

**INCLUSION:
A CASE STUDY FROM WITHIN**

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Abstract

“Inclusion: A case study from within” is a concentrated viewing of one central question: What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education practice in the inclusive classroom? It is an effort by a special educator to include the classroom teacher in the dialogue of special education practice while allowing the special educator to refine thought about inclusion by hearing and sharing the experience of inclusion with the classroom teacher. The perspective throughout remains that teaching is a dynamic complex process full of specific contexts defined by political, economic and social parameters. This is not a search for the elusive best practice but rather it is a search for workable inclusive practice precepts within the active construction of philosophy in work. Described are the beginnings of insights to guide further reflection, collaborative teacher thought and action, and of decisions about special education in the classroom against the discovery of inner voice in reflection on action, through action, and in action.

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CHAPTER 1

The Argument

Autobiographical Preamble

I began graduate studies at the University of Lethbridge while working as a resource teacher, struggling with an incongruence of educational intent and planned action. I hoped to find clarity of direction for my work so I could enhance the learning of my students. During the time of study my board adopted a policy of inclusion, providing opportunity for active construction of philosophy in work. As I slowly made thoughtful change, always resulting from student need; I located, listened to and articulated my inner voice. I began to broaden my concerns beyond my teaching, looking deeply and widely while problem solving with reflection in action, on action, and about action. An understanding of values and beliefs emerged as I looked at the “practice of teaching”. It became critical to assure “the best education for all Alberta students” (Alberta Education, 1997) by doing the right things. The struggle to inclusion was not mine but I saw the need for change, could not continue on without that change and, in the end, was the consistent voice for the process of inclusion. I was fortunate that my beliefs and structure fit with the political and social climate and prevailing educational initiative of inclusion. It allowed the active construction of philosophy in work while clarifying and restoring inner self to coherence and congruence in word and act. My emerging professional beliefs paralleled the educational initiative.

The argument. The work of including all students in a classroom relies on a

partnership premised on reflective problem solving. It is the teachers, classroom and special education, who must come together and share, must solve problems and construct the opportunities, must wisely determine expertise and resources. This requires a multivocal discourse among equal status participants with different knowledge and skills. When special education moved into the classroom an argument was begun; the special educator entered the classroom teacher's classroom.

I guess this is how changes begin but it is all very frightening. What have I done? And exactly how do I do this now? I only have so many minutes to any day, but student needs have not decreased. I have just added teacher variables! I cannot demand that I be in the room. What I do and how I do it now has such a much broader effect. Is that right? Is that ethical or good? (Journal entry).

Classroom teachers accepted both the students of special education and the teacher of special education into their rooms. In those classrooms the special educator spoke through action giving rise to two requirements: the division of labour into the various tasks that needed to be performed and the coordination of those tasks. The division of labour was based on specialization resulting from the special education students assigned to the individual classroom, but teaching staff remained only minimally dependent on one another. Problems maintained individual ownership. Only when the special educator was in a specific classroom did the classroom teacher and special educator work together. Much of the decision making about the division of labour and the coordination of tasks was done without honouring or respecting either teacher.

Reflections. My career stage (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992), simultaneous with moving

into the classroom of others, made me sensitive to my influence on fellow teachers, the school ethos and culture. As special educator, the process of inclusion made me a 'servant leader' in Sergiovanni's (1992) sense of those words, to inclusion, often without giving to others power or reason to use their own voice.

I know as resource teacher I am in a role of leadership through access to individual classroom functioning. That scares me but I know I have to accept the responsibility as part of the work so the process can happen (Journal entry).

There were inequitable, silencing spaces within and among the special educator and classroom teacher relationships. The resultant crisis in knowledge and the silence became a natural and necessary precondition to refining thinking, viewing, understanding, and practice of what defined special education for classroom teachers and special educators working together toward meeting the learning needs of each student as set out in the goals of Canadian compulsory public education (Berthelot, 1995).

Within the classroom I remained deliberately focussed on the direct and effective support of exceptional students, attempting to enable them to be meaningfully included in the learning activities of the classroom.

I believe student needs are central and place me in an active teaching role. I hold very tightly to my student time because that is what I believe I am here for, what I am good at, what the purpose of the school is. I hate to think 'resource' is only to get a job done. The honour is working with the students (Journal entry).

It was the traditional part of the job I would not let go. I gained satisfaction and success from that role but lacked certainty that it was what the classroom teacher in an

inclusive classroom needed of me.

The mandate of inclusion, a violation of previous norms for all partakers, tolerates many different practices co-existing. In practical terms the potential reform of collaboration and personalization of instructional practices resulting from inclusion (Skrtic, Sailor & Gee, 1996), fit with a need for change within the school. Collectively the school viewed itself with some pride as inclusive. However consistent with research (Elmore, 1992) there remained scant evidence of any real change within the classroom; how teachers taught, what they taught, how children learned, or that the use of resource personnel was worthy. A simulated collaboration had been stimulated by teachers accepting the close proximity and shared teaching responsibility with resource staff. It was readily apparent that if the classroom teachers were going to participate fully in the change of service delivery for all students, there must be more than just an import of special education into the classroom. A dissonance of perspective underscored the need for a sensible approach to pedagogical decisions (Udvari-Solner, 1996) with dialogue (Garnston & Wellman, 1998) leading to collective meaning making and shared understanding. I worked with many teachers within many classrooms in many ways with varying success. Stakeholder preferred practice was often sacrificed to facilitate and expedite acceptance of the enacted policy of inclusion. The special educator, only part of the classroom service available to accommodate the learning needs of students, often determined classroom practice.

Questions. As I remained sensitive to how much staff members expressed about themselves, about how they taught, planned, valued, and thought; I became aware of

how I attached my reason or thought to the classroom. Professional conversation was often discussion or structured problem solving and planning, not always as active participation in teaching. I observed how deceptive, self satisfying and seductive one's own voice could become. In the inclusive classroom, the point of my work should be for me to hear as little of me and as much of the other (student and staff) as possible. The special educator could be a catalyst, never the determinant, for teachers together to examine critically instructional purpose, methods, and outcomes for all students. It was time to examine underlying individual understanding and assumptions as part of a larger study that credited classroom teacher knowledge and that viewed teachers as people whose personal as well as professional lives constituted, revealed, and framed their thoughts to build a more balanced teaching environment for special education. My feelings of disjuncture led me to consider multiple perspectives with greater sensitivity to teacher insights. I needed to listen appreciatively to the voices of the classroom teachers — voices that differed, might jar, might even offend — as they recounted their attempts and explanations of inclusion. This meant hearing and respecting, but also acknowledging, their validity alongside my voice. It was time to make collective meaning and build a common sense of connection and belonging. Questions about the context of my work, my role in the classroom, the focus of special education, and the ethics of the work, had arisen for all partakers. The voices of the classroom and special education needed to be brought to harmony so together they could find mutually satisfactory solutions.

But how can I facilitate for others to find the courage and commitment to reflect, to

look, to consider, and to question the unacceptable even atrocious, as well as the enthusiastic and buoyant so we can actively practice reflection in action, on action and about action? How do I assist when student and staff who work with me may have to accept very real consequences (Journal entry).

Rationale of the Study

Teachers are viewed as both agents of change and obstacles to change. They are expected to play a key role in inclusion, yet their views of learning and teaching are thought to be a major impediment in the process (Udvari-Solner, 1996). Central to all questions on the pathway to inclusion is how to bring all the capacities of each teacher to fullest use (Stoddard, et al., 1996) to support each individual so risk can be taken freely without fear in meeting the learning needs of all students. Surely the intent of inclusion remains for each staff to find their own level of inclusion and to work freely, with the same respect and learning opportunity that is offered to every student. Growth of teacher individuality remains the ultimate guarantor of student individuality.

After a school year working together, the grade level team began evaluating the essence of our work to facilitate goal setting and planning for next year's service. I was conscious of my need for insight into the world of the classroom teacher within the inclusive classroom to increase my thoughtfulness, resourcefulness and effectiveness. It was necessary to become a challenger, asking questions to generate better solutions for all learners. Just as I had worked with the teachers in their classroom examining and considering their context for the student, I now needed them to work with me, to dialogue in our classroom so we could create joint constructs of meaning. By hearing

their voices in inclusion alongside that of the special educator, a more meaningful, harmonious and complete story would be possible with the potential offering of more educationally inclusive classrooms. I needed to hear what constituted the essence of special education in the inclusive classroom from the teacher's perspective to better understand what special education practice the classroom teacher found particularly meaningful or helpful.

My instincts find my kids. I need to consider the bigger picture and gain professional balance. I think special educators create some of their own problems by being well informed about characteristics that distinguish the troubled learner. We have forgotten how to wait, to let the learner try, to trust the person. The biggest stumbling block in full collaboration of classroom and resource teacher is the difference in focus, the tendency for each to overcompensate for the other resulting in strange mixed messages that are anything but moderate. We all need to share more openly. I want to really hear what my colleagues have to say, feel their fears, and be able to share with them the promise I feel. I want to see the child as my colleagues do and then give back the opportunities to the child that every child deserves. Whether it is done by me or by my colleague no longer matters. All I care about is that it is done, and done well. I think I have come to the point where I want to fully include the classroom teacher in my teaching (Journal entry).

It had become necessary to confront the layers of organization that tended to separate us (Barth, 1990; Lortie, 1975) while classifying our work. I needed to determine clearer practices for successful inclusive teaching so teaching expertise of each teacher might

converge, guiding, informing and improving service delivery for all learners more quickly in a school year. As a special educator I had worked in many ways with many people. All had provided a form of collegial relationship allowing for student success. My deliberate focus had always been the student and I had found this allowed for non-threatening entry into the classroom. By working gently and with integrity, I could complement the teacher's teaching so over time I could share the teaching load, pushing to gain co-teaching status. My hope remained to team and work equitably together, but that process requires understanding of what each individual classroom teacher values and sensitivity of appropriate responses meaningful for student learning (Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995). It seemed reasonable that there might be generalized precepts to valued special education service that could clarify the work of the special educator within the inclusive classroom. These might provide a beginning in building the proactive classroom relationship of teacher and special educator. Recognizing and respecting classroom teachers' voices and the worth of the knowledge and experience they articulate, as heard by the special educator, might result in more meaningful special education practice.

It was my own thinking and practice I wanted to challenge and refine using the perspective of the classroom teachers with whom I worked. No educator can operate without making assumptions about goals and exigencies about teaching. But what are the goals for the classroom teacher? How do they differ from those of the special educator? We are socialized into conceptions by training and work experience with

personal inquiry into the ultimate potency and effectiveness of those ideas abandoned until argument arises. The first step to accomplishing the inclusive education mandate was to physically include students and resource personnel into the various classrooms: to have inclusion. Change was made; the norm violated. An argument was begun; an opportunity given.

Whenever norms are violated and deliberate change is made, problems surface and can become legitimate topics of discussion making explicit goals set, beliefs held and their linkage to daily practice. By being included into the classroom and the grade level team, my conceptual framework was brought forward, my beliefs and practice called into question. Joining the classroom teacher in teaching all students presented new challenges daily. Regrouping special education students and staff into heterogeneous classrooms was necessary but not sufficient to create an inclusive classroom. Now it was time to consider how inclusion is translated into an inclusive elementary classroom by the members who create it. The slogan “all children can learn” has found a captive audience but when the goals set for the students are considered and the beliefs that underlie them are elicited, fundamental changes may be required in pedagogy and curriculum. Problems must be addressed and practical resolution sought. It is necessary to confront through practice and dialogue the consistently stable ideological norm of egalitarian public education (Adler, 1983; Barth, 1990; Giroux, 1988; Goodlad, 1984; Hilliard, 1991; Hope & Rendon, 1996; Postman, 1995) — the belief that educational attainment is possible and desirable for all — and to consider how the classroom structures itself and functions (Falvey, Givner & Kimm, 1995; Goodlad & Lovitt, 1993; Kohn, 1996) when it

reflects that belief. Problems had become legitimate as classroom and special educator worked in close proximity setting an opportunity to open dialogue and to seek solutions. As indicated in the literature review, attempts were made to consider the inclusive classroom with its unique support of the labelled and coded students of special education within the broader context of the purpose and goals of public education. Classroom teacher and special educator are both teachers. Methodology and organization are not unique to either but perhaps the philosophy and language are.

The purpose of this study was to provide insights into how the inclusive classroom works, what beliefs and values underlie it, and what special education practice is viewed as essential and meaningful by the classroom teacher. As I unravelled but also created my work I needed to hear promising and successful possibilities so I could recover my students' and my learning opportunities. Legitimate problems had arisen lending themselves to resolution. Only when argument becomes dialogue can solutions be worked out (Sergiovanni, 1996).

An inclusive classroom community requires educators to commit to a shared agenda (Udvari-Solner, 1996) and to use a shared language. Language users make choices when they are making meanings. The choices made highlight and give meaning to what is really said. It is by our words that we know ourselves (Giroux, 1988); by our language that we define our reality (Sergiovanni, 1992). The language of the special educator remained different from the language of the classroom teacher. The conversation of the classroom teacher and special educator needed to take on a more reflective learning purpose (Garmston & Wellman, 1998) to deepen understanding and allow shared

meaning making. Our opportunity for dialogue began when the special educator moved into the classroom, when the argument for inclusion was made. I needed to hear the classroom teachers' voice in response to the argument for the construction of knowledge understanding so I could more effectively facilitate opportunity for all learners within that classroom.

Statement of Purpose

As I considered the question, "Is it possible for my thinking about meeting the learning needs of each student to be refined, even reformulated, with the practice of teaching improved?", I recognized the necessity to begin research by deeply examining what it is classroom teachers require of the special educator. Inclusion asks that the classroom teachers be placed at the center of education delivery but often without much opportunity for dialogue or voice about their practice (Udvari-Solner, 1996). To better understand the classroom teachers' viewpoint in facilitating opportunity for all learners within the inclusive classroom, it was hoped a response, with the potential for an authentic dialogue about beliefs, practices and precepts could be initiated with those teachers. A thesis study concentrating on the question "What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?" was proposed. It had become necessary to hear the classroom teachers' voices in their inclusive classroom to construct the shared agenda necessary to further facilitate opportunity for all learners within the classroom. The study could result in valuable generalizations and possible clarification about the role of special education in the inclusive classroom as well as provide insights into the growth of shared professional responsibility. Hopefully it would

provide opportunity to share in authentic dialogue and perspective about how we best meet the learning needs of all students.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Overview

Inclusion is an argument that attempts to use the force of diversity in a constructive and unifying manner pursuing in a serious way the mandate of education. It is part of a much larger picture than just placement within the regular classroom in the neighborhood school. It attempts to locate education in the broader context of equality, freedom, democracy and community benefit derived from the interaction of all members of a society. To gain an understanding of the background against which the inclusive classroom must be created; to gain insight into what inclusion means and is, what special education in an inclusive classroom looks like and how it functions; and to invite dialogue about the identification of meaningful special education practice in the inclusive classroom, a review of the literature of inclusion was initiated. My perspective throughout is that teaching is a dynamic complex process full of specific contexts (Guskey,1994) defined by political, economic and social parameters. In that process a multitude of carefully, sensibly, and thoughtfully applied ways show success for some students; all methodology tells some truth. This was not a search for the elusive best practice, it is a search for workable inclusive practice. Described are the beginnings of the process of insights that will guide further reflection, collaborative teacher thought and action, and decisions about special education within the inclusive classroom.

The review has three major sections. First, the context of inclusion within public

education in Alberta is summarized. It would be a mistake to believe that an understanding of inclusion can be elucidated in a way that assumes its history is only of incidental importance. The movement towards a Canadian society with equality and inclusion of all citizens along with the educational reform movement create the moment for inclusion in schools. The second section of the review emphasizes the features salient to the inclusive classroom abstracted from the literature. In the third section, the role of special education within the inclusive classroom is considered. It is hoped the participatory democratic approach of collaborative action research gives form and substance to the ideas through a self-reflective critical community committed to the development of education for all. There is no blueprint but there are guiding thoughts.

Inclusion's Place in Alberta Education

Education's mandate. Historically schooling in Alberta has been adjustive — adjustive in the sense that a central stated goal of education is to prepare persons to fit into “our” society and stimulate their interest in movement up the socio-economic ladder (Manzer, 1994). Recent education conflicts and policy developments appear to revolve around three adjustive principles, all having important impact on the move to broader inclusion of individuals. First, education is considered an essential condition for individual economic opportunity (Andrews, et al., 1993; Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Contenta, 1993). Hence its purposes must give appropriate weight to the preparation of young people for work and the benefits of education must be equally accessible to all. Second, public schools serving a multicultural, multilinguistic, and multid denominational society must give equal respect to all students regardless of religion, language, ethnicity,

ability or status (Andrews, et al., 1993; Berthelot, 1995). Third, because membership in a community is good for individuals, public education must provide for the education of young people in their various communities (Andrews, et al., 1993; Barth, 1990; Costa, 1991; Postman, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994). The ideal projected is a society founded on the principle of universal human development, in which all persons have equal opportunity to develop fully their special abilities and participate freely in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their community.

Most Albertans (Andrews, et al., 1993; University of Alberta, Alberta Education, 1991) agree that all students must be full participants in school and society, and that children have the right to be foremost children, not viewed as a label or category. By legislation and deed the people of Alberta have committed to the policy that its citizens should be able to live and be educated within their own communities. Alberta Education's *Meeting the Challenge II* (no date) begins with the education system envisioned based on principles and beliefs that include:

All students can learn and experience success

All students have the right of equitable access to a quality education program that meets their diverse needs

Students are entitled to a safe, secure and caring learning environment where each individual is respected and valued

Quality educational programs develop the total person — social, physical, intellectual, cultural and emotional dimensions (Alberta Education, no date).

As John Goodlad (1984) wrote in his classic study, it does not seem to matter what our

individual experiences with a place called school were. To think seriously about education continues to conjure up intriguing possibilities and make for dreams of a way of life scarcely tried. Education is a hypothesis; not a conclusion (Postman, 1995).

Even though schools have not lived up to the potential of education's promise (Zimond, et al., 1995) the vision remains. The underlying optimistic hope of purpose is that the school, together with the parent can assist each individual student in achieving what is in the student's best educational interests based on equality, sharing, participation, and the worth and dignity of the individual. Yet the definition of education remains individual. There is no general consensus of what to expect from schools (Contenta, 1993; Lewington & Orpwood, 1995; Willis, 1980) or how to ascertain when those beliefs are being realized. It appears though one can be wise or unwise about education, one cannot be definitive. What is worth teaching is ultimately a value judgement; a dynamic of modification, refinement, enlightenment, and correction. In spite of an abundance of literature on the aims and purposes of education, the only certainties seem to be that all children should be schooled and the importance of equity in their treatment. It remains a matter of ethical responsibility and accountability for each school and classroom to clearly state their values for the children surrendered to them.

Current official policy studies (Manzer, 1994) accept that public education is a complex enterprise with multiple social, economic, and political objectives intent on creating a public. Public schools are human communities and public symbols; the classroom real and definable. Though it is probable the "intriguing possibilities" (Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975) maintain the purpose and direction, the existence and

operation of each classroom is defined by politics, economics, and social structure (Giroux, 1988; Kohl, 1982). The politics change, the economics vary, and whose social structure is often brought into question, but these realities maintain the parameters of what the classroom is, what the classroom can be, and how it operates. In the School Act of Alberta, assurance is made that "all children will be guaranteed access to the education system" (Alberta Education, 1988, p.3) and further the right of access to a program that addresses their unique needs. Regardless of need or ability, all children are to attend school. Furthermore, Alberta Education supports that first placement option for the education of students should be the regular classroom of the neighborhood school. Mandatary legislation requires boards to provide education for all children regardless of exceptionality. The education of all children has a common base and a common place. The political and social background to schooling is defined. In contrast to the belief of all children experiencing success in learning within the regular classroom (Geddert, 1992), exists the reality and problem of individual school experiences which do not meet the stated schooling goals and objectives. The Alberta School Act recognizes that certain characteristics alone or in combination, may necessitate the provision of special education. Pupils are identified as having special needs when they require special programs because of behavioral, communicational, intellectual, learning or physical characteristics; they require specialized health services, or when they have talents that bring their educational needs outside the range of what is being offered in a regular age appropriate program.

Students with special needs are those who require changes to any or all of the

following:

- regular curriculum
- staffing
- instructional and evaluation strategies
- materials or resources
- facilities or equipment (Alberta Education, 1995, page 5).

These students are additionally served by special education. Research indicates that given adequate resources, schools should be able to assist more students (Hope & Rendon, 1996; McLaughlin, 1993; Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990; Porter & Brophy, 1987) to be more successful. Although various interventions suggest positive impact on academic and social outcomes, no intervention reliably improves every student performance. The notion of some educationally disadvantaged students is tacitly accepted; even the best instructional programs (including those of special education) do not ensure success for every child (Cohen, 1992; Gersten, Walker & Darch, 1988; Phillips, 1992; Slavin, 1996). It is a fact that some young people are not provided the education they require (Contenta, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Lewington & Orpwood, 1995; Winebrenner, 1992; 1996). This is a failure that remains the most serious and complex problem of schools.

Special education. Given the disappointing outcomes documented for many students, it is not surprising that effort was continued to resolve the problem of educational failure so more students could achieve the outcomes desired for all students. Special education resulted from the conclusion that the classroom was not successful in providing an education for exceptional students. The diversity of learning in the

classroom was and continues to be addressed by various sorting and labeling with resultant categorical programming, usually away from the regular classroom. Special education did not develop on the basis of empirical research or evaluation. It arose from need and as a specialized service helped but perhaps not as well as it could. Research has not been able to link specific learner aptitudes to specific instructional practice or to match curriculum and instruction to student traits (Algozzine & Maheady, 1986; King-Sears, 1997). In the past special education focused on the teaching of pupils and did not ask whether individual learning needs could be better met in a special segregated classroom than in the regular classroom. Nor did it consider whether and how segregation offered better promise than that of the classroom. The judicial system (Court of Appeal for Ontario, C19214. December 21, 1994), an independent and freestanding institution, correctly questioned why education would have chosen segregation from the mainstream in the best interests of any when segregation in all areas of communal life is viewed in a burdensome, disadvantageous, discriminatory or disciplinary way. But by viewing school achievement as a derivative of natural ability, schools organized themselves based on academic needs and unintentionally limited other learning opportunities. The broader social context for the acquisition of skills necessary to operate effectively as contributing members of a community were ignored. The often resultant difference in pace through rigidly sequenced, strategy specific curriculum led to ever greater coverage and opportunity differences (Oakes & Lipton, 1996). Through effort to understand and provide consideration of student differences, the defining, identification, and segregation of the educationally disadvantaged occurred. What

started as an effort to customize schooling based on student differences evolved into an entire system of education often emphasizing services not benefits.

Special education has provided categorical educational access to many children who previously had not been successfully schooled in the regular classroom. It has further included many who had never been schooled into the process of education by providing specialized programs. Within special education is as rich a variety of philosophy and practice as the students it seeks to serve are diverse. The full continuum from strategy specific teaching for a homogeneity of disability to a strong preference and presumption for regular education placement for all students at all times is represented. Special education remains an effort to remediate and compensate through intensive work and specialized training (Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990; Yatvin, 1992) those disadvantaged educationally. The intent and purpose of special education is to better serve students and to assist classroom teachers (Andrews, et al., 1993) in meeting the diverse needs of the classroom. The implementation, delivery and ultimate responsibility for special placement and programming, is left with the individual boards and schools.

Just as there is no agreement on the goals of public education, there seems to exist no one right way for special education to assist educators. If education has taught anything, it is that we do not know the right answers all the time (Postman, 1995). What we do know is that different people have different needs, that it is appropriate to treat all with respect, and that at various times we borrow from each other and need each other's help. Ultimately we share the purpose of living together and hopefully, together we can find the right questions. We can argue, experiment, document, research, complain,

grieve, rejoice and argue some more because diversity does not lend itself to simple solutions or neat formulas. As educational institutions are called on to serve an unprecedented configuration of differences, it is not some strange logic that calls for the regular school system to take over responsibility for pupils it has already demonstrated it failed (Keogh, 1988). This is more a correction factor required after years of practice in a changing society. Rather than continue with special education's focus of defining increasing differences as a handicap or problem to achievement, a different paradigm — one that sees differences as defining humanness, handicaps as a degree of difference — has been presented. This view considers differences within the regular classroom as possibility, not as a problem. It is having sufficient will to do what needs doing on a scale broad enough to affect many.

Inclusion's root. Inclusion does not have its roots as an educational issue. Our schools have no authority to reconstruct society on their own nor are they the exclusive agency responsible for educating the next generation. Movement toward the inclusion of special education students into the regular classroom has been largely a sociopolitical process resulting from intense advocacy of disability groups (Andrews, et al., 1993; Roeher Institute, 1992; Sobsey & Dreimanis, 1993) in a favorable political and social climate. Inclusion in the school parallels and reflects the greater inclusion of exceptionality into society. Indeed it follows inclusion of exceptionality within the family. Present recognition, reinforced by empirical evidence, that specialized service away from the classroom has not fulfilled the hopes of improved achievement, adds credibility. Educational research has further resulted in the questioning of basic special

education assumptions. There is continued suggestion that students mainstreamed into regular education enjoy advantages of greater expectation (Allison & Paquette, 1991; Hilliard, 1991; Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990; Oakes & Lipton, 1996; Slavin, 1996; Yatvin, 1992), improved self esteem (Beane, 1991; Cipellone, Grady & Simmons, 1996; Rossi & Springfield, 1995), improved future possibilities (Goodlad & Lovitt, 1993; Hilliard, 1991; Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990; Oakes & Lipton, 1996), more relevant curriculum and materials (Oakes & Lipton, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1995; Wang, 1989), more opportunity to contribute (Slavin, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1990), and improved learning (Cipellone, Grady & Simmons, 1996; Goodlad & Lovitt, 1993). These possible advantages of mainstreamed education are difficult to disregard in the greater context of society.

Politically and socially there is a move toward the principle of "normalization", defined as the creation of lifestyle and set of living conditions for people with disabilities which are as close as possible to those enjoyed by the rest of the population. Inclusion in all areas calls into question the rarely admitted prevailing attitude that innate ability determines success, particularly school success. The very decision to define the ability of a population is of political, economic and social importance as a determinant of the action and its recipients. How the school chooses to assess children in determining their educational fate is the clearest expression of its values. What is used to make critical decisions about children (Reschly, 1996) determines the curriculum of the school. Research suggests that as long as outside program options exist, regular education does not need to create a learning environment that lets children succeed. If education focuses

on the differences of the individual, restructuring of the learning environment to accommodate all children will not occur (Sapon-Shevin, 1992). How important an argument is depends on its gathering, the time and place of its telling; on the politics, economics, and social structure. At this time inclusion is important.

Identifying Inclusion

Research suggests that there is a broad continuum of understanding, organization and acceptable practice embraced by inclusion (Catlett & Osher, 1993) resulting in a lack of coherent definition. The concept is still evolving. What is agreed on is that inclusion includes all students in regular education goals (Richler, 1991) and membership (Stainback & Stainback, 1990; Villa & Thousand, 1995) and that it places the complete student in the center of a constructivist learning approach involving all stakeholders (Rameriz, 1996). Implied is that most children will be educated in the general education classroom for the majority, if not all, of the school day. A better understanding of the academic and non academic scaffolds a student requires to succeed in school and life are outlined jointly by all stakeholders in the Individualized Education Plan and used to build meaningful learning success for the individual student.

The absence of clear consistent program goals (Catlett & Osher, 1993) and tolerance of a wide diversity of program implementation make a concise definition of essential characteristics difficult. Inclusion is not based on strategies, projects or programs (Guild & Garger, 1985; Lewis & Doorlag, 1991) though some are more likely to encourage and facilitate its success. Literature suggests the following as an incomplete but essential list to define an inclusive classroom:

- **inclusion means a climate of acceptance with a zero-rejection philosophy so that typically no student would be excluded. Students attend the school to which they would go if they had no disability (Andrews, et al., 1993; Falvey, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989).**
- **age and grade-appropriate school and general education placements with high learning expectations provided through individualized approaches to curriculum, assessment and instruction based on the Individual Education Plan (Falvey, Givner & Kimm, 1995).**
- **inclusion focuses on everyone's abilities and possibilities, not on disabilities and limitations. It acknowledges that everyone has different skills, talents and gifts to offer. Inclusion is about recognizing and accepting differences in positive and productive ways (Stainback & Stainback, 1995; Villa & Thousand, 1995).**
- **inclusion means all school staff, students and parents work together in an active partnership (Roehrer Institute, 1992).**
- **sufficient supports to students and staff are provided within the context of the general education class and other integrated environments (Geddert, 1992; Hammeken, 1995; Johnson, Johnson, Holubec & Roy, 1984).**
- **the classroom teacher remains responsible for all students in the classroom and is involved in all program decision making. The school is responsible for addressing the unique needs of all children.**
- **inclusion is a daily, on-going process, changing all the time (Idol, 1997).**

How a school or district defines inclusion through mission and goal statements appears a

critical factor (Idol, 1997; McLaughlin, 1993) determining the extent of inclusion of all students and staff. At issue is an acceptance of the equality of all learners and the freedom for all learners to learn. These two founding values of inclusion (and education) exist in permanent tension and the democratic challenge consists in extending their scope without separating them.

As a moral, just, and democratic initiative based on beliefs and values (Falvey, Givner & Kimm, 1995) inclusion results in an attitude from which all decisions and actions within the school should be driven. When teachers believe all students belong and can learn successfully in the classroom, it is communicated throughout the learning and teaching processes in that classroom. This invisible, implicit and often taken for granted flow of beliefs and assumptions give meaning to what is said and done. In an inclusive classroom it should be evident in the choice of material taught, type of instruction given, as well as classroom management and organization. The belief that education should be centered on the individual results in modifications made to education methods, practice, environment and curriculum – not in modifying the individual. When a learning experience is inadequate, it is the experience that requires perfecting not the student. The student, regardless of degree or nature of disability or difference, is welcomed and valued as a member of the regular classroom. All educational decisions begin with the student, not to fix or make whole, but to result in successful learning. Inclusion requires an educational perspective that takes into account the total child and that the best teaching practices (Idol, 1997) are applicable to all students. The student is taught the regular curriculum with modification and adaption as required, by the classroom teacher

who is supported as needed. Inclusion involves many practices that are ultimately practices of all good teaching (Good & Brophy, 1987; McLaughlin, 1993; Porter & Brophy, 1987) and are what good teachers do when they think carefully about children and develop ways to teach all of them. Against this framework of belief and values, the inclusive classroom has three identifiable variables involving special education: the creation of the inclusive community, curriculum adaptations to meet all learners' needs, and effective teaching strategies for diversity.

The classroom as inclusive community. A clear objective of inclusion is that students will develop an understanding and respect for one another's differences, and will build a community (Rockwell, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1994) that will find ways in which to support and nurture each others' learning. The concept of community and connectedness is not unique to inclusion, echoing throughout the literature of school reform (Barth, 1990; Goodlad, 1984; Postman, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992;1994; Sizer, 1973). In inclusion the emphasis of community translates into classroom organization and management so everyone belongs and is accepted, supports and is supported (Rossi & Springfield, 1995; Stainback, Stainback & Forest, 1989). It is creating the most enabling learning environment. The classroom becomes a relationship (Barth, 1990) and teaching a virtuous endeavor imbued with moral gravity (Sergiovanni, 1992) and example. Concepts of community, shared social responsibility and democratic decision making lie at the heart of the inclusive classroom (Barth, 1990; Falvey, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989). Inclusion is an education, actively teaching through the classroom. It remains a dynamic interplay between manifest and hidden curriculum.

The organization and management of the inclusive classroom is ultimately the responsibility of the classroom teacher. The teacher, as servant (Sergiovanni, 1992), accepts the responsibility to do everything possible for the full range of students accepted. By explicitly and overtly teaching all human life has equal value, differences are not viewed as handicaps. All children are encouraged to grow at their individual pace with every child potentially being a child of special needs (Pierpoint, 1990; Villa & Thousand, 1995). Since school is supposed to assist in the learning of coping, communication, and problem solving, the teacher facilitates solution finding and achieving with the children. As much attention is given to enablement as to empowerment: allowing all stakeholders to work together to problem solve and take the initiatives necessary to make things work as they should. A new culture results – one that demands a more complete and accurate picture of who we are, of our history, contemporary condition and future as it reflects the totality of the human experience (Phillips, 1992; Pierpoint, 1990; Pierpoint, Forest & Snow, 1992). The intentional inclusion of a different configuration of individuals who define problems and opportunities within a broader context, also allows for different solutions and achievements. This is lived out and forms the basis for action and decision. The teacher uses the classroom to look at itself and align practice with what it says it teaches (Falvey, 1995; Kohn, 1992; 1996; Lickona, 1994). The classroom must discover how to invite students (Sizer, 1973) into the learning arena, how to create situations in which the students see other people doing what they can begin to imagine doing themselves, how to sustain their participation in the group enterprise, how to keep conversations going, and

how to respond to what they are trying to do.

The inclusive classroom begins with the unconditional acceptance of every learner by the teacher, developing into the unconditional acceptance by the student and classroom. Each becomes an important and worthwhile member with responsibilities and a role to support others; each is essential to create the whole. All are less without any. Students are validated not only for the qualities they have in common but also for their uniqueness. All students are consciously and continuously affirmed for efforts and contributions. Students learn through active involvement that each member's participation is important, and thereby learn to appreciate all levels of performance and to accept different kinds of contributions. Expectations must be held high because educators have very little idea of what any child can achieve. It would be irresponsible to state limits without providing for possibilities. The focus is not on how to help a particular group of students to fit into the mainstream, rather the focus is how to operate the classroom and school as supportive communities that include and meet the needs of everyone. The idea of children having to be "normal" in order to contribute is abandoned. No longer is it a matter of getting the child ready for the regular classroom but rather the classroom is prepared for the child. The inclusive teacher focuses on removing obstacles, providing materials, and emotional support, taking care of management details that make learning easier and possible, sharing in the comradeship of the experience, celebrating success, and then together identifying new worthy destinations. The focus is on enabling; on thinking, seeing and considering all possibilities and maximizing the opportunities. To learn should not mean modifying the individual. Each individual must be assured the

freedom to think and come to truth by light of mind and conscience with the equal right to do, to be, to believe, to feel and to learn. Education is not a competition (Kohn, 1992;1993;1996) but rather is a preparation in a broad sense for a rich and full life in an increasingly complex world, ensuring personal development, the development of critical thought, social conscience, and the acquisition of a sum of knowledge. Each student holds a voice in classroom decision making and opportunities to teach students how to thoughtfully work toward answers are used in the community building. Class members learn that their actions both individually and collectively can influence. These beliefs and assumptions call up the most deeply felt passions about who we are, as individuals and as members of multiple groups, and about the kind of society we aspire to shape.

Although the body of literature examining the issue of likely impact of inclusion on students without disabilities is small, in general these studies (Fisher, Schumaker & Deshler, 1995) have indicated that students without disabilities do not suffer from being in classes serving students with disabilities. Instead there is suggestion that all students benefit academically from the programs that created the inclusive classroom. Research on the integration of students with severe mental disabilities emphasizes the social and emotional benefits to children and teachers, showing increased awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities, increased levels of social development in children, increased willingness to work with students with disabilities and increased skills for teachers (York, Vandercook, Macdonald, 1992). Research further suggests that academic progress may be bolstered because of the higher expectation and opportunity available, allowing for

more challenging content and positive model presentation. Studies further indicate that though academic outcomes for students with disabilities are positive, no intervention eliminates the impact of having a disability on the disabled student's level of achievement.

Within inclusion, the focus is always the individual student, and how best to meet the learning needs of each within the classroom learning group. The strengths and the weaknesses of each student are considered in relationship to their learning goals within the parameters of the classroom. The teacher must then evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the classroom, maximizing education within the classroom while at the same time recognizing the challenges and limitations of knowledge and resources.

Strategies. Clearly placement in a mainstream classroom, even one based on community, will not guarantee successful outcomes for all students. If students are to be successful, teachers need information about educational practices that will allow them to meet student need within the context of the institutional demands of the school. Surprisingly few inclusive practices are validated by research. A search by the University of Kansas found only twenty-nine studies describing the effects of different inclusive practices (Fisher, Schumaker & Deshler, 1995). There is no specific data showing one should teach exceptional students differently from others. Good instruction is good instruction (Elmore, 1992; Good & Brophy, 1987). Research indicates that those most promising for improving the learning outcomes for all learners can be grouped as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, content enhancement routines, and strategy instruction.

Cooperative learning approaches assign students to heterogeneous teams of four or

five to achieve common academic goals. While in teams the students are assigned a task and work together to complete it. To do so, the parts of an assigned task are often divided among team members, and the members monitor, assist, and provided feedback on each other's work. Instructional methods such as direct instruction, small group instruction and independent practice are combined with cooperative learning to teach skills and information. Cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, Holubec & Roy, 1984) appears to have potential for assisting students to progress academically and to be better accepted by their peers.

Peer tutoring (Topping, 1988) is a category of inclusive practice whereby students work in pairs or teams with one member serving as a tutor or teacher, providing instruction to the other. While the primary goal of peer tutoring is to improve academic achievement, other goals include development of cooperative work habits and increased positive social interaction. Peer tutoring may facilitate academic growth, but it also appears to promote fluency rather than initial acquisition of information.

Content enhancement routines are inclusive teaching practices that combine an interactive instructional sequence with a teaching device. Strategies instruction (Winebrenner, 1996) seeks to help students become self-regulated learners, individuals who have knowledge of how to learn as well as knowledge of how to effectively use what they have learned. Commonly strategies instruction is separate from content instruction and requires additional classroom instructional time and integration into the cognitive curriculum.

Direct instruction is a comprehensive curriculum, classroom management, and

teaching system that includes teaching skills in small sequenced steps, providing immediate feedback and offering frequent student-teacher interaction. Research suggests that learning under direct instruction appears optimal for students with disabilities when they respond to many questions during the course of a lesson and the teacher provides step-by-step instruction.

A vision of educational strategies that reflect an appreciation of the whole individual are required (Wang, 1989) in an inclusive classroom. The interventions must be powerful enough to help all students learn while fitting the realities of the classroom. The difficulty inherent in creating powerful and practical practices is evident in the low number validated.

Curriculum considerations. Including all students in the regular classroom provides schools and teachers with challenges as curriculum design (Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995) can either intercept or exacerbate learning difficulties and curriculum is after all the heart of schooling. The challenge in the inclusive classroom is to provide for the whole student and to frame dilemmas from a proactive perspective in which the target of the intervention is the curriculum and its relationship to the student. Inherent in inclusion is faith that all people can improve and continue to improve their intellectual capacities, that learning to think is as valid a goal for the 'at risk', the handicapped, the disadvantaged, and the troubled, as for the gifted and talented. This does not discount the very real differences each learner brings to instruction or the knowledge of instruction professional educators possess but the concern shifts the focus from factors over which teachers have little control to those that are amenable and capable of preventing and remediating

failure. Reasonableness of the curriculum for the individual must be considered, and then consideration of how to adapt and modify it, based on a sound understanding of curriculum goals (Warger & Pugach, 1996) is necessary. Inclusion accepts that not all subject matter content is equal in teaching for understanding and that learning and teaching must be personalized. The curriculum must be organized to develop in each student as much independence and integration into the community as possible. Inclusion emphasizes that all students can leave school with the skills to manage academics, get along with people, and deal with the exigencies of living as members in and of a complex society. Assistance is provided in a way that promotes increased student independence enabling the student to participate in class and school activities with as little identifiable support as possible. This is a developing area with only a limited number of studies examining the effects of revised curricula on the achievement of students. Student achievement has often translated into giving each student the same learning conditions while accepting the bell curve of results. However research (Corno & Snow, 1986; MacMillan, Keogh & Jones, 1986) has brought into question such action by showing that under appropriate learning conditions, students differ in the rate of learning, but not in the level to which they can achieve or in their basic capacity to learn.

Role of Special Education in the Inclusive Classroom

Inclusion requires a change in the role of special educators; asking that they give up their classroom, give up their curricula, even give up their students, to negotiate a partnership with classroom teachers to best meet the learning needs of all students within the inclusive classroom. Rather than working separately in segregated settings, inclusion

makes special educators part of a unified resource system in the classroom. Inclusion does not imply the withdrawal of services, supports or specialized programming for special students. The teachers, from the classroom and from special education, must come forward and share, solving the problems together, and providing opportunities, expertise and resources while respecting each other's individuality as they should the students'. Teaming approaches are used for problem solving and program implementation. Central to all the questions on the pathway to inclusion, is how to bring all the capacities of each teacher to fullest use to support all learners, including each other, so risk can be taken freely while providing the conditions for learning. The intent remains for each staff to find their own level of inclusion and to work freely, with the same respect and learning opportunity that is offered to every student. Inclusion does not have one path or one face. It deals with acceptance of every individual beginning with self. While there are many models and examples of success, inclusive teaching cannot be reduced to a simple formula.

Isolation of the teaching profession has long been recognized (Barth, 1990; Lortie, 1975) and the possibilities of educators working closely together have intrigued professionals for reasons unrelated to inclusion. It is the equity of investment and need along with the complementary difference in perspective and skills that makes the collaboration of inclusive educators unique (Cook & Friend, 1995). Classroom teachers come into the partnership with expertise in understanding, structuring and pacing the curriculum for groups of students; special educators bring expertise in identifying unique learning needs and strengths of individuals, and in how to enhance curriculum and

instruction to meet those needs. For effective inclusion to occur, the teaching expertise of each must converge (Andrews, et al.,1993; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995). Together they must alter the general education classroom conditions that previously necessitated the referral of students to special education. One of inclusion's most powerful and actively demonstrated messages is that working together, problems can be solved; that each is uniquely necessary to the other to achieve greater success. Whether the special education teacher works as consultant to the regular classroom or co-teaches or defines a different supporting role, professional dialogue with creative shared problem solving becomes part of the resources available to the classroom teacher. Grounded in the needs and aspirations of the exceptional student, inclusion is committed to supporting the education of all learners, consistent with the principles of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It challenges participants to draw on a reservoir of existing knowledge to design and embrace strategies that raise the achievements for all children and broaden the possibilities and opportunities by including special educators within the classroom.

With the classroom teacher responsible for all the students of the classroom, special education can act in more roles than just direct service to special learners. Supports needed to address the needs within a classroom are no longer exclusively attached or focused on the student needs, but extend to include the needs of the classroom teacher, classroom peers, and all members of the inclusion team (Van Dyke, Stallings & Colley, 1995). A wide range of service to the classroom can be considered all beginning with the collaborative dialogue of classroom and special educator. Together they must identify the type of informal supportive relationship or professional support desired. The process

of collaborating in determining the supports they would like in the classroom follows, moving finally to assisting in organizing and implementing identified supports deemed most appropriate or worthwhile. Through collaboration and cooperation, highly personalized opportunities to acquire new skills, expertise, insights, and resources are made available to teachers as well as students. The capacity of general education to accommodate student diversity and increase meaningful participation while improving achievement outcomes of students within the general education structure of the classroom should result. Care must be taken in the emergent definition of each teacher so the meaningfulness of the school experience is not diminished for any. Special educators must not be viewed as mechanisms for teacher evaluation or supervision, nor as experts with outside solutions. The growth of teacher individuality is the ultimate guarantor of student individuality. When teachers work collaboratively to develop a vision for student success, they deliberately plan for and establish the environments that motivate learning. The collaborative process is a powerful way of sharing and refining thoughts, beliefs, and instructional processes (Idol, 1997). During reflections teachers need to assess deliberately whether they believe that all students can learn, the rights of children to experience success in the classroom regardless of ability, and the teachers' own role in student learning, what children should learn and must know.

Inclusion asks of teachers what they ask of students: to commit and be authentic, live school, make emotion legitimate, be in touch with their basic beliefs and values, accept connections to others, and to lead so all become self-learners and self-managers. When respect for all is taken seriously, the servant mode (Sergiovanni, 1992) with the norms

and values associated with professionalism will define teaching. It is what goes on in that classroom and the attitudes and working styles of the teaching team that are the real measure of inclusion. To achieve a format responsive to the needs of students while being feasible for the teachers, it is critical to engage in authentic dialogue about the beliefs and principles used to identify and recognize if and when the regular classroom program is not meeting a student's needs. Inclusion strives to provide an appropriate education for all students, no matter how diverse or what the needs, within the classroom. The decision in an inclusive classroom to refer a given student for possible special education assistance has quite practical implications resulting in its organization and programming. The focus for teaching staff remains the identification of the student whose learning needs are not being met by the classroom program and the need to include that student in learning. The problem or failure is from within. Classroom teacher and special educator collaborate in the decision making, problem solving, and service delivery. Inclusion should strengthen the voice of classroom teachers by validating and enabling them to exert control through collaborative choice and enactment of the solution that best appears to suit the learner requirements within the inclusive classroom. The stressors become the resources to the solution. In inclusion, referral out should not be necessary as all services should be available to the teacher to access freely within the classroom. Certainly classroom teachers will become more adept at managing the larger range of students and resources they've been given, more aggressive about asserting their competence to teach all students, but also more insistent about getting the help they know they need. Their voice should connect inclusive theory and practice by

clarifying what special education help they find most meaningful within the inclusive classroom.

The truth is, good special education teaching is no different from good regular classroom teaching (Yatin, 1992). Within the inclusive classroom special educators continue, by default, to perform many of the traditional special education work roles when the inclusive classroom presents a new paradigm offering other opportunities and perspectives. The role of the special educator may well become that of a case manager for students, facilitating team meetings and planning sessions, being responsible for determining curriculum adaptations (Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995), facilitating the development of the individualized program plan (IPP) by the team, the documentation of IPP fulfillment, the liaison with therapists and external agencies, and as a team player supporting the classroom teacher in maintaining the inclusive classroom.

Conclusion

Summary of readings. At issue in every inclusive learning situation is an acceptance of the equality of all learners and the freedom for all learners to learn. These two founding values of inclusion (and education) exist in permanent tension with the democratic challenge inherent of extending their scope without separating them. In the inclusive classroom this is further translated through the tension defining balance for classroom management, effective instruction, and learning achievement: the classroom teacher's perspective against that of the special educator's. Classroom teachers accept the challenge of meeting the needs of all learners each day as they admit learners into their classrooms, but they also accept their own frailty and humanity, knowing they

cannot meet all needs at all times for all students. Teachers will revise classroom practice so the special educator can be used to more benefit but in spite of adaptations and modifications, what practice is viewed as most beneficial to the classroom remains unanswered. While we attempt to make the classroom inclusive in the best sense for as many students as possible; we must remain attached to the teaching reality, the classroom teacher's reality. The support and collaboration of special educators may not alleviate unsuccessful individual learning experiences within an inclusive classroom unless there is clear dialogue and supported work by all stakeholders. To assume that a developed, proven model will result in the needs of students being appropriately addressed is to underestimate the complexity of individuals, the differences that exist across school settings, and the desire for input and ownership on the part of those involved in seeking the solutions (Guskey, 1994). At some point the classroom teacher will consider some student's needs beyond those of the regular classroom program. It is necessary to begin the argument and ask clearly what the support of the special educator should look like. Rather than continue to have special education assume what must be done, it is necessary to ask of the classroom teacher what is viewed as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom. This will allow shared problem solving, respectful and dignified support of everyone's differences, as well as access to appropriate resources. The authentic dialogue between classroom teacher and special educator, resulting from the legitimate problem will make explicit the educational goals set, the beliefs held, and the linkage to daily practice (Sergiovanni, 1996). Such dialogue may lead to resolution and empowerment to seek the resources and create the solutions

necessary for greater educational inclusion of all learners. Each solution must be developed and implemented at the school level and tailored to the individual needs of the situation. It is the learning experience for all learners that must be viewed. The language used to describe and clarify the problem may present the stressors and resources available for resolution. The dialogue between classroom teacher and special educator may refine or reformulate teaching so the shifting learning needs of students and staff can be met, or it may require involving further resources. How teachers of inclusive classrooms determine when the classroom is no longer inclusive for all learners remains a highly individual but fundamental issue. There seemed no knowing of how to respond, only the need to listen.

Response to the argument of inclusion. The response to the argument of inclusion was initiated by the classroom teachers through the active creation of a grade level team based on the need for effective teaching and service delivery, collaborative problem solving, and communication — a need parallel to the need of special education in a more inclusive model. The team, consisting of the grade level classroom teachers and assigned special educator, began to assume joint responsibility for the grade level classrooms without discussing the reasons for why things were done as they were done. Special education became in a sense efficient ‘case management’ with resources defined as aspects which helped an individual cope better in the classroom. Much of the service resulted from an adherence to traditional routine, formula, habit, convention or standardized ways of speaking and acting. Included in the resources was the special education teacher.

That is not to say what we are doing is the only way to work or even the best or right way to work. I am sure it is not. But I know with certainty it is working with what we have and are given, trying to meet the needs of everyone as best we can (Journal entry).

The grade level team worked together, worked with each other, and shared in success and failure. Information and resources became common to the grade level and were no longer attached to one specific classroom. Classrooms became inclusive with no student excluded (Andrews, et al., 1993; Falvey, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989); student placements were age and grade appropriate with learning expectations provided through written individualized education plans for special education students (Falvey, Givner & Kimm, 1995); abilities and possibilities (Stainback & Stainback, 1995; Villa & Thousand, 1995) were considered along with the weaknesses and concerns; staff, students, and parents began to work together (Roehrer Institute, 1992); and the classroom teacher assumed greater responsibility for all students in the classroom.

We have become reliant on each other and what is available, sharing with trust to make a workable compromise however possible (Journal entry).

Although "collegial relationships" may be the least common form of relationship among adults in schools (Barth, 1990) in this experience the teachers desired and appreciated a collegial relationship after having shared the classroom and team work. It was not difficult to move from the parallel role to a full collegial one. Now was the time to ask each classroom teacher what special education help in the inclusive classroom they found meaningful. The dialogue could begin.

CHAPTER 3

The Study From Within

Procedure of the Study

Qualitative research. The question of “What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?” lent itself to qualitative research because the phenomenological paradigm holds that reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of situation (Merriam, 1988). This study considered the joint construct of the inclusive classroom by special educator and classroom teacher while building a new collective understanding through a shared definition of the process and work. It established cognizance of inclusion from a broader social viewpoint to include classroom teacher and special educator. The inclusive classroom was both the source and the object of the research.

Because of the need to suspend all presuppositions (van Manen, 1990) so the lived experience of inclusion could be discussed, the research approach and the reflective pedagogic approach was used. Through self-reflective methods that focused on how we construct our teaching, we utilized a democratized process of inquiry characterized by negotiation and reciprocity among the researcher and the researched (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Methods of written response, conversational interviewing, repeated inquiry, and recollection of experience were used. In an effort to move beyond autobiographical descriptions of lived experience and to progress from own experience to the possible experience of others, the research focus took alternate perspectives considering many

possibilities centered on the special education help in the inclusive classroom. The same question was asked over and over in different ways and in different forms. The shifting interactions, expectations and subjectivities were at the heart of the inquiry (Weber, 1986). After the initial questionnaire, the question of what was meaningful special education help in the classroom was asked and asked again in the classroom, in discussion, in the closing interview and throughout the reflective journal. Research means looking and looking again (van Manen, 1990).

The phenomenological orientation necessarily includes the willingness by all involved to risk and to change as evidenced by the attempts of all participants to reflect on action, through action and with action on the special education service in the inclusive classroom. The research attempted to make explicit and identify what was considered meaningful special education practice in the inclusive classroom. Alternate models were jointly considered and evaluated. As van Manen (1990) suggests, the end of research for educators should be critical pedagogical competence; an understanding resulting in knowledge of and action in pedagogical circumstance based on "edified thoughtfulness". It was accepted explicitly that how educators live and work cannot be separated from action. As phenomenological methodology is a natural process constantly evolving (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), constantly reshaping and molding teaching practice, it was appropriate for this study. The voices of the classroom teachers in relation to the issue of inclusion and meaningful special education practice in the inclusive classroom were gathered against the context of the special educator's journal.

As special educator I had worked with the grade level team according to my job

description, in the active construction of inclusive classrooms. The features of the inclusive classroom highlighted in the literature review were all evident: age and grade appropriate general education placement, cooperative learning, classroom teacher responsibility for all students of the classroom, building of an inclusive community, peer tutoring, and teaming.

Sample of study. The school in the study was a school of two hundred fifty students in a small rural commuter community of two thousand residents. About twenty five percent of the student population came from the surrounding agricultural area and the rest were residents in the town. The student population had been fluid with consistent yearly movement of roughly twenty percent of the student base. The intention of the administration was for the school to include kindergarten to grade 4, with a middle school next door. However, because of the yearly change in enrollment resulting from the high mobility in the community, kindergarten to grade 5 shared the building this school year.

Staff consisted of fourteen full time equivalent certified teachers, four full time special needs assistants, one full time resource assistant, a full time child development assistant, a library technologist, and one school secretary.

This study concentrated on one grade level team consisting of four classroom teachers (two full time, another part time classroom/part time administrator, and the fourth part time) and the researcher who functioned as the special education teacher assigned to the team. The team was new in that school year though some members had worked in other assignments. The team met monthly throughout the year with agenda

and notes, chaired by the special educator. It was the team that was committed to maintaining fully inclusive classrooms. Special educator time within the classroom was determined on a per coded student plus modified program formula (a coded student being a student with a documented Alberta government special needs number). Various members planned together on a weekly basis and each classroom teacher had an individually scheduled weekly planning time outside the school day with the special educator. There was departmentalization in the complementary subjects but homeroom teachers taught core subjects to their own classes.

Teacher participants were at various stages in their careers. One was a beginning teacher with one year of experience in another district. Another had five years of active experience, but was returning to a classroom assignment after an absence of ten years as a homemaker and substitute teacher. Two participants were in the middle years of their careers, each with more than fifteen years experience and many varied teaching assignments. The final participant was at the end of a thirty year career.

In selecting the sample, ethnic, cultural, gender, educational, personal, and other differences were not considered. The participants were the core teaching team assigned to, not chosen for, the job and as such may reflect the generalized teacher. As suggested by Bloom (1966) it remains teaching, not the teacher that is the key to the learning of students. It was accepted that teacher responses may be more like other teachers' than different. Teaching remains dependent on human relationships and as such was viewed in terms of potentials while recognizing constraints on what could be done.

The student population of the grade team was varied. All classrooms were thoroughly

heterogenous with students assigned randomly. There was limited consideration of potential social groupings. For several well documented reasons, this specific grade year had a disproportionate number of special education students with large needs. In a total of seventy eight students, there were eleven coded special education students representing the entire span of student variance from behavior to medically fragile. Another eighteen students were on modified programs of moderate need. It was only through the conscious decision and concentrated effort of the team to support each other and to work together with all students that it was possible to have inclusive classrooms.

Data collection. The study began with a written questionnaire, individually administered and privately answered. After the initial analysis of the questionnaire individual interviews were conducted with each participant to allow further clarification on the question. Throughout the study, a daily reflective journal was maintained by the researcher to provide the background and context for the research.

In the written questionnaire each classroom teacher was asked to explain what specific special education help within the inclusive classroom was viewed as most meaningful. The questionnaire consisted of five probes:

- In what specific ways can working with a special education teacher assist you in your work?
- What are the most important things the special educator can do for you?
- The best thing about special education in the inclusive classroom is
- Things that are troubling about special education are
- During your teaching career, are there changes to the special education role that

you have evidenced as more helpful than others? Please elaborate.

The final interview questions were constructed following the analysis of the questionnaire answers. Teachers were asked to elaborate on the specific ways special education can meaningfully assist in the inclusive classroom. Teachers were further asked to explain what the essence, or essential work of special education in the inclusive classroom looked like. The last question was an open ended query asking what was so meaningful and worthy about inclusion that would justify a change in one's teaching. Final interviews were transcribed and systematically analyzed for further themes.

Duration of study. The study began on Monday, May 25, 1998 and was completed six weeks later, on the last day of June.

Analysis of data. All four team members returned their written answers within a week. Analysis began with the transcription and compilation of all answers to each question onto a separate master sheet, one master per question. Answers were recorded exactly as written without reference to who gave the answer. Persistent etymological reference (van Manen, 1990) to inclusive language was noted with attention given to the didactic nature of that language (Giroux, 1988). Answers were loosely grouped together based on the language used. To bring a sense of control and order to the research, responses were then considered in a detailed reading approach (van Manen, 1990) for theme. Through thoughtful attendance to each single sentence or sentence cluster, appropriate phrases were lifted out of the text or singular words were held as the main thrust of meaning. Commonalities in the various descriptions were gathered allowing for

themes to appear. The richness of human experience deposited within the language was a determinant in the sorting of theme groupings.

Theme was viewed as the reduction of a notion, the experience of focus, the content of the core or the process of sense that is made of something (van Manen, 1990). Effort was made to systematically explicate the theme while remaining true to the essence of the response. Within the theme, all words were reviewed individually and their language was reconsidered for appropriateness of theme classification. Language, or the lack of, can clarify or mystify (Giroux, 1988). This sorting created big specific categories of generalized answers with number values providing frequency of each theme response. Not all answers fit neatly into single discrete categories and some responses were used in several themes. Some phrases were taken apart and separated. All responses were viewed as of equal status. Summary tables were created for each question.

Summary tables were individually viewed against the background of the reflective journal, read and re-read, studied and considered for meaning and insight from the perspective of the researcher. Implications, findings, uncoverings and conclusions were carefully noted before all the data were brought to bear against the original research question of "What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?"

In the process of analysing the data it was evident that answers to only three of the questions directly addressed the research question. The remaining data, though rich and significant, was the beginning of a dialogue by teachers collaboratively making their own discovery and connections in the process of professional growth. The researcher

followed up on the issues raised in the latter categories in the two questions used for the closing interviews and the concluding remarks of the study. A summary interview was conducted with three of the four teachers to share findings and allow closure of the study. The fourth teacher (due to unforeseen circumstance) was not part of the interview but asked for, and was given a copy of the summarized results with opportunity to submit written comment.

Throughout the research, the researcher's daily reflective journal provided the context for the research, observations, and analysis of the study. The researcher worked intensely as a full participant within the grade team's classrooms as special educator, basing action on the negotiated expectations resultant from the questionnaire within the framework and constraints of the role of special educator within the inclusive classroom. It was the researcher's intent to investigate as a fully participating member from within, documenting the realities in the journal.

The analysis of the data collected (inclusive of the classroom teachers' answers to the questionnaire, the special educator's reflective journal, and the concluding interviews) took as its starting point the realm of everyday lived experience with the intent to increase thoughtfulness and resourcefulness on the part of the special educator. It was further an effort by the special educator to become more fully a part of the classroom, to be included, against the background understanding of each teacher as a person, individual, unique, and valued. The special educator's journal built the context against which the classroom teacher's answers were viewed.

Limitations

As the research began the discrepancy, consciously recognized, was that not all learners (students and teachers) are equally welcome within all classrooms. Official statements of school objectives and daily reality of the classroom are not the same thing. How the school or district defines inclusion through mission and goal statements has proved to be a critical factor (Idol, 1997; McLaughlin, 1993) determining the extent of the inclusion of student and staff. Research (Reschly, 1996) suggests that as long as outside program options exist regular education does not need to, and therefore will not, create a learning environment that includes all students successfully. Indeed teachers in this study were encouraged to “refer out” students with difficulties.

Limitations of this study further relate to the difficulty to generalize within. Consistent with the philosophy of inclusion, phenomenology encourages the use of individual context. This study is limited to examining in meticulous detail teacher voice within one limited context and is dependent on the writer’s relationship with those teachers. It purposely ignored the central aspects of teaching, subject matter and instructional tasks. The study is limited to one grade level teaching team of one small school. The focus is what happened there, how those particular individuals perceived things, how they worked together to improve learning for all learners. It does not allow for empirical generalizations or the establishment of functional relationships. It does not reflect the principles of theoretical sampling. The study does attempt to acquire understanding about concrete lived experience by putting into language the classroom teacher and special educator perspective of meaningful special education help within the

inclusive classroom. In a political sense, it acknowledges the right to speak and be represented as classroom teacher in an inclusive classroom. The diversity of the grade level and the philosophy and policies of the school district further limited the experiences of the team.

CHAPTER 4

In Dialogue

Background Context

The work of including all students in the inclusive classroom relies on a partnership premised on reflective problem solving. It is the teachers, classroom and special education, who must come together and share, must solve problems and construct the opportunities, and must wisely determine expertise and resources. This requires a multivocal discourse among equal status participants with different knowledge and skills. Dialogue remains critical for the founding inclusive (and educational) values of equality and freedom to exist in the permanent tension required of an inclusive classroom. Knowledge must be made explicit to be built upon or, if necessary, challenged.

Professional goals set at the beginning of the year stated

the classroom teachers and resource teacher look forward to creating an inclusive classroom, intending to explore new possibilities presented by the classroom needs. It is the intention of all teachers to work together, supporting all learners, as we grow. We will work as colleagues and professionals, meeting weekly to plan, discuss, work and reflect (Journal entry).

The argument. When special education moved into the regular classroom an argument was begun; the special educator entered the classroom, the classroom moved to inclusion. Classroom teachers accepted both the students of special education and the teacher of special education into their rooms. In those classrooms, the special educator

spoke through action.

But how can I facilitate for others to find the courage and commitment to reflect, to look, to consider, and to question the unacceptable sometimes the atrocious, as well as the enthusiastic and wonderful so we can together actively practice reflection in action, on action and about action? How do I assist when student and staff who work with me may have to accept very real consequences? (Journal entry).

The opportunity came with the classroom teachers' action response.

The response. The response to the argument of inclusion was initiated by the classroom teachers through the creation of a grade level team based on the need for effective teaching and service delivery, collaborative problem solving and communication. The team, consisting of the grade level classroom teachers and assigned special educator, began to assume joint responsibility for the grade level classrooms. Classrooms became inclusive with no student excluded (Andrews, et al., 1993; Falvey, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989); student placements were age and grade appropriate with learning expectations provided through written individualized education plans for special education students (Falvey, Givner & Kimm, 1995); abilities and possibilities were considered along with the weaknesses and concerns (Stainback & Stainback, 1995; Villa & Thousand, 1995); staff, students and parents began to work together (Roehrer Institute, 1992); and the classroom teacher assumed greater responsibility for all students in the classroom. "We have become reliant on each other and what is available, sharing with trust to make a workable compromise however possible (Journal entry)."

The dialogue. As year end approached there was concern within the team that the

opportunity to continue exploring the extended possibilities presented through inclusion and teaming might not be available in the next school year. Together the teachers assessed the impact of new strategies on student learning and how weekly discussion examining specific aspects of instruction and student performance made them more reflective and accountable. What had been created had practical value to the team members.

Sometimes it would be less time consuming to work alone, but our team has the ability to think ahead and plan for the future so some of this will not have to be repeated every year. I can see how it would be of benefit to have continuity with an ongoing team. It seems we need to constantly reinvent what we do because of changes in staff. That is not all bad because it keeps us fresh and should make us look at what it is we are about, why we do what we do. Overall, especially in June, teaching does seem to be reinventing the wheel over and over again. When you think about it in those terms teaching seems extremely repetitive, short term and inefficient (Journal entry).

Recognizing the interconnectedness of how we worked and what we achieved, presented the opportunity to explicitly consider the essence of special education in the inclusive classroom for the classroom teacher.

New questions appear, new insights happen. I never thought too much about what it is the others view as my role or what it is they wish I could achieve for them. I just worked as hard as I could to meet the goals I set. Now I wonder what they would say if they could just tell me what to do. I wonder if I am really helping them meet

the needs of all the learners in their classrooms (Journal entry).

What special education help did the classroom teachers view as meaningful in the inclusive classroom? The need to link conduct with consciousness resulted in the questionnaire asking the team members what helped, what was meaningful, and what was necessary from special education. The answers to those questions marked the beginning of the multivocal dialogue among the participants resulting in individual consideration of the broader question of what knowledge and experiences are most worthwhile in the classroom. The dialogue offered us courage to care and to think about our reason for doing.

The Teachers Speak

The dialogue between the classroom teachers and the special educator about special education service within the inclusive classroom began with asking each “What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?” Once the question was explicit, it became valid to push beyond our work separations and openly consider possibilities, strategies and paradigms. The discussion became dynamic and reflective with the teachers able to provide detailed perceptive accounts of their experience. By helping them express their dreams and nightmares the teachers could also select concrete, realistic meaningful special education practices. The shared dialogue of all participants in this study suggested that the most meaningful and significant help from special education in the inclusive classroom is learner focussed student support within the classroom. The support should promote the sense of belonging for the learner and encourage student ownership of learning. What that specific support might look like or

consist of varied extensively depending on such factors as the individual teacher, the individual student, the day, the lesson, or the moment.

Successful learning by the individual student was the primary concern for all participants. For successful learning to occur, the ownership of knowing had to belong to all learners with multiple ways of representing knowledge and skills. With the increased demands in the classroom, the teachers welcomed the special educator as a colleague able to help with that work. Responses confirmed that to help each child to reach their potential as a learner and to feel positive about learning and themselves as a learner, . . . is our most important objective as educators (Teacher response).

The interviews further confirmed what the written responses indicated: any work by the special educator that meets the individual learning needs of the student within the needs of the classroom community remains of greatest value to the classroom teacher. No question of ability, disturbance, or failure entered the answers. Both in deed and word the teachers were committed to inclusion.

Through carefully listening to what was said and what was not said while giving consideration to language used, participant answers to the rephrasings of the original question, "What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?" were compiled. Each time the question was answered, different facets of meaningful special education work came forward. It was necessary to thoughtfully consider responses to the individual questions separately and to chart them. Summary charts were reflectively considered and brought to bear against the original

question to create the interview questions. It was a matter of fitting the researcher's learning and teaching together, to do everything possible to see every student does learn.

Question one. This question (In what specific ways can working with a special education teacher assist you in your work?), was a general probe asking the classroom teacher to state specific ways a special educator could help teachers in the inclusive classroom. It resulted in a detailed listing of sixty-one specific practices. The list was sorted by language and by similarity of task resulting in seven broad categories.

Table 1: Question 1 Summary

Question 1: In what specific ways can working with a special education teacher assist you in your work?	
• provide companionship and encouragement to all learners	(13)
• assist with decisions about appropriate strategies/curriculum adaption	(12)
• focus on individual student learning	(9)
• actively teach in the classroom sharing in all aspects of the work	(9)
• work intensively with special education students	(7)
• provide, model and facilitate collegial learning opportunities	(7)
• evaluate and assess students	(4)
Total	61

Answers were not given any weighting by respondent or researcher. Number values only indicate frequency of response, with each response counted.

The question seemed to gain a very full response with the comments forming a sound basis for a detailed description of the school-based activities and role of the special educator in the inclusive classroom. Many of the duties and responsibilities listed in job descriptions of the special educator were stated within the themes of evaluation and assessment of students, assistance with decisions about appropriate strategies and curriculum adaption, and active teaching in the classroom. Representative in the answers were collaborative, collegial, and consultative special education roles.

The respondents seemed to expect the special educator to see students from a different perspective, to focus with more intensity on the individual and to be more sensitive to individual differences. Several responses indicated “two views” or referred to the possibility of broader understanding because of the multiple perspective possible when two teachers work together. It was suggested that the difference in teaching provided greater opportunity for everyone.

The teachers were very aware of what they were doing and how the student group responded to their teaching but showed less confidence in assessing individual student connection. There appeared a reliance on and need for the special educator to work with the “individual”, “each child” or “small group” while they as classroom teacher were centered on the larger group. Sharing the classroom with a special educator seemed to give the teachers a sense of confidence that even when dealing with the large group, individuals would not get lost in the lessons. Student numbers seemed to have a very

defining role for the classroom teacher when addressing the role of special education in the classroom. Yet it was remarked repeatedly that “individual” included all classroom students, not just the students of special education.

In the ‘perfect classroom’ the teaching team (regular classroom teacher and special education teacher) would be available at key times to assist any student who needs help at that particular point in time (Teacher response).

It has always been my philosophy that every student requires extra or special assistance at some point. Having the special education teacher close and working with me facilitates this assistance easily (Teacher response).

There was an understanding that every student, not just the students designated as special education, may at times need support or more assistance than can be given within the regular classroom structure and curriculum.

Your main focus of course is to those children that need the extra help, those with the IPPs, but you are also available for anybody who needs a little extra help and you are also there for anybody that needs that (Teacher response).

While remaining with the intent of the special education job description emphasizing active teaching of students with special needs, the classroom teachers appeared to view the special education role extended to any student struggling at that moment. “I rely on your being there to help anybody that needs help” (Teacher response). The definition of “need” seemed more fluid within the classroom context than generally defined by special education. Concern was expressed for the overall effectiveness of all individual students, not just the coded students. The key aspect of inclusive special education for the

teaching staff seemed to be that children who are at a disadvantage for any reason are not excluded from education in the inclusive classroom. Categories and labels were not particularly meaningful and a child's needs were defined when they arose.

Indeed the needs of the classroom teacher were also fluid. It was pointed out in the questions that at times there was less need for the special educator to be active within the classroom and it might be more productive for all involved to have the special educator use the time in other ways. Though an integral part of the inclusive classroom individual program assessments, resource modifications, and liaison work were at times more critical than in class teaching. "Having a special education teacher close and working with me facilitates any assistance easily" (Teacher response).

Learning was further seen as the end result of countless personal interactions between a teacher and students, collectively and individually, and having the special education teacher in the classroom allowed for more personal interactions.

Those are busy demanding times and need our best teaching skills. . . as I write that I hear my grandmother's voice saying, a child can never have too much approval or love. The more people the child can trust and reach to the richer their opportunities (Teacher dialogue).

By including special education within the classroom the opportunities for broadened relationships and support were increased, thereby potentially allowing for increased learning. The classrooms were inclusive of the special educator.

In addition to the traditional and defined roles of the special education teacher, the answers suggested another aspect of special education in the inclusive classroom — that

of supporting the classroom teacher and advocating for the individual learner. There was a suggestion that the classroom teacher viewed the special educator as what teacher development literature refers to as a “collaborative teacher” (Joyce, Showers & Rolheiser-Bennett, 1987): a teacher teaching teachers always with a focus to the improvement of learning for the individual student in the classroom.

Provide a model for inclusion in the classroom to modify my own teaching practice to include these strategies and techniques (Teacher response).

Observe and conference with me, compare observations (Teacher response).

As special educator I felt that

student needs are central and place me in a teaching role, not as supervisor or expert.

I also know that what I do and how I do it impact more strongly than mandates or evaluation reports (Journal entry).

But I felt the potential of that role was worrisome with the added concern that I would lose the collegial status critical to the inclusive classroom. This began the extended dialogue with the teachers adamant that to work together as colleagues opened the classroom for greater learning for all members. Though the special educator was seen as a colleague of equal status, the opportunity to work together was viewed as a very rare and real learning opportunity. There was a high level of trust, respect, understanding and communication evident within the group. Peoples’ expertise, knowledge, experience, care and concern for each other built the capacity for everyone within the classroom community to be a learner. As a collective, the team allowed for the recognition and valuing of all participants; bound together by the shared ideas and ideals of

teaching all children. Responses suggested the inclusive special educator had gained another teaching role in the eyes of the classroom teachers as suggested by “. . . I observe, I learn from these and modify my own teaching practice in return” (Teacher response). Participants of the study appeared to view the special educator as providing direct and effective classroom support with the goal of enabling all learners, including themselves, to be meaningfully included in the classroom learning activities. By sharing expertise and knowledge with support for each other, more creative effective solutions were possible for learning problems. The teachers included themselves as learners and welcomed the opportunity to improve their work. This broadened the role of the special educator to include collaboration, liaison, program development, monitoring and professional development. Special educators could also help in gaining access to additional resources and in providing advice on program development.

Question two. While the response to the first question produced a comprehensive list of items, responses to the second question (What are the most important things the special educator can do for you?) focussed on fewer areas and were more evenly distributed. Perhaps because of wording, this question was understood to be subjective, grounded in personal experience. The two themes evident in all responses were the importance of special education support focussed on the individual learner and the importance of special education support focussed on the learning in the classroom. There seemed to be a subtle shift from teaching in the classroom to learning in the classroom. Interestingly, in answering this question, the classroom teachers identified the active teaching role with little frequency concentrating on individual student support,

individual student assessment and program decision making with planning assistance.

This may have related to the work of that specific time frame of the school year (June, a time traditionally focussed on student assessment and program decision making).

Classroom learning and the individual learner were the definitive themes of all responses.

The bureaucratic process involved in maintaining special education students was almost entirely ignored. Only five responses related to case management and they made no mention of the meetings (both formal and informal in the referral and maintenance), the documentation and process, the file maintenance, or the annotation of Individual Program Plans.

Table 2: Question 2 Summary

Question 2: What are the most important things the special educator can do for you?	
• focus on the individual learner	28
• focus on the learning in the classroom	24
support and assist the teacher with programming/planning	(10)
assist with assessment and evaluation	(8)
supply resources, materials and information	(6)
• case management	5

In viewing the words used in answering this question it became apparent that a collegial relationship (Barth, 1990) had formed between teacher and special educator.

The enormous risks and costs associated with observing, communicating, sharing

knowledge and talking openly about the work done had been overcome.

During the time the special educator is in our classroom . . . that instructor becomes an integral part of the teaching/learning processes there. We also confer. We work as a 'team' . . . the resource teacher in a supportive role. I show examples of lessons and activities planned and the resource teacher modifies for special learners. We discuss ideas together; she adds what she feels might work and we adjust the activity that way. Also if I have concerns about students the resource teacher observes to clarify, reaffirm my ideas or presents her own opinion of what happened. Helpful to have second set of eyes/ideas and interpretations on situations (Teacher response).

The special educator was truly included in the classroom teachers' work and in their view of the inclusive classroom.

Special education support of greatest value was work that focussed on the individual learner in the classroom. Phrases such as "support the special learner", "unobtrusively assists", "modify on the spot" and "meet the learner's needs" were typical of the answers. Work such as student assessment, monitoring of individual difficulties, adaption of learning, and support with programming and planning were listed. Emphasis appeared on the educators working as a team focussed directly on maximizing individual student learning. The focus of all participants was clearly on the learning in the classroom, not on the teaching. The teachers considered it most important that the special educator enhance that learning and provide for greater learning opportunities in the classroom. That could be achieved by the special educator working directly with a struggling individual or by the special educator focussing on providing good learning opportunities

through resources, information, reports, data or teacher support.

Answers were almost evenly divided between those focussed on the learner and those focussed on learning. The distinction between the two was that a focus on the learner resulted in a teacher working directly with the individual student. Assistance that focussed on learning was more generalized classroom support often resulting in direct teacher support to achieve greater classroom learning. Both would suggest it was imperative that the special educator be in the classroom, actively involved as a teacher, rather than in a strictly consultative role.

Responses relating to both themes suggested the awareness of personal limitation to meet all learning needs as evident in the use of the words “help”, “collaboratively”, “together”, “team”, “advise”, “model” and “support”. These words were prominent throughout the responses. As observed in the daily journal, my colleagues showed me how staff members have trusted me and exposed themselves by admitting me into their classroom. I know more than I sometimes should about how they teach, plan, treat their students, think about teaching. It is a trust that can be betrayed through an unthinking word or act. I constantly struggle with how frail and human, and often desperately inadequate I am for this role. They must likewise. We need tools and skills to talk more openly as a team, to share in doing right with others. The reaching out and inviting me in is as much a cry for help as it is an act of courage. Inclusion brings so many different things to the forefront. Things that are easier to ignore if you work with the door closed (Journal entry).

My colleagues shared my struggle.

Several responses expressed a dissatisfaction with the coding and labelling process of special education with its often limited scope of support. There was issue raised as to the exclusion a label created for both the labelled and the unlabelled. All answers suggested the need for universality, comprehensiveness, proficiency and accountability for all students not just those of special needs. This would also reflect a high level of ownership felt by each classroom teacher for the learning within their classroom.

Because so few responses mentioned the area of case management, it is difficult to know whether the extensive documentation, reporting and record keeping required of the special educator were seriously considered of any importance to either the individual teacher or student. The responses related to case management were specific, all relating to the need for a liaison between the various specialists, services and stakeholders involved with the student of special education as well as the need for an advocate for the individual student. Responses further suggested such case management duties were a worthy role for the special educator and valued by the classroom teacher.

Responses indicated the teachers recognized that good teaching is only half of the story, the other half remains good learning. Rather than always looking at what has been taught and how, their view broadened and the focus in the classroom became the student as learner. Participants accepted that effective teachers would constantly reflect about their work, observe whether students were learning or not, and then adjust their practice. Responses to question two suggested that the special education support of greatest value to the individual teacher in an inclusive classroom was work that focussed on the individual student as learner. The teachers' concern remained individual student

engagement with learning.

Question three. Although the intent of this question — the best thing about special education in the inclusive classroom is . . . — had been to provide an open ended opportunity to restate what was best about special education service within the inclusive classroom, classroom teachers responded by stating what was best about having special education service and the students of special education in the classroom. This suggested the level of acceptance of each individual special education student and how the teachers' emphasis remains on people, not service. The responses along with the interviews further suggested that special education had become the teachers' teacher, allowing them to learn powerful new lessons about education. Exactly how powerful and what change inclusion had brought to the classroom of these teachers was not fully realized until we began our interviews.

Table 3: Question 3 Summary

Question 3: The best thing about special education in the inclusive classroom is:	
• differences	(5)
• equity	(5)
• creates a community	(3)
• opportunity	(1)
TOTAL: 14	

The themes that emerged in the responses indicate that special education entering the classroom made the teachers consider deeply what they believed and valued about learners and about learning, while offering them the opportunity to constructively consider the dynamic of teaching and learning. There was a perceived uncertainty within themselves.

I can see how as a teacher I may take on roles and responsibilities I cannot adequately meet and how I feel I must hold onto them. But in the inclusive classroom I have learned it is not a sign of weakness to ask for help, anymore than it is a sign of weakness to admit I do not know. If after documented intervention we have to admit that there has been no growth, it is to our credit to ask for help for the student and for us. We are all human. Only when we recognize our limitations can we surpass them (Teacher dialogue).

Having special education within the classroom with the special educator actively teaching and physically in the room was perceived to address those tensions with some satisfaction. It was suggested that the special educator could expand options and interventions available, as well as providing another perspective for problems arising within the learning community.

I think it also complements our various skills, jobs and focus. I stay with the individual, intense indepth knowledge of any problems, while S stays with the large group maintaining the overall and using the knowledge I can generate to move them forward. It seems to be successful for us (Journal entry).

As a result of inclusive special education, a broader spectrum of student was in the

classroom with opportunity for different teaching strategies also available. Detailed analysis of the answers indicated that special education help within the classroom allowed for the provision of individualized instruction within the large common grouping of the classroom. Having two teachers in the classroom provided flexibility, more solutions to problems, and broader learning environments allowing for more varied contributions to be valued.

It was comfortable to talk openly, share and project. Each of us has such different perspectives and skills. We view everything so differently (Journal entry).

Responses indicated the classroom teachers modelled what is the essence of special education in the inclusive classroom. Inclusion calls for teaching innovation that requires full participation by both classroom and special education teacher in constructing new bodies of knowledge and skill, a goal none working independently can achieve. With combined skills and insights, inclusive teaching can result in more than just the sum of the whole. Inclusion necessitates teachers collaborating among themselves to achieve more personalized instruction. For effective inclusion to occur the teaching expertise of each teacher must converge. Together they must alter the general education classroom conditions that previously necessitated the referral of students to special education. Effective teaching was no longer viewed as a set of generic practices for the whole but a set of context-driven decisions about teaching individuals. The opportunity to use extended resources and several perspectives added depth to reflection and allowed for the challenging of schooling regularities. A more reflective and nonjudgemental but sceptical stance toward oneself and one's classroom was emerging with the teaming of

teachers allowing for engagement in a dialogue that could nourish and sustain professional growth.

We have pulled together as a team of educators . . . to provide what I feel is a very positive learning environment that values all learners. But if IPPs (students with Individualized Program Plans) and MPPs (students with Modified Program Plans) are to be pulled out and isolated . . . that undoes all that we have worked so hard to build and will be a step back for many students. And teachers (Teacher response).

Special education in the inclusive classroom also brought equity for student learning with it. Lack of student achievement should initiate adaption in instructional strategies, methods or skills by the teacher with the special educator.

(Special education)'s involvement allows the MPP and IPP in my LA program to participate fully with modified expectations and allows these students and their fellow classmates to realize and understand that we are individuals who form a team and on a team everyone counts. And has something valuable to contribute (Teacher response).

One of inclusion's (and to the teachers, special education's) most powerful and actively demonstrated messages was that working together, everyone had an opportunity to contribute and everyone had an opportunity to gain. Problems could be solved if everyone was involved; that each is uniquely necessary to the other to achieve greater success.

It's magnified for me personally that everybody has a contribution to make because I had my K--, I had my C--, who have such a struggle with written language but the contributions that they made to discussions blew me away. And so just because the

connection between writing their thoughts down is weak for them, doesn't mean they don't have valid contributions to make. And if I've taught the kids anything this year, if they leave the class, well if our team has taught the kids anything this year, if they leave the class knowing that everybody has something to contribute, and everybody has their strengths, and everybody has their weaknesses, but as a team it makes you stronger, then we have done our job (Teacher response).

Both competence and confidence as classroom practitioners was judged as increased by closely connecting high expectations for all with the opportunity to teach all students. Inclusive special education allowed the staff to identify learning which was not limited by a perception of what 'kids from this profile' could achieve, allowing them to see the student rather than the special education label. Highly creative and previously overlooked solutions were found by the classroom teachers solving daily problems with their special education students. During the time of the research a new special education student entered the school. Needs were extreme with our resources very limited. The classroom teacher resolved the student's disruptive agitated activity by assigning ownership to two desks, one at each side of the class, allowing for a most sensible and non disruptive solution to a potentially disastrous situation.

The teachers were aware of their own learning and were anxious to share it.

It has been a surprise and a lesson for me to find that even when, as teachers, we have done everything possible, everything right, things may not work out as they should. I do not think I could have learned that or accepted that if I had only worked by myself (Teacher dialogue).

All proclaimed support for the ideological consistent that educational attainment is possible and desirable for everyone but were realistic in accepting that they could not be equally effective in all situations. Not everyone saw themselves as sharing a complete generalizable body of knowledge, practice and expertise that could provide education for all students within their charge. The teachers frequently cited the contributions of the special educator as a part of their success.

I'm really really proud of where the special, er resource children came this year. And as I said before I think they're the ones who showed the most growth. And, I'm, uh I'm so proud of that but I know beyond a shadow of a doubt if it had been myself and just the whole class in there this year, that we wouldn't have seen that (Teacher response).

Having another's professional skills readily accessible provided an underlying confidence and a valued opportunity enabling the working through of problems as they emerged. An inclusive classroom seemed to make manageably explicit for educators the permanent tension and conflict of the dynamic yearnings for full inclusion and full independence that exists in all teaching and learning.

Question four. When the question "What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?" was asked in the negative (Things that are most troubling about special education are . . .) in hope of allowing concerns or issues regarding special education in the classroom to emerge and to be worked against, funding and the fickleness of educational leadership were presented. The teachers commented on a plethora of comprehensive changes that had been seen

over their career years with many seemingly contradictory pressures, and they expressed concern about “the severe compromise of inclusion based on financial not educational reasons (Teacher response)”. The teachers found themselves scrambling to keep up with both the depth and the rapidity of change and questioned if opportunity was available to do more with education initiatives than create change. Was it possible to have time to thoughtfully work beyond process? Questions were raised about the politics of the teaching role, the ‘all or nothing’ issues of education, and the difficulties of maintaining ownership in a mandated institution.

As a unit special educational needs were no longer narrowly defined as the quality of an individual but rather as a social construction;

to be able to observe and work with IPP students among their peers has made it possible to identify the best ways to assist and support the entire population of a given class (Teacher response).

But overriding the positive results experienced was the grave concern of decreasing funds and increasing needs. The responses indicated that the teachers felt “compromised” by the need for constant adjustment to current trends.

When all the data was carefully analysed by language for theme, it became clear that inclusion was a teaching model accepted by the team to provide effective teaching for all students. The closing interviews resulted in discussion of that observation.

Question five. To place inclusion within the perspective of the classroom teachers’ experiences, question five asked the teachers to consider the changes in special education over the span of their teaching career and to elaborate on the changes they evidenced as

more helpful than others. Answers were extensive personal narratives documenting professional growth and philosophy. Each participant commented on the positives of working with all students, and how moving special education into the classroom had improved their class.

Table 4: Summary for Question 5

Question 5: During your teaching career, are there changes to the special education role that you have evidenced as more helpful than others. Please elaborate.	
• inclusion	(4)
• establishment of teams	(1)
• community schooling	(1)

All participants had previous experience in full “pull out” or segregated programs. In retrospect, they questioned why they had accepted the “rightness” of taking students out of general education classrooms, reflecting on the social learning the students had missed and how that had resulted in even bigger problems. Concerns about what removing a student from the classroom taught the student were reflected on.

This special class or ‘dummies’ felt isolated and singled out. They lost many of the skills to interact with their peers. Their peers also suffered from a loss of the ability to interact with them (Teacher response).

From the discussion emerged the suggestion that students with learning difficulties

were labelled and removed from the general education classroom because even after the best efforts of the classroom teacher, the needs of the student were not being met.

When I began teaching . . . it was resource taught on a pullout basis, which (at that time) I considered to be easier on the homeroom teacher (Teacher response).

There was the further suggestion of teacher humanity, rather than student inadequacy. While acknowledging the reality of not being able to always teach all students all things, the teachers' statements did not indicate frustration toward the students or resignation about trying to teach. Teachers were accepting of themselves and their students and reflected an optimism that those situations were now potential learning opportunities for professional growth in the inclusive classroom:

My interaction with various special educators has allowed me the privilege of having my special education colleagues serve as my teaching partner, my advisor, and my mentor. In turn my students have benefited from my close associations (Teacher response).

Teacher ownership of classroom learning complete with successes and failures, was strong. The teachers felt a sense of pride at the positive student learning results evidenced by such data as work portfolios, discipline plans, report cards, and student self evaluations.

I'm really really proud of where the special, er resource children came this year. And as I said before I think they are the ones who showed the most growth (Teacher dialogue).

Participants viewed all children as learners belonging with their peer learning community.

I find this (inclusion) to be much more valuable and effective. Students in these programs are very much part of our community of learners. They have developed excellent peer relationships and from this have developed confidence, self esteem and are willing to take risks with their learning. I feel the students are more happy, well adjusted . . . (Teacher response).

The single most helpful change special education brought to the classroom teachers was inclusion. The language in the responses was all the collective “we” and “together” with frequent reference and example from experience. There was evidence of a generalized change in teacher beliefs and a renewed understanding of the words “inclusion”, “teaming” and even “education” resulting from the involvement with special education in their classroom. As they explored inclusion, the insight and energy of inclusion informed and animated their responses. They had discovered and developed strategies that emerged from their own integrity. They felt a greater confidence about their teaching and being able to provide learning environments for all students. Repeated comment was made about the “completeness” of the classroom now that all children shared in its learning. Of secondary importance was the support special education provided to the teacher in maintaining the student of special education. Throughout the answers echoed a mutual respect and a sharing of a common work with appreciated different perspectives. Every teacher gave evidence of changed teaching practice as a result of special education entering the classroom.

The Interview

To clarify and confirm what the written questionnaire and journal suggested,

participants were asked directly what had been the most helpful role of special education during their teaching career. Every participant stated learner focussed student support within the classroom. The specifics of what learner focussed student support looked like was dependent on who was involved, the resources available, and a plethora of other factors.

Conversation moved to the changes special education in the classroom had brought to the individual teachers' teaching and what about this teaching experience they would continue to seek. Again answers were unanimous: inclusion. The notion of inclusion being viewed as a part of special education suggests that to the participants inclusion was more than a process. Rather, it was about a philosophy of acceptance; about providing a framework within which all children – regardless of ability, gender, language, ethnic or cultural origin – can be valued equally, treated with respect and provided with learning opportunities.

It has changed the way I look at things. Absolutely. My hope is it has changed the way the kids have looked at things too and that they all feel valued at the end of the day. I hope that's what happened (Teacher response).

Accepting inclusion had changed teachers' perspective from defining individual learning difficulties to an agenda that focussed on what is and should be learned. Differences had become possibilities instead of difficulties, problems were viewed as opportunities:

the value of each person, that, like that it really developed for me personally, you know how we had in our class "we're on a team" and "on a team everyone counts", and "a team supports each other" well its, its magnified for me personally that

everybody has a contribution to make (Teacher dialogue).

Classroom emphasis was one of creation rather than conformation, cooperation rather than competition, with an effort inherent to see the world with greater clarity and entirety. Inclusion was accepted as a teaching perspective effectively allowing for the education of all students within the classroom. For the participants of this study inclusion began as a strategy but became a perspective of choice.

Since . . . experiencing the inclusive method of resource or special education, I have come to the conclusion that it is far superior in meeting the needs of all students as well as the educator if implemented properly . . . (Teacher dialogue).

Participants accepted that teaching requires the active construction of their own classroom with their own possibilities. The collaboration of inclusion signified a form of action that enriched their lives and work while it alluded to possibilities of other constructions and contexts in which they might take action to create. Inclusion became more than including all learners in the classroom. It extended freedom of thinking, speaking and doing:

the best thing about this year has been the openness of the resource room and the freedom to speak in our group, knowing you will not be judged or devalued, always listened to. It has been a unique experience (Teacher dialogue).

From this observation came the closing interview question "What is so meaningful about inclusion to be worthy of changing you and how you teach?" All the usual benefits of inclusion were listed or suggested by the participants. They confirmed that inclusion allowed them to provide a better learning environment in their classroom for all

children with both academic and social benefits. Inclusion further allowed for more tolerance, taught an appreciation of human differences, allowed for creation of a more complete community, and resulted in curriculum coherence that was more interdisciplinary and integrated. But the most important aspect of inclusion remained the congruence of word and action in the unconditional acceptance of each person, including themselves, as a human being within a community. The essential reality that each person is unique but deep rooted characteristics bind together the human community was seemingly resolved in inclusion. The connectedness of humanity suggested the greatest lesson of inclusion: that only when humanity is accepted in its entirety is the magnitude of the problem or the creativity of the solution for creating a better tomorrow possible.

I have found that we can accept our mistakes and frailties with more grace and courage, learning from them greater lessons than we would from continuous success because we do explore all possibilities in open non judgmental ways. It has been a surprise and a lesson for me to find that even when, as teachers, we have done everything possible, everything right, things may not work out as they should. I do not think I could have learned that or accepted it if I had only worked by myself. That finding has not diminished my effort in finding more success for my students but it has allowed me to forgive myself when things go wrong. And in forgiving myself, I have found I also give permission to others to forgive allowing the learning and growth sought to begin with (Journal entry).

If the problem is within, then the solution must also come from within. Owning up to a

problem allowed the ownership of the solution. Classroom teacher and special educator collaborated in decision making and problem solving in the inclusive classroom. When staff sits down together and asks “What are we going to do about it?” rather than expecting outsiders to solve the difficulty, solutions that work are going to be found. Inclusion strengthened the teachers and enabled them to exert control and choose the solution that best appeared to suit learner requirements in their classroom. Inclusion does not expect perfection, though in its high expectations it accepts only the best we can give. That presupposes a good knowledge of what our best is. “We are all human. Only when we recognize our limitations can we surpass them” (Teacher response).

Inclusion freed participants from the burden of being the expert allowing a partnership of joint responsibility for learning between student and teachers. The classroom could become more responsive to the needs of all learners, using the teachable moment with greater effect. It further affirmed all humanity as beings in the process of becoming; as unfinished, incomplete beings in a likewise unfinished reality.

Summary of Findings

Through thoughtful reflective dialogue with several different approaches to the question, meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom was considered by classroom teachers with the special educator. For all, the most valued special education practice remained practice that was focussed on the individual learner. Classrooms exist for students, teachers for student learning. All other special education work is of secondary importance.

Careful scrutiny of data further suggests:

1. The most meaningful and valued special education practice in the inclusive classroom is learner focussed student support that promotes in the student ownership of learning and a sense of belonging.
2. It remains essential for special education to combine the more practical elements of the role (individualizing student instruction, modifying and extending lessons, providing resources, writing, monitoring, and evaluating IPP, student referral and assessment) with the professional and leadership responsibilities of the position (cooperative planning, modelling and demonstration, team teaching, discussion, planning, extending the professional development content, conducting inservice). Special educators must undertake and develop critical affective areas of support, encouragement, facilitation and problem solving both in the classroom and in their daily interaction, with staff members and with students.
3. Inclusive programs and special education within them, will differ and should differ, depending on the strengths and weaknesses of all involved, the resources available, and many other factors.
4. The primary consideration in creating an inclusive classroom involves defining 'inclusion' for the classroom to allow individual teachers to find their own level of inclusion through experience with opportunity to reflect on their beliefs about education and to work freely with the same respect and learning opportunity as their students.
5. Thoughtful consideration of personal values, the educational effectiveness of various practices, the potential impact upon all people involved, common sense, empathy,

good will and unbiased meaningful support will include more students in education than dogmatic pragmatism ever will.

6. Special education teachers in the inclusive classroom may be as much agents of change and mentors as they are teachers of children.

7. It is only in creating a community that we realize our individual selves; it is only by including that we are included.

The closing interview brought to consciousness the ownership of process, its direction and tempo, and allowed each participant to clarify and evaluate personal professional growth as a teacher. The dialogue came to a point of meditation, a pause, allowing each of us to gather observations, view actions, consider consequences, ponder issues, celebrate growth and refresh ourselves before returning to the persistent interruptions and daily demands. We had jointly ventured beyond the constraints of conventional thinking and action, moving from constantly looking at our feet and where we had been to once more considering our ideals and reasons for teaching; to dreaming; to believing and perhaps to stumble on unrecognized paths for achieving greater educational inclusion.

CHAPTER 5

Deliberation

The research question, “What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?” originated from the constructive collaboration of classroom teacher and special educator in an inclusive classroom. Throughout the research, the classroom teachers and special educator thoughtfully engaged in dialogue and discussion focussing on the service delivery of special education within that inclusive classroom. Specific norms of collaboration were adopted with the dialogue becoming a reflective learning process for the special educator. The special educator focussed on openly reflecting in action, through action, and about action in an attempt to improve personal and professional practice. It was hoped that through better understanding of the viewpoints and mental models classroom teachers hold about special education in the inclusive classroom and how it worked in their world, more meaningful and valued special education practice could be achieved. The classroom teachers and the special educator talked together as a professional learning community (Garmston & Wellman, 1998) about the hard issues, honoring cognitive dissonance, and minimizing affective conflict. As a community, the team learned to make decisions based on objective data, shared values, and a deep examination of internal models. Since teaching remains a never ending search for better learning for students (Ayers, 1995), all were in the process of ‘becoming’ teachers. As educators all gained in critical pedagogical competence (van Manen, 1990). As a professional learning community, all shared in the answers to the research question.

Inclusion of Special Education

Dialogue led to collective meaning making and a shared understanding of the inclusive classroom with its unique needs and use of special education. The staff shared individual stories of why things work in their classroom as they do and how they could or should work. Assumptions and beliefs about inclusive teaching and learning were suspended (Garmston & Wellman, 1998) and thoughtfully examined. The dialogue built a sense of connection and belonging providing greater understanding by all participants and thereby allowing for the greater inclusion of the students and teacher of special education within the classroom community.

Dialogue was explicit that special education is an integral, valued and desired part of the classroom community. Consequently the professional relationship of classroom teacher and special educator was deepened. The classroom teachers were willing to compromise and change many aspects of their work, but would not willingly give up the students or staff of special education from their classroom. After these beliefs were given words, the team was able to identify the boundaries necessary to maintain their classrooms. Their indicators of success were student learning and job satisfaction. In the participants' inclusive classrooms both indicators necessitated having the students and teacher of special education within the classroom.

Most valued special education practice. The most valued work of the special educator in that classroom was work that focussed on the individual learner, supporting the learner in achieving a sense of ownership of the learning and a sense of belonging to the classroom. Specific actions related to that principle varied from classroom to classroom.

The study clarified that although there is always more to learn and to know as a teacher, the heart of teaching remains a passionate regard for students. The work of teaching, whether classroom or special education, involves struggling to see each student in as full and dynamic a way as possible, to create environments that nurture and challenge as wide a range of students as there are in the classroom, then to respectfully construct bridges with each learner from what is known to what is unknown. Inclusion can provide the structure that provides greater opportunity for more individual learners. It can assist in defining the “intriguing possibilities” (Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975) that maintain the purpose and direction of education while allowing for classroom definition within the politics, economics and social structure (Giroux, 1988; Kohl, 1982; Manzer, 1994) of today.

The dialogue further suggested that inclusive special education action should be considered collaborative professional action based on informed student need. The inclusive classroom requires the broadened perspective provided by the teamed approach of general and special educator to take into account the total student within the construct of the community of the classroom.

Advocacy role of special education. The dialogue with the classroom teachers revealed the need for special education to continue to provide for all students the continued educational access of the classroom by focussing on the individual learner. The goal of educating all learners may not be humanly possible if educators work independently but has greater possibility when the skills and insights of several are combined. The result of

inclusion seems more than just the sum of the whole. Within the inclusive classroom is the explicit acceptance and acknowledgement of the eternal continuum of group and individual, teaching and learning, strength and weakness, difference and same. To maintain those dichotomies requires a diversity of learners with a diversity of creative leadership skills. This suggests that the greatest weaknesses of the inclusive classroom are also its greatest strengths; while its strengths have the potential to be its greatest weaknesses. Problems inherent in too diverse a grouping too often or necessity to use extreme solutions can result in inaccurate perceptions and extreme mediocrity. There is a need to remain firmly anchored in the full reality of the whole education community, to consider broadly, to experience widely. Care must be taken in maintaining thoughtful inclusion respectful of all participants.

Congruence of word and deed. Responses by the teachers suggested that inclusion allows the intriguing possibilities of schooling to reflect a way of community life that as yet have been scarcely tried (Goodlad, 1984) but remains the purpose of public education. Inclusive teaching demands innovation that requires full participation by both classroom and special education teacher in constructing new bodies of knowledge and skill to benefit all learners. Inclusion necessitates teachers collaborating among themselves to achieve more personalized instruction and to find solutions to learning issues. Emphasis is on maximizing education within the classroom while at the same time recognizing the challenges and limitations group learning places on the individual. It is a change in perspective and attitude, a working from the proactive, an accepting of what is given. The shift in perspective and attitude does not just happen but takes time. It is only through shared

experience and the provision of multiple opportunities for all students to know themselves, and each other with opportunity to interact in positive and supportive ways, that the task is possible. Conflicts will arise, the way may not be easy. When choices must be made, student needs come first. Support of the classroom teacher should be secondary.

Further observations. In this study, efforts directed at including all students within the classroom resulted in the classroom doors opening and in improved communication among staff. Vigorous formal and informal communication and planning with shared decision making became a part of the classroom and team work. This allowed for more understanding and consistency in classroom management and curriculum. The team had a clear focus that made it easy to implement and ensure strategies were effective and useful.

Implications

Classroom focus. The answer to the question “What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?” can assist in providing clear focus for the work of the special educator within the inclusive classroom. It permits the special educator to enter the classroom with confidence and begin the work from a valued professional stance while building the collaborative relationship. Knowing that learner-focussed assistance is of greatest value to the classroom teacher allows the special educator to be attached to the classroom in a significant and meaningful way and to set work priorities that are congruent with the job while having value for the classroom teacher. When beginning new classroom assignments it becomes meaningful to start with a brainstorming inventory of specific assistance while negotiating the process of dialogue and data collection. Dialogue remains critical for the founding inclusive (and educational)

values of equality and freedom for both classroom and special education teacher to exist in the permanent tension required of an inclusive classroom. Professional goals set at the beginning of the year could state indicators of meaningful special education assistance. It is necessary to give opportunity for those who share the work to speak and take ownership of their inclusive classroom.

In the inclusive classroom, special educators need to disregard personal bias and support the individual teaching style and philosophy of the classroom teacher while considering a wider range of service that focusses on individual student learning. Inclusion does not have one path or one face. While we have many models and examples of success, inclusive teaching cannot be reduced to a simple formula. The intent of the inclusive classroom should remain for each staff to find its own level of inclusion and to work freely within it. The growth of teacher individuality remains the ultimate guarantor of student individuality. This requires the development of problem solving skills, consulting skills, and skills in conflict management and collaboration. Many of these remain skills difficult to learn on the job.

The answer also defines the need for the special educator to work with great sensitivity, care and respect so inadequate decisions and actions are not made. Though the universal norm of "helping each individual student succeed in the classroom" applies to all situations, how that success is achieved does not. Until the dialogue of classroom teacher and special educator explicitly state intentions, choosing congruent behaviors must be based strictly on perceived student need. Responses of the teachers in this study present the notion that being a special educator in the inclusive classroom means behaving in any role

that helps the student learn within the inclusive classroom. It is the equity of investment and need along with the complementary difference in perspective and skills that makes the collaboration of inclusive educators (Cook & Friend, 1995) successful.

It became evident that general educators specialize in understanding, structuring and pacing curriculum for groups of students. They view as valued, special education assistance specializing in identifying unique learning needs and strengths of individuals, enhancing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs. This may at times be contrary to other aspects of the classroom and require the special educator to hold tightly to the learner focus. A system of questions related to such student driven decision making and behavior of the special educator in the inclusive classroom needs to be considered by the special educator for clarity of work. A constant sensitivity to questions such as the following, could help guide in determining if the focus of the special educator in classroom remains the student:

1. Will my action produce the maximum benefit for all concerned?
2. Will my action generate the most good for the most people?
3. Does my day to day practice conform to local, provincial and national standards of ethical behavior?
4. Has communication been effective? If not, how can it be improved?
5. Who has ownership of the issue?
6. Who is in the best position of responsibility, of greatest influence?
7. Have student, parent, teacher, IPP team, and administration concerns been identified and addressed?

Great care is required to provide meaningful help.

Professional leadership. The responses of the classroom teachers suggest that special educators are viewed as active participants in the learning and professional opportunities of the teachers. There is concern that if special educators become involved in the broader context of that educational arena by assuming greater leadership roles in staff professional development, effort focussed on the students may be diluted. However if the creation of an educational system more responsive to individual differences is to be achieved, special educators seem to be placed in the role of professional leadership and mentoring. To what extent the role special education should involve professional development for its teachers, remains a challenge.

The deconstruction of myth. A central aspect of inclusion must lie in the deconstruction of the idea that only special people are equipped and qualified to teach special children (and classroom teachers to teach classrooms) while constructing the possibility for staff to accept and become aware of their own competence. This presents quite a task since for many years special educators have been saying the opposite – that there is a set of teaching procedures which are especially appropriate for a segment of the child population. The system built around this idea has been reinforced by a whole range of political, social and economic investments — from school buildings to professional careers. If classrooms are truly inclusive, truly respecting, and truly built on diversity, students will be seen as students not labels. Special education has no special magic or secrets, it is just good teaching.

Teacher empowerment. For effective inclusion to occur, the teaching expertise

of classroom teacher and special educator must converge (Andrews, et al., 1993; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995). Together they must alter the general education classroom conditions that previously necessitated the referral of students to special education. One of inclusion's most powerful and actively demonstrated messages is that when educators work together, problems can be solved; each is uniquely necessary to the other to achieve greater success. This brings forward consideration of the role of 'student services team', in which the teachers would suggest the school's own teaching staff should take the initiative.

Visiting professionals cannot work miracles. The teacher and the school remain responsible for their students together with the parents. Other professionals do not have the same direct responsibility and rarely have the contact. With the teachers and the school central within the student services team, they have the strengthened position to exert control and choose the solution that best suits their requirements and skills. Outside staff can offer a new perspective for consideration, individual work with the child, possible support in the classroom, access to other resources and moral support. All of these are very important at various times for the teacher and school, but only the staff of the school sitting down together and asking "what are we going to do" will provide a solution that works. The stressors become the resources to the solution. Owning up to the problem allows for the ownership of the solution as well.

Who is a valued special educator. The individual skills, experiences, knowledge and background of the special educator remain unclear. In this study it was often the broad base of experience resulting from having worked in the segregated classroom that allowed for the greatest clarity of issues. Opportunity to have such experience is limited. Professional

competence must further include recognizing one's professional limitations and needs, understanding one's professional strengths, knowing when to decline work and when to ask for assistance, ensuring that whenever possible interventions have an empirical basis, keeping abreast of professional developments and maintaining high levels of professionalism. There is no single metaphor adequate to cover the role of the special educator in the inclusive classroom. Special education teachers may need to have a classroom experience to build from.

Further Questions

Continued consideration of the central question of "What does the classroom teacher view as meaningful special education help in the inclusive classroom?" promotes further questions.

1. How can I facilitate for those I work with, to find the courage and commitment to reflect, to look, to consider and to question so we actively practice reflection in action, on action and through actions?
2. How do I encourage others' individuality without imposing mine?
3. How do I, as special educator working in many others' inclusive classrooms, maintain my identity?
4. How do I improve my data collection and documentation without taking or detracting from my teaching?
5. How do I support the development of interactive professionalism? How can I monitor and strengthen the connection between my development and my students' development?

Conclusions

The hard work in education is not reforming institutions. The hard work remains helping all learners grow and that can only be done one person at a time. Whether for teacher or for student, meaningful learning remains individual and personal. Solutions to the argument of inclusion will not come quickly or by standardization but slowly from individual teachers thinking deeply about hopes and aspirations for students, examining self for evidence of those hopes realized, and actively teaching those hopes through living. The need is to adapt to present political, social and economic times without altering public education's purpose. This requires extraordinary wisdom, vision, boldness, flexibility, dedication, willingness to learn, and a renewed commitment to the mandate of public education. Good teachers will find themselves in their teaching. It is individuals, one at a time, who learn and change hearts and minds. This may be slow work but over time it remains the only work that matters.

CHAPTER 6

Afterword

The dialogue and discussion initiated and sustained through this research provided privileged opportunity to reflect and probe, ponder and query, listen and speak as part of a professional learning community. It was awe inspiring, emotion laden. What I believed true for children and learning (that learning occurs through context and interaction) was revealed imperative for teachers and learning. The research, like inclusion, was but a process. The resulting product will be the ways all participants use what was learned to change and to grow as a result of seriously listening and talking together. Although I will continue to question methodology as I teach, I am more peaceful about what I do. I have departed from relying on outside influences for direction and am nourished by the insight and compassion of colleagues. Our continued dialogue gives to me, an ordinary teacher, the insights, courage and resources to create for my students extraordinary learning. I remain humbled by and in awe of the incredible audacity of this profession.

The research made me consider the troubling personal question of "Is being a teacher what I do or what I am?" It has been an interesting, often uncomfortable quest allowing for the stretching of thought about beliefs and values. It has resulted in the refining of basic precepts and principles about life and work as well as clarifying and restoring the inner self. Throughout I have considered the language with its words from perspective of our use and the use of us by the words; I have considered how that reflects a coherence and congruence in life's word and act. Becoming a teacher remains a highly

individual struggle in a diverse complex enterprise. I have considered the question from the inside out and from the outside in. It no longer matters what I do or where I work, or who it is I work with. I know I will always be teaching; I will always be in the process of 'becoming'. Being a teacher is never a state of completion. The insight is shocking and a bit intimidating, humbling and exhilarating.

As I unify my philosophy of education, make my life more consistent and congruent with belief and understanding, I accept that the heart of teaching is and must be the passionate regard for students. The work of teaching involves struggling to see each student in a full and dynamic way while providing unconditional acceptance of the learner in building well anchored bridges from what is known to what is unknown. Education should result in greater human-ness. I have come to realize whom I am teaching: it is myself. Authentic teaching must remain a singularly selfish acceptance of self learning to allow for the unselfish centering on student learning. It is in teaching that I learn; it is in learning that I teach. I must include myself in the community of learners within the classroom. Life is an inclusive education.

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Appendix A
Initial Questionnaire

Demographics:

Age _____

Years teaching experience _____

Previous positions (grade level, years in each) _____

Highest degree, speciality _____

Special Education training _____

1. In what specific ways can working with a special education teacher assist you in your work?
2. What are the most important things the special educator can do for you?
3. The best thing about special education in the inclusive classroom is
4. Things that are troubling about special education are
5. During your teaching career, are there changes to the special education role that you have evidenced as more helpful than others. Please elaborate.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. The answers to the questionnaire can all be categorized under two headings, classroom teacher assistance, and student assistance in the classroom. In an ideal world it would be possible to do everything. However I am looking for a workable, equitable model based on your classroom experience. Considering a year of work in retrospect, which of the two do you consider more necessary to your own classroom? specifically what is it that you have come to rely on? that you will work toward having in future teaching situations? In other words, what is the essence, the essential of special education in an inclusive classroom for you?
2. The answers to my questionnaire suggest that the most meaningful change special education has brought to your classroom is inclusion. Answers further suggest that inclusion has changed you, your teaching and your classroom. What is so meaningful about inclusion to be worthy of changing you and how you teach?