external support are

required if their support for Inclusion is to be sustained. Regardless of what resources or supports are secured for the classroom teacher, they remain ineffective or unimplemented without the ingredient of time which is required to coordinate all of these aspects of student support and team collaboration.

4.11 The Need for Specialized Instruction

The last category within the qualifying comments made by elementary and secondary teachers was consistently supported across all teacher subsets. Special Education teachers (27% of secondary Special Educators) and regular teachers alike, including 37.5% of male regular elementary teachers, offered the opinion that while they can support Inclusion as a concept, as practice it falls short of meeting the educational needs of the students it was developed for. The comments from the on-line survey consistently showed that all but a tiny minority believed that a blanket approach to Inclusion served no one well and that while they could see times and instances where all students received benefits from being together as a single peer group for a common purpose, the quality of the education of students with special needs was often sacrificed, as though being with non-disabled peers was educationally superior to specialized teaching designed to ensure that students with special needs reach their full potential. Teachers communicated clarity around their mandate as educators; the primary goal of education in British Columbia is academic according to the Ministry of Education, and it was evident by their heartfelt feedback that this is central to teachers' focus. In that spirit, teachers expressed concern not only for their regular students and their right to an uninterrupted, safe learning environment, but the best possible education for those with special needs requiring specialized teaching methods and curriculum.

...we are often wasting the children's time when they could be learning things more valuable to their lives and future lifestyle.

In the field in the high school setting, daily observations were made of students in resource rooms merely putting in time until their next integrated block. Some resource

rooms functioned as little more than a waiting room for integration or a community outing. In regular classrooms, students were observed on the periphery of the learning activities, not only intellectually, but physically and most of all, socially. Of 37 high school observations of students with special needs integrated into age-appropriate regular classroom settings, the experience was observed to be a negative one in terms of the student's learning or social experience, or both in 32 of the observations (86%). Where a paraprofessional was present giving support to a student in a regular class, their presence was as frequently as not an impediment to the student's ability to interact with peers or with the teacher directly. As one teacher observed,

The fact that there is a [paraprofessional] in the room means these kids are socially segregated anyway.

In the on-line survey, 22 regular classroom teachers expressed specific concern that students with special needs were being deprived of their right to the best education available and denied the opportunity to realize their full potential. Teachers conveyed a shared sense of concern for all learners, noting that what they could offer in their regular classrooms often fell short of what they believed was the best available for a student. This was reinforced by what was found during field observations.

In the earliest stages of formulating the questions that would guide this inquiry, the question of what *actually* happens in classrooms arose. Unquestionably, the stories and perceptions of stakeholders would be critically important sources of information. However, it was also important that there was first hand documentation to support the comments made by anonymous survey respondents.

Field observations were scheduled on an average of 1 to 4 times per week, in both elementary classrooms where students with disabilities were placed in regular classrooms as their primary classroom and in regular high school classrooms as integration. The observations included 135 separate observations over a period of nine months during the same school year. The observations involved 63 students with disabilities in the moderate to severe and profound range of intelligence, as well as children with Autism (with mental retardation), physical disabilities (with mental retardation), and both visually and

hearing impaired children (with mental retardation). The majority of the observations, 98, were conducted in elementary school classrooms, kindergarten to seventh grade. The remaining 37 observations were in high school classrooms, but limited to classroom levels of grade 8 through 10. The average length of the observation was approximately one hour, with none shorter than 30 minutes. An observation session involved the observer to be inside the classroom, though not always or necessarily beside the observation subject. The observer's presence was, where possible, presented in a non-student-specific context and was kept informal.

The criteria which determined if the observation had noted a positive or a negative example of Inclusion was clearly laid out and provided two separate contexts for a positive observation: academic and social. If, from an academic standpoint there appeared to be some attempt at inclusion of the student with the disability by the teacher or by the members of the class, a positive observation was noted. Academic Inclusion could mean full participation in the class activity, sharing the same theme or topic as the class but completing individualized work, or using the same materials as the rest of the class to focus on an individualized learning outcome. The key aspect of a positive, academic experience was a discernable link between an appropriate and meaningful individualized learning outcome, and the academic activity of the rest of the class. Since the observer was not able to determine if a child was having an inclusive experience or not, the focus was limited to the structures in place to facilitate Inclusion. Based on these criteria, a student counting money at the back of the classroom while the rest of the class was writing paragraphs was noted as a negative observation.

The second context for the observation was social. If a student was positively interacting with peers or if peers were including the disabled child in any positive social interactions, that was good enough to be deemed a positive observation. If a child was socially isolated from peers, never acknowledged by the teacher, or only attended to by the assigned aid, that was noted negatively.

It should also be noted when considering the results of this series of observations, that as long as there were *some* positive interaction, or *some* evidence that an academic task was meaningfully linked to what the class was doing (not both), the observation was recorded as positive. Even so, Table 18 shows that few positive examples of inclusive

classroom practice were observed in elementary classrooms, and even fewer were observed in the high school classroom. While socially, students with disabilities were frequently not acknowledged by peers or the teacher, their academic activities were often completed independent of and unrelated to what the class was doing. From an observer's standpoint, exclusionary practices and experiences seemed substantially more prevalent than inclusive ones.

TABLE 18: Classroom Observations of Social and Academic Inclusion

Teacher subset:	Observations	Positive Inclusion	Negative Inclusion
Elementary School Classrooms:	98	16 (16%)	82 (84%)
High School Classrooms:	37	5 (13.5%)	32 (86.5%)
Total:	135	21 (15.5%)	114 (84.5%)

4.12 Perception of Schools as Respite / Babysitters

In the on-line survey comments made by regular teachers, eight teacher comments specifically addressed a perception that Inclusion, in some cases, was nothing more than babysitting or respite care for the parent. One teacher proposed that too many students with disabilities placed in the same high school classroom diminishes his ability to teach.

As a Professional, I must include all students assigned to my classes. Physical or mental disabilities that exceed a certain level become counter-productive distractions in my class. When 6-8 disabled students are enrolled in the same class because there is only one [paraprofessional] between them, teaching becomes babysitting.

Another high school teacher was more graphic and impatient with aspects of Inclusion which he believes are not defensible.

This policy of inclusion has gone too far! I see in my school aids [paraprofessionals] pushing drooling quadriplegics in chairs into PE and shop classes. These people are disrupting the classroom, they are learning nothing and they are costing too much. These people have no place in the education system. The health care system should be babysitting groups of them for a small portion of the cost.

A female teacher needed similar limits sets, as she commented on a scenario that the author observed in the field on numerous occasions, as well as prior to the research in her own capacity as a regular classroom teacher.

...Students who spend their days sleeping in wheelchairs are not really learning much. Respite is important but it needs to come out of the health budget, not the education budget.

While many teachers fully grasp the rationale of including students with all kinds of disabilities in the regular classroom, providing they are able to learn and participate, not all agree.

There are some extreme cases – severe behaviour difficulties and extremely handicapped students (intellectually, physically – tube fed, diapered, etc.) that I feel should be receiving support outside the public school system.

In the field, classroom teachers talked about scenarios such as the ones described in the comments above as being babysitting or respite for the parents of special needs students. At the high school, there was a pervasive feeling that much of what went on in the Special Education resource room was of little value, and babysitting was a term that was not uncommonly used in informal conversations that the author had with teachers. This sentiment was reflected in similar comments made by high school administrators and by non-teaching staff, such as hall monitors or custodial staff who frequent all areas of the school and have a fuller sense of where special needs students are and what they

are doing than many teachers who rarely get out of their classroom when school is in session.

When 14 high school administrators were presented with a rubric outlining what the district and current Special Education research considered to be acceptable practice in high school resource rooms, eyebrows raised for, if nothing else, the accountability issues that had been put on the table. The administrators, some principals and some vice-principals, seemed genuinely surprised that there were any expectations or standards with regard to program organization, IEP development or curriculum development for students with mild to severe and profound intellectual impairment. Two administrators, both with extensive training and experience in Special Education as teachers, were already aware of where their school's programs and staff practices were, and were not, meeting an acceptable standard. Two other administrators sent Special Education department staff in their place to the scheduled meeting to discuss and review the standards but did not come themselves even though it was clearly conveyed that an administrator was required to be present. The remaining administrators varied between being slightly annoyed at having to meet, to defensive and angry, to just beginning to adjust to the news that Special Education has standards.

4.12 Meeting Robert

Fifteen minutes alone with seventeen-year-old Robert can change a person's whole perspective on life. At seventeen, he should be on the verge of manhood. But this young man recently weighed in at a mere forty pounds. That in itself was cause for celebration as an indicator that he was continuing to thrive. His meals have been fed to him since birth through a feeding tube that enters through his stomach. Oddly, he has no problem passing a dozen inches of his loose sleeve material down his throat when eyes are off him for a second, but he cannot eat food.

Born to Chinese parents who immediately gave him up at birth and were not heard from again, Robert came into the world, less about one-third of his brain and without any bone on his skull to protect the part he was born with. With only a membrane of skin holding the outside world at bay, a small egg-shaped vented helmet was designed and fitted to his head. He is watched and checked for cerebral swelling hourly. Swelling inside the unforgiving helmet would be certain death. The hair that grows around the perimeter of his bald head creates the effect that he has a full head of hair, and seeing him without the helmet – and without hair on the top of his head, is always strangely shocking.

Unable to talk and profoundly blind, Robert curls up in his child size wheel chair like a twisted pretzel. When he does not like the sounds around him – anything plastic is a trigger, his screaming is shrill, loud, and relentless. When he is curious about his surroundings, he beeps out short shrill blasts of sound, and then listens for the echo that returns to him. One senses that he has mechanisms inside him more like a bat than a boy.

Robert can hum back any musical note sung to him in perfect pitch. It is a fun game to play for a while, in between grabbing his shirtsleeve just as his tiny fist vanishes up the arm hole and he tries to stuff the fabric in his mouth. Exhausted from the stress of the day, his body stiffens, his arm extends straight ahead and his tiny helmeted head drops. Ten frozen seconds, and then the seizure has passed. It is important to time them, and then to document them. More than ten in any one hour and the paramedics are called. Sometimes it is hard to figure out exactly why 911 needs to be called. His personnel file has the instructions stapled inside: D.N.R. (Do Not Resuscitate).

4.14 ... But Not in My Class

The intent of Inclusion is that students are placed in the regular classroom *first* with services and support provided for that student in the regular classroom. Students with special needs are not required to reach a certain level of ability or fulfill a prerequisite before being allowed his or her rightful place in the regular classroom. This is by and large the status of children in grades kindergarten through 7 in the district with 2 self-contained classrooms reserved for the most extreme students who simply cannot be contained in any other setting. By the same token, the success of the integration model that exists in secondary schools for cognitively impaired students is dependent upon finding an appropriate integration classroom, given a student's strengths, interests, learning, and support needs. Integration into regular classrooms is an opportunity for students to fulfill individualized goals and objectives in a setting that is best suited to the achievement of those goals and objectives. The prescribed learning outcomes which are established for the regular students may or may not be important to the program of the student with special needs and in most cases will be a less important consideration for the student than his or her own IEP goals.

In reality, in many high school integrations the classroom teacher was unaware of the prioritization of the individualized goals of the integrating student and had minimal understanding or experience with IEP implementation. When surveyed, regular classroom teachers reported low levels of training in areas related to the instructional aspects of the integration of students with special needs. In particular, 70 % of teachers reported having no knowledge of how to implement an IEP. (Table 19)

TABLE 19: Readiness of Regular Classroom Teachers

Indicate the extent of education you received in the area of ...	None at all	In-service / Pro-D	Diploma / Degree
Strategies for adapting and modifying the learning outcomes for students with special needs	47%	38%	17%
Developmentally appropriate curriculum for students with special needs	49%	36%	18%
Creating and implementing IEPs (Individual Educational Plans)	70%	27%	3%

Further to this lack of knowledge amongst teachers whose job it is to facilitate the learning that the support team of students with special needs have identified as their best chance at personal growth and maximizing their potential for independence and quality of life, even fewer teachers had knowledge of available resources, were trained to effectively support behaviour or were familiar with how to implement safety plans for students who acted with aggression. Observation in the field confirmed this lack of expertise in teachers and documented that in both elementary Inclusion model classrooms and secondary Integration scenarios, teachers tended to defer to a paraprofessional to decide what would be taught, where, and how.

Amongst high school resource room staff, the district Special Education teachers, a minority have any Special Education training and more than half have none at all. In the case of at least three documented high schools, resource room teachers were unaware of the purpose for integration and consequently made no effort to communicate to the classroom teacher what the intended learning outcomes for the integration were. With the number of teachers who are placed part-time in resource room programs to fill blocks attached to other academic teaching positions and the prevalence of full time untrained resource room teachers, the likelihood of other classroom teachers having to proceed without the necessary information to provide an integrated program for students with special needs increases significantly. That this happens was echoed by this high school shop teacher's comment:

As an elective area teacher, I hold that it is not appropriate to include and integrate students in all aspects of schooling. For example, I once had a boy with severe physical handicaps, confined to a wheelchair, participating in the woodshop. I did not understand the rationale of his inclusion.

This teacher also suggests a perspective that surfaced as the main focus in the comments of eight regular classroom teachers. Teachers saw value in some integration placements for some students and not for others. Where safety or sanitation was a concern, such as in a shop class or cooking lab, teachers felt that the presence of students with special needs potentially compromised safety through their lack of ability to understand. A common

attitude in the high school arena was that teachers see other teachers' subject areas as better alternatives to place students. One such comment came from a choir teacher. Choir is an integration option heavily relied upon in many schools and typically seen as a realistic placement with benefit for most students with special needs.

Different abilities and disabilities need to be monitored more closely to make sure that appropriate classes are chosen within the scope of the client interests. E.g. Clients that are developmentally and cognitively challenged shouldn't be thrown into a highly skilled performance oriented class like choir in order to entertain them. If it is clear that they are too inept to partake, another class needs to be chosen. Often the morale and quality of the group is hindered by the abilities of these clients.

In many settings, high school academic teachers remain relatively unaffected by the most challenging students and agree with Integration as long as things stay that way. A teacher of what he self-referred to as a “specialty” course complained that he could only run his course if students sign up for it. Because the course relied on extensive partner work, he worried that students would be increasingly reluctant to choose a course where their semester may mean being paired with a student who is not able to meet the learning outcomes.

Many well-meaning, excellent teachers expressed their support for Inclusion at the high school level, with an understanding that Integration means some classes but not others. While academic and senior grades have been mostly exempt from integration for students other than those with non-cognitive disabilities, such as learning disabilities or students with chronic health issues or physical disabilities, elective teachers have taken on the integration of all types of students. The survey responses by regular classroom teachers show that some elective teachers felt that students would better benefit by being integrated into the *other* elective courses. NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) was a prevalent theme throughout the comment sections of the survey responses.

A similar sentiment was expressed by elementary teachers who, by contrast to the high school teachers who see a student for one block a day only, have the same group of students all day long. This primary school teacher saw partial Inclusion as viable but placed limited value on Full Inclusion.

I agree with integration for non-academic subjects like gym, calendar, centers, but not for academic subjects. It is extremely disrupting to have a student... acting out in the middle of the lesson... Everyone is distracted and not learning!

4.15 Teachers Want Training

In the survey responses, 92% of teachers expressed some interest in receiving additional education.

I feel the need for greater training and information in this area.

I am thirsty for education and strategies to address the multitude of special needs in my classroom.

I think this is a very important area for teachers to have more training and support.

Training / in-service should be mandatory for all teachers expected to design and implement exceptional education.

Some respondents reported that is not right to expect teachers to integrate students into their classrooms without providing guidance and instructions on how to do it this successfully.

There needs to be more support and training for the general classroom teacher to support inclusion and make it realistic.

This survey makes me reflect on how much I have relied on 'on the job training.' Over the years, I have received little support from the district in terms of training, philosophy, strategies, etc.

I have been teaching over 15 years now and have integrated a large number of special needs students. Any training I received was very early in my career. I am not aware of in-service being offered for teachers new to integration recently.

I am deeply committed to the practice of inclusion. I am in desperate need of support and training to meet this challenge. EVERY time a teacher has a student with special needs in her/his class, s/he should be offered training about the condition, the needs it generates, the resources available and the strategies that represent best practice. WE NEED MORE EDUCATION TO MAKE THE PRACTICE OF INCLUSION WORK FOR ALL OF US.

I would like to see a Pro-D session where an expert on Special Education would provide workshops on how to implement strategies on adapting/modifying programs for special needs students.

Teachers need in-service and support to make inclusion work.

Teachers also reported in the survey results that a preferable format for receiving instruction was in a single day workshop supported by professional development funding as indicated by 70%. Respondents could choose as many of the formats as were of interest to them. A monthly workshop series with release time from class provided by the school district was the second most popular choice (53%), with 34% indicating that a tuition-subsidized Integration Diploma program, with release time provided by the school district was of interest to them. Only 11% indicated interest in obtaining a Special Education Diploma, while 18% were interested in pursuing courses in Special Education towards a PB+15 category (a partial Masters, with increased pay category) or full Masters Degree. (Table 20)

TABLE 20: Learning Format Preferences

After school in-service	16%
Staff meeting Presentations	17%
Single day workshops supported by Pro-D funding	71%
Monthly workshop series (release time provided by school or district)	53%
PB+15 or Masters Program	18%
Special Education Diploma	11%
Tuition-subsidized Integration Diploma (release days provided by school or district)	34%
First Class conference site	17%
Mentorship	25%
Other	3%

4.16 The Perceived Need for Better Services and Resources

While the early interviews of the twenty “experts” provided the researcher with an inventory of the skills and knowledge teachers must have to fulfill the mandate of Inclusion well, the on-line survey comments provided suggestions from teachers about what they felt was missing and needed. Regular classroom teachers reported that the system needed more funding targeted for students with special needs, adequate classroom support for teachers, more paraprofessional support for students with special needs, access to teaching materials and resources for modification, as well as time for planning, for training, and for consultation with support staff. Elementary teachers reported that they needed more support from integration support personnel, that a more holistic approach must be adopted, and that the “excessively explicit” learning outcomes on IEPs needed to be eliminated so that efforts with students with special needs could better focus on helping them fit into the community.

At high school, the resource program that supports students with physical disabilities and chronic health concerns who are on regular academic programs was perceived to be ineffective in its capacity to provide support to the classroom teacher. During the interview with the superintendent, he talked about hearing “great stories about partnerships” between academic support resource teachers and classroom teachers. In the field and in the comments and responses by teachers in the on-line survey discussion of partnerships did not arise.

4.17 Perceptions about Being Included

It is one thing for adults to view a classroom and decide if it is inclusive or not. But it is another thing to hear from students about their own perceptions about how they are perceived by peers and if, in fact, they feel a sense of belonging. Is a sense of belonging an inner state of mind that has more to do with the beholder than the environment? If a student with a moderate intellectual delay reports that he feels welcome and included, what does a researcher do with that information? For the same student reports that he is sad today because his Dad has the measles and is sick in bed at home. Only he decided to make up the story so that he would have a reason to feel and act sad, because on TV the night before he watched a sad movie that was upsetting. This is logic in the world of a student with a mental handicap; like wearing a watch on both wrists on field trip day, so you do not forget when it is time to go. Including the perceptions of disabled children, while an important measure of Inclusion, clearly poses challenges. Researchers must be cautious about relying on their interpretation that what they see in the classroom has resulted in a child *feeling* a sense of belonging.

Past research such as that by Katz and Mirenda (2002) has focused on the feelings, perceptions and social interactions of regular students with disabled children amongst them. Ken Pudlas, of Trinity Western University has attempted to evaluate Inclusion through the perceptions of the children who are being placed in proximity with their peers (Pudlas, 2005). The reliability of their responses, because many of the research subjects are mentally handicapped, leaves room for more discussion, debate and research, but the premise is an important one since Inclusion is about the lived experience

of the disabled, not the increases in social, communication and behavioural skills that Cole and Meyer (1991), Brinker and Thorpe (1984), Lee and Odom (1996), or Katz and Mirenda (2002) set out to measure. Pudlas (2005) has shown in his recent research that many students do not feel included and their very proximity to regular children increase their feelings of loneliness and isolation; Inclusion for some children, amplifies their awareness of being and *feeling* different.

In the field, many scenarios were observed where moderately to severely disabled students – students who looked and acted different and were noticed as such by their non-disabled school mates, chose to be together in a resource room, for example during lunch. Although admittedly limited to the observer’s discernment, as was the case with the research teams cited, it *appeared* that they were happy amongst friends and were feeling a kinship that was not evident when they were amongst students who did not have disabilities.

In order to avoid too much assuming, an email was sent to ten high school students in the district who are non-cognitively impaired, but who are severely physically handicapped. Nine are confined to power wheelchairs and one uses a walker. Email was chosen because adapted computer/electronic communication was used daily by each of them at school and/or at home. The email contained six open-ended, Appreciative Inquiry style questions about Inclusive schools and invited them to share their personal experiences as they felt comfortable. The students were offered the option of an interview in lieu of completing the questions by email. One student opted for the interview. The other nine, despite that the researcher contacted their support workers to assist and remind them of the email were not willing or not interested in completing the questions.

The single student, who wished to be interviewed, although believed to be cognitively unimpaired, seemed to lack an age-appropriate level of personal and social awareness and further seemed distanced from the perceptions of others. The student claimed that “other kids were nice” and that because most kids knew her from elementary school already, her disability was not a big issue for them. The best that the interviewer could ascertain from her responses in the interview was that her existence at school was so far removed from the school pulse that she was virtually unaware of a concept of inclusion on the level that the questioning was directed. The reality she lives comes with

no experiential comparative, and therefore virtually, it seemed, she had no expectations or judgments of her teachers or peers.

4.17 The Story of Mark

Mark is a very independent and capable teenage boy with Down Syndrome, integrated into choir class with his same age peers. Through functional assessment, it was learned that the function of many of his non-compliant behaviour is escape and avoidance, notably increased when a task is perceived to be too difficult. Mark is a very physically mature 16-year-old with a preoccupation with girls that, while some might say is “normal” is also problematic and the catalyst for many attention-motivated behaviours in the choir class and eventually in the lunch room, hallway, and around the school. Likewise, the sensory aspects of daily choir class – the enticing sights, the perfumed air – the arousal of physical proximity are very reinforcing to Mark.

Mark’s refusal to sing gives him plenty of time in choir class to sit and watch. The watching quickly becomes staring – often to the discomfort of female peers who were perfectly comfortable with cleavage, exposed midriff and tight jeans before the arrival of Mark. Less and less interested in following the words on the sheet music and with no desktop in front of him as his personal reminder of where he might be best to keep his hands, he adds to his repertoire of refusing to sing. Staring becomes leering, touching himself, sitting too close to other female students, telling them that he loves them, and asking them to marry him. Eventually, one grade 11 girl becomes the object of Mark’s obsession, having to seek the help of an administrator when she is no longer able to be free of Mark at lunch or during hall change. He knows where her classes are, where her locker is, where she meets her friends, and he has no inhibitions when it comes to pursuing his “new girlfriend,” Leah. Needless to say, Mark is unaware, perhaps incapable of understanding, how his friendly gestures have crossed a line, and why Leah’s initial acceptance of Mark as a special needs peer in choir class is turning into annoyance for now... but potentially discomfort, and eventually *fear*.

4.19 Unconditional Support for Inclusion

In contrast to the thoughts, feelings and concerns expressed by the 259 regular classroom teachers who responded with additional comments containing negative or qualified perspectives on Inclusion, 8 teachers expressed unconditional support for Inclusion as a philosophy and best practice. The 8 comments range in focus and emphasis but all share a common underpinning of the benefit for the teacher and the non-disabled classmates of students with special needs. Two of the comments imply that Inclusion is a need held by students with special needs, a third suggests that Inclusion is deserved, while a fourth comment states that integration into the regular classroom is a student's right. The comments have been given an identifying letter that corresponds to the data in Table 21.

- A. *Special needs are gifts in disguise.*
- B. *In general, I learn an incredible amount about children and teaching from the inclusion of special needs students – much more than I would had they not been present.*
- C. *Every student has a right to be integrated into a regular classroom. The benefits for the student, teacher, parent and classroom students far outweigh the disadvantages.*
- D. *Integrating Special Needs is important for mainstream students to develop empathy for diversity and the needs of diverse learners.*
- E. *I strongly believe that everyone benefits from inclusion.*
- F. *Inclusion is the most sound and humane educational practice. It may take many forms but children with special needs need to be interacting with the “normal” classroom.*
- G. *It is sometimes difficult or disruptive but I feel the benefits...are great. The other students learn different tolerances and learn to be adaptive, compassionate, and a friend. The special needs child learns from the other children.*
- H. *Every child deserves to be in a regular classroom.*

Table 21 examines how the positive views of Inclusion correlate with demographic categories, revealing how the regular classroom teachers see benefit to participants. Comment C is unique in that it is the only classroom teacher comment which comes from a perspective of human rights. Comment H, made by the only Special Education teacher, hints at a similar perspective but frames Inclusion as something that the child has *earned*.

When the comment themes are juxtaposed against the ages or years of teaching experience of the teachers who made them, no patterns emerge, and thus this information has been omitted from the table. When the same themes are held alongside the teaching assignment levels of the teachers who made them it is apparent that none of the positive comments were made by teachers at the high school level. Most of the teachers who made the positive comments were from the primary grades; three were from intermediate level elementary school. Also noted was that the intermediate teachers seemed to focus more on the benefits to regular students and the need of the students being integrated. Although a small sample, the primary teachers expressed their support of Inclusion in general as a more global benefit, with the exception being the teacher who spoke of the child's right to be included.

TABLE 21: Analysis Summary of Teachers Who made Positive Comments Only in Support of Inclusion:

Comment ...	A Everyone benefits	B The teacher benefits	C Is the child's right	D Benefit is to regular students	E Everyone benefits	F Is the child's need.	G Benefit to regular students	H The child deserves
Regular classroom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Special Education								X
Female Teacher	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Male Teacher						X		

K- grade 3 (primary)	X	X	X		X			X
Gr 4-7 (intermediate)				X		X	X	
Gr 8-12 (secondary)								

The detailed deconstruction of these 8 comments is the result of a desire to understand and gain insights into the values that belie the comments of these 8, all at various stages of their careers, at different ages and experience levels. Besides sharing in common that each is an obviously sincere and committed educator, the most apparent discovery in an otherwise relatively fruitless process, is that all the comments were made by elementary level teachers; none by secondary teachers. That 7 out of 8 of the comments were made by female teachers is probably related to the fact that they are elementary educators, where a well documented disproportionate representation of female teachers exists outside of this study. It was also noted earlier that female elementary teachers tended to support the philosophy of Inclusion, unconditionally or not, at a rate of 20% above male elementary teachers surveyed.

In the larger context of this research, these 8 comments necessarily took on a heightened significance because of the insight they potentially afforded the author into the beliefs and values of those who wholly embrace Full Inclusion as the educational model of choice for all students with special needs, regardless of need or severity.

4.20 Identified School Strengths

Through the Spring of 2006, team meetings were held at 14 school sites, all secondary schools with resource room programs for students mildly to severely mentally handicapped with many of the students having additional physical handicaps. The teams were to include the resource room teachers, the school's Special Education department heads and the administrator responsible for Special Education at the school site. Actual groups ranged from a single participant at one school to seven participants at another.

The setting varied from school to school but was typically either the empty resource room classroom or a conference room, and was casual and open. Participants were invited to share a story about when someone at the school, a teacher, or students perhaps, was inclusive. A member from each group volunteered to share an experience at all but one school. At this particular school, they saw themselves as leaders in Inclusion in the district and offered suggestions of how to create Inclusive schools. None of the four-member teacher team, after 3 re-stated requests for an actual *story* or example from their school lives were willing to share an experience. At other schools, multiple stories were shared enthusiastically.

Participants were then asked to reflect upon how people were acting, what stood out in the situation in their story, or what was happening that made it Inclusive? One resource teacher shared the story of Travis, a severely disabled student who was integrated into a high school Physical Education class. As a role model, the PE teacher included Travis in every way possible. At first, three students were assigned to speak with Travis during every PE class until speaking with him, a student with extreme communication challenges, became common place and comfortable for everyone.

After each of the story-tellers had had a chance to share their reflections, the questions was posed, “what would it be like for you if everyone in the school, all together acted in the way you just described?” And then, “What would it take for that to happen?” The following responses were generated:

- Teachers would need to see what respect and inclusion look like
- They [teachers] would need practical knowledge
- Teachers would need to build real relationships with students; maybe if they came and spent a day in the resource room every other month
- Open communication – teachers need to be able to just drop in and out of classes where they support students
- Respect for staff, from staff

- Teachers need to know what to expect
- Teachers need to spend time in the roles of Special Education teachers and vice versa
- Show gratitude and appreciation to teachers
- Let teachers see that what they do influences and impacts lives
- Appropriate placements for meaningful Inclusion
- Maintain an open door policy; students with disabilities are welcome back to the resource room

4.21 The Experiences of Pre-Service Teachers

A cohort of thirty-five pre-service high school teachers with teaching concentrations in English, Social Studies or Physical Education, spent thirty-six hours of university level instructional time focused on obtaining the skills and knowledge to support students with Ministry designations in the regular classroom. The pre-service teachers provided several pieces of data related to the skills and understanding they obtained, their increased confidence level, how their learning and exposure to special needs training impacted their personal views, and what concerns they had as a future teacher with regards to Inclusion. Consent to participate in the research (Appendix H) was obtained from the respondents and students completed a short survey (Appendix D) similar to the on-line Skills and Knowledge survey designed for the district teachers. Participation was voluntary and surveys were anonymous. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of familiarity with the ten theme areas identified in the on-line survey format, choosing *from not at all, somewhat or very familiar*. The pre-service teachers had the highest level of familiarity with the philosophy of Inclusion, how to adapt and modify the curriculum, and general knowledge about physical and intellectual disabilities. They

reported being less clear about the expectations set out by the Ministry and about obtaining available resources for supporting students with special needs. (Table 22)

TABLE 22: Familiarity with the Required Skills and Knowledge as Reported by Pre-Service Teachers after One Course

Indicate your level of familiarity with:	Not at all	Somewhat	Very familiar
1. the roles and responsibilities of the regular classroom teacher and others involved with students with special needs such as Occupational Therapists, SEAs, Integration Support Teachers, parents, etc.	0%	40%	60%
2. the B.C. Ministry of Education policy on Special Education	0%	65%	35%
3. Special Education philosophy if Inclusion	0%	5%	95%
4. the topic of physical and intellectual disabilities	0%	30%	70%
5. strategies for adapting and modifying the learning outcomes for students with special needs	0%	20%	80%
6. resources available for supporting students with special needs	0%	65%	35%
7. developmentally appropriate curriculum for students with special needs	5%	55%	40%
8. strategies for supporting behaviour of students with special needs	0%	50%	50%
9. creating and implementing IEPs (Individual Educational Plans)	0%	45%	55%

Question 10 asked the pre-service teachers if the practice of Inclusion was consistent with their personal and professional values. The positive responses were well in the majority, with low and equal numbers in partial agreement or disagreement with the statement:

Agree = 80%

Agree somewhat = 10%

Do not agree = 10%

Additionally, the following three questions were asked:

1. As you imagine yourself in the future in the classroom as a teacher, what do believe is your strongest attribute, area of knowledge, or characteristic that would positively impact the experience of a student with special needs in your classroom?
2. Are there any areas of concern that have arisen, as you have learned about students with special needs and the expectations of regular classroom teachers?
3. Has your view of education and / or Special Education changed? Explain briefly.

In general, respondents reported being more aware of the issues related to Inclusion and having students with special needs in their future classroom as nearly all of the university students in the teacher training program had no prior experience, or had had negative school experiences with respect to exposure to students with disabilities. In a journal reflection comparing her views before the six weeks of instruction to her views towards the end, one young woman described the experience that had shaped her views:

When I started this course I have to admit that I did had some negative views about inclusion in the classroom. During my undergraduate degree I had spent a week in an elementary school observing and interacting with disabled students for a school assignment. I came away from that experience convinced that inclusion for some of these students was hopeless. I witnessed a Down syndrome student stuck at the back of his classroom, only interacting with the TA [paraprofessional], who from my observation looked as though her enthusiasm for her job had long gone and showed little empathy towards him. Added to this I did not witness the class teacher or her other students interact with him or the TA once. I thought how can this possibly be inclusion, when the very place it is suppose to happen isolates this poor boy into segregation. He would have been better in the resource room with the other disabled students at least he would have some social interaction. I was so disheartened and disappointed, so much for this great thing called inclusion I thought.

Despite that pre-service teachers in the cohort reported increased awareness and less apprehension, many expressed understandable uncertainty in their abilities as they anticipated the reality of the classroom that they would soon face in their new role as teacher. The concerns expressed were consistent through all of the responses and exposed an undercurrent of worry about the ability to meet student needs, the attitudes and

behaviours of regular students towards disabled students, having the necessary time and resources available to do good job, and the increased workload. One respondent noted a following concern:

...[I am concerned] whether or not I will also have to wear the hat of an advocate to get the proper support systems in place for a particular student's needs.

Another student stated:

I am concerned about the equality and rights of students with disabilities especially with the implementation of Bill 33.

Two other respondents specifically highlighted their concerns about the other students in the class.

I am still worried that some special needs students will take away from other students' learning.

I am still concerned with dealing with the behaviour /attitudes of other students (and parents) towards special needs students.

4.22 Summary of Findings

- a. The district employs the term, inclusion to mean *a sense of belonging*, not as reference to the special education model of Full Inclusion.
- b. The needs of students who are mentally handicapped are not encompassed within the district strategic planning initiative.
- c. The district has set a goal to establish *a service delivery standard* for programs for students who are mentally disabled.

- d. The district feels it is important that all students have *a sense of belonging* at school.
- e. Student Support Services emphasizes that *inclusion should be meaningful*.
- f. The topic of Inclusion sparked emotional responses with a high survey response rate of nearly 50%.
- g. Teachers reported low levels of familiarity with key skills and knowledge required to integrate students with special needs into the regular classroom.
- h. Teachers reported low levels of training in key skills and knowledge required to integrate students with special needs into the regular classroom.
- i. Over 93% of teachers believe that teacher opinion is important, regardless of whether there is already a Ministry mandate in place or not.
- j. More than half of elementary teachers, secondary teachers, male teachers, female teachers, Special Education teachers and regular classroom teachers are in agreement with the philosophy of Inclusion.
- k. While 106 teachers (22%) stated that they did not support Inclusion, more than 90% of the teachers who said they agreed with the philosophy of Inclusion qualified it with a comment of why, in practice, they do not support it.
- l. Of the 475 survey respondents, only 8 teachers provided positive comments in support of Inclusion.
- m. For 31% of teachers (and 38.5% of Special Education teachers) who said they support Inclusion philosophically, their leading concern was one or more of the following issues: lack of time, energy, support, resources, communication and training for classroom teachers.

- n. 15% of regular teachers (and 13% of Special Education teachers) who support Inclusion philosophically believe Inclusion should depend on student's ability and needs.
- o. 21% of regular classroom teachers who support Inclusion philosophically feel that Inclusion sometimes has a negative impact on the classroom and/or the learning of regular students.
- p. 17% of regular teachers (and 27% of Special Education teachers) who support Inclusion philosophically believe Inclusion inadequately provides for the educational needs of students with special needs.
- q. 70% of teachers reported having no training at all in how to create and implement an Individual Education Plan; the essence of a student's program in the model of Inclusion.
- r. 92% of teachers expressed some interest in receiving training.
- s. The observations and comments of some teachers echo recent research that shows that for many, proximity to regular peers amplifies their awareness of being and feeling different.
- t. Eight teachers were unconditionally in support of Inclusion.
- u. 85% of the classroom scenarios observed was neither socially nor academically inclusive to the disabled students placed in them.
- v. After completing a university level Special Education course, 35 pre-service teachers reported an increased awareness of the issues related to Inclusion but worried about the increased workload, if they would be able to meet the needs of their disabled students, and how the regular students would react.

CHAPTER FIVE – Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

5.1 The Objectives of This Chapter

This chapter seeks to accomplish three objectives through discussion, analysis, and interpretation of the research data. The first is to gain an understanding of the school district's values and beliefs ... the official, organizational core values, as well as those individual values and beliefs held by various individuals and stakeholder groups; school-based administrators, regular classroom teachers, Special Education teachers, pre-service teachers in training, and parents. The second objective is to establish an understanding about trends in current practice in the school district. This includes understanding policy and planning initiatives as they are generated at various organizational levels, as well as school protocols and classroom practice. Using the combined understandings of value and practice, the third objective of this chapter is to identify key areas where values and practice do not align and to interpret what dynamic or issue is the underlying cause. Specific recommendations for creating and implementing strategic initiatives to encourage and facilitate successful re-alignments will follow in Chapter Six.

The catalyst for this research project was a desire to improve the quality of education for students with special needs; to actualize teacher knowledge and understanding of theory of best practice in the classroom with students. The theme of actualization – of moving from concept to action, is one that re-emerges time and time again for the author in the creative process as an artist in the classroom working with students and as a Special Education consultant supporting teachers. Through the past year of observation and data collection, the author observed an inability within the system to take concepts and put them into action. The author, a person who moves easily from the drawing board to the ribbon cutting in her personal, professional and academic life, has been intrigued by the frequency of encounters with individuals who are obviously competent and capable, who think up and talk up ideas, but somehow never quite manage to bring their ideas into the realm of action.

As a way of moving the reader towards a fuller understanding of the children, the teachers and the challenges that are integral to their lives, the writer has included selected

narratives to support and hopefully illuminate the interpretation provided. Particularly for those who have not experienced life along side a child with an intellectual or physical disability, the narrative format may add a new dimension to the readers' understandings, perspectives or personal insights. Further to the purpose these narratives serve for the experience of the reader, the process of living them, reflecting on them and then sharing them in story has been a conscious attempt to widen the angle on the author's own perspective. Placing the narrative snapshots strategically within the context of this dissertation has transformed their significance from just *things that happened* or benchmarks of performance, to a fuller understanding of the impact that Inclusion policy has on the individuals for whom it was intended to advocate. They offer a glimpse of how the school exists today for a particular child – not as it *might exist* in the future with the right resources, classroom support, teacher training or time for collaborative planning.

5.2 Making Meaning of the Data

This endeavor has been about social change and advocacy for the educational needs of challenged learners. Those who once marched on Parliament Hill in defense of the rights of the disabled were in pursuit of a much-needed adjustment to concepts of social justice current at that time. It is unacceptable that people with special needs should be left out of society at any time in their lives and the organization of schools, more than any group, must embrace that as a guiding principle – not just as a guide for how we approach students with identified special needs, but *all* students.

It became evident in looking at the existing body of research on the Full Inclusion model for the education of students with special needs that the social change that has so thankfully been achieved has come from a social justice perspective. Therefore, some critical educational considerations have emerged only after the social structures were in place.

The results of this study mirror the results of the recent Cambridge University study in the United Kingdom, *The Costs of Inclusion* (2006). This author proposes that it is more than a coincidence that such similar findings have emerged on two separate continents with the same educational ramifications arising out of an attempt to implement

a theoretical model driven by social justice concerns. Furthermore, the findings common to these two studies provide results which overlap significantly with two British Columbia Teachers Federation studies, *BC Teachers Have Their Say on Special Education* (Naylor, 2002), and *BCTF Research Report* (Naylor, 2002). Perhaps most disquieting though, is that the concerns emerging in each of these studies are the same as those reported in a study completed 25 years ago (Hudson, Graham & Warner, 1979).

In the process of this research, the author has at times searched out high ground where, invisible, a wide view of the organizational landscape could be observed. At other times, climbing down to ground level has allowed for engagement in careful and purposeful listening to stories, many of them heard countless times over the years, others new and heard for the first time. And still, at other times, the author has accepted an invitation to join in a dialogue becoming an active participant. Where these three experiences intersect with those of the author's own seventeen years as a full time classroom teacher, the interpretation and analysis begin.

Unpacking the data demands locating a plane of focus within the context of the organization and the philosophy of Full Inclusion and subsequently engaging in analysis and interpretation for each of the twelve themes in the previous chapter. Alternatively, throwing all of the data pieces back into one huge pile, looking for new combinations of pieces and constructing out of them new interpretations and new meaning has been fruitful. This is the process of reconstruction, one where old assumptions are juxtaposed with current information allowing new patterns and understandings to emerge.

5.3 The Story of Valerie

It is mid morning, and the school yard should be deserted, given that morning classes have started and lunch is some time away. It is high school, and besides a five-minute break for class change part way through the morning, there is no recess or nutrition break. But away from the prying eyes of administrators, on the far side of the lot designated: PARKING FOR VISITORS, a small group congregates under a large Hemlock tree. This is the “Smoke Hole” as it is referred to - the place where students meet up to have a cigarette, either before class, after class ... or in this case, instead of class.

When one of the teens steps aside, the profile of a student is startlingly evident. The beautiful girl with the long, brown, wavy hair, sitting, is confined to a chair, not sitting *on* one. She has Cerebral Palsy and just enough motor control through her spastic convulsions, to manipulate a joystick to steer her heavy chair. Today she has chosen to steer it right out the front door of the school, through the parking lot, and onto the dirt floor of the Smoke Hole. Actually, school is boring and she comes here a lot. She cannot manage a cigarette herself, so the kids in the group take turns holding their cigarette up to her mouth for a puff – a surefire way to catch a bout of the Mononucleosis that is going around, but it is full inclusion, nonetheless... *is not it?*

The group does not have much time before one of the vice principals will come skulking around to given them trouble, so they finish their smokes quickly and head out the back way for the corner store. The last one over the bumpy terrain of the pathway is Valerie but they wait at the sidewalk for her to catch up before they resume a leisurely pace down the street, away from the school.

5.4 Values and Practice at the District Level

The district's well publicized planning initiative, guiding decision-making and prioritization of energy, focus and funding until the year 2010, provides a backdrop to the formalized or *stated* beliefs and values of the organization. The first goal in the document acknowledges what current research (Beck & Malley, 1998) is telling educators about the vital role a sense of belonging plays in students' ability to learn:

Our students will have their diverse educational needs met through relevant learning experiences... *students will achieve success in an inclusive learning environment*

i) A Sense of Well-Being – The District Perspective:

The district's mission of providing *safe and caring environments* is recognition that children's inner sense of well-being is prerequisite to learning. While an inclusive environment and a sense of belonging are clearly values of the district, the concept of *inclusive* is not being used in conjunction with the Special Education Model of Inclusion, one which guarantees a seat in the regular classroom for every student with special needs as their primary learning placement. The *inclusive* environments referred to in the context of the district's initiatives are in reference to schools and classrooms that are respectful, welcoming and student-centered, rather than a reference to how the district places students with special needs.

ii) Understandings About Inclusion – The Special Education Perspective:

In the Special Education services documentation, the word *inclusive* is used in the same manner as in the district document, but with *all students* this time pertaining to students serviced by the Department of Special Education. Besides a respectful, welcoming and student-centered environment, Special Education desires that what happens within the educational environment for students with special needs is also *meaningful*. And while the district believes that the quality of the learning environment impacts students' ability to thrive and succeed, the district does not proclaim that its policy for students with special needs is "Full Inclusion." Individuals within the

Department of Special Education who have been fighting the cause of Inclusion for years, however, would lead one to believe otherwise. A policy consistent with the tenets of the School Model of Full Inclusion is not formally in place and despite that elementary students with special needs designations are placed in regular classrooms in all 100 elementary school facilities, high school programs do not follow the Full Inclusion Model. As the author has suggested earlier, regardless of which delivery model is chosen, placing students with special needs in regular classrooms may be the “Educational Model of Full Inclusion,” but proximity of students with special needs does not *necessarily* translate into inclusion. The author assumes however, that this was both the expectation and the hope when the model was implemented.

iii) Special Needs – The Superintendent’s Perspective:

The district has undergone a change in leadership for the first time in more than a decade. The personal philosophy of the new superintendent is a noteworthy departure from the previous leadership’s focus on improving student learning and accountability. It came as a surprise that the new focus is on teachers spending their extra efforts on the students with the highest needs. The new superintendent speaks often about alignment of services, resources and manpower; equity is to be achieved through putting more where it is needed. Students who learn with ease and are doing well have their needs met; teachers are being asked, for the first time as educators in this district, to look beyond the achievers to the students who *really* need their time, effort and concern.

But which students are these needy students that the district leadership has repeatedly identified as needing the attention of teachers? Who are *the students with special needs* who the superintendent has deemed as central to the calling of teachers for whom teachers need to build inclusive communities? The district web site identifies them as three sub-groupings of students. Students with special needs are Gifted, ESL (English as a Second Language) and students with diagnosed Learning Disabilities. That all students with physical and sensory disabilities, chronic health concerns and those who fall into the mentally handicapped range of intelligence are not included in the district’s definition of students with special needs is nothing short of a revelation for the author, someone who has spent a career working with the latter.

The superintendent is still a stranger to the halls of many of the district's schools, obviously unable to get around to everyone right away. In gauging a sense of his knowledge of the district Special Education status quo, his sense that both *Inclusion* and *inclusion* are alive and well comes from the team of assistant superintendents who report to him. This confirmed the author's original suspicion that the widespread talk of Inclusion and inclusive schools was a myth that had worked its way all the way up the chain of command. The understanding that *his* students with special needs were an entirely different group of students from those with which this dissertation is concerned offered a perspective that was at once illuminating and disconcerting. The author was alarmed that an educational community could proceed without physically and mentally handicapped people on their educational radar, yet, at the same time seventeen years of a nagging feeling that these students were all but invisible has been validated.

iv) Special Needs – The Ministry of Education's Perspective:

Who these students were was a point of confusion and misinterpretation that could not have emerged at a better place and time. Was there similar confusion at any other level? Who was the School Model of Full Inclusion intended for? Was it invoked to address certain students and not others? Or was it intended as a blanket approach to address students with mental handicaps in the mild, moderate to severe and profound range as well their gifted partners at the opposite end of the intelligence spectrum? A report by the BC Ministry of Education, *Students With Special Needs – How are We Doing?* (April 2006) provides critical and timely insight into which students the British Columbia government considers to be students with special needs in BC schools. The study specifically does *not* include those students with mental handicaps – the very students that article after article after article on Inclusion, teachers, parents, and advocates for the mentally disabled refer to when they talk about students with special needs. This discrepancy is an indicator of a problem spot and an important misalignment.

v) An Initiative for Students with Special Needs:

One year prior to the commencement of this research project, the entire school district received an announcement that a sports day event for high school students with

special needs was being planned. Two regular physical education teachers were organizing the event while behind the scenes an assistant superintendent was securing the necessary district funds to support it.

The gesture was interpreted in different ways across the district. For fundamentalist Inclusion advocates within Special Education it was a very sad and frustrating day – *segregation with a sports theme*; an afternoon of fun and games that would set Special Education and the practice of Inclusion back two decades. The high school resource room teachers, many lacking Special Education training, assumed the event was sponsored by the Special Education Department and signed their students up with little reflection or thought on its philosophical or political ramifications.

This past Spring, the special needs sports day was held again. It went ahead in complete oblivion to the Ministry mandate of Inclusion, the district's undocumented but widely assumed position on Inclusion, or the years of struggle some have spent to end segregated activities and have children with special needs included in activities with their peers. It was not until an announcement was made that a similar event was being planned for students at the elementary level that opposition became evident. A backlash of sorts reached the organizers and the concepts of segregation and Inclusion were explained to them. The reason for the up-swell in reaction was twofold. Students with special needs in the elementary programs are placed in regular classrooms and have participated fully alongside their regular peers in sports day events across the district for many years. As well, an organized, knowledgeable team of itinerant integration support teachers have the full time responsibility of managing the support needs of these fully integrated students, and have access to each other daily for debate and dialogue about issues which impact the students they support. Effectively, the district wide event would be a giant step in the opposite direction from a goal mostly seen as already being achieved, at least in terms of students' day-to-day proximity with non-disabled peers. That such an initiative could rally so much support and interest from teachers, administrators – and even the superintendent's office, is testimony to the scale upon which not only the practical aspects of Inclusion have been a failure in the district but also the lack of shared understanding of what the human rights issues are for students with disabilities.

5.5 Values and Practice of Regular Classroom Teachers

Teachers do not recoil in panic when they hear the word *segregation* nor do teachers see Inclusion, or even integration, as a universal truth or a blanket approach to Special Education. Relatively few intensively reject segregated learning. What some embrace as the established educational doctrine that *must be* followed, requiring classroom teachers to adjust their attitudes and change their beliefs, is put aside here in order to discover the existing position of teachers. What emerges, once out from under this insistence that teacher's beliefs and values *must change*, is that teachers will travel down a continuum of Inclusion to certain key stopping points. At those points, they are clear about their position, and they say, "Sorry, this is as far as I go." This ability to go only part way, or *inability* to go all the way depending on how one sees it, is true not only of their philosophical position, but shows in their actions. What they believe and what they actually do are at least well aligned.

In Special Education, students are categorized in a multiplicity of ways, serving to thoroughly confuse non-Special Education people as demonstrated in the Ministry report, "Special Education: How are We Doing?" cited earlier, and the understandings of the superintendent about who are students with special needs in his district. On the other hand, within the field, categorization assists in providing common language with which to approach funding, service provision and placement. This approach, it could be argued, is one that values efficiency over accuracy. As a broad filter though, categorization and labeling have merit in that they allow funding, service and placement to happen quickly and efficiently on a general level, and they funnel the appropriate expertise down to the individual level more readily. The debate of the pros and cons of this approach aside, it is the lens through which the researcher and colleagues in the field of Special Education view children with disabilities and their needs from a service provision perspective. It is how the author is oriented to the issues of Special Education within the education framework but it is not the framework that teachers know, understand or care about. Teachers know about teaching, and hence that is their orientation to a discussion of Inclusion.

In addition to this system of categorization, Special Educationists often make reference to a *continuum of service*. It is one in which available services and support

options are used according to what best meets a student's individual needs. The range of possibilities begins with a regular classroom setting, spanning all the options and degrees of support through to a segregated resource room setting with full, one-to-one support. Like the Ministry categorizations, the Special Education continuum of service is not a meaningful model for teachers, as the continuum of the teacher role in the regular classroom is what they know and relate to. It is on these terms – the teachers' terms that the author will bring issues into a focal plane that best allows us to see and understand aspects of Inclusion as the regular classroom teacher does.

Accordingly, the model of a continuum of the teachers in this study is one of relationship between the regular classroom teacher and a student with special needs. A Ministry category of funding or the type of disability a student has is both foreign and irrelevant as it is the nature of the relationship between teacher and student that changes as one moves along the continuum. As the needs of the Special Education student become more specialized, the role and responsibilities of the classroom teacher change from simply teaching the provided curriculum, to adapting the curriculum and instructional strategies for students who need a bit of help, to developing and implementing a modified curriculum which supports the goals and objectives of students' individual education plans (IEPs). A collective resistance amongst the teachers takes hold as one moves along the continuum; beliefs, attitudes, perception and practice change. This continuum is one of service but relates in the context of this research to the shifting responsibilities of the teacher as students' needs grow more complex and their ability to participate with the class diminishes. The teacher, who previously needed to know Math and classroom management, may now need to know seizure management, how to support intensive behaviour modification, safety protocols and restraint techniques to respond to aggression, and how to design and implement a program which allows the student to complete individualized learning objectives within the context of the regular math program. The teacher is challenged to instruct a student's individualized program designed to achieve unique educational goals, while delivering the regular Ministry prescribed instruction to the rest of the class of learners at the same time. It becomes evident quickly why so many Special Education paraprofessionals assume the role of instructor and it is not surprising that the task of deciding how the day's learning

outcomes relate or do not relate to the goals in the student's IEP is deferred to them as well. Even if the teacher *knew how*, when would there be time to do and plan this well?

The discussion and comments by teachers could be sorted into the framework used by Special Education, naming categories of disability. While tempting, using old terminology and language to rehash the issue does not encourage the assembly of new frameworks that might offer a new way of looking at an old problem. There was evidence that teachers did differentiate between different levels of cognitive ability and degree of support needs, both physical and behavioural as significant factors in where they could and could not sustain support for Inclusion. But more importantly, teachers defined the challenge of Inclusion both in terms of *their* limitations and the deficiencies of students.

i) Teacher Opinion is Important:

Those who choose teaching as their profession come to it for many reasons and by way of many paths. Where a teacher ends up, either by choice or out of necessity, can look dramatically different. The world of a kindergarten or grade one teacher bears little resemblance to that of a high school math or science teacher, although the two may share a passion for learning and a desire to instill their love of learning in their students whether they are 6 or 16 years of age. While there are many romantic notions of teaching from enjoying the “personal reward” to the satisfaction of “teachable moments”, the reality is one of hard work and challenging classroom issues. In British Columbia, teachers in general feel undervalued if not for that their pay has been allowed to fall nearly twenty per cent behind other provinces despite that the government boasts great economic times and has rewarded itself with fat increases, then because decisions which effect them daily are made without their input. The Ministry mandate for Inclusion is an example of such a decision.

The recently suspended Grade 12 Portfolio Program is one of a string of government initiatives designed and implemented without teacher input, reviewed for effectiveness and then withdrawn. This has happened in British Columbia with frequency: SIPS (School Improvement Plans), Accountability Contracts, Accreditation, Dual-Entry. At the school level the list of abandoned initiatives is long as well and teachers feel that they have seen and done it all in the name of school improvement. As

trends of intervention and improvement strategies and processes reinvent themselves and re-emerge with new names every ten or so years, many have endured multiple cycles while those nearing the end of their careers have lost count. While consultants with new and innovative ideas and approaches in the name of staff bonding, team building and collaboration are recruited to professional development days, increasing numbers of teachers roll their eyes. Another staff canoe trip up the Fraser River. Who can blame them? The record of follow-through is dismal as ideas are implemented with gusto and then left to fizzle out slowly or the plug is pulled part way through a major initiative, as in the case of the Grade 12 Portfolio Program. The Ministry of Education has a particularly poor track record of both, as governments and budgets and Ministers change. Perhaps any efforts are doomed to failure given that teachers are fed up with having to endure new initiatives before their merits are assessed, not after. Additionally, make-work initiatives seem to be developed by individuals who work in offices far away from classrooms and children. The Portfolio program is an example of an enormous province wide initiative that made a tremendous amount of work for all school departments. It required principals to siphon off teaching time for the immense clerical task of managing the student portfolios, checking to ensure that each student upon graduation had the right number of performance indicators signed off. Then suddenly, after grade 12 students had been working for two years (since grade 10) collecting materials that demonstrate achievement in six different areas, including arts and design, employability skills and personal health, for formal presentation to a panel in order to graduate, the Minister of Education suspended the initiative. In the press release, it was explained that the government was reviewing it “to see if it’s accomplishing what was intended” (Reynolds, 2006, n.p.).

At the district level, the strategic planning initiative claims to have been an “appreciative inquiry” with stakeholders, yet the author could not find a classroom teacher who participated in the process or who was invited to participate in the process at any stage. Furthermore, teachers are generally unaware that there was a process or that the document exists. At the school level, decisions are made by administration based on “what is good for kids” every day of a teacher’s life. Seldom does a teacher hear their administrator say that a decision is going to be based on “what’s good for teachers,”

despite that common sense tells us that when teachers have their needs adequately met, the positive impact trickles down to students. Teachers, as a professional group have students' best interest at heart, often putting student's needs ahead of their own, as shown in a recent studies (Schaefer, 2001) showing that the average teacher in British Columbia spends \$1095 of their own earnings to ensure their classroom is equipped with what is needed. While there are some key differences between the classroom routines of individual teachers across kindergarten to grade 12, teachers share a belief almost universally that their opinions are not valued.

ii) Are All PLO's (Prescribed Learning Outcomes) Created Equal?

In secondary schools, there is a clear distinction between those who teach courses for which there are provincial examinations and those who teach non-provincially examinable and elective courses. Provincial examination results are published and reviewed with staff and hence there is much talked-about pressure on teachers to yield positive results on provincial exams. A myriad of inequity is perpetuated within school organizations because of the desire for exam results at or above the district or provincial average. Some schools have implemented their own policy whereby students must have a grade of C+ (65%) or better in the subject area prerequisite, just to enroll. While the Ministry and district would never overtly support such an exclusive and ideologically offensive policy, knowledge that schools use it is widespread and a blind eye is turned.

The implications to Inclusion are obvious – lesser ability students are simply not invited to participate; a system built upon the principal of exclusion, rather than the mandate of Inclusion, or the values and principles of *inclusion*. The implications reach farther. Students with special needs are limited by such “unofficial” policies as to the classes in which they can be integrated and those who teach elective courses such as Visual Art, Physical Education, Music (Choir and Band), Home Economics (Cooking and Sewing), or Shop classes (Woodwork and Metalwork) find themselves with a disproportionate representation of students who are unable to meet the learning outcomes of their courses. There is a corresponding disparity in the status of teachers in high school who teach electives compared to those who teach academic subjects, (especially those who teach provincially examinable academic subjects) and the perception of quality and

importance of the content of electives and provincially examinable courses. The Physical Education, Art or Home Economics teacher would expect to find students in their senior level (grade 12) classes who are unable to write their own name, or follow three-step directions. The Physics 12, English Literature 12, or Calculus 12 teacher, without exception, would *never* be asked to have such a student in their class. Furthermore, compared to the expectations to differentiate instruction, allow for diverse styles of learning and provide for a wide variety of ability levels, Physics, English and Calculus would be examples of courses that do not allow for any of these inclusive components.

When the two categories of courses are contrasted the unfortunate but inarguable result of Inclusion is that it lowers not only the status of courses into which students can be integrated and the teachers who teach them, but it lowers the quality of what teachers can teach in them, and the expectations teachers can realistically have for the students in them. Viewed from this perspective, one could justify an interpretation of Inclusion as inadvertently encouraging a fracture in the academic and educational community of schools. It would be easy to argue at this juncture that in our present educational settings, Inclusion as an educational model is an oxymoron.

Returning to the continuum referred to earlier, how do teachers reconcile the differences in how what they teach is regarded in the expectation that some learning outcomes are to be modified, but others are too important? Perhaps, under the layers of confusion and history, the author has led the reader to one of the source points for the anger and negativity expressed in the comments by teachers in the survey. If at the secondary level some Ministry prescribed learning outcomes are immune from modification - too important to modify, while others are not, then the author extrapolates that students with special needs are permitted access only to those learning outcomes which are *not* very important. The value structure of the organization, at its most rudimentary level of interpretation, is that certain grades and certain subjects shall have immunity from students with special needs. Some might argue that when the district says classrooms should be inclusive, it means that those students who are permitted to enter should feel a sense of belonging. It does not mean that everyone is welcome.

At the elementary school level (kindergarten through grade 7) students with special needs ranging from mild to severe are placed in regular classrooms with their

same age peers. No learning outcomes at the primary or intermediate levels of elementary school are exempt from modification. The only exams which are administered in the elementary setting are province and district wide skill assessment tests. Students with special needs are generally excluded, as are ESL students, as potentially their scores could disadvantage the publicized achievements of a particular school or school district.

iii) Teachers Draw the Line at Modified Learning Outcomes:

The survey results showed a high level of agreement amongst teachers that the philosophy of Inclusion of students with special needs was consistent with their personal and professional values. Between 70% and 80% of teachers were able to travel some distance along the continuum. The comments however, illuminated at what point their personal and professional line needed to be drawn. General observations of teachers in action in their classrooms were consistent with the comment data.

When the learning outcome of the class was the same for everyone, regular student and special needs student alike, teachers were all onboard. If the student arrived in a wheel chair, with augmentative communication, adaptive technology for written output and a full time paraprofessional who could arrive on time with the student, stay throughout the class, and leave at the regular time, the inclusion of this student was a relative non-issue to teachers. Where a teacher could carry on, status quo, the student's presence was not a concern. Ironically, what the teacher modeled in such a circumstance was acceptance of the physically disabled student as a member of the classroom community, accepted, respected and included no differently than anyone else in the classroom. The student was treated as a *normal* learner.

When the accompanying physical or medical needs of a student with similar intellectual capability became a negative factor to the classroom environment, teacher support fell away. For example, teachers felt that an additional adult and a large power wheelchair in a small classroom with large number of students were problematic. Likewise, a student on a gurney requiring frequent turning was felt to be a distraction and therefore not tolerated.

In a scenario where the learning outcome of the class was the same for everyone, but some students required adaptations such as more time to write a test or a lap top

computer to assist with written output, teachers remained supportive and onboard. Where a student required specialized instructional strategies, such as visual schedules or multiple-choice tests instead of the class' format, most teachers expected that a support worker would come into the class to carry out those tasks. Teachers were able to maintain their position on the continuum, if support personnel ensured that the student received the additional supports he or she needed to continue meeting the learning outcomes. In this same scenario, if the physical, medical or behavioural needs could not be contained so that they did not impact the learning environment, teacher support dropped. This was the first major stopping point on the continuum. When a student's presence in the classroom took away from the learning of other students due to special needs considerations, even though the learning outcome was a regular learning one, a significant group of teachers said, "This is far as I can go." The strategies and protocols that teachers brought into play every day in the regular classroom were no longer relevant and consequently teachers saw these students as having too great a need to be met within the context of the regular learning environment.

The second stopping point on the continuum involved students who, due to intellectual incapacity, were not able to meet the regular learning outcomes that were the focus of the classroom activity and the teacher's planning. Where teachers were expected to modify learning outcomes, so that they fell within the ability range of a student with special needs, a large contingency of teachers no longer agreed with Inclusion. That most teachers are untrained in how to modify curriculum is only a small factor since if teachers thought it were important, they would research it and familiarize themselves with the premises behind modification as they do with new approaches and curriculum design improvements. Teachers have professional allowance funding and release time to keep them current. Teachers are reluctant to participate in modifying learning outcomes for individual students in their regular classroom because their job, as they see it, is to help students meet the learning outcomes, not to rewrite them for individual students who cannot. Some teachers are both sympathetic and interested in Special Education and students with special needs, but a large number of teachers articulated clearly that it was not their intent to be a Special Education teacher when they trained to become teachers, and it is not their plan now. Ironically, for the extra time, effort, expertise and variation

on instruction that is called into play on the part of the teacher, the student with the modified learning outcomes does not receive course credit or even a grade. Add in physical, medical or behavioural needs which negatively impact the learning environment and an even larger number of teachers draw their personal and professional cut-off line.

iv) The Correlation Between Teacher Expertise and High Student Need:

The issues of students with severe to profound delays in intellectual functioning are an ideal entry point to a further consideration of the conceptual continuum the author has employed as a framework for understanding the perspective of regular classroom teachers on Inclusion. It is helpful to use the extremely complex needs of this challenging group of students to conceptualize the high-need end of the continuum and assist in grasping the correlation between teacher expertise and the needs and abilities of students. Regular classroom teachers best understand the learning needs and intellectual abilities of regular students on regular programs. As one moves down the continuum, away from regular students with low levels of learning and support needs, teachers are familiar with basic adaptations of the learning outcomes. As needs grow more complex and intellectual ability lessens, so lessens teacher expertise.

Likewise, as one moves down the continuum of student needs becoming more complex and teacher expertise decreasing, there also exists an increasing demand for additional time and a marked increase in the degree of specialized skills, knowledge, training needed, as well as specialized resources that are required. Where teachers have a high level of confidence and expertise, little is needed beyond the standard teacher skill and knowledge set. Where the greatest demand for specialized resources, time and skills is needed, teachers are least prepared and equipped. The comments made about students in the severe to profoundly handicapped range by some of the regular classroom teachers are admittedly blunt. Yet, would it make sense if teachers were ready to embrace a concept that correlates so poorly with what teachers became teachers to do, and with what they are *able* to do? It is hard to imagine that anyone would anticipate support of a philosophy that adds significantly to a teacher's already challenging workload and then to expect teachers to say, " Hey, I don't mind a bit if you come in and disrupt the learning in my class. You have every right! Oh – and by the way, I have no idea how to help you,

but I am going to go after school and weekends, and take courses on my own time to learn.” This sounds ridiculous and silly stated this way, however, the expectations and demands created by Inclusion are portrayed as they impact teachers.

Although some teachers support Inclusion to a further degree on the continuum, teachers who responded to the survey, universally subscribe to the concept of *full participation*. This concept describes participation in the intellectual, social and behavioural expectations of a classroom; the prescribed learning outcomes, classroom routines and behavioural expectations. While not all students are fully successful in all areas at all times, following routines, meeting expectations and fulfilling learning outcomes must be within a student’s immediate and realistic potential for all teachers to embrace a common belief that they belong. This is certainly not the Full Inclusion model but this is the reality of the regular classroom teacher whether advocates of Inclusion like it or not. This *is* the zone of teacher agreement on the continuum. Move beyond it, and teacher support begins to drop away: at first a few at a time and then, in greater numbers as first the classroom is disrupted and teachers are asked to modify learning outcomes.

v) Political Correctness... Unleashing the Emotion:

What teachers said in the survey is far blunter and bolder than what they will commit to in person. The anonymous format of the survey facilitated honest expression that is not shared during lunchtime shoptalk, in staff meetings or around the photocopy machine. There is a veil of political correctness when it comes to discussion of people with disabilities that was evident in the first part of each response in the survey. A majority of the participants’ comments were prefaced by a profession of support for Inclusion, followed by a but, which was followed by the conditions under which support for Inclusion would not apply. The anonymous survey format with an option for comments was selected specifically because in order for Inclusion to be talked about or examined in any useful manner, the veil of political correctness had to be removed. The result was that stored-up, unexpressed emotion was unleashed. For even stronger than the sheer veil of political correctness, has been the sense that any sudden opinion against Inclusion could trigger a backlash with the force of an avalanche. The author believed that for educational practice for students with special needs to move beyond its present

standard of mediocrity, Inclusion as a value and a behaviour would have to be hauled out of its un-talked-about place and examined, emotion or not.

Analysis of what is at the core of the emotion that emerged on both sides of the Inclusion debate, suggests several different reasons at the core of that emotion. For the teachers, many of them expressed their frustration at being expected to spend extra time and energy modifying and customizing curricular objectives, managing complex behavioural issues, providing specialized instructional strategies and resource materials when Special Education is not an area they chose to be trained in. When the needs of a student begin to take away from the teaching and learning of the whole class, teachers become advocates for the rights of regular students. A rationale of human rights is seen by regular classroom teachers as a contradiction when the learning environment and potential safety of regular students is jeopardized. Teachers were genuinely unclear about the rationale behind many integration placements.

5.6 The Story of Alex

A glassed-in weight room looks out onto the huge, empty high school cafeteria. This is Alex's classroom today, as it has been for a few weeks now. He loves PE and looks forward to it everyday but weight-training days are by far his favorite. Today, Alex has decided he will walk to class backwards ... literally, by walking *backwards*. Everyday Alex has a new challenge for the Special Education staff to deal with. The fact that he is a boy with Down Syndrome and an intellectual handicap does not preclude an ability to generate a new behaviour each time a plan is successfully engineered to get rid of the last one.

So today, Alex heads for the grade 8 PE class, already changed into his sweatpants and workout T-shirt – or should one say, *backs* to class. He arrives about the same time as the other students, about 30 of them in all and sits on one of the padded benches next to his Special Education paraprofessional while the teacher gives his instructions for the period. There is a circuit – each student has their personal fitness program on a chart and they will keep track of their repetitions and sets as they go and then hand it in at the bell. It is very hard for Alex to sit through all these instructions, so he plays with the equipment that is in his reach – the metal pin that is used to determine how much weight to lift is particularly interesting.

Alex is able to wait his turn when he has finished a machine and is ready to move to the next; waiting gives him time to check that the muscles in his arms are getting bigger. The odd thing about the weight room is that in this very small space, with thirty students practically on top of each other, the time passes without a single student initiating any interaction with Alex. Not a *hello* or *I'll be done in a minute*. Nothing. And Alex does not speak to any of the students in the class. It is as if, to him, they are not there and to them, he is not there. Sixty minutes passes. The teacher – a big tall man in shorts and a gray T-shirt that says COACHING STAFF across it, never acknowledges Alex.

When the class is over and it is time to hand in his paper, Alex hurries to the single file line-up. When it is his turn to hand his paper to the teacher, Alex holds his hand up high and calls enthusiastically for a high-five. The gesture is met with an air of tolerance. Satisfied, Alex heads out the door and then, part way across the cafeteria, remembers that today he is walking backwards.

5.7 Values and Practice of Special Education Teachers and Programs

i) The Learning Needs of Students with Special Needs:

Three widely held assumptions remain intact after extensive field observation and contact with teachers. The author recognizes that each of them could justify a complete study to reliably verify these assumptions. Nonetheless, intuition, experience, and common sense will prevail here in the absence of hard data to allow the author to move forward with the assumptions integral to the understandings of the learning needs of exceptional students.

Those assumptions are as follows:

1. As student needs become more complex, they require an increased level of specialized skills and knowledge from their teachers in order to realize their potential as learners.

2. Most classroom teachers have skills and knowledge that is directed toward teaching the Ministry's prescribed learning outcomes. As student needs become more complex, classroom teachers are less equipped to meet those needs.

3. Where a student is not able to *fully participate* in the learning objectives and activities of the regular students in the class, the likelihood of the modified participation being planned, implemented and evaluated at a quality level equal to the planning, implementation and evaluation of those achieving the prescribed learning outcome is minimal.

Modification of learning outcomes is too often an on-the-spot decision made upon realization that a student is incapable of doing what the class is doing. It is not always tied to the students' needs, and is rarely backed by a rationale or with consideration given to the most important question for activities and objectives for students with special needs; "to what end?" In reality, much of curriculum design for students on modified programs is done by teachers "flying by the seat of their pants" and admitting it. And yet, regular classroom teachers seem to be the ones who are advocating for something better.

Despite that most regular classroom teachers believe there is some social benefit obtained by placing students in proximity to their non-disabled peers that has yet to be satisfactorily proven. In fact a recent investigation of social proximity (Pudlas, 2004) suggests that regardless of whether students appear to have improved social skills, friendships or improved peer relations the disabled students themselves do not report a sense of belonging, or feel accepted by their peers. It is certainly the case that in schools with resource room programs, students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities often appear most content and socially interactive in the resource room with other similarly disabled peers. Lunchtime is an activity when many students relish the opportunity to sit in the privacy of the resource room, away from the main body of students and the loud, chaotic cafeteria and enjoy the company and security of special needs friends. While this is a practice frowned upon by those who believe students must be integrated, and therefore must go to the cafeteria to mingle with the regular students, it is ironically, a real example of students feeling a sense of belonging in an inclusive circle of peers. To suggest that such a circle of companionship is not encouraging social growth is overlooking that they are actually experiencing and enjoying real school friendships not growing towards the possibility of relationships. And similarly in elementary school classrooms, observations where students were found segregated within the regular classrooms out-numbered those where Inclusion yielded *meaningful* experiences of inclusion, socially or academically. Trends in the comments of many elementary teachers substantiated this.

Special Education professionals know enough about their clientele to know that the learning of social skills does not come through proximity alone. That teaching conversational skills to students with Asperger Syndrome, or about personal space to students with moderate intellectual disabilities requires specialized resources and strategies that do not exist in the regular classroom teacher's arsenal. They have said so clearly. Even non-enrolling teachers who run tutorial-type resource rooms for students who need academic support admit that they feel that teaching social skills is beyond their comfort level, both in terms of their knowledge and ability and what they perceive their mandate of academic support to be.

Recall Mark. In choir class Mark was not taught (and did not learn) that when you stare at someone they feel uncomfortable and want to move away. He was not taught that other people have personal space that belongs to them and that *they* decide who gets to come into that space. He was not taught that there are people, like moms and dads that it's OK to be affectionate with and other people, like students you don't know very well, that you don't love, or hug, or talk about private and personal things with. Choir class was not the place where Mark was taught about touching oneself in private, but never in public, and which places are considered public and private and why that is. Choir may have indirectly provided other regular students with a social learning opportunity about the difference in the way people talk and act toward you when they are your friend versus when they are just your classmate or peer, but not Mark. Choir class served as an excellent experimental laboratory to learn about Mark's learning needs from a social context, however in this case, at the expense of many potential positive peer relationships, most notably the one with Leah.

In the resource room however, Mark received direct instruction from his teacher who had received specialized training, using materials that were age appropriate for a 16-year-old high school student, but appropriate to his developmentally young age, and limited intellectual ability. Once the concepts were explored, talked about and made personally experiential through the use of "Social Stories," they were revisited again and again, each time in a new social context, in order to compensate for Mark's poor ability to generalize new concepts and ideas. Mark was invited to bring photographs of his family and photos were taken of students in the choir class, and other students who Mark had never met. They were arranged on large, coloured concentric rings on the wall, each one with a special associated meaning – purple for Mark's personal, private space, red for those closest to him, like immediate family, orange for friends, yellow for people we recognize and say hello to but who are not close enough to be our friends. It took weeks of instruction with the use of specially developed video resources, to learn about each colour and what it meant. The process of revisiting and incorporating the concepts into school and community settings was not the work of many weeks, but several years. This *was* Mark's curriculum, along with functional academics and life skills that were focused on moving him along the continuum of independence with many steps forward and just

as many back when the push for Inclusion not only justified, but insisted on placing Mark in a regular classroom to become socially integrated.

The benefit of Inclusion in choir was far from non-existent for Mark as it was a critically important test of whether he had mastered a certain set of social skills; it was a measure of his level of independence and a critical piece of the puzzle of Mark's educational needs. Without doubt, there is a role for integration to play for Mark and others like him. It is also, however, critically important to understand the implications and ramifications of declaring the social benefits of Inclusion. Whether one is a developmentally delayed student with Down Syndrome, a student with a mild intellectual delay or an above average IQ learner with Asperger Syndrome, social skills are not learned in the regular classroom. At worst, undesirable social behaviour is reinforced. At best, the regular classroom is a place where students can practice and receive positive support and reinforcement for the skills they have learned in the resource room setting. It is unfortunate that the resource room setting is seen as an extension of segregation, rather than the continuum of support that is required for special needs students to reach their potential. It is also problematic that Inclusion continues to build on findings such as that of the BCTF that 79% of teachers agree that most students with special needs benefit *socially* from Inclusion. The very same teachers self-proclaim their lack of skills and knowledge in the area of support for students with special needs (Naylor, 2002). There is a prevalent belief amongst teachers that this wonderful social benefit exists. The author's concern is that this reported social benefit is incidental by comparison to what they *could* be learning with the right expertise, curriculum and specialized instructional strategies. In many cases, we are selling students with special needs short on reaching their full potential as learners.

When a child is developmentally delayed it is certainly not typical that his academic work suffers but his social world is normal. This is dramatically portrayed in the self-made documentary aired on CNN, *Autism is a World* (Wurzburg, 2005). It is a classic example of how autism devastates a young woman's ability to function socially, while academically she is completing a university degree. The well-known feature film, *Rainman* (Levinson, 1988) showed an Autistic savant's struggle to cope in a social world. Temple Grandin, PhD and famous scholar with Autism, is a third example of an

individual with special needs whose biggest challenges are in the social and communication domains. It is the very essence of such complex disabilities that proximity to normal functioning children and adults does not aid in the acquisition of better understanding or better functioning as is the case with normally developing children.

ii) Perceptions of Special Education Teachers and Resource Rooms:

Regular teacher perception of resource room teachers is mostly negative. They perceive a low level of expertise, see low adult to student ratios in place and estimate their functioning as little more than babysitting. These perceptions match with the facts; more than half of high school resource room teachers in the district have no post-secondary training in Special Education and many put time in each day with minimal amounts of *teaching* in the form that educational circles have come to know it.

At the elementary level, perception is not as harsh. There are only two self-contained resource rooms for severely disabled students serving 100 schools. The extreme of student need and the intensity of the teaching experience in such a classroom necessitates that a teacher is both skilled and trained, and elementary teachers who have had experiences in the facilities which house these programs are somewhat humbled by the demands of the self-contained elementary resource rooms.

Given that the standard of qualifications for high school resource room teachers is low, the expectations set for programs often follow accordingly. A typical day in one resource room might bear no resemblance to another; one program may operate as a tutorial class offering students help with homework from their modified integrated subjects, while similar ability students elsewhere are learning to set goals and problem solve social situations that they have encountered with peers. Students from one program recycle pop cans and refill candy bar machines, while comparable ability students in another program are paired with assistants or peer tutors for data-driven discrete trial teaching of functional academic skills such as telling time or counting money. Some resource room teachers continue to apply remedial reading strategies to students who are in their final years of school and who need reliable word recognition, comprehension and actualization of functional words that encourage independence and safety. The

differences are not only vast, they are too vast. And they should not be allowed to continue when one considers the price paid in the form of lost skills, independence and ultimately, quality of life for students who need every possible advantage in life they can acquire. When teachers, hall monitors, custodians, and administrators make unkind and uncomplimentary comments to the effect that resource rooms function as little better than holding tanks, waiting rooms for integration, babysitting and respite, something is not right. Perhaps nothing of educational value is taking place. Or perhaps, the passer-by does not associate what he sees with teaching and learning. For example, a passer-by might see a group of students with a board game as playing and wasting time, not knowing that the group has been working on some common weak social skills that are encompassed in the natural setting of playing a game together: taking turns, not cheating, and learning how to be a good loser. If the same passer-by observing some physics students watching a ball bounce, would they be more likely to make an assumption that it was part of lab, than wasteful physics class time? The assumption is borne of a more pervasive belief that is rooted in an overall perception about the value of the program, the class and the teacher, rather than the activity itself and its possible educational merits. The fact that such assumptions or misperceptions exist supports the need for the image of Special Education to initiate swift and far reaching improvement. Perhaps as Special Education teachers we *owe* our students with special needs the best possible specialized and meaningful education in part *because of* the negative stigma they must bear because of what has been allowed to flourish in the name of Special Education.

iii) The Paraprofessional:

The role of the paraprofessional or Special Education assistant is both controversial and problematic. The position requires a minimal amount of training as short as six months of part-time instruction. In many known instances paraprofessionals are instructing training courses while others are being taught by retired administrators. The results have been less than ideal, as much of the course content is taken from teacher training programs and prepares paraprofessionals better for overstepping their role than fulfilling their own role well. How does the saying go? *A little bit of knowledge can be dangerous*. In the field, paraprofessionals on practicum are being supervised and shown

the ropes by other paraprofessionals. Also problematic, the minimal entry and exit requirements combined with a high hourly rate of pay and membership in a large and protective union have attracted a wide range of abilities to the job. The quality of worker attracted to the easy certification and relative high pay and their documented tendency to be an impediment to social interactions and the independence of students with special needs (Giangreco et.al 1997) is exacerbated by the approach that the best way to address unmet student need is to add more paraprofessional time. Hence, Inclusion has gotten as far as it has – that is the placement of students in physical proximity regardless of the educational quality of the placement, in part because the inadequately fulfilled role of the paraprofessional has allowed it. The lack of teacher expertise and time to teach, manage and program for high need students is not the only explanation for the failure to understand and implement Inclusion. With neither classroom teachers, nor paraprofessionals fully understanding each other's roles, the confusion is worsened by the fact that paraprofessionals are ultimately the responsibility of administrators not the teachers who supervise and work along side them.

Students with special needs have experienced their academic programs ad hoc, with most of the actual teaching performed by non-teacher paraprofessionals. Frequently, this takes place in the back of the classroom where in effect the student experiences segregation within the regular classroom. Alternatively, the model of Inclusion is lived out with paraprofessionals doing the “teaching” to students with special needs, isolated in the hall, in storage spaces designated as “pull-out” spaces and in designated paraprofessional staff rooms where they bring “their student” to have their coffee break, or to simply take a break from the classroom when they feel the child or they, themselves need it. The fact that this phenomena exists in schools is yet another testimonial to the fact that the education of students with special needs, under the insistence that their rightful place is in the regular classroom, is subject to the whim and preference of the minimally trained. Paraprofessionals, though in most cases well-meaning, have been and continue to be a key factor in the perpetuation of Inclusion as an unimplemented theoretical model.

The actualization of the theoretical model of Inclusion is dependant to a significant degree on paraprofessionals and the way in which their presence supports

teachers in their teaching role. A functional relationship between teacher and paraprofessional demands extensive daily collaboration and specific expertise on the part of both. Since paraprofessionals are paid hourly and only for time that students are present and teachers are fully engaged in the classroom during the school day, an opportunity for such communication and collaboration does not exist. Add to the unavailability of time to talk and plan, a lack of expertise and a mutual lack of understanding of roles from both sides. This is not the foundation for best practice inclusive instruction designed to meet the needs of individual learners in an environment that promotes a sense of belonging.

It is perplexing to try to understand how the theoretical model of Full Inclusion was expected to work in the classroom with the above variables as the standard of the vast majority of classrooms within a system that offers little flexibility. Not only has the model of Inclusion set students up for failure, it has set into motion the practice of turning huge numbers of people trained to support personal care loose in the system to wile about their time however they can engineer things to best suit themselves. The professionals around them are far too busy with the business of teaching to worry about where a paraprofessional is, what they are doing or why. Unfortunately, to add insult to injury, a request for additional assistant support time is invariably the first response when a team (the term used loosely) experiences any issue, challenge or unmet educational need from a student with special needs.

5.8 Jack and Jonathan

In the high school gymnasium a Country and Western hit song blasts from a pair of huge speakers not far from where a team of four Physical Education teachers stand waiting for the last of their respective classes to hurry in. It is an atypical scene for a PE class but it is the dance unit, and today the four classes scheduled for PE before lunch are meeting together for an hour of Line Dancing. Somehow it is just corny enough that the students love it, and they are in high energy spirits as the music is shut off and the four adults in track suits move with their clip boards to their respective groups and get roll call out of the way. Minutes later, out of chaos, 120 students form six long horizontal rows facing the speakers. A teacher shouts the name of the first dance and before the echo has finished bouncing, the stereo is back on and simultaneously, the sea of bodies begins to move in unison to another country and western song. A number of the boys struggle to keep up but the girls not only know every step of the dance, they know every word of the song and sing happily as they complete a sequence by tipping an imaginary hat, and then begin all over again.

In one of the rows a paraprofessional assistant, a woman in her early thirties, has her arm interlocked with a boy whose feet have only mastered forward and back. Oh, and he loves the part where they reach back with one hand and slap the opposite heel. Despite that they are out of sync with their row and with the music, she perseveres with him each time to make sure his hand and his foot connect, and then resume the forward and back steps until that part comes around again. To the group's right, two boys stand on their own against the wall. Jack alternates between flapping his hand in front of his eyes and rocking with his hands over his ears. He is Autistic, and the volume of the music reverberating in the chamber-like gymnasium is stressful. The second wallflower appears slightly more normal, but an anxiety disorder makes him more comfortable watching than doing. Since no one has invited him to do otherwise, Jonathan stands bolted to the wall.

The music changes and a new set of dance moves begins. The boy near the back continues to step forward and back, forward and back, in time to the music with his support worker clutching his arm and steering his movements. One of the PE teachers walks the perimeter of the huge group. His proximity and watchful eye ensures that any silliness is quickly quashed. He passes by the two boys against the wall without acknowledging them or inviting them to be a part of the group with his help. It is confirmed: they are invisible.

5.9 Values and Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers

In British Columbia teachers must complete a bachelor degree prior to admittance to the teacher certification program. The certification is granted by the BCTF, rather than the post-secondary institution and is therefore provincially standardized. The process, after being challenged in the courts, has been recently revised. Student teachers (pre-service teachers) have the opportunity to experience guided practice under the close supervision of a school associate (teacher mentor) and a faculty associate from the university. For many, this is the first time they have gotten a taste of the classroom, apart from their personal experiences as students. For some, a decade or more has passed since they experienced school themselves, and the changes are notable. That many do not recall having students with special needs in their classes suggests that either the school they attended educated students with special needs separately, that the numbers of students with special needs were significantly fewer, or that they simply did not realize that they were there amongst the regular students because their integration was managed well and their presence was not obvious. The variables include where and when they went to school and whether most of their courses were provincially examinable academic classes or electives.

Teaching practicum experiences can thus be an eye-opener for many students with preconceptions about the career of teaching, particularly when it comes to the realities of students with special needs. Some of them get their first taste of what contemporary classrooms look like in the university lecture hall in classes designed to prepare them with the skills and knowledge they will require to be inclusive practitioners within their area of teaching specialty.

The skill set they gain and the background Special Education knowledge they learn not only prepares them to design and implement instruction for all students in their classroom, it puts them in a unique position of understanding and ability when compared to teachers in the system, many with years of experience. While this will make them desirable commodities to school administrators looking to hire quality staff, (good news for beginning teachers), there may several other potential outcomes to consider. Their skills and willingness to integrate students with special needs may fly in the face of existing teachers who feel that it is not educationally sound and may resent their more

open and positive approach. In terms of staff relations, the combination of knowledge and inexperience is rarely an endearing combination. Furthermore, new teachers with the skills and willingness may pay a price for it, as students with special needs are typically scheduled by hand (as opposed to computer generated schedules) and teachers are individually matched to students. Those who are receptive and do a pretty good job with the system's toughest students are rewarded with higher ratios of them. Bill 33 has recently been legislated to protect teachers from just such inequities in teacher load but administrators may circumvent the legislation and place more than three students with special needs in a single classroom, simply by asking a teacher's permission. Young teachers on temporary contracts are particularly vulnerable to administrative pressures for just such things.

Courses offered in university teacher training programs are optional electives offered at some but not all institutions in BC, and not all graduating teachers choose them. In fact, almost exclusively, those teachers who are already open and inclusive in their personal philosophies sign up and those who are not, choose other courses unrelated to Special Education to fulfill their program completion or degree requirements. It is also important to note that a single introductory course does not provide any tangible level of expertise and merely provides a bit of exposure to some strategies and what to expect. (Perhaps in conjunction with providing pre-service teachers with the skills and knowledge to be somewhat successful in the regular classroom with their share of Ministry designation children, it would be fair to also give them some training in how to be confident and assertive when the principal comes knocking at their classroom door with another student with special needs.)

5.10 Chapter Summary

i) Values and Beliefs:

One of the key objectives of this chapter was to unpack and combine the various pieces of data to gain a sense of what the district's values and beliefs are; not only the official, organizational core values but also the values and beliefs held by various

individuals charged with the responsibility of meeting educational needs at various levels in the organization.

The district's official values can be summarized as follows:

1. A sense of belonging and wellbeing are pre-requisite for learning for all students.
2. Inclusion for *all* members of the school community.
3. *Meaningful* inclusion (versus Inclusion for the sake of Inclusion).
4. Mentally handicapped students are not thought of as a group of *learners*.
5. Teachers' efforts need to be directed at neediest students. The rest will be successful regardless.
6. One of the ways we can meet the unique needs of students with special needs is to give them their own "special day" each year.

At the support services level, the values can be summarized as follows:

1. Inclusion is a child's right.
2. Proximity equals inclusion.
3. Inclusion first, if it fails, only then consider lesser options.
4. There is no benefit, educationally or socially, for students with special needs to group together for activities designed for them. Special events for students with special needs go against the basic principle of Inclusion.

5. Modification of the curriculum is an acceptable educational strategy.
6. The added workload is unavoidable and teachers should just do it.
7. Inclusion is alive and well.
8. Student with special needs have value and can learn.

At the school level the values can be summarized as follows:

1. Exam results are a very high priority, hence different course subjects and grade levels are valued differently.
2. Teacher workload is a factor secondary to need for student placement.
3. Students with special needs belong to the district, not to the school.
4. Expertise is not needed to teach students with special needs.
5. Paraprofessionals are not highly valued within the professional community but are highly sought after as the solution to supporting high need students.

The values of teachers as a group can be summarized as follows:

1. It is politically incorrect and unprofessional to speak out against the Inclusion of students with special needs.
2. Students with severe to profound intellectual disabilities with complex medical, behavioural and learning needs are not wanted in regular classrooms.
3. Time and resources must be weighed against educational benefit.

4. Teachers' opinions are important.
5. Provincially examinable subjects are more important than elective courses and non-provincially examinable courses.
6. Students with special needs should be limited in where they are integrated.
7. The added workload created by students with special needs is not OK.
8. *Full Participation* is viable and logical.
9. Modification of Ministry learning outcomes is not a viable approach.
10. Schools are not babysitting or respite services.
11. Students with special needs are the responsibility of the Special Education teacher or paraprofessional.

ii) Practice

A second objective of the chapter was to go beyond the values and beliefs of the educational community to determine parameters for practice. An early hypothesis for the research was that although many spoke of Inclusion as though it were both philosophically embraced and fully operationalized district wide, it was neither.

The district's practice can be summarized as follows:

1. Teachers are not included in decision-making.

At the support services level, practice can be summarized as follows:

1. Inclusion for the sake of Inclusion
2. There is a clinging to the hope that proximity will equal inclusion.

At the school level, practice can be summarized as follows:

1. Inclusive practice exists for well-behaved students who excel in school.
2. Meaningfully inclusive experiences for student with special needs are the exception.
3. Proximity does not equal inclusion.
4. Poor quality and inconsistency in Special Education resource rooms at high school is pervasive.
5. Students with special needs at all levels are receiving education that would be considered substandard for any other group of learners.
6. Students with special needs are not welcome in courses considered important.
7. Time and resources are weighed against benefit. Modification of learning outcomes is not a priority for classroom teachers.
8. Few teachers understand how to modify curriculum for a student program.
9. Most teachers do not increase their own workload to make Inclusion work.

10. Expertise for complex high need students is not a pre-requisite for supporting a high need student.
11. Programs for students with special needs are primarily influenced by paraprofessionals who typically know more than the teacher about a student's needs and abilities.
12. Teachers are most supportive of integration where there is *full participation* possible by the student.
13. Teachers are not trained in management of adult personnel and have no input into placement of paraprofessionals in their classrooms or programs. Schools do not make hiring decisions re paraprofessional staff.

5.11 Misalignments and Incongruencies Between Values and Practice

The final objective of the chapter was to identify key areas where values and practice do not align and to interpret what dynamic or issue is the underlying cause. The following areas are highlighted as areas of concern, wanting for specific recommendations for creating and implementing strategic initiatives to encourage and facilitate successful re-alignments that will follow in Chapter Six:

Parents have sacrificed education for social justice...

The rights of people with special needs became a fight when parents took it to the courts. Although the rights of the disabled were inarguably a socially important battle to win, the research here suggests that a fundamental error was made in the approach to Inclusion as an educational model. The need for parents of children with special needs to feel empowered has been satisfied by the decisions of the courts and the subsequent policies of government, but apparently, not without costs. Parents continue to focus on social justice and having their children being accepted and included, rather than on how best their children's school lives can help them to reach their educational potential. However, the belief that every child has the right to full Inclusion and an education

alongside non-disabled peers does not reconcile with the reality in practice that proximity does not necessarily mean inclusion. In fact, meaningful inclusion is the exception rather than the standard. While some tolerances have indeed been developed through the desensitization of regular students to the sights and sounds of students with disabilities, the logistics of modifying the regular curriculum and maintaining individualized goals has resulted in scenarios where minimally trained paraprofessionals are the primary influence on a student's program and teachers are less involved and less interested than ever. Teachers weigh their own time and resources against what they perceive as the benefit. Teachers do not support the idea that they should increase their own workload to make Inclusion work and modification of learning outcomes is not a priority. Students with special needs are receiving education that would be considered substandard for any other group of learners. Parents, as advocates for the education of their own children, seem to have won the battle but are losing the war.

Students with special needs have value and can learn, yet...

Students with special needs get least priority of course selection in high school. When classes become too full, administrators routinely instruct counselors to remove students with special needs to make the necessary room for regular students. A core value of the district is that inclusion is desired for all members of the learning community, as a sense of belonging and well-being is prerequisite for learning. However, in schools inclusion is ultimately experienced by those who are well-behaved and excel at school.

Schools are essentially exclusive...

Schools in general are exclusive. A student's value as a member of the school community is typically tied to academic achievement, citizenship and behaviour. There are far more examples of classrooms and student experiences that are non-inclusive than there are examples of inclusive ones.

Inclusive experiences for special needs students are specifically understood related to participation with regular students...

The best examples of truly inclusive experiences, where students with special needs perceive themselves to be accepted and welcome, tend to occur when students are with their special needs classmates and friends not their regular classroom peers. The most vocal advocates for students with special needs rail against the idea that there is any benefit, educationally or socially, to be grouped together; that the grouping of students with disabilities goes against the principle of Inclusion. More importantly, they have closed off the possibility that perhaps Inclusion is not alive and well and continue clinging to the hope that somehow, with time, proximity will equal inclusion.

Special Education students need trained teachers, specialized instruction and materials...

The hiring of Special Education teachers has historically been a low priority for administrators, often mixing Special Education teaching blocks in the master timetable with regular teaching assignments which are short a block or two. As a result, 70% of secondary Special Education teachers are untrained and many simply accept placement in Special Education positions until a full time job in their specialty area is available. Their limited knowledge of special needs issues and primary school focus on their regular teaching load means that even the most diligent, well-intentioned teacher falls far short of delivering what students with special needs need. As well, paraprofessionals with no teaching qualifications or teacher training do the majority of “teaching” to students with special needs whether they are working on their own individualized learning objectives as intended, or a modified version of what regular students are doing in the class.

Resource materials are purchased from operating budgets ...

All other departments in schools are entitled to funds targeted for resources such as textbooks and computer software approved as learning resources to support the curriculum set out by the provincial government. There is a perception which is embedded in the educational value structure related to students with special needs that at a district planning level the mentally handicapped are not really *learners* in the sense that other students are. Furthermore, there is a perception that students with special needs are firstly the responsibility of district support and members of the school community secondly. An operating budget is determined to cover the soft costs of running programs,

including such things as photocopying, laminating, white board pens and such. Because no curriculum has existed for students with developmental disabilities, there has been no approved list of resources and consequently, nothing appropriate to order from the official list with designated funds. This has had a twofold result. Teachers have been forced to order age inappropriate materials in an attempt to find materials with ability levels appropriate to their students. Consequently, materials that are both age inappropriate and remedial rather than functionally instructive in nature, are the norm in classrooms accepted as what to use because every classroom has shelves of it. Teachers either lack the expertise to know better, or the funds to acquire better teaching materials. As a secondary consequence of teachers having to spend their program operating budget to purchase those teacher resource materials which *are* appropriate from unapproved distributors and publishers not on the approved resource list, there is minimal budget left to facilitate community integration and life skills activities such as cooking, vocational skill development, etc. In order for resource programs to meet their program objectives, they must fundraise the hundreds and thousands of dollars needed. Those programs who opt to request assistance for the cost from parents quickly find that parents are resistant to contribute either because they cannot afford it or because they do not believe that the costs are theirs to pay.

Not all courses and teachers are expected to support Inclusion equitably...

Inclusion of students with special needs adds to the workloads of some teachers but not others. Provincially examinable subjects do not accept the integration of students who are intellectually incapable of meeting the learning outcomes. The same policy does not extend to all Ministry learning outcomes in all subjects. In keeping with the abilities of teachers, and maintaining realistic and manageable workloads as well as respecting educational standards within education, the practice of modifying learning outcomes must then be replaced by limiting integration to those students who can *fully participate* in the learning outcomes.

Regular classroom teachers lack skills and knowledge needed...

The education system does financially compensate teachers for their time and effort in acquiring the skills necessary to support students with special needs. Nor does it readily provide release time and class coverage to attend training sessions during the regular work day. In looking to the future, numbers of students with special needs are expected to rise significantly. Despite this, pre-service teacher training programs in British Columbia's universities continue to offer courses in Special Education on an optional basis, rather than as a mandatory component of teacher training, while some do not offer such course work at all.

CHAPTER SIX – Summary and Conclusions

6.1 Summary of Main Findings

The following statements summarize the main findings of this research:

- District administration is aware of and committed to high educational standards for those students designated as special needs, but who are *not cognitively* impaired. Intellectually impaired students, the mentally handicapped, seem to exist outside the very notion of educational standards and they are excluded from the term *students with special needs* in educational contexts outside of the department of Special Education. Even the Minister of Education speaks of the achievements of special needs students in reference to students who are blind, deaf, learning disabled, ESL or gifted, but the mentally handicapped are excluded. A provincial curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities does not even exist.
- The district policy on Inclusion is a blanket statement intended for *all* learners in the educational community and refers to classrooms and schools that are safe, caring, respectful and welcoming. The district does not advocate with a formal policy of Full Inclusion for students with special needs, although it is generally assumed that all non-cognitively impaired students are fully included with their non-disabled peers and achieve comparably.
- The understanding of roles and responsibilities of all involved, from the school based administrator to the paraprofessional, has been ad hoc with expectations, standards and routines varying widely across the district. Subsequently, at the high school level, Special Education programs, their staff and the students supported by them have low status. Students with special needs in the elementary

system are perceived as belonging to the district or to the itinerant teacher whose role it is to provide support and guidance to the classroom teacher.

- There is a fundamental disconnect in Special Education service provision and practice between the elementary and secondary school levels.
- The very nature of schools is one characterized by exclusion. Students who fit well into the system are *more welcome* than those who do not. Likewise, some courses have learning outcomes deemed so important that they are never modified. Their door is closed to students that are unable to meet the prescribed learning outcomes.
- Schools provide full funding to departments for purchasing textbooks and instructional resources as standard practice across the district. Programs for students with intellectual disabilities do not enjoy access to such funds and are frequently expected to collect pop cans or sell candy to support the basic costs of their program.
- In practice, the district has adopted the Special Education model of Full Inclusion for elementary school age students as its primary placement option for all students with disabilities, and students with intellectual disabilities. Teachers have experienced having students with special needs placed in their classroom but overall the model has been a failure in accomplishing the following:
 - academic objectives
 - social objectives
 - teacher ownership of students with special needs
 - teacher support for the model
 - inclusive experiences for students with special needs
- Most regular classroom teachers find the model of Full Inclusion unsupportable. It is founded upon the notion that all children have value and can learn and yet it ensures that the educational needs of students with the most complex learning

challenges of all students are primarily served by regular classroom teachers who are not specialists in Special Education. Furthermore, paraprofessionals who are not trained to teach and are often an impediment to social interaction play a key role in shaping and delivering students' programs.

- The model of Full Inclusion is fundamentally about social justice and human rights issues of people with disabilities. As a model of human rights, it fails to adequately uphold the rights of co-stakeholders such as teachers and non-disabled students. Hence, Full Inclusion sometimes carries with it a message that the rights of people with disabilities are *more* important than the rights of others, leaving teachers concerned that it is accomplishing the opposite of what Inclusion is intended to achieve.
- Regular classroom teachers lack the time, expertise and interest to adequately fulfill the educational programming and instructional requirements of complex-need students. Hence, the placement of high need Special Educational students in regular classrooms relegate them to sub-standard practices and deny them the ability to reach their full potential as learners.
- Advocates for Full Inclusion approach social and educational change from the perspective that non-supporters must change their attitudes and adopt a belief that all students belong in their classrooms. However, only those values that are shared by all members of the organization can be the foundation for action. Support for Full Inclusion of students who can *fully participate* in the BC Ministry of Education's prescribed learning outcomes is the common platform of belief.

6.2 Conclusions

The efficacy of the educational model of Full Inclusion becomes complex and controversial when its scope and impact is fully examined in an educational context in

terms of the rights of students with special needs, those without special needs, and the regular classroom teachers who oversee both. From the standpoint of all three stakeholders in the Full Inclusion model of Special Education, it is unfortunate that so many children with special needs have been placed in regular classrooms to sink or swim. The casualty rate has been high. As children have failed to thrive, or have fallen short of realizing their full potential, they have taxed teachers heavily and teachers in general are feeling the effects.

Firstly, the potential level of expertise which regular classroom teachers may get to with a continued, aggressive campaign of in-service and professional development, falls far short of what a fully trained, Special Education professional brings to program development, curriculum implementation and specialized instructional expertise for students with special needs. While there is room for teachers to grow in their ability to create inclusive learning environments for the proven benefit of *all* students, this still falls far short of what students with complex challenges need to realize their full potential as learners. The current educational bandwagon of *differentiated instruction* is a band-aid on a broken limb. In fact, it is impertinent to the needs of intellectually disabled children, and serves as a reminder of just how far the system has to go.

Secondly, the minutes of a school day for full time classroom teachers are spoken for and teachers report that they are stretched to their limit. British Columbia is a province where compensation for what teachers already do has not kept pace with the consumer price index. As teachers lose ground in their ability to maintain their personal standard of living, it is discriminatory to predicate the quality of Special Education on the promise that teachers will put in the extra personal time to ensure that the best possible program and resources are in place. It is unfair to leave the fate of their educational potential to the charity of teachers who are willing to complete a bit of extra training, as insufficient as even that would be.

Thirdly, there is a concerning trend of filling student support need with paraprofessionals. Students with the greatest, most complex needs and who have the most to lose spend the majority of time with the *least* trained personnel in the school system. The role, responsibilities and supervision of paraprofessionals must be radically redefined

within the parameters of a caregiver role. Students with special needs need and deserve the very best professional educators that money can buy and that universities can train.

Inclusion is fundamentally a societal issue of human rights for those with disabilities. Sustainability and support has remained elusive in part because exercising the rights of the disabled has been at the expense of a safe and distraction-free learning environment in more than the exceptional case. In British Columbia, schools are primarily places for academic learning with social and personal development the responsibility of the community with support from schools. Therefore, schools are obligated to ensure that the learning environment is maintained as a place that is respectful, inclusive, and safe for *all* children equally; not compromised by an individual whose needs are beyond that which the regular classroom can meet. Trained professionals can make sound educational decisions based on the rights of *all* stakeholders, or outside agencies such as the BCTF, local teacher's union and the Workman's Compensation Board of British Columbia will uphold the right to safe working conditions for teachers and mandate placements for troublesome children. The recent and yet untested legislation introduced by the BC government, Bill 33, limits the number of students with special needs to three in any one classroom and is a welcome acknowledgement of what teachers must face and the limits of their capability. It is also a salient and timely reminder that a quality educational program for a student with special needs is more than just differentiating instruction, as mentioned earlier. In the end, it is not *where* we teach our special needs learners that matters most, but *what* we teach them, *how* we teach them, and *who* teaches them.

Finally, the author proposes that the educational system has much to learn from the outside world of corporate leadership and organizational theory. Sometimes educators pay homage by referring to it as the *real world*. In the *real world*, the survival of thousands of large, multi-million dollar corporations depend on their ability to move ideas from concept to action. Their understanding of the need to align company values with organizational practice and their skill in doing it is ripe fruit for the education system to pick. The corporate world understands that its foundation is at the level of common understanding and shared values but more importantly, it understands that common understanding and shared values are discovered from *within* the organization,

not imposed *on* the organization. The work of alignment begins at that point of discovery, firstly by improving existing alignments and then by actually deliberately designing, constructing and implementing new alignments that reinforce the existing values and bring new energy and vitality to the organization.

i) Recommendations for Re-Alignments:

- a. Raise the bar on Special Education to improve status, as well as standards by:
 - hiring only trained teachers for resource room positions or teachers registered in Special Education training
 - establishing a district standard for resource rooms for program organization, IEP development and curriculum
 - implementing a district developmental curriculum, K-12
 - providing management training to teachers who oversee paraprofessionals
 - developing a conflict resolution process for teachers and paraprofessionals
 - improving teacher caseload ratios by reducing paraprofessionals and adding teachers
 - implementing a web-based IEP process for transparency and accountability
- b. Correct the disconnect between Special Education at the elementary and secondary levels by providing every elementary school with a resource room. Eliminate the itinerant integration support teacher position and re-train to manage best-practice resource rooms.
- c. Support teachers and administrators to adhere to Bill 33 on the basis that integration is time-consuming, demanding work.
- d. Define “meaningful inclusion.”
- e. Make all levels of management aware of the presence and educational needs

of all groups of students with special needs; those on academic programs (ESL, Gifted, Learning Disabled) as well as those who are disabled physically, intellectually or both.

f. Combine the academic support branch of Special Education and the main department of Special Education under one management.

g. Provide names for resource room programs which illuminate their value and purpose, rather than imply that what is learned there is lesser or basic.

h. Redefine and limit the role of the paraprofessional.

i. Provide comprehensive re-training of paraprofessionals throughout the district to match revised existing training of new paraprofessionals focused on skills related to care of physical needs.

ii) Recommendations for New Alignment Initiatives:

a. Ensure that Masters in Leadership programs provide Special Education training for future administrators.

b. Include Special Education training as a requirement for hiring new administrators.

c. Adopt a *Full Participation* policy as the guiding parameter for Inclusion and placement decisions for students with special needs.

d. Implement a district sponsored teacher education program for existing teachers to give them the skills and knowledge to build inclusive classrooms and schools and ensure *full participation*.

- e. Propose to the Ministry of Education, a provincial K-12 Special Education developmental curriculum to parallel the curriculum guides that exist for all other grades levels and subject areas.
- f. Offer financial incentives for teachers with completed Special Education course work and provide tuition reimbursements and release time for future training.
- g. Forge District partnerships with post-secondary institutions for training of Special Education specialists as a new teacher major or Masters area. Provide attractive incentives to teachers to encourage participation.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

- a. How do mildly, moderately, severely and profoundly developmentally delayed children learn best?
- b. What is the impact of Inclusion and integration on *all* students socially, academically and behaviourally?
- c. How are borderline (Mild Intellectual Delay) students best served?
- d. Which disability areas are growing most rapidly? How can the school system prepare for them with regards to physical facilities, staffing and program development?

EPILOGUE

I began this research as a committed advocate for students with special needs and maintain that position now, two years later. While I did not set out to sway the opinions of others, my own views have undergone sweeping changes. As a direct result of this research and what I saw, heard and experienced along the way, there are significant differences in the rationale for the advocacy I will continue to offer.

My respect for classroom teachers has grown immensely, as I am more a-tuned to their experience as non-Special Educators charged with the task of designing, implementing and evaluating programs for students with special needs. As a regular classroom teacher with a background in Special Education, as well as familiarity and comfort with the needs of the students who were welcomed and included in my own classroom, my perspective was limited. Prior to this research, I saw my Special Education expertise in the regular classroom as a good thing – a personal strength. I see now how my own skills and knowledge was in fact a barrier to understanding the broader picture, and a diversion from the real advocacy work for students with special needs that has needed to be done.

A perspective I have gained is related to the importance of differentiating between students with physical or sensory disabilities, and students whose disabilities are intellectual. I entered the Inclusion debate aware that there are obvious differences. Over time I discovered that the practice of lumping them all together has been purposeful. Inclusion advocates for students with severe intellectual disabilities regularly cite research that is specific to non-cognitively impaired individuals. This provides insight into why a model that does not make a whole lot of educational sense for the cognitively impaired individual has been successfully justified. Standing beneath the large umbrella of “disability” has been a convenient way to be a part of the Inclusion mandate.

I have spent the past two years listening to my expert peers and reading the research of my colleagues. I have been nothing less than stymied by the lack of unbiased, empirical research in the field of Special Education. I hope that by arriving to this research effort unresolved and genuinely interested in discovering where we need to go

from here, I have made a credible contribution. At very least, I know that I entered the ring an Inclusion agnostic and leave with strong, clear, defensible convictions.

I have tried to listen and watch with integrity, with openness and without letting the emotion that has pervasively surrounded me throughout my research derail me. I have reached the disparaging conclusion that Inclusion has become an industry in the way that cancer treatment and legal services have succumbed to commercialization. I am convinced there are more people writing books about Inclusion than there are people doing what the books say to do. Inclusion is flourishing remarkably, *as a theory*. As a model whose implementation has actualized the essence of Inclusion, it is a failure.

Guaranteeing students a physical place amongst peers seems an irrelevant piece of the education puzzle for students with disabilities. Their sense of themselves and their relationship with others are foundational to how they construct their world, and how their disability does or does not impact them. Social Constructionist thought has been instrumental in pointing out the fallibility in thinking that there is only one right answer to the educational question of students with special needs. The issue is not whether Inclusion is right or wrong, but rather if it is adequately providing for students who have needs that fall outside what has traditionally been the classroom norm. Teachers have spoken clearly and loudly about what they think, how they feel, and what they believe. Lest we forget, for every teacher who has put a voice to their experience, there are students with their own realities.

So far, the Ministry mandate of Inclusion has not served our children with special needs at a level that is on par with the educational standards of their non-disabled peers. There is significant work to be done in the area of Special Education and encouragingly, teachers are voicing a clear mandate for change.

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