

**SPECIAL EDUCATION GOALS PROGRAM
A CASE STUDY OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS**

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Abstract

Accountability to the students in special education classrooms is critical and in today's uncertain political climate it becomes mandatory to ensure that these programs are successful. How then is it possible to evaluate these programs to determine whether or not they are successful, given their complexity? Specifically, would an evaluation of the GOALS (Generating Occupations Academics and Living Skills) program, a special education classroom designed for students considered EMH (Educable Mentally Handicapped) demonstrate that the program was successful? An evaluation of this program was undertaken using triangulation and the hermeneutic phenomenological human science research method. In this particular triangulation, multiple observers of the same object are used: the "object" in this case being the ex-students from the GOALS program. Interviews were conducted with four of the students who passed through the program; interviews were conducted with significant others of these students; and research on successful practices employed in special education classrooms was conducted and the research was compared to the practices employed in the GOALS program. Finally, the ex-students are narratively researched by the author as teacher, in the stories written. These narratives are presented in order to speak to "the groundless ground of ambiguity that marks the human condition, a site of vibrant original difficulty, at times agonizingly difficult" and the "question of how life together can go on in such a way that even in difficulties, new life is possible" (Aoki, 1996). The author determined that the students leaving the program enjoy a high quality of life, and they consider themselves

successful. They appreciated the programming provided in the classroom and the relationship they had with the teacher in the program. The significant others of the students interviewed felt the relationship with the teacher was the most important aspect of the program. The research indicates that the teachers in GOALS are using special education best practices successfully in the program. As a result of these findings the author finds that GOALS is a successful, meaningful program.

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History

As I mulled over the nature and conclusion of this culminating master's project, I thought of how far society has come in its treatment of people with disabilities.

In the beginning, at the time of the hunter-gatherers, it is doubtful that people with disabilities would have been able to survive. If they were not able to hunt or forage for food, or if they were not able to detect and ward off enemies, they would have been of no use to the group.

From my practice and research, I thought of Mary, with her profound visual impairment, unable to make any sense at all of her environment, her disabilities compounded by the abuse she was subjected to by her older, "normal" brother. Although her life today is challenging, she would not have survived in earlier times.

Attempts to heal were made even then, but the cure was often worse than the disease. There is evidence that cave dwellers chipped holes in the skulls of sufferers in order to treat them (Apter and Conoley, 1984; Harms, 1976 as cited in Winzer, 1993). Priests in early Hebrew cultures performed exorcism rites to rid sufferers of their demons, sometimes killing them in the process (Apter and Conoley, 1984 as cited in Winzer, 1993).

The introduction of farming about 10,000 BC was the beginning of a remarkable transformation of humanity, including the chances of survival of disabled persons. The emergence of towns and cities meant that disabled people would not be left behind as the tribe moved to new hunting territory, and they would thus have a better chance to survive on scraps and handouts. More attention was paid to people with disabilities, and more

attempts were made to cure them.

The Egyptians attempted to cure trachoma with a solution of copper, myrrh, and Cyprus seeds and other ingredients applied to the eyes with a goose quill accompanied by incantations. There have been papyrus documents found (the Egyptian Ebers papyrus from 1550 BC) which contain references to disabilities such as mental retardation, epilepsy, blindness and deafness (Moore, 1987 as cited in Winzer, 1993).

I thought of Bill, born with a cleft palate. If he had been born in Sparta under the laws of Lycurgus, he probably would have been thrown into a Gorge in the Taygetus Mountains. On the other hand, if he had been born in Athens, under the laws of Solon, he would have been placed in a clay vessel and left to die by the wayside (Winzer, 1993).

Today we attempt to do better. In the past 20 years many implementations have occurred in school districts. It was interesting to establish the GOALS program in the high school. The knowledge of the administrators about special education was very limited. As I was introduced to the vice-principal in charge of the program, he stated his opening line "I don't know anything at all about special education, so you are pretty much on your own." For me this was good news; his lack of knowledge meant that he was going to allow me to use my considerable knowledge about EMH students to set up the program according to current standards.

However the bad news was that the vice-principal in charge of the budget had a predetermined set of prejudices against special education. He was opposed to the concept of any allowance being made for people with disabilities, and he was determined to make sure that the program, and the budget, was as small as humanly possible. For example,

during the first of many disagreements, he said, “You want a stapler, go buy one out of your budget, and don’t come around here looking for handouts!” One month later, at a staff meeting, he had three staplers to give away to “anyone who needs one.” This is an example of what persons with special needs face on a regular basis.

Even in our enlightened times, the range of opinions about special education continues to be wide, and varied in scope. As I developed the program, I hoped that things would change for the better, as they had done many times in the past.

The EMH program that I set up at the high school was fairly consistent with others in the province at the time. The name GOALS derived from a similar program in Edmonton. It is an acronym for Generating Occupations, Academics and Living Skills, later changed to Generating Occupations and Living Skills, after a disagreement with another vice-principal, who had strong opinions about what students in special education programs could be expected to accomplish.

Just as the vice-principal had final authority with regard to the academic expectations of the students in the GOALS program, Roman children were subject to the authority of the male head of the human family, the paterfamilias. As the head of the family, it was the father’s right to kill, mutilate, exile or sell his children. Any child under three who might someday become a burden to society was thrown in the Tiber. Infants with handicaps were also disposed of in the sewers under the streets of Rome (Winzer, 1993).

Fred would undoubtedly have suffered one of these fates, born as he was with spinal bifida. His parents would never have known that he also suffered from mental deficits as well as his physical handicap.

Interestingly, handicapped children who survived crude attempts at eugenics sometimes became valuable. Blind boys became rowers or beggars. Blind girls became prostitutes. Sometimes a wealthy family would keep a mentally retarded person as a source of amusement. Later, markets were established in Rome, where one could purchase giants, dwarfs, or hermaphrodites (Winzer, 1993). I suppose Harry, at 6'6" and 240 pounds, and a heart of gold, possessing, I would imagine, a mental capacity similar to that of Lennie in Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, would have been sold in one of these markets.

While blind children in Carthage were burned over a slow fire as a sacrifice to the sun, and while the Emperor Augustus considered people with disabilities or deformities as freaks of nature and bringers of bad luck, others were looking to the medical causes of disabilities. The earliest theories as to the origins of disabilities were usually related to divine or demonic possession. If the gods were not to blame, then it was considered the fault of demons. Later, with the rise of Christianity, came the belief in Satan, who was a prime suspect in handicapping conditions. Interestingly, deafness, blindness, and insanity were all thought to be punishments meted out to humanity by the Divine Master.

Other opposing theories of the origins of handicapped conditions had arisen much earlier, along with cures for these conditions. Hippocratic medicine was based on the belief in the four humors- blood, lymph, yellow bile, and black bile. Disease occurred with an imbalance in these liquids. Hypocrates believed that the black bile was responsible for mental illness, particularly the disease known as melancholia. Balancing the four humors was probably a much better cure than Celsus' prescription, which

consisted of liberal doses of black hellebore for depression. The hellebore was violently purgative (Winzer, 1993). Joe, a clinically depressed student, would not have been happy with that treatment.

The rise of monastic Christianity led to the belief in cloistering for handicapped persons; hospices for the disabled were set up as early as the fourth century B.C. Cures for handicapping conditions continued to be pursued rarely, and if pursued, the cures were mostly of the miraculous variety. Saint John of Beverly in England became the patron saint of the deaf after he “cured a dumb man with blessing him” (Porter, 1847 as cited in Winzer, 1993).

In medieval Europe attitudes toward disabled persons varied. Some mentally retarded persons were considered to be connected with the devil, whereas others were considered to be the children of God, blessing houses into which they were born.

Joan of Arc, considered by some modern authorities to be mentally unstable due to her religious visions, was initially thought by the authorities of the day to be a messenger of God, then of the devil, and finally, after she was burned at the stake for her beliefs, she regained favor with the church, and was sainted. Little consolation to her I would expect.

Unfortunately for people with handicaps, a plague known as the Black Death swept over Europe in the fourteenth century. Widespread symptoms of the disease included derangement, either through the disease itself, or through fear of the disease. Witch hunters became prevalent at this time, and they had a field day with the victims of the disease, and others with various conditions, which placed them apart from the mainstream of society.

Pete, with his epilepsy and his propensity for dresses and makeup would quite likely have been burned at the stake for his disabilities if he had been born during this period in history.

By the latter stages of the fifteenth century, witch hunting had become a science. The *Malleus Maleficarum* [The Hammer of Witches] was written. It provided intimate details of the habits and characteristics of witches. For example, "If the patient can be relieved by no drugs, but rather seems to be aggravated by them, then the disease is caused by the devil" (quoted by Alexander and Selesnick, 1966, p. 68 as cited in Winzer, 1993). Not a happy time for persons with handicaps!

Bill, with his uncontrollable ticks and strange vocalizations would likely have been considered a minion of the devil.

Even the more radical thinkers of the time held these beliefs. John Calvin preached that mentally retarded persons are possessed by Satan. Martin Luther was of the opinion that a mentally retarded child is merely a mass of flesh (*massa carnis*) with no soul (Kanner, 1964 as cited in Winzer, 1993).

Angela, with her deep and heartfelt religious convictions would be greatly distressed to realize that one of the great religious leaders of his time held these opinions about people with disabilities.

As stated previously, the GOALS program was set up much like others in the province at the time. That is to say, there were occupational classes, where the students were taught the basics, such as what occupations were available in the community, what education was needed to get those occupations, as well as the skills needed for those

occupations (i.e. resumes, job interviews, on the job skills). Unfortunately there was very little hands-on training. I began negotiations with the shop teachers in the school and eventually was able to enroll some of the students with interests in specific areas into those shops. This was accomplished over the objections of the administration that felt “They’ve already got a program. Why get them into another one, and take up valuable space which a student in the regular classes might want?”

There were also academic classes, in which the students were taught the 3R’s. Most of their learning in this area was related to occupational skills. The living skills component of the program consisted of community recreational activities. As a devout photographer, I added photography to the curriculum, as it incorporated many of the other skills taught in other areas (i.e. there is an occupational component, an academic component, and a living skills component). It has been shown to boost self-esteem in special education students, plus, it is a lot of fun (Oh & Miller, 1991).

As stated previously, most of the attention paid to disabilities in previous ages was in the form of medical interventions, attempts at cures. The first authenticated special education classes were started in Spain, as a result of fiscal considerations. The Spanish ruling families had a strong streak of hereditary deafness, which created serious legal problems. According to the laws of inheritance at the time, if you could not speak, you could not inherit. A Benedictine monk by the name of Pedro Ponce de Leon was hired to teach the deaf offspring of the nobility. Apparently he was quite successful (Winzer, 1993). (Fiscal considerations continue to be a major influence today, not always in a positive sense).

It was during the French Enlightenment in the middle of the eighteenth century that the systematic education of handicapped persons began. This came about as a result of the philosophers; Diderot, Bonnet, Voltaire, Helvetius, Rousseau, Condillac, La Mettrie, and others.

They wanted to change the world, as they believed that everything in the world needed changing. They questioned the legal, moral, and religious foundations of the French society. They assumed, contrary to the doctrine of original sin, that goodness was a natural characteristic of humans. They promulgated the idea of an ideal society that would protect everyone's rights. They awakened a sense of the individual's social responsibility, as well as a sense of the community's responsibility toward its members (Winzer, 1986).

The philosophical spirit of the age "elicited new concepts, theories, and speculations about sensorily deprived persons, including deaf and blind individuals, and inevitably led to concerns for those impaired by mental retardation and mental illness" (Winzer, 1986).

John Locke (1690), with his psychological speculations about the infant as "tabula rasa" (blank slate), opened the door for the education of handicapped persons. He believed that all of our ideas arise from two sources - sensation and reflection. This opposed the belief that we are stamped by God with our innate ideas, and thus that handicapping conditions were the result of divine displeasure or satanic possession, and the only cure was through divine intervention.

Locke claimed initially that all our ideas arise from experience. Later he added the rejoinder that more complex ideas come from reflection. With this understanding, people

became optimistic about the prospects for habilitation and rehabilitation of people with handicaps. This philosophy became known as sensationalism.

Voltaire (1694-1778) brought the ideas of Locke to the French people. Rousseau (1712-1778) took those ideas, developed theories of how the ideas could be turned into concrete forms of activity, and wrote his classic work, Emile (Winzer, 1986).

Jacob Rodrigies Periere (1715-1780) was the first person in France to professionally teach deaf persons (Winzer, 1986). Unfortunately, he was very secretive about his methods, so it is impossible to analyze why his methods worked. The Abbe del l'Epee (1712-1789), a bitter enemy of Periere, opened his own school for people who were deaf. He expanded the language of sign into a manual-visual equivalent of spoken language (Winzer, 1986). "De l'Epee's work formed the kernel of future intervention with deaf persons, as well as profoundly influencing other forms of special education" (Winzer, 1986). Work with the deaf was well established by the time the first school for the blind was opened in 1784, by Valentin Haüy. As a result of Periere, de l'Epee and Haüy's work, Phillippe Pinel changed the treatment of insane persons. Before his innovations, it was considered essential to dominate insane persons; the domination in some instances consisting of the afflicted persons being chained naked in rat-infested cubicles below ground, fed on bran and soup (Lane and Pillard, 1978, as cited in Winzer, 1986). He introduced kindness, respect and an expectation of appropriate behavior in the treatment of insane persons, with dramatic results (Kauffman, 1981, as cited in Winzer, 1986). An interesting experiment was carried out by Jean Itard (1775-1850) on the so-called Wild Boy of Aveyon. This young boy, approximately 12 years of age was observed running

with wolves, and after being captured and escaping several times, he was brought to Itard. Itard was thus faced with the opportunity to put the philosophies of Rousseau and Diderot into practice. He named the boy Calvin, as in Calvin (Sequin, 1864, as cited in Winzer, 1986). Calvin did not live up to Itard's expectations, and Itard felt that his work was a failure. However, his work with Calvin became the basis for the teaching approaches of Eduard Sequin and Maria Montessori. Many of our contemporary methods for the teaching of disturbed and retarded individuals were derived from Itard's work (Winzer, 1986).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1747-1827) adopted the educational philosophies of Locke and Rousseau. Pestalozzi stressed using the senses. He wanted to relate vocational education to agricultural and handicraft production, similar to the vocational education and work experience of today. He founded a school at Neuhof in which his pupils were orphaned children. The idea was that the children would work in agriculture and handicrafts, to help defray the cost of the schooling. I would suspect that most of his pupils were handicapped in some way, as only 14 out of 50 were able to work. His school closed due to lack of funds. He also believed in the importance of an educational climate of emotional security (Gutek, 1997). These two ideas incorporated by Pestalozzi into his teaching, using the senses and the need for an educational climate of emotional security, are still mainstays of special education programs today.

Winzer sums up the contribution of enlightenment thought towards special education with this quote:

The accomplishments of Periere, de l'Epee, Pinel, Haüy, and Itard are remarkable.

The mission for these pioneers was not a question of 'cleaning house'; they constructed a new form of education from the foundations up. In the process, they devised pedagogical methods that are still used today. Moreover, they overturned the conviction that educating handicapped persons was a wasteful and quixotic undertaking. They demonstrated that exceptional individuals were intellectually capable beings who could achieve in areas not previously thought possible (Winzer, 1986).

The GOALS classroom at the high school was relocated 3 times over the course of the first 3 years. We accepted our fate with equanimity however, because the school was being renovated, thus, I was able to design the classroom to my specifications. A kitchen was added, and cooking classes became a part of the living skills component. I became involved in fund-raising activities fairly quickly upon arrival, and with the money earned obtained computers for the class.

Horace Mann had a profound influence on special education with his philosophy. He believed that common schools should be socially integrative. Mann was interested mainly in integration of members of different socioeconomic classes in schools; however the idea has been used to help end racial segregation, and to aid in the mainstreaming of handicapped children into regular classrooms (Gutek, 1997).

Special education in North America began in the early 1800s. For nearly 100 years this education consisted mainly of residential programs for persons with visual or hearing impairments, or who were moderately or severely mentally retarded, or severely emotionally disturbed. Beginning around 1850, the United States started making school attendance mandatory, which caused quite a change in the education system, as no longer was education only for the upper classes. It became a multifaceted system, addressing the varied academic, social and vocational needs of a diverse population (Lilly, 1979).

In Canada, special education began in the 1850's when institutions were established in Nova Scotia and Quebec. Day classes began in 1906 for children with physical problems. These children were described as crippled, sickly, and malnourished. Later there were day classes for mentally retarded pupils, sight-saving classes, home instruction, speech correction, lip reading classes, orthopedic classes, vocational and advancement classes, and remedial reading classes (Winzer, 1994).

In Alberta, provisions were made for deaf and blind students at this time. Nine students were sent to the Winnipeg School for Deaf Mutes, and three were sent to the Brantford Blind School (Conn-Blowers, E. A. & McLeod, H. J. as found in Csapo, M. & Goguen, L, 1989). Out-of-province placements in Alberta continued until 1955 when the Alberta School for the Deaf opened in Edmonton. Blind students from Alberta were being sent to the Ontario School for the Blind at Brantford, and to Jericho Hill School in Vancouver until the 1970s.

Other changes were occurring in the GOALS program besides the structural ones. The program was growing larger and larger. From an enrollment of 8 in the first year of the program, it went to 16 students within three years. Agitation for another teacher began. There is no cap set on the number of students in this type of program, so it depends on various factors. I have always considered 10-12 students to be an ideal number, depending on the students, room size, and etcetera.

The type of student in the program was changing as well. There continued to be EMH students, but now there were students with other disabilities. Some of the students were learning disabled, some were physically disabled, some were more profoundly mentally

handicapped, with IQ's much below 55, and some were behaviorally disordered students. This last classification of student had the most profound effect on the program, as one student who is behaviorally disordered can keep the entire class in a state of disequilibrium. It was at this stage in the development of the program that I began to worry that it was becoming a dumping ground, which can be a problem in this type of program.

As a result of the postwar baby boom, as well as medical advances which kept more premature and handicapped babies alive, special education services expanded greatly in the 1950's. Parents' associations formed, and opened schools for their moderately and severely disabled children. The polio epidemic of the 1950's and the rubella epidemic of the 1960 have resulted in more disabled children in need of educational services (Winzer, 1999).

Interestingly, except for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, there is no federal law to guarantee the rights of exceptional children. The responsibility for education rests entirely with provincial legislation. This has led to some gaps in the education of students with severe mental or physical handicaps, which have been filled at the discretion of school authorities (Winzer, 1994).

The notion that exceptional students should be educated in institutions, special schools or special classes began to be rejected in the 1960's. The principles of normalization emerged at this time. Normalization refers to the belief that all individuals with exceptionalities should be provided with an education and living environment as close to normal as possible. Exceptional individuals should be regarded as individuals,

and be treated fairly and humanely.

At this time special classes were criticized. It was claimed:

- they were used as dumping grounds,
- they were exclusionary rather than remedial,
- they contained disproportionate numbers of minority students, and
- there was no difference in the progress of students in special classes as compared with those in regular classes.

Mainstreaming gained popular acceptance by 1975 as a philosophy for special education. Mainstreaming refers to the provision of free, appropriate education in the most suitable setting for all youngsters with exceptionalities.

In the mid-eighties, inclusion became the goal of some educators, even though the term inclusion has not been fully defined as yet. One definition defines full inclusion as “the education of all students with identified disabilities in the schools and classrooms they would attend if not disabled, via collaboration by general and special educators to bring support and services to student” (Rogers, 1993, as quoted in Winzer, 1999). There are many who dispute this notion, and insist that individual decisions should be made for each child (Winzer, 1999).

Thomas Kuhn’s theory of paradigm shifts is useful in describing the changes in special education in this century. Polloway et al. (1966) have theorized that there have been four educational paradigms in this century. First, from the early to the middle 1900s, the most typical programs for persons with mental retardation and developmental disabilities were facility-based programs. The theory was that these individuals could best be served if they were grouped together, and isolated from other individuals. Eventually what occurred was not what was expected. The clients ended up being warehoused (i.e.,

Blatt and Kaplan, 1967, as quoted in Polloway et. al. 1996), involuntarily sterilized (Smith and Polloway, 1992, as quoted in Polloway et. al. 1996) and subjected to generalized poor treatment.

The Alberta Government is currently dealing with the results of these policies, in the form of lawsuits brought forward by people wrongfully sterilized. Leilani Muir, who was sterilized in the 1950's, bravely brought this issue to the attention of the public.

Deinstitutionalisation as a movement had its beginnings early in the 20th century, but did not become a dominant movement until the late 1960's and early 1970's, (Smith and Polloway, 1955, as quoted in Polloway et. al. 1996), debate rages still about the extent to which deinstitutionalisation should be occurring.

The facilities-based paradigm in many cases has been replaced by the services-based paradigm. In this model, there is an attempt to provide special services to individuals with handicaps in order to prepare them for subsequent integration into society. This paradigm consists most typically of self-contained special education classes in regular schools, resource or pull-out programs, transitional workshops, related training programs and the like (Polloway et. al. 1996). In theory, the services paradigm should work, however, in many cases, the "subsequent integration into society" does not occur. Many students never leave special education classes, and the promised integration remains a pipe dream. In 1968, Dunn presented a paper in which he decried a services model in which the promised outcomes were not forthcoming. As he stated;

"... we have been generally ill-prepared and ineffective in educating these children. Let us stop being pressured into continuing and expanding a special education program that we know now to be undesirable for many of the children we are

dedicated to serve” (Dunn, 1968).

While the debate about institutionalization vs. de-institutionalization goes on, and the newer debate about full inclusion vs. pullout and segregated programs gained steam, education was faced with the “supports-based” paradigm. This model “assumes that we begin with placement in an inclusive setting and then plan to insure its success through the provision of appropriate and necessary supports” (Polloway et. al. 1996). Part of this model emphasizes levels of support, vs. levels of disability. This is a profound change in the way we view humanity. Rather than classifying according to disability or deficit (i.e., mild moderate, severe, profound), people are classified according to level of support needed: Limited, (consistency over time but time-limited); intermittent, (as needed basis, episodic nature); extensive, (regular [daily] on-going involvement of supports across environments, not time-limited); and pervasive, (consistency, high intensity, across environments, more intrusive, potentially life-sustaining).

While there are many questions arising out of the supports-based paradigm, such as training of staff, increased numbers of staff, increased costs, etcetera, a new program has arisen, the empowerment paradigm. “Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals with developmental disabilities to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, and experience full integration and inclusion in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society” (Developmental Disabilities Assistance and the Bill of Rights Act, 1993, as quoted in Polloway et. al. 1996). Although originating in the U.S., this quote applies equally appropriately to people with disabilities in Canadian

society.

In order to help students in the GOALS program to experience full integration and inclusion, an intensive work experience component was added. The first semester of the program is usually completed entirely in the GOALS classroom. I found that it takes at least that long for students to acclimatize to the high school environment. If there are students who are able to handle courses in the regular classes, they are integrated immediately. By the second semester, work experience is a part of some of the student's timetables, and by the second year, they are all enrolled in work experience. In the third year, 75% of the student's time ideally is spent in work experience.

Individualized Education Plans are developed for each student. These plans are developed by a team consisting of the student, the parents, and the teacher. The IEP outlines the aims of the education program for the student while he/she is in the program, *including* the destination of the student after graduation from the program. This is known as the transition component of the program. Transition was not initially considered to be part of the program. However, fairly early it became obvious that in order for post-school success to occur, it would be necessary to make connection with the community, to ensure smooth transition out of school into the next stage of development.

The vice-principal in charge of the GOALS program had trouble with this concept, and I was ordered to stop making plans with agencies in the community, as it was "not part of your job!" I chuckled two years later, when I was commended by the principal of the school for "going the extra mile" with the students as a result of my efforts to involve community agencies in their futures. This speaks to the continual state of flux of special

education programming direction.

What is the GOALS program like today? The clientele in the program range from severely behaviorally disordered to physically disabled, to moderately educable handicapped, to mildly mentally handicapped. In other words, there is a great variety of students with different cultural backgrounds, different socioeconomic backgrounds, and different and varying levels of disability. And it is a wonderful program.

The courses offered cover the mandate of the curriculum as proscribed by Alberta Education, and more. The students, their parents, and the teacher design an Individualized Education Plan when the student enters the program, which is followed throughout the high school career of the student. The courses which the students can take within the program are: academic, with a focus on life skills, occupational, with a work experience component built in, Living Skills, which includes cooking, the Career and Life Management course mandatory for all students attending high school in Alberta, a recreational component covering life long pursuits, and a course called Media, in which the students do units on photography, silk screen, computers, and video.

While the students attend these classes, the transition component of the program occurs. The students are connected with other programs within the school (vocational programs, physical education, art, and occasionally regular academic courses), programs outside the school, (Transitional vocational programs in colleges throughout Alberta, social services, Handicapped children's services, Adult client services, Boys and Girls clubs, Alberta Mental Health, etcetera).

Although the program appears to be stuck in a segregated class a la 1960, in this case,

appearances are deceptive. The students are taught using a services-based model; however, it is a services-based model, which works. It has incorporated aspects of the supports-based model, and a lot of effort goes into ensuring that the students are able to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, and experience full integration and inclusion in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream, much as the empowerment model works. With help and support they are becoming fully actualized members of society with all of the rights and responsibilities given to members of that society.

When I think back on the readings I completed for this section of the paper, I am encouraged by the progress that has been made in society's treatment of people with disabilities. We really have come a long way... and yet, we have a long way to go.

Introduction: Great Expectations

How does one determine the success or failure of an education program, and by so doing, determine whether or not the students in the program are successful? One way to make such a determination of success or failure would be to research all the available literature on the topic. This research would in turn point to the relevant issues, and the successful practices; in other words the “Hot Topics” in special education.

During the research, the key issue that arose in analyzing successful special education programs was one of best practice. Although the term *best practice* is problematic, as, “...various definitions, conceptualizations, and applications of the term presently exist” (Peters, M.T. & Heron, T.E., 1993), I will provide a working definition for the purposes of this project.

Some components of best practice include instructional strategies, student-teacher relationships, inclusion, and transition. The questions to be answered then become “Does the GOALS program incorporate these components into its structure?” “If so, does it work?” and “Do the students graduating from the program experience success, as determined by a high quality of life?” These are some of the preliminary questions which should be answered in this paper, to help determine the ultimate question: “Is the GOALS program successful?”

I believe however that more depth is required to make the research truly meaningful. Thus, I have included a chapter on the history of special education to help the reader come to an understanding of current special education practice. Also, I have interviewed the people most intimately involved in the class, namely; a parent or significant other,

and most importantly the former students. Through questions such as: “Do you consider yourself successful, and if so, why?” and “What were the most helpful aspects to the GOALS program?” and “What were the best and worst parts to the GOALS program?” I attempted to draw out a deeper understanding of the question of success or failure for the program, and thus for the students. (See appendices B and C for a complete list of questions.) These interview questions were administered in the form of conversational interviews which were collated and analyzed for themes related to the key issues, to develop a richer understanding of the lives of the students. Excerpts of these interviews are included throughout the research, wherever appropriate, to enrich and expand the research (see appendix E for a sample of the interviews).

Lastly, as teacher, interviewer, researcher, and friend of the people being interviewed, whose life is to this day inextricably bound with the lives of the students researched, I have incorporated a narrative telling to infuse life into and to deepen the relevance of the research. I have written personal lived-experience descriptions of the subjects in the study, as well as narrative descriptions of other students who have passed through the program over the years. This has been done deliberately to EVOKE the contextual conditions of each student, which I consider to be pertinent to the study with respect to their individual success, as well as the success of the program.

It is this last aspect of the paper that makes me the most fearful.

Can I tell someone else's story? That is the question. I face so many fears; the fear of misappropriation of voice, the fear of betrayal, the fear of exposure, the fear of misunderstanding.

Pip, Charles Dickens' hero from Great Expectations said it well.

If a dread of not being understood be hidden in the breasts of other young people to anything like the extent to which it used to be hidden in mine-which I consider probable, as I have no particular reason to suspect myself of having been a monstrosity-it is the key to many reservations (Dickens, p. 62).

Yet it is incumbent upon me to make the attempt to tell these stories. If I do not make the effort, then who will? The constituency I speak for has no voice, as they have been relegated to the space occupied by "students with special needs", and as such they speak but are not heard.

For many years as a special education teacher working with these "students with special needs", I have dwelled in the edgy unplanned curriculum spaces between us and them, and have listened, and have heard their call for legitimacy. As Ted Aoki so eloquently stated;

The unplanned and the unplannable appear unsolicited midst teaching, entering engagingly into play with the planned and plannable. And these teachers know too that, though difficult to articulate, they try to be alert to confront both the predictable and the unpredictable. For me these are telling marks, signaling the tensioned textured spaces teachers are already indwelling in their pedagogic practices. Where? In that metonymic space of doubling between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. The call for legitimation of curriculum-as-lived, then, is a call to recognize that textured site of lived tension-so often ambiguous, uncertain, and difficult-and a call

for struggle in tension but nevertheless a generative site of possibilities and hope (Aoki, 1999).

And in the telling of these (my) stories, I tell their stories. I tell our stories.

. . . while my suffering is always uniquely embedded in a story in which I am the seeming narrator, it is never mine alone but always ours. The locus of suffering is not the objective so-called 'natural' world of individual people and things, but rather the *fathomless intimacy of narration*. *Person is narration, a centerless space of dramatic interplay*. Narrator? Narrative? Narrative and Narration? (Aoki, 1996). An invited address presented at a conference titled: "Curriculum as Narrative/Narrative as

Curriculum: lingering in the spaces.

The issues and the questions are inextricably linked, and an explication of one is impossible without the explication of the other, and vice versa. In attempting to deal with both, something new is created. My hope is that through research, interview, and narrative, the study will take the reader to Aoki's (1999) metonymic space "a site that beckons pedagogic struggle, for such a human site promises generative possibilities and hope."

An explication of the research technique(s) utilized in the study follows below.

According to (Berg, 1989), qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things, and quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things. However that is not to say that there are not advantages to each style of research. According to King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, p. 92) as quoted in Neuman (1997), the best research "often combines the features of each." I employed the triangulation technique in an attempt to improve the validity of the study. I have used what Denzin (1978, p. 295) as quoted in Berg (1989) calls investigator triangulation.

In this type of triangulation, multiple observers of the same object are used: the "object" in this case being the ex-students from the GOALS program. They are being explicated by me as teacher/researcher, in the narratives I have written; by a significant other through interview with the researcher; and by themselves, in the form of an interview with the researcher.

One of the research traditions which I will be using in this study is that of the

hermeneutic phenomenological human science research method.

“Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation” (van Manen, 1990). It comes from the Greek god, Hermes, whose task it was to communicate messages from Zeus and other gods to the ordinary mortals. In this study, the interpretation is not of “the fundamental thought of the other person but the world itself, the ‘lived experience’, which is expressed by the author’s text” (Dilthey, as quoted in van Manen, 1990).

As David Smith says:

...the hermeneutic modus has more than the character of conversation than, say, of analysis and the trumpeting of truth claims. When one is engaged in good conversation, there is a certain quality of self-forgetfulness as one gives oneself over to the conversation itself, so that the truth that is realized in the conversation is never the possession of any one of the speakers or camps. But rather is something that all concerned realize they share in together (Smith, 1999, p. 38).

Phenomenology is the science of phenomena. For Husserl phenomenology was a discipline that endeavors to describe how the world is constituted and experienced through conscious acts. He states that phenomenology must describe what is given to us in immediate experience without being obstructed by pre-conceptions and theoretical notions (van Manen, 1990).

And

“Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is a *descriptive* (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an *interpretive* (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. The implied contradiction may be resolved if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) “facts” of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. Moreover, even the “facts” of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretive process” (van Manen, 1990, p.180).

And finally, a definition of human science. “Human science research is the activity of explicating meaning. In this respect the fundamental research orientation of all human science is more closely aligned with the critical-hermeneutic rationality of the humanities

and philosophy than with the more positivist rationality of empirical-analytic or behavioral cognitive science” (van Manen, 1990, p. 181). “According to Dilthey we can grasp the fullness of lived experience by reconstructing or reproducing the meanings of life’s expressions found in the products of human effort, work and creativity” (van Manen, 1990, p. 180).

I have “great expectations” that by reading the research into best practice and quality of life issues for special education students, through the narrative telling, and through the interviews with the former students and their significant others, the reader will gain insight into one special education class and the lives of an oft-segregated section of society. I also hope to learn and grow from the experience of this research. As David Smith states:

Underscored here is a profoundly ethical aspect to hermeneutic inquiry in a life-world sense, namely, a requirement that a researcher be prepared to deepen her or his own self-understanding in the course of research. Other people are not simply to be treated as objects upon whom to try out one’s methodological frameworks. (Smith, 1999, p. 38)

As an educator, I have been teaching students in special needs classrooms for over 20 years. The high school classroom in which I taught has been given the label EMH classroom. Students who are labeled Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH) are considered mildly mentally retarded. One definition of the degree of intellectual disability and expected developmental and academic characteristics of EMH students is: having an IQ level of from 55 to 70 and “Capable of basic academic subjects up to advanced elementary levels; [they] will achieve about half to two thirds of what normally developing peers do. General achievement ranges from second to fifth grades. Gap

widens in secondary school” (Winzer, 1999).

Having thus defined EMH students it becomes necessary to emphasize that the GOALS classroom rarely, if ever, is limited to students who meet this criteria. A typical class in any given year may have students with special needs due to learning disabilities or physical disabilities. There may be students with more profound mental handicaps, as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV), such as Dysthymic Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Conduct Disorder or Schizophrenia. There may also be students who have IQ's far below 55, or students with milder unclassified behavioural disorders and average IQ's. Naturally, being human, the students arrive with various combinations of the above disabilities. Also the students come from a variety of cultural, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds.

Best Practice

As mentioned above, the term best practice could be seen as problematic, however I will use the following criteria to help clarify the term (Peters & Heron, 1993).

1. The practice is well grounded in sound theory.
2. Empirical support exists for the practice.
3. Existing literature corroborates the practice.
4. Meaningful outcomes result from the practice.
5. The practice is socially valid.

The best practices described below emphasize “quality of life” outcomes by addressing what is being taught from the student’s point of view.

The use of best practice has drawn attention to the fact that multiple effective procedures must be integrated to realize qualitative changes in lifestyle for persons with disabilities. The concept of best practice has been an attempt to point out that achieving meaningful outcomes requires the effects of several procedures working in concert (Snell 1988, as found in Peters & Heron, 1993).

The four examples of best practice explicated below and employed by teachers in the GOALS program are necessary for success in the program; however, they are not necessarily the only examples of best practice used in the program.

Student-Teacher Relationships

Marzano et al. (2001) have looked at the studies that indicate that school influence on student performance accounts for approximately 20% of a student mark, while the student’s background accounts for 80% of the mark. One of these studies (Coleman et al., 1966, as found in Marzano, 2001) concluded that the quality of schooling a student receives accounts for only about 10 per cent of the variance in student achievement. Coleman concluded that the vast majority of differences in student achievement can be attributed to factors like the student’s natural ability or aptitude, the socioeconomic status

of the student and the student's home environment. Jencks (Jencks et al., 1972 as cited in Marzano, 2001) came up with the same conclusion that schools make little difference. They state that students with disadvantaged cultural capital (which would include a large percentage of students in special education programs) do not bring the same amount of ability to the table as those students who have very supportive home environments. Marzano (2001) found studies by Rosenthal (1991) and by Hunter and Schmidt (1990) that disputed the technique used by Coleman and Jencks of focusing on the percentage of explained differences in scores, and suggested that a more meaningful way of interpreting the findings is in terms of percentile gain in achievement. An example would be the finding that schools account for only 10 percent of differences translates into a percentile gain of about 23 points. From this perspective, schools can definitely make a difference in student achievement. More importantly, more recent research since those studies has shown that an individual teacher can have a powerful effect on students even if the school does not. Jere Brophy and Thomas Good (1986, as found in Marzano, 2001) commented: "The myth that teachers do not make a difference in student learning has been refuted." Also, William Sanders and his colleagues (see Sanders and Horn, 1994; Wright, Horn and Sanders, 1997, as found in Marzano, 2001) analyzed the achievement scores of more than 100,000 students across hundreds of schools, and their conclusion was:

The results of this study will document that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. In addition, the results show wide variation in effectiveness among teachers. The immediate and clear implication of this finding is that seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor. Effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels, regardless of the level of heterogeneity in their classrooms. If the teacher is ineffective, students under the

teacher's tutelage will show inadequate progress academically regardless of how similar or different they are regarding their academic achievement (Wright et al., 1997, as found in Marzano, 2001).

Effective school research suggests that three factors affect school achievement. They are schools, teachers and students. School factors include the school itself, curriculum and environment. Teacher factors include instruction, curriculum and classroom management. Student factors include the home, prior knowledge, aptitude and attitude.

Other studies allude to the importance of student-teacher relationships in the educational process. Shore (1996) reports how a school in the United States reduced expulsion rates and suspension rates, and improved grade point averages just by having staff members get to know the troublesome students in the school and meet with them, and talk to them on a regular basis. (See also Testerman, 1996).

The results of the interviews support the above statements. Seven of the eight interviewees referred to the positive relationship between the teacher and the student. In the interview with Manny, the answer was straightforward. When asked "Who's your best bud right now?" The response was "I'm talking to him." Manny and I established a close relationship in class, which continues to this day, several years later. His mother refers to this relationship as well. As she states; "I'm glad he got somebody to turn to when he is in town so he can get help." and later, "There is Glen that always helps you out." This close relationship began while Manny was in the classroom, and no doubt contributed to Manny's learning in the classroom.

When Pete was asked, "What was the best thing that you learned? If you could think of one thing that was really good that you learned in the GOALS Program, what would it

be?” his response referred to the teacher in the program. “Well, I think it wasn’t the schoolwork that was really neat that I learned there, it was, I’m being very honest, but it was the people who I met there who I got to learn more about and the teacher, which is you, ...”

Pete’s mother referred to the important role of the teacher in the classroom as well.

When she was asked, “What did Pete learn in high school?” Her response was telling.

I don’t think it was the learning thing, that’s not just the socializing you know because he really liked you and he liked a couple of the kids, I think. But I think it was mostly you that he liked because you always supported him no matter what and so he always felt accepted there and felt like you were interested in him.

Later in the interview, she was asked “What can I do in that program to ensure that Pete and other students are successful when they leave the program?” and her response is worth quoting here.

Well I don’t think that’s the problem. I don’t think that’s the concern because you know if everybody thought like you out there and was willing to take kids like him in and spend extra time and teach them a job and you know; look at them as a kind of an investment...

Later in another exchange:

Bonnie: Umm, well. I don’t know how much it helps you but I mean, you were definitely, definitely one of the most positive influences in his life. I know that so I know you’re doing that right you know, the kids, they trust you and ...

Glen: What is it that I do that ...?

Bonnie: I think you just umm, you listen. Nothing shocks you, you know? Whatever they come to you with, you just, ok so take it in their stride. Nothing turns you off of them and you don’t discriminate against anyone or anything and he’s very sensitive to that you know. He knows the minute that someone doesn’t like him and he doesn’t want to know him. I think we probably all are but he’s right on track with that. So I don’t know what, I don’t think there is anything you could have done differently. I think you did everything fine...

Ted also talks of the influence of his teachers. When referring to his social life, he says:

...I'd have to say my social life is pretty good. Because of the way I was brought up properly and probably the role models I have, which was you probably and Mrs. Tompkow." He says, "One thing is you never gave up on me. You never let me quit." and later, "... you stood up for your students.", and later yet, "But you make it fun. When students go there you make it fun. We had everything. We had a kitchen, a computer room, two classrooms, I mean, we had it all." When speaking of his late mother Justine, Ted states, "... you were an important person to both of us. You smartened me up all the time."

Bill's mother makes a similar point:

He found somebody because all the years he had been in school, you were probably the second teacher only that he had that he really felt that he could connect with him because usually the teachers he had, they just don't understand him and so he really, I think that's why he became so, so attached to you.

Bill talks about the teacher being his friend. He says; "... I've been separated from my dear friend Mr. Miller, the guy that they hear me talk about all the time." When talking about friends later on, there is this exchange:

Bill: Oh, I don't have any friends.

Glen: You don't have any friends?

Bill: Yeah. Like my one big best friend I'm talking to right now but I don't have much.

Instructional Strategies

Marzano (2001) engaged in a meta-analysis of thousands of different instructional strategies, and based on his research, identified nine categories of instructional strategies that were shown to improve student achievement.

These strategies are enumerated below:

1. Identifying similarities and differences

2. Summarizing and note taking
3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
4. Homework and practice
5. Representing knowledge
6. Learning groups
7. Setting objectives and providing feedback
8. Generating and testing hypotheses
9. Cues, questions, and advance organizers.

These strategies are similar to the strategies employed in the cognitive education programs (Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment - I.E. and Strategies Program for Effective Learning/Thinking – S.P.E.L.T.) that have been developed as instructional strategies to improve student achievement. A study done by Robert Mulcahy (1993) showed that:

1. Cognitive education was effective in improving student thinking, especially for the grade 4 learning disabled, and to a lesser effect the gifted, in reading comprehension, and comprehension monitoring skills.
2. Students' strategic behavior generally improved across grade and diagnostic groups.
3. Though I.E. was effective, S.P.E.L.T. tended to produce more positive changes in students' overall performance.
4. Teachers', parents', and administrators' responses were positive towards the two cognitive education programs, with more favorable remarks being made for S.P.E.L.T.

In the GOALS program Instrumental Enrichment was taught as part of the curriculum.

According to Mulcahy;

The program is based on Feuerstein's theory of structural cognitive modifiability via mediated learning experience. The theory suggests that cognitive deficiencies which youngsters exhibit as a result of impoverished experiential backgrounds can be corrected if a knowledgeable adult, usually a parent or teacher, intervenes between the child and his/her environment. Such mediation takes the form of intentional transformation, reordering, organizing, grouping, or framing of environmental stimuli in a way that transcends the immediate stimuli and reveals new meaning and insights

hitherto unknown to the child. The program utilizes paper-and-pencil tasks and intensive teacher-student discussion (Mulcahy, 1993, pp. 28-29).

The major goal of the program is to enhance cognitive modifiability, that is, learning potential of the individual. Among the sub goals relating to self-determination, and thus quality of life are:

1. The correction of deficient cognitive functions;
2. The development of an intrinsic need for adequate cognitive functioning, and the spontaneous use of operational thinking by the production of crystallized schema and habit formation;
3. The production of insight and understanding of one's own thought processes, in particular, those processes that produce success as well as those that result in failure;
4. The production of task-intrinsic motivation that is reinforced by the meaning of the program in a broader social context; and
5. A change in orientation towards oneself from passive recipient and reproducer to active generator of information.

Another "purposeful instructional program" used in the GOALS program is the CALM (Career and Life Management) program which is a required course for all students taking the regular high school curriculum. This course covers topics such as thinking skills; health (in the global sense), including Baby Think It Over (BTIO), a program designed to impress upon high school students the reality of having a baby; looking after personal finances; living on your own; relationships; and work (how to find a job, how to apply for a job, getting and keeping a job, etcetera).

As well as these courses, the GOALS program offers courses on occupations, work experience, driver training and first aid, as well as academic courses at the student's ability level. The benefits of these courses in terms of self-determination and quality of life are self-evident. There is also a course called media that covers photography,

computer graphics, and silkscreen. This course has been shown to aid in self-concept development in special education students, which also relates to quality of life (Oh & Miller, 1991).

Another purposeful instructional aspect to the program is volunteer work, mostly volunteering for bingo. Although working bingo was initiated in order to raise money for classroom materials and equipment, and to help pay for field trips, I quickly realized other more important benefits were arising from the volunteer work. The students were asked to help out, as they benefited directly from the proceeds. As workers, they were expected to sell cards to the public. They were required to walk up and down the aisles, selling bonanza and satellite cards. As well, they had to check cards to verify bingos, and call back numbers from individual cards to the bingo caller. Quickly it was determined that money earned was one of the minor benefits for the students. Real life transactions with real people, using real money, was a far more effective way to teach the students how to make change than sitting in a classroom with the plastic money provided in math kits. Also, and most importantly, student's self-esteem improved when they realized they could go out into a large room filled with people, and do business and communicate with these people just fine. Volunteering for bingo has become an important "purposeful instructional program" for students in the program.

Inclusion

In 1985, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect. In terms of equality rights, the charter states:

15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the

equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.

(2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.

As a result of the charter and educational policy in the United States, (which I refer to extensively below), education in Canada, and specifically in Alberta, changed significantly. Previous to the charter, a school board in Alberta had the right to excuse (exclude?) students from school if the board determined that “regular classroom experience is non- productive or is detrimental to the pupil or to the school, until such a time as the board with the approval of the parent can arrange the needed special class or in any other suitable manner” (Government of Alberta, 1980).

In 1988 the School Act begins to reflect the Charter of Rights. It reads in part:

29(1) A board may determine that a student is by virtue of the student’s behavioural, communicational, intellectual, learning or physical characteristics, or a combination of those characteristics, a student in need of a special education program.

(2) A student who is determined by a board to be in need of a special education program is entitled to have access to a special education program provided in accordance with section 28.

And,

Alberta Education policy 1.6.1 (1997) which states, “Educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighborhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards in consultation with students, parents/guardians and school staff”.

In the United States there has been much written about necessary conditions for inclusion. There has been a promotion of the concept of “full inclusion” which involves all children with special needs being educated in regular schools, and in most cases in

regular classrooms. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as quoted in Burnette (1996) specifies that:

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities ... are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be attained satisfactorily (IDEA Sec. 612 (5) (B).

As Burnette (1996) states, "... the Department of Education has also expressed support for the important role that other options on the continuum play for some students and has affirmed that placement decisions should be made on an individual basis and in conjunction with, not following, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process also mandated under IDEA." A problem associated with inclusive practices centers on placement of students in regular classes without appropriate supports. The success of students has been related to the supports and services they receive.

Also, the type of disability affects the success of students in inclusive programs. Studies show that many students with below average IQs or mild mental retardation, for example, demonstrate higher academic achievement in general education classrooms than in special education classrooms, while many students with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, or behavioural disorders make more academic progress in special education programs than in general education classrooms (Carlberg and Kavale, 1980; Sindelar and Deno, 1978, as quoted in Burnette, 1996).

According to Lipsky and Gartner there are seven key factors necessary for full

inclusion. These are:

visionary leadership; collaboration between everyone involved; refocused use of assessment; support for staff and students; appropriate funding levels; parental involvement; and effective program models, curriculum adaptations and instructional practices (Lipsky and Gartner, 1998, as quoted in Hornby, (1999, p. 153).

Meeting all of these needs is a major undertaking, certainly not practically possible in many schools. The question then becomes “Is it more important for a child to be educated in a local school or for a child to be educated well?” Thomas researched support teaching and found:

Particularly problematic is the collaborative relationship required between support teacher and classroom teacher. This is the key to success of support teaching but it often falls down due to the limited time for liaison, support teachers’ lack of interpersonal skills and the negative attitudes of many class teachers. Because of these factors, support teaching is often found to be less effective than the use of withdrawal groups in facilitating progress (Thomas, 1992 as quoted in Hornby, 1999).

Hornby (1999) analyzed seven major reviews of the literature on inclusion and he concluded that, apart from the lower cost of inclusive practices, the reviews found little evidence that the goals of inclusion are being met. It appeared that greater educational attainment, increased social skills, reduced stigma, increased self-esteem, greater racial integration, improved parent involvement, and individualization of instruction did not necessarily result from including children with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

Vaughn and Schumm enumerate nine components that are necessary for inclusion to be effective. These are:

- Using the extent to which students with SEN (Special Educational Needs) make satisfactory academic and social progress in ordinary classes as the major criteria

for considering alternative interventions – as opposed to insisting on mainstream class placement regardless of the academic and social progress of the students.

- Allowing teachers to choose whether or not they will be involved in teaching inclusive classes - as opposed to expecting all teachers, regardless of their attitudes towards inclusion or their expertise in teaching students with SEN, to teach inclusive classes.
- Ensuring the provision of adequate human and physical resources – as opposed to expecting reductions in the cost of provision through implementing inclusion.
- Encouraging schools to develop inclusive practices tailored to the needs of the students, parents and communities they serve as well and to take into account of the expertise of their own staff – as opposed to imposing inclusive models on schools without involving them in the discussion.
- Maintaining a continuum of services including withdrawal for small group teaching and placement in special education classrooms – as opposed to viewing full inclusion as the only alternative.
- Continually monitoring and evaluating the organization of provisions in order to ensure that students' needs are being met – as opposed to sticking rigidly to one model of inclusion without ongoing evaluation to assess its effectiveness.
- Ensuring ongoing professional development is available to all staff that needs it – as opposed to not considering teachers' need for training in order to be able to implement inclusion.
- Encouraging the development of alternative teaching strategies and means of adapting the curriculum in order to meet the specific needs of students with a wide range of ability – as opposed to exposing students with SEN to the same teaching and curriculum as other students.
- Developing an agreed philosophy and policy on inclusion that provides guidance to teachers, parents and others – as opposed to imposing a policy of inclusion on schools without the opportunity for discussion (Vaughn and Schumm 1995 as found in Hornby 1999).

Based on these conclusions, Hornby (1999) makes the statement that the level of inclusion, locational, social or functional, should be decided on the needs of each individual child and the exigencies of each situation.

Blamires (1999) approaches the subject of inclusion from a different viewpoint. He suggests that inclusion can be evaluated on three different parameters, enabling physical inclusion, enabling social inclusion, and enabling cognitive inclusion, and:

- A learner may be cognitively engaged in every lesson she attends through her use

of a laptop but she may have no social involvement with the class or the life of the school.

- A learner may attend a variety of social activities and lessons in the school but not be included in the teaching and learning activities.
- A learner might attend a local school but his social and cognitive needs are not recognized or catered for.
- A learner may not attend his local college but is engaged in learning and social activities with tutors and peers via mail, speech and video who form a 'virtual' community (but who are we to say this virtual community is not real?).

Burnette also refers to this:

The National Center on Educational Outcomes has noted a national shift in business, industry, and human services from a focus on process to a focus on results that are broader than academic achievement. In addition to academic and functional outcomes, these include contribution and citizenship; personal and social adjustment; and satisfaction of the students, parents, and community (Ysseldyke and others, 1994, as found in Burnette, 1996).

Blamires states:

Where school systems are based upon an expectation of homogeneity rather than diversity, inclusion may be rather akin to the Piagetian processes of assimilation rather than accommodation, with similar experiences (familiar learners) being assimilated into existing structures but new experiences (different learners) not being accommodated through the creation of new or the elaboration of existing structures. When schools fail to recognize diversity in this way, special educational needs may not warrant due consideration. In order for schools to improve and become more effective at the same time as they become more inclusive, students must have a stake in the learning and its outcomes, they must be engaged in tasks that are perceived as being worthwhile by the people involved, and they must have high expectations which do not lead to self precepts of being a failure. (Blamires, 1999, p.159).

In order for inclusion to work effectively:

for any given student, teachers need to be able to provide content that is interesting; an appropriate level of challenge; appropriate supports and scaffolds that can be withdrawn as skill improves; timely, personally relevant feedback so that the student can observe progress and make adjustments; options for learning context (e.g. exploratory versus structured, individual versus collaborative; real-life versus fictional); and a clear purpose for learning (Centre for Augmentative and Special Technology 1998 as found in Blamires 1999, p. 162).

Edgar and Polloway (1994) argue that the emphasis on placement has often resulted in somewhat diminished attention to important questions concerning the content of educational programs. They suggest that an emphasis on outcomes and the nature of the curriculum should be paramount.

A critical review by Brantlinger (1997) focuses on 13 articles and 5 book chapters by prominent special education scholars. These authors write in support of a continuum of special education services and recommend that only the results of empirical research should inform special education practice. They also express wariness about the concept of inclusion and the direction of the inclusion movement. In touting the superiority of their own scholarship, they accuse inclusion supporters of being political, subjective, and ideological. This article challenges the supposed neutrality of the special education status quo and the moral grounding of the reviewed authors' position. Drawing from the insights of theorists who study ideology, the analysis sheds light on the ideological nature of the reviewed authors' own writing. The major recommendation put forth in this article is that scholars and other professionals need to think seriously about the impact of their educational preferences on the least powerful members of society if equity in schooling is to be realized.

MacMillan et al (1996) argue that educational treatments of children with disabilities should be empirically validated. From this perspective the current press for full inclusion is examined against empirical evidence bearing on the major assertions of advocates for full inclusion. Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) are among the most difficult to include, and the unique problems presented by such children often are

ignored by advocates for full inclusion. Arguments for full inclusion, particularly as they apply to children with emotional and behavioral disorders suffer from: (a) the failure to specify what constitutes full inclusion, (b) the weakness of relying on anecdotal reports and single case studies to validate the utility of full inclusion of all children with disabilities, and (c) the fact that the evidence that does exist fails to include children with emotional and behavioral disorders. Finally, evidence is summarized that contradicts the position that “more restrictive” placements are never beneficial and that regular class placement is always beneficial to all children with disabilities.

Inclusion for students in the GOALS program is a complicated process due to the varied nature of the disabilities of students in the program. A discussion of inclusion in the GOALS program will of necessity include inclusion strategies employed throughout the school, and as such, will serve to elucidate inclusion strategies throughout the high school, not just the philosophy of inclusion in the GOALS microcosm. Examining the inclusion strategies employed for the students interviewed for the study will clarify the above statement.

Bill’s enrollment into the GOALS program could be interpreted as a major step in the inclusion process. Previous to his enrollment, Bill’s mother had been driving Bill to and from a special school in Edmonton. This meant at least three hours of driving every day. She did not embark on this rigorous regime lightly. It came about as a result of Bill’s inability to fit into any of the programs offered within the district in which they lived. While he was attending local programs, he was very unhappy, and unable to connect with anyone, staff or students.

When Bill reached high school age his mother could no longer manage the extra hours needed for the trip to Edmonton. Even so, it was with some trepidation that she enrolled Bill in the GOALS program. As the teacher in the GOALS program, it was my job to ensure that Bill was “included” in the high school culture. He was able to accomplish this, and Bill and his mother were happy with Bill’s new program, and his inclusion into the culture of his new school. (A description of this process is found in “Bill” in the narratives). Although Bill would not be considered a success by advocates for full inclusion as described above, I felt he was included to the greatest extent possible. Rather than working on full inclusion for Bill, the next step for him was the transition from high school to general society.

Manny was another GOALS student who was included to the fullest extent possible. Manny’s disabilities are documented in other places in this document, but it is worth repeating here, his inability to communicate, either through speech, or writing, precluded him from full inclusion. Like Bill, however, he was included in the high school culture to the greatest extent practicable. He began his high school career in the Remedial and Living Skills program, which is a program in the high school for students having more severe disabilities than the students in the GOALS program. After some time in this program it was felt that Manny would benefit socially from inclusion into the GOALS program, so he was moved on a part time basis to this program. He was another student who was included to the fullest extent possible, and then the emphasis was moved from inclusion to transition as it was felt that Manny would not be attending school much longer, due to his age, so work experience became much more relevant. (See “Manny” in

the narratives.)

Ted, like Manny, was included to the maximum extent practicable. Ted came into the program with one goal in mind, and that was to get out into the work world. His mother and the teacher concurred with this goal, and as a result, Ted's program was geared specifically to get him into the work world, with much of his day being devoted to work related activities, and work experience. An attempt to include Ted in the regular programming in the high school would probably have resulted in his dropping out of school. Today, several years later, Ted is still happily working. (See "Ted" in the narratives.)

From Bill's and Manny's and Ted's point of view, (and also from their parents point of view), the GOALS students "Had it all." They were part of the school culture; they had a curriculum that was relevant and geared to their level of ability; and they were having fun learning.

The only student interviewed for this study with an interest in inclusion into regular programming was Pete, and as such, with consultation with Pete's mother, teachers and administrators, he was included in regular programming. This process of inclusion did not come without struggle, as the administrators initially had difficulty with the concept. (See "Pete" in the narratives.)

Pete is a gifted artist, and as such, it was felt that art classes would be beneficial to his growth. He was also a long distance runner, so he was directed to the track team, and enrolled in Physical Education. He ended up taking three years of art, and one year of Phys. Ed. Pete had some comments about his placement in the GOALS program that are

relevant here. Regarding inclusion Pete had this to say:

Glen: ...the worst thing that there was about being in the GOALS Program?

Pete: The worst thing was we couldn't earn credits. That's so stupid.

Glen: Why was that a problem for you that you couldn't earn credits?

Pete: Because that's stopping the GOALS students from getting into college isn't it?

Glen: Into some programs in colleges, yes. Yeah, that's true.

Pete: That's really stopping them from making a career in life I think.

Glen: Yup, yup.

Pete: That's what's really unfair about GOALS, that's what I didn't like.

Glen: So that was the thing that was the least helpful in other words, it kind of held you back that you weren't getting credits.

Pete: Yeah.

Glen: You ended up getting some credits.

Pete: Yeah, because, thanks to you, you got me into regular art classes.

Glen: Yeah. And you were in the Phys. Ed. class.

Pete: Yeah, I was in Phys. Ed. 10.

Glen: Did you get credit for that, I can't remember.

Pete: Yeah, I think it was worth 6 credits, I'm not sure, but yeah, I earned 14 credits (laugh) but that's nothing ...

Glen: When you need 100, that's not much is it?

Pete: Yeah, that's nothing. So it was fun in art class, it was interesting...

Glen: Yup, yup.

Pete: ...I didn't enjoy art class as much as I enjoyed the classes in the GOALS Program.

Glen: Yup. So you were integrated into the regular program, that's what that is called, you know, to get you into the regular program. You figure that's a good idea?

Pete: Yeah.

Glen: Yeah, so if you were to come into the GOALS Program and say, Mr. Miller, I'm going to tell you what you can do to improve, that would be one thing, would be to get the kids out more into the regular programs?

Pete: Yeah, yeah, they're there for, trying to get them into that course in regular classes.

Glen: As much as possible?

Pete: Yeah.

Glen: What about taking kids in special-needs programs in say, like you for example, say Pete, we're going to put you into a regular grade ten program. We're going to have somebody there with you ... do you think that would work?

Pete: Yeah.

Glen: Yeah?

Pete: Umm, when I was in grade six, there was a teacher's aide, Ms. Monica, and she was with me all of the time... she would help me in some of the regular classes that I had to take and she went with me into grade seven too ...But yeah, Ms. Monica, she

was constantly with me all of the time.

Glen: So if you had somebody with you, you think that you could handle being in a regular program? Like a regular math class?

Pete: See if I was in regular classes in Junior High, then Ms. Monica, it's good for me I think that I would have done well with her help in regular classes instead of being in the SNAP Program with her being with me all the time, helping me out with my work.

This segment was from the second interview. In the first interview, Pete talked about his comfort level being higher in the GOALS class, because the students in the GOALS class were more accepting of Pete's sexuality (See Pete in the narratives), and also "...I could understand them better than I could the other people...they don't use big fancy words like the other normal students do, you know?" In the first interview Pete also makes the point about lack of credits in the GOALS program. He says, "It's such a shame that they can't earn credits in that class. That's just really, that just offends me a lot because that stops them from, kind of succeeding in life. It stops them from accomplishing a lot of things and that's what really ticks me off." These quotes and the one following from Pete's interviews speak to his ambivalence about his placement in the GOALS program.

Yeah. It's like you're on the east side and regular classes are on the west side. They're the rich, you're the poor; you're nothing, they're everything. You're the moldy little gutter and they're the golden sidewalk. And I don't know who's in charge of letting GOALS earn credits or not but I wish that that would change. And another thing that I wish could happen is if the high school could give away some information about sexuality, if you're feeling different, if you're confused about your sexuality and stuff and I tried to do that before I was done grade twelve and Mr. Neilson sent back a letter saying that you would have to ask the head office or whoever is in charge.

It should be noted that since Pete's time in the program, there has been a strong push

in the program to introduce more accredited programming, where possible.

Although no students with emotional and behavioral disorders were interviewed for this study, there are always students with these disorders in the program, and attempting full inclusion with these students is a near impossibility, due to the extreme range of behaviours exhibited. (See Franky's story in the narratives.)

In the last few years at the high school, the administration has come to a finer appreciation of the concept of inclusion, as there have been students coming into the high school with disabilities, who have been fully included in junior high school, and whose parents have come to the high school with the understanding that they would continue to be fully included. Each of the students is unique, and their stories are worth repeating here.

Sam has autism. In elementary school, Sam was fully included in regular classes, with a full-time aide. When he reached junior high school, central office personnel determined that he should be placed in a special class, as it was felt he would not be able to handle the academic rigor, nor the social scene in a regular class. Previously, when a parent was given this sort of directive from the "authorities" it would have been accepted. Sam's mother refused to accept this directive, pulled Sam from school, and hired a lawyer to fight Sam's case. It took a year, but in the end, she won, and Sam was placed into a regular grade eight program, once again, with a full-time aide. Sam is now entering grade twelve, and his years of inclusion have been successful. Academically he is achieving well, and socially, his peers accept him, although interaction with Sam is difficult due to his autism.

Dirk had a spontaneous spinal bleed when he was 10 years old. It left him quadraplegic, with very little movement possible, other than a small movement of his head. He is bright, with a keen sense of humor and an interest in hockey. He is in a motorized wheel chair that he controls with his breathing. He is in a regular program, with a full-time aide, as he needs constant care. His social interaction is mostly with the adults around him; his aide, his counsellors, and the teachers. Recently he has started using the internet with the help of his aides, and he is learning voice recognition software, with the hope that he will be able to interact more independently with his friends and family. He has moved into a group home in Edmonton, and is finishing up his high school there. He has gone for job interviews, and although he is not working, he is optimistic about his future. Like Sam, Dirk is achieving academically, with his social life constricted as a result of his disability.

Brad has Down syndrome. He has limited academic ability, and limited communication skills. As a result of his mother's intervention, and the reluctance of the school district to engage in a legal battle over inclusion, Brad is fully included in the mainstream in the high school except for one period he spends in a special program, to give his aide a lunch break. He comes to school with a full-time aide. His aide sits with him in his classes, and interprets the work being done so Brad can understand it. He is working at a grade one and two level, so his aide must do a lot of interpretation. Socially, Brad has a few friends in the high school, in the regular programs, and several friends in the special program he attends for one period a day.

Transition

A definition of transition as found in Williams (1998) comes to us from U.S. legislation in the form of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990).

It states:

Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment) continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation.

Some points to be made about this definition:

1. The “coordinated set of activities” must include the integration of the post-school activities and the different agencies that are responsible for providing services to a special education student.
2. The term outcome-oriented process is defined by the results or planned conclusion of the transition activities of a disabled student.
3. Regardless of varying degrees of ability, if post secondary activities are dealt with appropriately, the chances of achieving the highest level possible for post secondary life increases.
4. Post-school activities refers to the fact that transitional services are aimed to help disabled students successfully move from a public school education program to post school activities, and these activities may include; post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation.
5. In other words, transition planning not only addresses the employment domain, but adult life within the community.
6. And finally, the transitional plan must be student-centered, and for the student and parents to be involved in the planning process whenever possible.

Also, Williams quotes the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1994) as stating “Comprehensive transition planning needs to address several domains including education, employment, personal responsibility, relationships, home and family leisure pursuits, community involvement, and physical and emotional health.”

These specific definitions and well-defined outcomes are necessary when one realizes

as the research points out, that learning-disabled adults experience more career-related problems than non-disabled adults. Learning disabled individuals may have poor organizational skills, limited attention span, perceptual problems, functional limitations, poor academic skills, and they may be passive learners (from Adelman and Vogel, 1993, as found in Williams, 1998). Also, as Rojewski (1994) states “learning disabled individuals have problems in the socio-personal area, and as such usually have low self-esteem and low self-concept” (as found in Williams, 1998). Thus, one advantage of vocational education during high school years is that it raises students’ self esteem (Asselin and Mooney, 1995) as found in Williams (1998). As well, as Adelman and Vogel point out, “learning-disabled adults who were employed during high school or completed a vocational program during high school usually are successful in obtaining occupations in clerical, craft, laborer, and service fields (Adelman and Vogel, 1993 as found in Williams (1998). The good news is high school programming which follows recommendations for successful transition programs does help; the bad news is the wages paid to learning disabled workers are generally minimum wages.

According to Seigel and Sleeter: “The mission of special (or general) education is not restricted to the teaching of academic subjects, nor is it to protect students from a harsh adult environment, it is to prepare them to participate fully in the mainstream adult world” (Seigel and Sleeter 1991, as found in Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997, p. 27). In order to meet this mission, Burrell (1993) states “staff development efforts must be made in the areas of assessment and evaluation, counseling and referral, program placement, remediation, tutoring, specialized services, job placement and follow-up (Burrell as found

in Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). Burrell also states that the programs with high-quality outcomes also include career guidance services as part of their transition programming (Burrell as found in Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997).

Maddy-Bernstein suggests:

the guidance program include the program's capacities to assist students with self-assessment, deliver educational and occupational exploration and lifelong career planning, address the needs of diverse groups of learners, provide support services (e.g., child care), and create career information delivery systems (Maddy-Bernstein 1994, as found in Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell 1997).

Maddy-Bernstein also asserts that the best transition programs have plans for internal and external coordination. As he says:

Internally, schools have well defined relationships between special education, at-risk services, vocational-technical education departments, and guidance and pupil services. Beyond the program or school, coordinated service arrangements often specify vocational assessment and job coaching services to be provided, referral and eligibility determination policies, job placement services, and additional training services to be provided by employment and training agencies (Maddy-Bernstein 1994, as found in Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell 1997).

Grigal et al. (1997) evaluated the transition component of IEPs of 94 high school students with various handicaps, ranging from learning disabilities to emotional/behavioural disorders. They determined that teachers must take on the role of facilitator and help each student achieve his or her stated post school outcomes. They also made the point that the transition plans must not be disability specific, rather they must be "driven by student desires, and then activities selected to ensure students reach their goals. Both goals and activities should be individualized for each student. Students should not be 'pigeonholed' by disability." They also state that:

To be effective, the transition planning process must be collaborative. In the same vein, the changes needed to enable effective transition planning must be

collaborative. Schools must provide time and opportunity for students, teachers, parents, and other professionals to work together appropriately. Adult service agencies must also commit time and resources to the effort and teacher education programs must prepare professionals for the realities of transition planning.

Morgan et al. (1992) surveyed 104 secondary special educators in six states to determine their views on planning the transition of students from school to work. The educators responded to a mailed questionnaire to ascertain (a) what activities they considered important in transition planning; (b) what age they started planning for a student's transition; (c) what skills, behaviors, and services they assessed; (d) who participated on a transition team and who was primarily responsible for coordinating the transition; and (e) what goals they commonly identified in a transition plan. Results showed that respondents considered teaching social and job skills, involving parents, and matching skills to jobs as the most important activities. Most respondents reported that their programs started planning a student's transition at or before age 16. The teacher was most frequently identified as the person responsible for transition planning, although several other professionals commonly participated on the transition team.

A summary quote from Williams (1998) is appropriate here. Please note, Williams is referring to learning disabled students; however, the concepts she is discussing are equally applicable to a wide range of students with a wide range of disabilities.

Within the transition planning process, it is important to include the student and his/her parents. The transition program should be a reflection of the student's personal and career goals, which include his/her preferences and interest. When the student is included in the transition planning process, it increases his/her level of self-determination. The student, the school, parents, teachers, other professionals and outside agencies must work together to achieve the student's future goals. During the transition planning process, the student's community should also be taken into consideration because it can increase the student's level of participation and

contribution to the community in which he/she resides. Based on the research, it is evident that learning-disabled students need transitional services to become productive members of society. If the educational system doesn't work to properly prepare these individuals for adult life, then what is the purpose of identifying and labeling these students learning disabled? It is worth the efforts of educators to provide transitional services to learning disabled students, not only because it gives these individuals a sense of pride and self-worth, it also allows learning disabled students to become independent learning disabled adults.

According to Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000) the following programmatic factors contribute to better postsecondary employment and education outcomes for students with disabilities:

- Participation in vocational education classes during the last two years of high school, especially classes that offer occupationally-specific instruction;
- Participation in paid work experience in the community during the last two years of high school;
- Competence in functional *academic* (e.g., reading, math, writing, and problem-solving); *community living* (e.g., money management, community access); *personal-social* (e.g., getting along with others); *vocational* (e.g., career awareness, job search); and *self-determination* (e.g., self-advocacy, goal setting) skills;
- Participation in transition planning;
- Graduation from high school; and
- Absence of continuing instructional needs in functional academic, vocational, and personal-social areas after leaving school.

The GOALS program attempts to meet the needs of the students in the program by undertaking the above objectives, to varying degrees. Over the years, more and more of these objectives are being met. For example, five years ago a representative from the high school was invited to attend meetings of the Battle River Council; a committee that oversees services for persons with developmental delays (which many of the students in special programs in the high school are eligible for), and there is now a permanent representative attending these meetings. It gives the special educators in the school a

much closer view of the community services available. The administration in the high school is no longer concerned about the time spent at these meetings, as they have come to realize the importance of such activities in the transition plans of the special needs students. (This has been a gradual process of education of the administrators, which has been worthwhile in terms of quality programming.)

An extension to transition programming began in Oregon in 1990. This program, The YTP (Youth Transition Program) was designed and implemented in order to serve youth with disabilities “who require support beyond the services typically available through a district’s traditional general education, special education, and school-to-work programs to achieve their secondary and postsecondary employment and continuing education goals.”

The youth referred to this program generally have the same disabling conditions of the special education population in general, however they also are subject to additional barriers to success, for example; at risk of dropping out of school, limited or negative job experiences, teenage parenting responsibilities, or unstable living situation. Results of the study show that students who were in the YTP for 12 or more months were almost two times more likely to graduate with a standard diploma than were students who were in the program less than a year. Other findings from the study indicate the following necessary conditions for success:

- Focus secondary and transition services concurrently on the two goals of school completion and post school preparation.
- Promote curricular relevance and student self-determination through student-centered planning and individualized services.
- Expand the use of collaborative service delivery programs as a mechanism for delivering transition services.
- Extend secondary school reform efforts to include career development, applied

learning in the community, and transition planning as a central part of the regular education curriculum for all students.

The GOALS program has always been faced with the problem of how to deal with the student described in the YTP program, and sadly, students fitting into this particular category usually drop out of school. For this reason, the district has recently set up a program similar to the one described by Benz & Yovanoff (2000).

The GOALS program has incorporated many of the best practices for transition planning outlined in the above research. However it does face a problem: how to put the information in a format which is comprehensive, easy to read, and accessible to the relevant members of the transition team, including teachers, employers, and community agencies. A transition profile has been developed by Neubert and Moon (2000), which

incorporates students':

- Interests and preferences;
- Need for behavioural supports;
- Skills in integrated school and community settings;
- Amount of support needed to work successfully;
- Accommodations needed on the job and in the community;
- Level of self-determination.

This profile has been field tested and determined to be an efficient way to gather information and to pass it on to agencies such as adult service providers, employers, or to support personnel in the community or at postsecondary education institutions. It is also a valuable tool for parents or guardians to help keep track of their child's secondary educational and vocational experiences. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to incorporate this profile into the GOALS program repertoire.

deFur (2000) provides a process for designing quality individualized education program (IEP) transition plans for secondary students with disabilities. She stresses the importance of taking an early long-range approach, preferably beginning at age 14 or earlier. Her recommendations are very similar to those of Williams (1998), Neubert and Moon (2000) and Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000).

Zhang & Stecker (2000) stated, "After a decade of research on self-determination of individuals with disabilities, it is now widely recognized that student involvement in the transition planning process is critical to their transition success." They therefore did a study to determine how much involvement students with mild mental retardation actually had in their transition planning. The results of their study were surprising. They revealed three major findings:

1. Although the majority of teachers indicated that they identified students' needs, interests, and preferences prior to the transition planning meeting, many fewer teachers reported incorporating these variables into the transition plan;
2. Higher scores were observed for teachers with less experience in teaching, no previous experience in transition planning, and lower level degrees, with no association found between certification in mental retardation and scores on the index measure; and
3. A trend of relatively little active participation by all students in their own transition planning was revealed.

As a result of these findings, Zang & Stecker state:

Self-determination is critical to success in adulthood. Results of the current study indicated that both individuals with MMR (Mild Mental Retardation) and the professionals working with them need to be more actively engaged in the development of student-directed behaviours, before, during, and after transition-planning meetings.

Bateman (1996) addresses the need for transitional services for students with behaviour problems. (Many students in the GOALS program have been diagnosed with

behaviour problems.) He enumerates several problems experienced by students with emotional and behavioural disorders, such as:

1. lack of social skills;
2. lack of self-awareness/responsibility;
3. lack of daily, functional skills;
4. lack of support/personnel; and
5. teaching barriers.

He suggests teachers include social skills classes in the curriculum, complemented by emotional and substance abuse counseling. There should be goal-setting and self-advocacy programs to increase self-awareness and responsibility. Each student should have a well-developed transition plan, which should be regularly reviewed throughout high school. More on-the-job and vocational training opportunities, business-school partnerships and integration of functional skills into the academic curriculum should be undertaken. Bulen & Bullis (1995) also stress the importance of the development of community work experience components for success in transition programs with adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. Bateman (1996) suggests then that a successful transition program incorporates vocational preparation activities, social skills/self-awareness training and skills in independent living into an academic curriculum. Secondly, the social skills/self-awareness component of this program includes training in listening and basic communication skills, problem solving, conflict resolution, accepting responsibility, self-advocacy, and activities to increase self esteem. Thirdly, the components of the transition program-vocational preparation, social skill/self-awareness, and independent living – should be incorporated into an academic curriculum emphasizing functional and practical learning in the areas of English, math

and reading. See also Bulen & Bullis, (1995).

It pleases me to realize that many of the recommendations made by Bateman are already components of the GOALS program, and the other special education classes in the school.

Wagner & Blackorby (1996) quoting the NLTS (National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students) analysis of contributions to outcomes for students with different kinds of disabilities:

confirm that there is no “magic bullet” that offers benefits to all students. Vocational education appears to have benefited students with mild disabilities but not those with sensory impairments. Academic course taking benefited those with sensory impairments but not those with severe disabilities. Regular education placement appears to have advantages in some outcome areas for students with physical disabilities but to be less helpful to those with either mild or severe disabilities. In shaping policy and programs for students with disabilities, a range of options, tailored to the individual needs of students, continues to be the most effective approach to meeting the wide range of needs, preferences, and abilities of students who participate in special education. No principle that is held to be appropriate for all students, with or without disabilities, is likely to succeed in helping all students meet their needs. A diversity of students requires a diversity of program choices if students are to benefit from their educations and make a successful transition to adulthood.

McCormick & Amundson make an important point with regard to the transition of native students to the world of work:

Another task, which would greatly strengthen the school-to-work program concerning the Native American population, would be to strengthen the relationship between tribal organizations, employers, educators, and the community. This would facilitate the feeling of connectedness that is important to the Native American people (McCormick & Amundson 1997, as found in Long, 1999).

Long concludes:

In order to be successful, an ethnically aware, multi-dimensional approach to the school-to-work transition is necessary and certainly would be the most beneficial to

Native Americans. By addressing the cultural aspects, as well as the vocational and educational components of this specific population, the students would be provided with an environment that is very conducive to learning about the work setting (Long, 1999, p.10).

The GOALS program has quality transition planning. Students entering the program get together with parents and teachers, before the first day of school, and also during the first parent teacher interviews. At this time, student's aspirations are discussed, and an IEP (Individualized Education Program) is begun. It should be noted that the IEP is always considered a work in progress, never a finished document. The students interviewed for the study provide examples of transition planning.

When Pete entered the program we knew through discussion with teachers in his previous school, and Pete, and his mother, that he was a gifted artist. With this in mind, Pete was enrolled in the regular class art classes (the difficulties encountered trying to enroll Pete are explained elsewhere). The idea at the time was that Pete's work on school completion would involve artistic endeavors. His enrollment in the art class was planned for the second semester, as the first semester in high school is usually a stressful time for students, especially students with disabilities. As the first semester progressed, and Pete got used to the new school, and the program and the teachers, and the teachers got to know Pete, more information came to light, which was taken into account in Pete's IEP. He was also an excellent runner, so he was encouraged to join the cross country running team, and enrolled in the regular physical education class. He also expressed an interest in working with children. Pete participated in the GOALS classes designed to help with the transition to independent adult life. These courses are described elsewhere in this paper,

and include Home Economics, Occupations, Instrumental Enrichment, Life Long Pursuits, and Career and Life Management, as well as the academic component (reading, writing, science and mathematics). Pete's transition plans were in place, and it looked like he was going to complete his time in school, with his art and physical education classes, and possibly some other academic courses, as Pete seemed to have a good grasp of English and it was felt he might have success in the regular stream.

Life had other plans for Pete however. In the second year of the program, after successfully completing his second year of art, and his physical education program, and a work experience placement at a local day care, Pete went to the University Hospital for a brain operation, to remove the part of his brain responsible for his epileptic seizures. As a result, he missed the last two months of school. He came back into year three of the program, with his seizures under control, but with a major loss of vision as a result of the operation.

In his third year Pete had a wonderful work experience placement at a local art gallery, which fit perfectly with his artistic talents. The owners of the gallery were able to spend quite a bit of time with Pete, teaching him about the business side of art, and helping him with his art as well.

Unfortunately, life hit Pete fairly hard in his third year. After years of angst, he finally "came out" to his mother and to his teachers as being transgender. He spent the remainder of his third year trying to come to terms with his sexuality. Possibly as a result of these major life-altering events, Pete finished school with very little idea about what he wanted to do, and for the last few years, he has been struggling. He could be considered

to still be in transition, as he was enrolled in a program called Skills for Work while living in a group home in Red Deer, and he now does a lot of volunteer work for different agencies. Recently he phoned me for advice about how to become a teacher's aide. As his mother says, "It's finding a niche for him, and finding someone who will invest that extra time." Although he is not working, and still living with his mother, he feels that he is reasonably successful, (see chapter 4, Quality of Life).

Manny's transition program was quite different from Pete's. As noted in the story of Manny in the narratives, he is severely disabled in terms of his speech, reading and writing, but he is a people person, and it was important to show Manny through hands-on work that he was a capable contributing member of society. His program therefore was geared specifically to work experience. He was sent out to several different work sites in his time in the program, including a local service station, a paint shop, and a donut shop. The transition plan for Manny was basically to expose him to as many different job sites as possible, with the hope he would become interested enough to pursue one of them as a career. As Manny's teacher, one of my main concerns was that Manny not become involved in criminal activities. His brother had followed a criminal path and spent time incarcerated, and the possibility existed that Manny would follow in his big brother's footsteps. Manny was asked to volunteer at the local bingo hall to help with his communication skills, and his money management. This strategy worked well for Manny, as he has become an important member of the local culture. It has been several years since Manny was in the GOALS program; however like Pete he is still making the transition to general society. He enrolled in a work skills program at the local reserve, and

attended faithfully for a year. This did not lead to permanent work for Manny, but added to the repertoire skills he needs to apply for different jobs in the community. He has gained the confidence he needs to apply for these jobs. He does have a job working in the summer (see Manny in the narratives), and he works bingo for numerous different non-profit organizations in the community.

Bill could also be said to be in an extended period of transition. He is very slowly gaining the skills he needs for inclusion into society, and in much the same way, he is making the transition to independence. As I mentioned previously, he may or may not make the transition to independent living. Regardless, in his own way, in his own time, Bill is making the attempt. While he was in the GOALS program, he was progressing slowly as well. When he entered the program, one of the main goals of his IEP was to become a part of the culture of the program. Little was said about post-school activities for Bill, due to his severe disabilities. (See Bill in the narratives.) The hope was that he would be happy in the program, attend regularly, and possibly learn some social skills so he could get along with the other members of his class.

Getting Bill to attend regularly was easier than expected. His interest in computer animation and video was the hook needed to keep him in school, as there was a computer with sophisticated (for the era) animation software and video editing software package installed. Bill and I spent many hours working on animations and videos. The challenge was to get Bill interacting with the other students in the class. Pointing out to the class the quality of Bill's animations garnered him some recognition from his classmates, however Bill had very little interest in other's opinions of his work. A more successful technique

was group story telling and writing. With me facilitating, group stories were written, with each student encouraged to contribute to the story. I wrote the story on the board as it was dictated to me by different students, and all the students were expected to copy the story off the board. Bill loved those stories, and as a result, he would occasionally interact with other members of the class to discuss characterization or plot. Activities which usually create interactions between classmates, such as field trips and physical education activities, meant very little to Bill, as he had very little interest in any of them.

Eventually, in Bill's second year in the program, it was felt that he was ready for work experience. With Bill's interest in computers, it was decided a work experience placement at the library would be appropriate as there was computer filing to be done, as well as reshelving of books. Unfortunately, the librarian had little patience for Bill's quirky behaviour, so he only lasted a few weeks. Working at a senior's home was more successful for Bill, as he had more patient bosses. He did yard work around the outside of the home, and he was successful at this job. He worked inside as well, where his job was to spend time with the seniors, engaging them in conversation. He spent a lot of this time drawing and writing in his books, but there was some interaction. Slowly Bill came out of his shell. In Bill's third year there were many changes. I went on sabbatical leave, and more significantly for Bill, his family moved to northern Alberta. His family wanted Bill to finish his final year in the GOALS program, so he moved to a local group home. A rather drastic transition for Bill, one that he wasn't able to handle. After a short time, Bill phoned his mother and asked her to come and get him.

He missed part of his last year in the high school; however, it wasn't the end of his

transition period. He was enrolled in the Creative Living and Career Support (CLCS) program in his new home, and he continued to gain skills needed for independent living. This lasted until the family moved back to Wetaskiwin, at which time permanent full time aide was hired for Bill, to continue his transition period.

For Bill, the transition program in high school is just a small part of his transition to independent adult living. He will be accessing transition services for many years to come. If he had stayed in high school part of the responsibility for connecting Bill with community transition programs, would have remained with his teacher, however in his case he moved and the responsibility for connecting Bill to the community services fell squarely to his mother. Luckily for Bill, his mother was aware of the services available, and took advantage of them.

Ted's transition planning was much simpler. Ted entered the GOALS program with a single-minded agenda, and that was to get through high school and into the world of work as quickly as possible. As outlined in the narratives (see Ted in narratives), he was a difficult student, and he had difficulties relating to peers. He was often in trouble with the school administration due to this inability to relate; and he was often involved in fights with less capable students in the class. There was a lot of anger in Ted and it looked like he needed to create anger and frustration in his peers to allow him an outlet for his own. Fortunately for Ted, he also had many strengths, including a strong work ethic and an ability to relate well with adults, particularly men.

It became obvious to his teachers that Ted's transition plan would include a lot of work experience; the work experience would give Ted the boost to his self-esteem he

needed, and when he was in class, his need to take out his frustrations on his classmates was much reduced. In junior high school Ted had a regular work experience placement and when he graduated into high school he began work experience immediately.

Normally students spend one semester in the high school before having this opportunity.

In Ted's case it made a lot of sense to waive this protocol. While in the high school, he had work experience placements in an auto radio shop, an auto glass repair shop, a retail paint store, a grocery store, and a pizza parlor.

When Ted was in the classroom, he worked on curriculum courses, and he was engaged in counselling with his teachers about interpersonal issues. He also worked on the courses designed to help the students make the transition to independent living, cooking, CALM, and the others described in the section on Instructional Strategies.

His ability to relate to adult males meant that he was able to connect with many different small business owners in the community, and thus he was never at a loss for a work placement. Ted's last work experience placement in a local fast food establishment led to a job that he kept for 4 years.

Quality of Life

According to Halpern,

The transition from adolescence into adulthood can be a difficult time for any young person, with or without a disability. Many changes are occurring during this time of life, not the least of which is the change from attending high school to some other primary activity as a young adult. The possibilities are many, including tertiary education, entry-level job, time-out for recreation, or unfortunately for some, less adaptive endeavors such as a period of “unengagement” or even worse, a period of self-abusive or anti-social behavior that can result in such unhappy consequences as drug abuse, criminal behaviors and eventual incarceration. Even at its best, this period of transition is usually accompanied by a strong sense of floundering as young people attempt to sort out the lessons of their childhood and move into effective adult roles in their communities. There are many influences that affect this transition, for better or for worse, including family background, quality and impact of the high school program, nature and quality of transition services that are provided, opportunities in the community that are actually available for the young person, and the readiness and motivation exhibited by the young person to move forward with his or her life (Halpern 1994, pp. 193-194).

The history of educational services to facilitate this transition has moved from work-study programs during the 1960’s through career education programs in the 1970’s to the transition programs of the 1980’s until today. Initially the transition movements focused mainly on employment as opposed to the earlier movements, however, as the transition movement has moved into the 1990’s and beyond, the parameters of the movement have broadened to include more issues of importance to students with disabilities. In the United States, in 1990 the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA) (Public Law 101-476) makes this clear:

Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment) continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. The coordinated set of

activities *must*: (a) be based on the individual student's needs; (b) take into account the student's preferences and interests; (c) must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (as found in Halpern (1994, 198).

There is no mention of the term "quality of life" in the above quotes; however the multidimensional expression and validity of life goals are clearly implied. When discussing quality of life it becomes obvious that there is more to this concept than the issue of employment. These definitions of quality of life will serve to illustrate this point.

- Quality of life is a matter of subjective experience. That is to say, the concept has no meaning apart from what a person feels and experiences. As a corollary to the first proposition, people may experience the same circumstances differently. What enhances one person's quality of life may detract from another's (Taylor and Bogdan, 1990, pp. 34-35 as found in Halpern 1994, p. 199).
- Quality of life can be viewed as the discrepancy between a person's achieved and their unmet needs and desires... Quality of life can also be viewed as the degree to which an individual has control over his or her environment (Brown et al., 1988, pp. 111-112 as found in Halpern 1994, p. 199).
- Quality of life represents the degree to which an individual has met his/her needs to create their own meanings so that they can establish and sustain a viable self in the social world (Parmenter, 1998, p. 9 as found in Halpern 1994, p. 199).
- When an individual, with or without disabilities, is able to meet important needs in major life settings (work, school, home, community) while also satisfying the normative expectations that others hold for him or her in those settings, he or she is more likely to experience a high quality of life (Goode, 1990, p. 46, as found in Halpern 1994, p. 199).

The central issue seems to be one of a subjective (individual) versus an objective (societal) point of view. The author thinks of Manny, with his jobs working in the summer as the Dickey Dee ice cream man, at 27 years of age, and in the winter doing his volunteer work at the bingo halls (for the social life, and maybe more importantly, for the free meals the volunteer work entails). He receives AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped), which means he survives, but from the objective (societal) point of view, his quality of life is poor, and yet from Manny's (individual) point of view, his

quality of life is high. (Manny's story follows, in chapter V).

Quality of life issues for Halpern can be broken down into three basic domains of outcome, including:

1. physical and material well-being;
2. performance of a variety of adult roles; and
3. a sense of personal fulfillment.

Physical and material well being are the most basic of the quality of life issues, and are necessary (to some extent) to achieve the other outcomes. These are:

1. physical and mental health
2. food, clothing and lodging
3. safety from harm
4. financial security

Performance of adult roles includes the following ways in which a person can interact with his or her environment. These include:

1. mobility and community access
2. vocation, career, employment
3. leisure and recreation
4. personal relationships and social networks
5. educational attainment
6. spiritual fulfillment
7. citizenship (e.g., voting)
8. social responsibility (e.g., doesn't break laws)

The final domain is entirely person-centered. Outcomes described for the personal fulfillment domain include:

1. happiness
2. satisfaction
3. a sense of general well-being.

Halpern summarizes his paper with the following quote:

In summary, there are many paths that different people follow as they pursue their own dreams and achieve, to greater and lesser extents, a high quality of life. The

essential requirement for making this journey successfully is the ability to exercise choice and self-determination effectively. While in school, students with disabilities need opportunities in a very broad range of instructional programs, responsive to their individual needs and provided, when appropriate, in an inclusive environment that breaks down forced segregation from students without disabilities. Once out of school, attention must also be given to helping school-leavers with disabilities to access those community resources that are still needed in order to support the enjoyment of a high quality of life (Halpern, 1994, pp. 229-230).

Wehmeyer & Schalock (2001) feel that self-determination is an important concept that needs to be promoted in order to help enhance quality of life. They state "... a person's relative self-determination was a strong predictor of his or her quality of life; people who were highly self-determined had a higher quality of life, and people who lacked self-determination had a less positive quality of life" (Wehmeyer and Schwartz, as quoted in Wehmeyer & Schalock 2001). They believe that success for students with disabilities is difficult if the educational process has not prepared students with special learning needs adequately to become self-determined, and thus have an enhanced quality of life. They offer this quote:

If students floated in life jackets for 12 years, would they be expected to swim if the jackets were suddenly jerked away? Probably not. The situation is similar for students receiving special education services. All too often these students are not taught how to self-manage their own lives before they are thrust into the cold water of post-school reality (Marshall, Maxson, and Jerman 1993, as found in Wehmeyer & Schalock 2001).

They state that self-determined behavior refers to actions identified by four essential characteristics:

1. The person acted autonomously.
2. The action(s) was self-regulated.
3. The person initiated and responded to the event(s) in a "psychologically empowered" manner.
4. The person acted in a self-realizing manner.

Each of these characteristics is a necessary but not sufficient element of self-determined behavior. According to Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001), these characteristics emerge through the development and acquisition of multiple, interrelated component elements, including the following:

- Choice-making skills
- Decision-making skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Goal-setting and attainment skills
- Independence, risk-taking and safety skills
- Self-observation, evaluation and reinforcement skills
- Self-instruction skills
- Internal locus of control
- Positive attributions of efficacy and outcome expectancy
- Self-awareness
- Self-knowledge

As they also state, “promoting self-determination as an educational outcome will require a purposeful instructional program, one that coordinates learning experiences across the span of a student’s educational experience” (Wehmeyer and Schalock 2001).

(See Instructional Strategies)

Another point made by Wehmeyer & Shalock is important to note:

Particularly important is to consider the learning environment and to evaluate its effect on student perceptions of control. Teachers who use an overly controlling style, or whose classrooms are rigidly structured, limit their students’ development of positive perceptions of control. This does not mean that classrooms must become chaotic; allowing more control is not the same as relinquishing all control and abolishing rules and regulations (Deci and Chandler, 1986, as found in Wehmeyer & Shalock 2001).

And,

Instead, classrooms can be structured such that students can perform more actions for themselves, such as obtaining their own instructional materials (Wehmeyer & Shalock 2001).

The GOALS classroom has always appeared to be rather chaotic to people entering for a short period of time; however the appearance belies the reality. As a high school teacher I have always worked on the assumption that one of the needs of the students is to develop self-determination skills. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to give the students more control over their environment, while mediating the experience for them, through dialog and discussion. For students used to being firmly directed in all aspects of classroom behaviour, this is a steep learning curve. Initially the experience is confusing, and disorienting; I have found however that ultimately the large majority of the students find the experience exhilarating, and liberating, and most end up having positive perceptions of control as a result of this style of teaching.

Do these programming considerations result in improved quality of life for the students in the program? According to Ted's sister, he is paying his own rent, he eats and sleeps appropriately, and when he is not working he watches television or goes down to the legion and plays pool. This indicates a reasonable quality of life, from a societal point of view. He is working, which provides him with the income he needs to pay his rent, and provide him with the food he needs. He is a member of the local legion, and enjoys the benefits of membership, including playing pool in the local weekly tournaments. He also lived on his own in Edmonton for three and a half years while working for a Pizza chain. Lucy, his sister, talks about the sense of self-determination that Ted learned in the GOALS program, referring to it as responsibility for his own life. As she says:

Lucy: I think that is the biggest thing. Actually emphasizing responsibility for himself. No one is there to get you up. No one is there to say, "Get to work!" You got to do this yourself and that's, I think, one of the most important things that the program has taught him.

Glen: And you think the program taught him that?

Lucy: I think so yeah cause I mean before he really didn't have a goal. He just went to school you know. That's about it and after awhile he didn't work for a while but when he did he realized, "Well I've got to do this myself, there's no one around to get me up, there's no one to do these things for me, so..."

According to Lucy, he is happy in his work:

He's up every morning, when he's with Byron he's up in the morning. He's ready for work. He's never been late... and with his janitorial job he seems to enjoy it.... He come home and he was really impressed he was really happy. He had a job and was really... you know mopping and cleaning so he was really happy about that. ... he was just really impressed...

He spends some time with some of his family members. He enjoys playing pool with his brother-in-law, and spends time with Lucy and his nieces and nephews, although as she says, "He's not a kid guy." He spends some time with his father and his father's girlfriend. He is not a substance abuser. As Lucy says, "He only does that (drinks) maybe once every two or three months... so it's not... not really a whole lot. Doesn't smoke, doesn't do drugs." He doesn't have a girlfriend, although he has tried. He is "trying to get his money up and get somewhere in life for himself. Saving his money and once he gets a little more secure financially and then maybe a woman, maybe." Later, she says, "He's got money coming in; he's knowing what he wants to do with his life." And in terms of work, "He's versatile. He's worked with pizza, he's worked turkeys, he's now doing janitorial. So he's now successful enough he can interchange those careers and do whatever." In terms of happiness, Lucy says, "Oh yeah. I'd say he's pretty happy." And "...he's self-assured. He's confident in what he wants... he's a pretty happy-go-lucky

guy.” From Lucy’s point of view, based on these comments, it would appear that she thinks he enjoys a high quality of life.

Ted made several comments about his quality of life. As he says, “I’m not doing too bad, I made mistakes in life but you know being in your class taught me a lot of things in life... A lot of values, ways of living...” and a bit later in the interview, “I look at my age and think I could be doing better things in life.” But he then says, “So I think I’m doing pretty good.”

In terms of his social life he says:

My social life is actually social. I have a few good friends that I work with and me and my brother-in-law, we get along pretty good but ever since I’ve been out of school I’ve had no problem meeting friends you know because... I’m just that kind of person you know, I’ve known a lot of people throughout my years. When I was volunteering for bingos, people who know me now, they say I remember you when you were doing bingos and all they say, that’s great you know and then I start a relationship with them and because of that I see people every day up and down the street that I talk with. So I’d have to say my social life is pretty good.

Ted has ambitions to improve his lot in life. As he says ... “I would like to maybe own a house...I think with my hard work I could have owned a house. But I spent my money foolishly so now I’m paying for it.”

Volunteering at the local bingo halls plays a big role in Ted’s life. As he says, “Doing a bingo is kind of like going to a party, you sell bonanzas as you talk to people. It’s great stuff you know. In the eleven years I’ve been doing it, it’s great.

Ted talks of how he and one of his sisters are close, and how he likes to visit old people. He also talks warmly about the time he spends with his relatives, and how he is close to his cousin. He says, “I revolve around family. I have to be around family.”

From Ted's quotes above, it would appear that he considers himself successful, however when asked directly, he is somewhat ambivalent.

Glen: Do you consider yourself successful?

Ted: No I don't really because, I do in a way because my boss, he likes, he loves my work. He keeps telling me what a great job I'm doing.

And later, he says, "...I do consider myself successful physically but not financially."

In Bill's case it is more difficult to determine, from his point of view, his quality of life. As of the time of writing, Bill lives with his mother and father and sister in the family home. Although he lived in a group home for a period of time when his family moved up north, this was not a happy time for Bill, and he eventually moved to live with his family again. Bill's handicapping conditions lead me to believe that he will need assisted living for many years to come, if not for his entire life. Given this understanding, it is still possible to determine his quality of life.

When asked how he is doing, he responds "I'm doing fine", and he follows that statement up with "I am doing fine because we're at your place." He enjoys being with the Glen very much, and as he lives very much in the present, since he is at the Glen's house, he is fine. He appreciates living in his home in northern Alberta, as he says, "It's very nice there...it's actually very beautiful there.

Bill is in a program in northern Alberta called Creative Living and Career Support (CLCS). His comment about this program is worth quoting:

Bill: Right now about this job, CLCS. It's not the best thing for me. It is the best thing for me but not the best thing that I like.

Glen: Yeah. Tell me about the job.

Bill: Well it's, laundry work. Well actually Monday: arts and crafts, Tuesday: laundry, Wednesday: (pause) I have no idea, I completely forgot. Thursday:

computers which is the only thing interesting. There's, I know I should go in the right programs and learn to be smart and all this stuff you know but it's boring me.

Glen: And what do you do on Friday?

Bill: Recreation. That's the best day really for me. That's just the best day because it's the last day, "Yahoo!" It's the last day till the weekend. But now, sometimes with sports stuff, not my subject. Ah movies, they're ok. Games, like Pictionary and stuff, ok. Nature walks, that sounds good. When they go down, down to the river or some place, you know, La Crete? It's another place I go to. It's far away from, a little far away from Fort and most people speak German there.

Bill is aware of the connection between work and remuneration, but only superficially. As he says, "I get paid lots, the maximum. Well actually I got paid I think on, what I think it was forty some dollars? I'm not sure if was forty it was something". He does know that he is receiving AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped), and he does know about expenses. "Ah, I gotta pay for room and board and some other things, power bill or whatever, I don't know but." He concludes his discussion about finances by saying, "I'm not good at that stuff."

In terms of relationships, this exchange between Bill and the interviewer will inform the reader:

Bill: Oh sweet, kind, loving, caring. Good parents. Ah, I'm not sure if I'm allowed to say certain things. I don't know what mom would think.

Glen: You say just what you think you should say and don't say anything more.

Bill: Ok I really enjoy when I see her. My dad and I don't get along very well.

Glen: Oh O.K.

Bill: But he's trying to control himself and to control myself ... now he's trying to control himself, I'm trying to control myself and things happen but and so we try to control ourselves now, not battle each other and fight each other and all that stuff.

Glen: So things are getting better?

Bill: Yeah things are getting better.

Glen: Good. Anything else about your family?

Bill: (Coughing extensively) I just exaggerated a cough I hope you know (laugh). I'm crazy.

Glen: What about Judy? (Bill's younger sister)

Bill: She's good. Ah she umm, I think she's beginning to control herself as well. The

way she's yelling at me, she was actually saying which, "I hate you, I hate you" and you're like I don't hate you I love you, I say. But now she's starting to smarten up and get more smart, more mature. She's starting to be more open, more mature.

Glen: So everybody's maturing?

Bill: Yeah.

When questioned about his social life, Bill is rather blunt. He was asked "...what do you do for fun? Who are the friends you hang around with?", and his response was "I don't have any friends." He qualifies that later by saying "Like my one best friend I'm talking to right now but I don't have much." He attends church regularly with his family, but he does not have any friends there. He talks about a girl that he knew while he was a student, and how he would like to have her as a girlfriend.

When asked about success, Bill states the following:

Bill: My success would be, if I actually kind of, got to be around Liz for a long long time and get to know her and actually get her as a girlfriend I would be successful. And if I could make an interactive comic about an inch thick I would be successful. I could make a book really. If I could make a movie but I can't, I would be successful and so on you know like ...

Glen: Keep going I like hearing your stuff.

Bill: Ok fine. I like hearing it too. Umm let's say I want to build without even trying a unique playground and I just got it going and I was successful. And they say that I'm working hard, hard trying to figure out how to get a computer and actually did succeed with the computer because I tried.

Bill: Umm, things I want to add. Let me see. There's another success that I would like to possibly work on somehow get a program. First get a PC card, put it into the computer and I have to get this program, basically the same program ... But anyways. This successful thing that I would like to get to but I just can't, like that program, like you can metamorph face to face, or add floods coming into the land, or T-rex's walk here or something.

Glen: So it would be very successful for you if you ended up getting your computer set up so that you could do really good animations?

Bill: Yeah. And videos. Video stuff.

Glen: Video stuff.

Bill: Yeah.

Glen: If you could do that, that would be successful for you?

Bill: Exactly, it would be.

Bill talked mostly about things that he would like to do that would make him successful, rather than things he has actually succeeded in doing.

Bill's mother has some thoughts about his quality of life. She says: "Well I think he's doing pretty good since he's left GOALS. In that program up in Fort Vermillion so far he's doing ok. He doesn't always like the work they want to do but he's doing ok. He doesn't complain." She describes the Creative Living and Career Support program that Bill is in, stating, "...they do lots, it's not too bad. They cover all the areas needed for independent living..." Although Bill has been out of the GOALS program for some time, he is enrolled in a program designed to help students transition to work and independent living. In this program Bill is doing laundry, clearing land, maintaining vending machines, as well as other areas needed for independent living, such as arts and crafts, leisure activities, and memory building exercises on computers.

Bill's mother describes Bill's family and social life.

Marie: Oh boy. Well he sure depends on family a lot that's for sure. He spends a lot of time in his room. He prefers that a lot now so he doesn't, we try to get him to come down and watch a movie together or if we go out together and ...

Glen: You think he spends too much time on his computer then?

Marie: Yeah we do. We try to get him down and we just make him shut it down and make him come down and come outside with us. So we go outside and we even had him come help in the garden just to get him out of that room.

Glen: Yeah and how does he react to that?

Marie: He fusses at first, ah, he gives us the groan but he never outright refuses, never. He helps with mowing the lawn around the house and lots of different chores. He doesn't want to do too much. He's a very, he just wants to sit in his room and we have a very hard time getting him to do anything.

Glen: Yeah?

Marie: It's a struggle.

She states that Bill has "no social life at all." As she says:

He goes to church with us every Sunday and the young people have actually tried to get him to come to join in and he says, "I'm not a sports person, I don't like sports or I'm not interested, I prefer not to do that." No social life at all. We try but it's very tough. I think he had more of a social life when he was down here to tell you the truth because he got to know, what's that young man that other computer buff? ("Jake" in background) Yeah Jake. So he started making good friends with him but then he had to leave.

When asked about Bill's level of success, she is ambivalent.

Glen: Do you consider Bill successful?

Marie: Oh. I don't know at this point. I mean I would like to see more I guess.

Glen: What would you like him to be doing?

Marie: Like being more responsible. Like being more interested in wanting to be independent, want to be independent. I'd like to see that more.

Glen: He needs to be more independent then once he's more independent, that will be success for you? For Bill?

Marie: Yeah but even now I find success in just parts that he's willing to, like going to work, I mean he goes everyday and works and there was a time when Bill just wouldn't do that.

Glen: He had a tough time on that work experience the first time.

Marie: Yeah and now in that area I find he's successful because he's finally realizing that you know he doesn't like it. Things need to be done and so he's doing that with not too much problem. They haven't had that much problem with him but I'd still like to see him more responsible not lying around home and just things that I've showed him, simple things. I wish he could take more of an interest and really want to grasp. Like he wants to get his license but he doesn't take the responsibility of getting that book out to study. So I would like to see more of that because how long we've been working with it and talking about this. To me, I wish I could see something more, you know with his determination anyways.

If degree of happiness can be considered a marker of quality of life, then according to Bill's mother, the GOALS program has improved his quality of life. As she says, "... I think it's through GOALS that he came where he is now, that he's much happier. He wasn't happy before in school. ... I had to fight with him to go to school but once he was in the GOALS program, he was happy."

Pete, with all his disabilities, does not seem to be enjoying a high quality of life. As

noted in the narrative (see Pete in the narratives) Pete had epilepsy, treated by surgery, which affected his sight. He realized when he was in high school that he is transgender. Possibly as a result of these problems, he also suffers from clinical depression. Pete did his first interview in the spring of 2000, but after he did that interview, we had many discussions about the interview. He was not happy about it. I deviated somewhat from the interview template, (see appendix B) by asking him why he was in a special education program. This seemingly simple question started Pete on a long monologue describing his life in great detail. Later when we were discussing his interview, he requested that he be allowed to go through the interview again. His concern was that he was talking too much about himself, and not really answering the questions. I tried to reassure him that his interview was fine, but eventually agreed to redo the interview. After we did the second interview Pete agreed that I would be able to use both interviews in my research. In the second interview, Pete left out the details of his early life, which shortened the interview considerably. The following analysis incorporates elements of both interviews, which were generally consistent in their responses, other than the early history which Pete included in the first interview. Where the responses are not consistent, it will be pointed out.

As Pete says when asked how he is doing, “It’s hard to kind of answer that question. I, I’m not sure how I’m really doing. I’m doing O.K. That’s the best that I can put it... mediocre.”

When he was asked in the first interview what he had been doing since he graduated (three years) his response was,

Yeah, after I graduated from high school, I was just pretty much living with my mom and my sister and my brother. The three of us were living with my mother and my brother was going to school and my sister, they're still going to school but I was at home all the time, most of the time, umm sitting around and not really thinking of what I should do, like if I should apply for jobs or anything and I kind of ah, put myself into being, I don't know, depressed I guess.

This response was extended considerably in the second interview, when Pete filled in the details of the time living with his mother. He explained that he had tried to get into a modeling career, but his looks and his height put an end to that. He then helped his brother in another town doing landscaping, but was unsuccessful doing that as well, so he returned to his mother's place for a short while, but became clinically depressed, and was admitted to Alberta Hospital Ponoka. Pete felt that his time in the hospital was very interesting, as he met lots of interesting people. From Ponoka, he moved to Red Deer where he lived in a group home, which he did not like. While in Red Deer, he was enrolled in a program called Skills for Work, and he had some work experience that he enjoyed. He obtained his first aid certificate at this time. Eventually, Pete was asked to leave his group home due to personality conflicts with other tenants. He returned to Wetaskiwin, then back to Red Deer, where he shared an apartment. He was evicted from this home as well for similar reasons. From there, he returned to Wetaskiwin, into the same difficult situation with his mother. From there he went back to the hospital for another stay for treatment of his depression. Since his discharge, he has moved back with his mother, and they have been managing better since then. Pete had a short-lived career working at a fast-food restaurant but as he said:

I don't like flipping hamburger patties; it's gross (laugh). It turned me off of meat, for sure, like beef, and like I guess for beginners who first get working there like after

they get their jobs, they have to do those things, like the hard messy stuff, like the janitorial crap and hauling out all of the garbage and doing the sloppy work, and then they slowly work their way up into becoming the cashier or something. Or even manager, but I gave it up because it was too hectic there. It was really stressful for me.

At the time of the interview, Pete was unsure as to what he was going to do, as his mother was moving to northern Alberta for a teaching position.

Although his life is very much up in the air, Pete still considers himself successful.

As he says:

Pete: I'm not trying to sound like I am special person, a little saint, but I've been through quite a bit. I've been through a lot of crap. There's people who have been through worse than me and that's stupid, that sucks for them and I can understand what it's like, but umm, I've been through quite a bit in my life. I've been, ah just because I'm simply gay, I mean I've been chased by gay-bashers here in town and I've always been an outsider in school. I've never been popular or anything so I've never had any good friends in school. I used to be epileptic, that sucks just by itself, not including all the other things, but just being epileptic, that sucks because I had seizures and people used to make fun of me. They think that I'm spacing-out or something, but, and the operations that I had, people made fun of me because I was bald and I had a big scar on my head and they used to think it was weird. They'd ask me, "What's that thing on your head? Why are you bald?" and being unemployed, I mean I did give up the Wendy's job but, I don't like working in fast-food restaurants, that was only the first time. It was only for a week but I mean I have a good idea of what it's like.

Glen: Yup. And in spite of all that, you consider yourself successful.

Pete: Yeah, I like my life. It's interesting.

He also says:

...I'm successful at some things. I was able to live out on my own for a while. Finally live out on my own in a bigger city and that was all new to me too. So I had to find my way around and know where things are located at and stuff and ah, I accomplished a lot of things by moving out on my own, living in a bigger city, ah, but being more understanding and accepting than how I used to be when I was younger when it comes to talking to people who are schizophrenic or just people who are depressed.

Pete's mother is not optimistic about his quality of life. She states, "Well Pete's Pete,

you know, just when you think he's doing O.K. we take a nosedive and ... get into that little tango we do where we argue consistently and get into name-calling and all of that which we've been doing all week." When he is not living with her, things are not much better. As she says, "For a long time he wasn't here but it wasn't any better for either of us because I was worrying about him and he wasn't getting along with anyone that he was associating with. He had three living arrangements in less than a year so obviously it proved that it wasn't me."

In terms of his mental health, Pete's mother has an interesting analogy. She says: Pete's a car without a steering wheel and that's, that's perfect, that's a perfect umm, description. He gets something in his head, you cannot move it. It's totally illogical. And he just keeps cruising with it until he runs out of gas and that's what you have to do. You just have to wait it out. You can't change his mind. You can't reason with him. Like he'll say, "You said that," and I'll say, "Pete I wouldn't say such a thing." "Yes you did you liar. Why wouldn't you, why would you lie about saying that?" You know? Totally off the wall and so he'll just go with that until he runs out of fuel and wears something else and umm, that's basically how it goes. And (his psychiatrist) said that part of the brain that deals with logic and reason and emotions, you know, control of your emotions, is gone. There is no mechanism that kicks in and says you know, "Hello!"

In terms of his physical health, this exchange between Pete's mother and myself is interesting:

Glen: And with your children, you expect that they're going to grow up and leave home and start lives of their own ...

Bonnie: Yeah. Be able to care for themselves. You see, he, he can't live on his own because you should have seen him when he came back; he was so thin. Well he was only getting four hundred and something a month from Social Services and that's absolutely, it's disgraceful, just disgraceful.

Glen: Yeah I know.

Bonnie: He gets eight hundred now on AISH. We finally got him AISH but even that's not enough for a person to have any quality of life. You're just eking out an existence so when he came home he was so thin because he had been living on scraps basically, chips and stuff. So he's got, his health is better now, he looks a lot better. He's still thin but I think that's through choice. You know when I'm not here he won't eat. I don't know if it's because he's too lazy to make something or if it's

because he wants to keep that slim figure.

As for his social life, Pete's mother says that he has none. She says, "He's always here with me. He goes out running, he'll go to the track and kick a soccer ball around or run or go for a bike ride but he's terribly lonely. Terribly lonely." She says he had a bit of a social life when he lived in Red Deer, but he had never had a relationship with anyone. Being transgender, Pete finds it difficult to relate to many of the people he meets.

The interviews with Pete and his mother were very comfortable and conversational in a way with which I was very familiar. The interviews with Manny and his mother offered a fascinating contrast. Manny and his mother are Cree, and they both relate to people in a quiet non-verbal native way. Much of the interaction between Manny, his mother, and myself is non-verbal. Unfortunately the actions and the body language do not appear in the transcript. This communication style is further emphasized as Manny finds it incredibly difficult to express himself verbally. As a result of this expressive language disability, I found the interview with Manny to be the most difficult of the eight conducted. It was necessary to slow down and allow for long quiet spaces between answers, all the while paying attention to Manny's body language and mannerisms. Suffice it to say, Manny was having a wonderful time during the interview. He joked, teased me, and laughed throughout the interview. The reader will get a small sense of this in the excerpts following. I noticed the same upbeat attitude from Manny in all my dealings with him since he left the program, other than the time he was going through the break up with his girlfriend.

As found in Halpern, 1994, "Quality of life is a matter of subjective experience. That

is to say, the concept has no meaning apart from what a person feels and experiences” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1990, pp. 34-35 as found in Halpern 1994, p. 199). Using more leading questions than usual, I was able to pry some answers from Manny however. Here is a sample exchange from the interview, in which we discuss Manny’s day.

Glen: ...So what do you do, during the day?

Manny: Nothing.

Glen: Nothing at all?

Manny: Sit at home and watch TV (laugh).

Glen: But you do other things as well don’t do?

Manny: No. Volunteering at the bingo.

Glen: Volunteering at the bingo?

Manny: Hmm-hmm.

Glen: Ok and why do you do that?

Manny: Help the well people.

Glen: Yeah and you like helping out people?

Manny: Yep.

Glen: What does it do for you when you help people out? Does it make you feel good or?

Manny: Makes me very good.

Later, we talked about his favorite job, working as a Dickey Dee salesman.

Glen: Yeah. So a little earlier you said that you didn’t work and you’re looking for work. Manny: Yeah.

Glen: But you have a job every summer? Tell me about that job.

Manny: What job?

Glen: Selling ice cream?

Manny: Doesn’t start till April. April fools and all that.

Glen: Yeah and you like that job?

Manny: Yep.

Glen: Why do you like that job? What’s good about it?

Manny: Eating ice cream.

Glen: (Laugh) anything else?

Manny: Making money.

Glen: Making money?

Manny: And making a honey (laugh).

Glen: So you like making money.

Manny: Hmm-hmm.

Glen: What do you do with the money you make?

Manny: Spend it on stuff I need.

Glen: Yeah? What sorts of things do you need?

Manny: Everything.

Glen: Yeah. So you really enjoy that job that you have?

Manny: Yeah.

Glen: Yeah.

Manny: Five months now. Since 98, 99, 2000 and 2001.

Glen: So you've done that job for all those years?

Manny: Yeah.

Glen: So you like doing that job in the summer and then in the winter you like doing the bingos and the casinos?

Manny: Yeah.

We talked about his social life as well.

Glen: ...your mother said something to me that I didn't know about. She told me that you had a girlfriend? A few girlfriends sometimes?

Manny: Yeah.

Glen: Do you have a girlfriend now?

Manny: (Pause) Yeah.

Glen: Who is she?

Manny: I ain't gonna say.

Glen: Where does she live? Does she live in town or in Hobbema?

Manny: Actually both.

Glen: Yeah? Ok. How long have you been going out with her?

Manny: Not too long.

Glen: Not too long? She's pretty nice is she?

Manny: Yeah.

Glen: Ok. Who else do you hang around with?

Manny: Myself.

Glen: Yeah? So who's your best bud right now?

Manny: I'm talking to him.

Glen: Yeah? So I'm your best bud? Yeah we spend a lot of time together don't we?

Manny: Yeah.

Glen: So are you having any fun in your life Manny? You're shaking your head no?

Manny: No (laugh).

Glen: Shaking your head yes?

Manny: Yeah.

Glen: So you are having some fun. What's fun for you? What are the fun things that you do?

Manny: Volunteer I guess. Things like ... (gestures toward the tape recorder)

Glen: Doing the interview is fun?

Manny: Yeah.

Glen: Your mom was telling me that you really like being around people a lot.

Manny: Yup.

Glen: So that's probably why you enjoy doing the casino and the bingos because you get to be around people a lot. Is that right?

Manny: Yup.

Glen: So you feel pretty good about the way things are going?

Manny: Yeah.

Manny's mother commented that Manny was "Good so far." She says that he has a problem with gambling, but "Otherwise, he's doing pretty good." She says that he has been looking for jobs since he has been out of school, but later she qualifies this statement by saying he works in the summer for the ice cream man, and that he spent a year in a pre-employment program operated out of Maskwatchees College at one of the local reserves. As she says, "It was good. He went every day. He never missed one day... he enjoyed going there." She mentions the bingos Manny volunteers for, and how, "...he's got all these bingos to attend, like helping out. He gets up, hikes into town. Everybody picks him up cause they know him. He doesn't have a hard time getting a ride when he leaves." When asked "What is it about the bingos that he enjoys so much?" she responds, "He likes to talk to all the people because all the people enjoy his company". Talking about his schooling, she says the best thing he learned when he was in school was "How to fend for himself and how to get up for himself..." She also says he "goes out on his way to get his own job without any help." In terms of his relationship with his former teacher in the GOALS program, she says, "I'm glad he got somebody to turn to when he is in town so he can get help." Manny is a real people person. This description of him selling ice cream will serve to illustrate this point.

Glen: Dickey-Dee, the ice-cream thing, tell me about that?

Lorissa: Oh, he enjoys that.

Glen: Yeah.

Lorissa: Oh, geez. He chases after these little kids cause the kids chase him around eh.

Glen: Yeah.

Lorissa: Cause he won't give them a free ice cream.

Glen: Oh.

Lorissa: Then once in awhile he will have a kind heart and say, "Well I have to see how much money I got left".

Glen: Oh is that right?

Lorissa: And he turns around says, "Yeah I can afford four, maybe three, but you guys will have to split" he says.

Glen: Yeah.

Lorissa: They turn around and they look at each other, "Yeah, we'll split" then they turn and take off.

Glen: (Laugh)

Lorissa: But he enjoys it out there.

Glen: Yeah.

Lorissa: But he knows them eh.

Glen: Yeah and it's the people aspect that he likes the most isn't it?

Lorissa: Yeah.

Glen: Talking to people ...

Family connection is very important to Manny, although he has had problems with his family. He and his older brother do not get along well at all. As Manny says "He wants to fight." As well, Manny was molested by an uncle, who later hung himself. Manny's mother thinks this bothers him a lot. "It bothered him cause he never used to talk about it and I said the only way you're going to get over it, I says you're gonna have to talk about it." He is close to the other members of his family. When asked about Manny's social life, his mother has this to say, "Oh he's got a social life but he won't tell me who his girlfriends are. He says he's got about four. She feels Manny is successful. As she says,

Glen: (Laugh) So do you think Manny is successful? Is he having a good life, a successful life?

Lorissa: Yeah.

Glen: Yeah.

Lorissa: He goes out on his own when he wants to find something. He wants to do something.

Glen: Yeah.

Lorissa: Then he'll find it.

Glen: Yeah.

Lorissa: And that's good. At least he knows what he wants and then he goes after it.

And later she says "...he enjoys what he's doing."

The Narratives

I have included the following narratives in order to add another dimension of life to this research. The references to best practice and quality of life are important aspects of the project, in that they relate the experience of the GOALS classroom to the general body of knowledge, however the narratives are a crucial aspect in that:

...the concern must always be with life as it is lived, with a desire to understand the same, interpreting it in a way that can show the possibilities for life's continuance. Human vitality depends on being able to show the conditions and constraints of the day-to-day as having boundaries that are permeable and open, not fixed and closed (Smith, 1999, p. 47).

Through the narratives I hope to awaken teachers to the "other" of teaching. As David Smith points out:

Teachers who think teaching involves nothing but the correct application of professional knowledge they learned in college or university soon burn out, because it is young people themselves who hold at least part of the answer to the question of how to teach. Good teaching requires getting to know one's students personally, uniquely, individually, so that a genuine conversation can exist between you and knowledge is mediated in a way that has a human soul (Smith, 1999, p. 9).

And

...whether I am a teacher depends on something else. It depends on the ability to dwell openly in that which cannot be named but within which we live and move and have our being. Without attention to this which contains both this and that, self and other, you and me, life becomes nothing but a half-life, a kind of fake optimism about the Now which is fundamentally conservative because it refuses to love the Other as Itself, to see them as one, instead banishing the Other as enemy, or potential enemy of the "I" (Smith, 1999, p. 23).

"According to Dilthey we can grasp the fullness of lived experience by reconstructing or reproducing the meanings of life's expressions found in the products of human effort, work and creativity" (van Manen, 1990, p.180).

As Gadamer states about Schleiermacher's hermeneutics:

That was indeed Schleiermacher's intuition; he and his associates became the first to develop hermeneutics as a foundation, as the primary aspect of social experience, not only for the scholarly interpretation of texts as documents of the past, but also for understanding the mystery of the inwardness of the other person. This feeling for the individuality of persons, the realization that they cannot be classified and deduced according to general rules or laws, was a significant new approach to the concreteness of the other. This is why Schleiermacher defined hermeneutics as the ability to avoid misunderstanding, because, as a matter of fact, that is the mystery of individuality, we can never be sure, and we have no proofs, of rightly understanding the individual utterance of another (Gadamer as found in Shapiro & Sica 1984).

Heidegger placed hermeneutics in the center of his analysis of existence in showing that interpretation is not an isolated activity of human beings but the basic structure of our experience of life.

With these understandings in mind, I present the following stories.

The Beginning...

One of my first clear memories . . . I was three, maybe four years old, leaving Miller Electric Service, my father's electrical repair shop, with its wall-to-wall alternators and generators, grease and grime. And the lathe, turning out shafts for motors and curlicues of steel grey metallic hair.

Miserable weather. Rain, coming down in sheets, and wind. It might have been September or October, but I was too young to remember, and it was before school, so I wasn't able to use the yardstick of just after I went into grade two, or the day I won the prize for reading.

Bundled up against the wind and rain and cold, heading out to the old Hudson, I saw it. Leaning into the wind, much like I was, an English sparrow, recent immigrant to

America, brought here by some misguided soul who didn't appreciate our wildness.

I don't recall my father's reaction to the sparrow, but I can imagine, looking back from the perspective of father to young child that he was not keen to take on the responsibility of curing nature's ill. Still, ever the teacher, he placed the bird gently into a cardboard box, and home we went.

The next morning, early, the scrabbling of sparrow claws greeted me as I knelt down to the box. My father insisted on taking the box outside before we opened it. I recall vividly the red rush of excitement tinged blue with sadness, as the tiny creature, now fully recovered, rocketed skyward to freedom.

Susan

"Miller, give me the key to the filing cabinet!" Her voice had the same strident quality it usually had when she wanted something now, without qualification or explanation, as was her God-given right.

The filing cabinet in question held the Sour Soothers, the chocolate loonies, the sour Cherry Colas, and most sweetly satisfying, the longed-for and fought over and begged for Rollos.

"Please Mr. Miller; I've been so good today..."

You notice the difference, "Mr." Miller when sweets hang in the balance.

But now imperiously, "Miller, I need to get into the filing cabinet. Give me the key!"

Said filing cabinet also held the swear jar, previously looted while inadvertently left unlocked, and now once again nearly full of quarters and loonies and toonies wrenched from cursing hands.

And that particular “Miller” coming as it did so soon after the confrontation over the printer, which she also seemed to think was a birthright granted to all cute sassy girls who wanted it once again in the eternal now to print their cards or letters or posters to whomever cute and sassy was currently dating, or befriending or wanting to befriend or date or impress.

I had “lost it” then and turned off all the computers with my patented growl. Shock had registered on all their faces as the last screen flickered out, and I realized with a pang of regret mingled with the still fresh scent of adrenaline that... she got me.

The last day of classes in a year of clinging to the last day of classes vision and breathing ever so carefully in and out and repeating the mantras as needed: It is not personal, Tomorrow’s another day, We’ll get through it, In ten years or ten minutes it will mean nothing.... as off she stormed down the hall in a whirlwind of indignation, with dust-bunny hangers-on swirling around her desperately attempting to grab a piece of the action as she passed.

And now she was back with yet another impossible command. Of course I responded with my own impossible (to her) question.

“Why do you want in the filing cabinet?”

“Just give me the key so I can get what I need!,” at a higher pitch, and then,

“Tell me what you want.” and a giggle from the gaggle was all she needed. She whirled back to the gawkers, fired off a volley of sidewinder missiles formerly daggers and then spinning back, she saved the cruise missile look for me, and just as she locked on and hissed,

“You’ve embarrassed me Miller.” I realized with a touch of sadness far too late, “the curse” was the cause of her distress and once again she and they were out the door and gone.

As perhaps so too am I.

Is this the same Miller who sat against his will at the front of the class within whacking range of Mrs. McCleary’s pointer? The same Miller who let the tears flow and refused ever to ever go back to face the wrath of Mrs. Marcellus? Say it ain’t so!

The weekend spent writing final exams (piece of cake) and wondering out loud to Betty and Sarah, and the cats, and whomever, whatever would listen how on earth was I to destroy that rough beast I had created on Friday when the impeccable warrior (sorry Don Juan) let his guard down for however many seconds it took for whatever I had created to come to bitter fruition.

She was wrong dammit, she said she wasn’t going to use the printer today, and that she was going to let the others have a turn and get caught up on their cards and letters. If she would just slow down, go at a pace that I could keep up with, things would go so much smoother in class. If I could just keep up with her!

So, confront her, put on the old pressure, you’ve been doing this for twenty some years, you must have a few tricks up the old sleeve. Make her see the error of her ways, make her feel the guilt, make her listen to the “voice of authority”. Come at her with all guns blazing: That’s why we learn about individualized learning styles, so we know how to get them where it hurts.

But would that be fair, blasting her just before she writes her final exams? I worked

long and hard with this class just to get them comfortable enough with the idea of final exams. It is a fair distance from “I’m not doing math, math sucks!” to writing for sixty minutes of an eighty minute math exam, quietly putting down your pencil and reading for the last twenty minutes. To let all that work go now, just for the sake of proving her wrong... Besides, as she goes, so goes the class. Try and put the word on her and I may face all out mutiny. What exactly am I afraid of?

I thought the years overseas traveling through exotic climes and cultures had changed me, had saved me, and moved me past my small town red neck Alberta heritage. Apparently not.

Perhaps a blatant lie would diffuse the situation and end the confrontation.

“I’m sorry I was so rude Friday.” (Even though I didn’t think I was the rude one.) Probably a no-go. She is too good at picking up nuances for that one. Come to think of it it was probably a clash (class) of nuances which created the situation in the first place!

By Sunday, I was a wreck; worn out by all the permutations and conversations I had worked out for Monday’s inevitable clash.

“Give it a rest!” was now the only response from my usually helpful mental health therapist wife. I was on my own, and still lacking a suitable strategy for success.

Monday morning, early. Still no strategy. Talk to colleagues; try to pick up a pointer or two. Nothing doing. The students start to trickle in. Eye contact established. Seems a little distant, but no munitions yet. It’s always calm Monday morning, the calm before the storm? A few minutes before the exam, it’s got to be now...

“Could I talk to you privately please?”

“What’s up Miller?”

It will come from somewhere; it’s got to...

“That was a very embarrassing moment on Friday. I was embarrassed when I figured out what you were asking for, and I know you were embarrassed too. Maybe next time if you could call me off to the side and quietly explain that it’s a “personal” matter, we might avoid the embarrassment.”

Blank look. “I don’t know what you are talking about Miller. Can I go write my exam now?”

Always in a hurry, if I could only catch up to her...

Jay

I’d have come to class

But I was far too busy

Sleeping on the grass...

Bill

Bill arrived in the room at 8:30 every morning. He used to arrive earlier, however, just before Christmas, his dad lost his job, and so Bill, and his sister and mom and dad had to move back in with Bill’s granny. A very friendly “Good Morning” from Bill, and he’s off to the computers. I have two Amiga computers in the back of the room that I use for animation. Bill is now my animation expert. If I let him, he would spend every minute of every day working on animation. He animates squiggles on the computer. They look like worms, but “They are not worms Mr. Miller!” Bill would try to animate “coolers” or “peepers” but they are more difficult to draw on computer, so for the time being, Bill

sticks with squiggles. This may sound a bit bizarre; however, we've made lots of progress in the year since Bill first came into the class.

I remember the interview I had with mom before I had even met Bill. She had been driving Bill to Edmonton every school day for the previous two years for classes. Bill didn't fit into any classes in town, so she drove him in to school every morning, drove back to Millet to look after Bill's sister, and then drove back to Edmonton every night to pick him up after school. Bill worried about coming to school in town where he hadn't had any friends in class and that he would be bullied. I reassured Bill's mom that the atmosphere in the class was friendly and welcoming so in he came.

When he walked in he carried his world with him, in his binder of artwork. The artwork was unlike anything I had experienced previously. He had created a world, populated with peepers, and coolers and squiggles. They were engaged in all sorts of activities.

To introduce Bill into the real world, I felt that I would have to enter his world first, to understand from where he was coming. I have always felt that to make progress with my students, I have to enter their worlds, in order to entice them into mine, and hopefully into society. Thus I spent time checking out Bill's artwork to discover the meaning of his art. I discovered that Bill not only had created a world on paper, but that he had consciously decided to live in that world. The real world around him wasn't much fun for him, so he made up his own. This was a conscious decision, and he had and has no desire to leave the world of his own imagination. I have attempted to debate with Bill on the feasibility of living in this world, and have been rebuffed on all fronts. "Why should I

grow up? If I do, I'll have to leave all my special animals behind, and I enjoy them too much to do that!"

Bill has been a worry for his parents from the beginning. He was born with a cleft palate and has had extensive surgery to repair his palate. However, he was also diagnosed as being autistic as a child. At one point, he was put on medication to control hyperactivity. When he arrived in the GOALS class, he was not taking any medication.

After getting into his world, that is talking to him and asking lots of questions about his pictures, and what he likes doing, and why he likes doing it, I started him on the computer. I thought that maybe it would wean him off his drawings, and perhaps get him more socialized. He took to the computer like a duck to water. So much so, that I found it difficult to get him off the computer onto other work that he was supposed to do.

"Why should I do that useless stuff? I like doing animation on the computer!" And when I did get him off the computer and into his desk, you guessed it, right into his art book.

One day at his work experience station, as I stood talking to Bill and Bob, his work experience supervisor, and Bill was emitting the most incredibly smelly farts. Finally I looked at him and said "Stop farting Bill, it's really gross for us to be standing here talking, and have you farting and stinking up the place."

His response was "I can't help it, it just happens."

A few minutes later as we were getting into my car to return to school, he cleared his throat loudly, and spit on the sidewalk. He then covered it up with snow. When I addressed this behavior, he said, "But I covered it up!" These two incidents encapsulate

Bill's struggle to grasp social niceties.

A late fall field trip was to the Chickadee Trail in the Gwynne Valley. It is a lovely walk through a poplar and evergreen forest, noted for its chickadee feeding. Almost anywhere on the trail, it is possible to feed the chickadees with sunflower seeds held up in the palm of one's hand. Bill and I brought up the rear of a group of about 20 students. Imagine my surprise when Bill let out a screech that sounded very much like a hawk or an eagle soaring high above. I knew about Bill's ability to mimic pigs, and horses, and chickens, and chimpanzees, from classroom experience; however, the hawk's screech was a new one for me.

When I pointed out to Bill some time later in the classroom that he could integrate movies with computer animation and add titling to his work, he became quite excited. Since we had a video camera in the classroom, it was just a question of when the two of us could get together after school to shoot the video. As Bill's favorite topic was animals, (no surprise), we decided to return to the chickadee trail, and shoot what Bill described as an "animal view". We had to wait until spring as the winter came early that fall. Little did I know what I was in for on this adventure. The video camera is somewhat old and beat up, so I wasn't too concerned about how it was handled. After a lot of discussion, mostly on Bill's part, about how to shoot, and what to shoot, we headed out one day in early spring. I was the assistant for the shoot, which meant basically trying to keep the old camera running. Bill would get it a crouch position and he would hold the camera beside him about 2-3 inches off the ground. Then he would run fast down the trail, holding the camera in that position, exactly as if a small animal such as a weasel or a stoat was

shooting the video. (Similar in appearance to peepers, Bill's imaginary animals.) The trail was snow covered in spots, and muddy in spots, and very difficult to maneuver walking upright, however Bill was able to negotiate the trail all hunched over, and running full tilt. (For a peeper!) His ability to mimic the behavior of a small mammal on the prowl was uncanny. He would run down the trail, and then suddenly, when a downed tree loomed up, he would jump the camera onto the tree, and run it down to the end, pan from side to side, turn back, run back down to the other end, jump off, and head down the trail again. He had the camera climb part way up standing trees, check them out, dash down and head off again. I could see the animal running. Bill became the animal.

Bill took the finished tape home with him to preview, and to give him ideas for editing, unfortunately, the cold weather and the rough handling meant that not much of the video turned out, however Bill wasn't too concerned. He just headed on to his next project.

Watching Bill work, I became increasingly aware, and then concerned about twitches that I noticed. He would start on some writing, and then his hand would twitch or jerk. When drawing pictures in his art book, he had to erase quite a few times. When working on the computer, he developed what looked like a ritualistic mannerism with the mouse, lifting it, and tapping it before using it. After Bill became more comfortable with me, I queried him about this behavior. He started telling me about his "twitches" which he said seriously affected his ability to work. I tried to put the behaviour with the computer mouse, and the animal noises and the twitches with the drawing all in the same category, as something over which he had no control, however Bill was very rigid about which

behaviors fit into the “twitch” category, and which behaviors were things that he just “did”. On a field trip to West Edmonton Mall Water Park I became aware of another behaviour that I tried to put into the same category, but which Bill assured me was different. As we were walking to the top of one of the water slides, Bill let out a yelp, grabbed my leg, and fell to the steps we were climbing. He described that as something that came over him over which he had absolutely no control. It occurred occasionally, and he said that he could kind of feel when it was coming. He described how it had happened one time when he had a glass of juice in his hand, so of course he spilled the juice all over the table, and ended up in trouble with his dad.

During parent teacher interviews, I introduced the topic of Bill’s “twitches” into the conversation, to gauge his Mom’s reaction. She was well aware of the twitches, and explained that she had Bill on some medications to control these behaviors previously. She described the results as disastrous. I recommended a psychiatrist who attended a Wetaskiwin clinic who diagnosed Bill as having Tourette’s syndrome, as well as an anxiety disorder. She offered Bill the choice of which problem he wanted to deal with first; he chose the anxiety. She prescribed a medication to ease his anxiety, and he did become less anxious although his twitches remained.

The other teacher in our program reported to me that Bill had told her that he really liked it in the GOALS program, and that he was happy to be here. We seemed to be getting somewhere with Bill. It doesn’t quite match the vice principal’s goal of turning Bill, and the other students in the program into “Taxpayers”, but Bill was happy.

Pete

Pete distinguished himself in my classroom with his artwork. Any white board markers left out were fair game to Pete. And his art was excellent. Reminiscent of Mad Magazine cartoons, his caricatures of the students and the teachers in the class were astute. Whenever I needed a drawing on the board, Pete was the one I would turn to, much to the delight of the rest of the class.

Pete's personal life wasn't nearly as neat as his artwork however. Pete was placed in a special education class very early in his schooling, because of his "behavior" problems in regular classes. His mother knew there was more to Pete's problems than just "he's a disruptive student who needs to be in a smaller class where his behavior can be kept under control", but she could not get anyone to listen to her. The powers that be had spoken, end of story.

Finally after much searching for answers, with no help from the school system, Pete was diagnosed with epilepsy. His form of epilepsy was unusual in that his seizures were a type of petite mal seizure not obviously noticeable to others.

I sometimes think of Pete as a small boy sitting in class trying to make sense of what was going on, with all of those gaps in his consciousness. I suppose I would be disruptive in a situation like that as well.

The diagnosis didn't make much difference to the system, however, and so Pete continued in the special education classes to which he had become accustomed. He was placed on powerful anti-seizure drugs, which reduced the seizures, but left him with attendant side effects, including lethargy and inattention.

In grade five had an operation to remove the specific parts of his brain that were malfunctioning. Unfortunately for Pete, the operation reduced, but did not completely eliminate the seizures, nor did it eliminate the need for medications to stop them.

About this time, Pete's mother and father divorced, adding a new dimension to Pete's life.

As soon as I realized Pete's artistic abilities, I started lobbying to have Pete enrolled in the regular art classes. It would seem to be a natural thing to do; however, the vice-principal in charge of the alternate programs in the school had other ideas. His arguments against Pete being enrolled into the regular art class included:

"He already has a program, (the GOALS program), so why would he need another regular class?" and "What good is an art class for Pete? Will it make him more 'employable'?"

Finally, with the promise that we would wait until all of the "regular" students who wanted to enroll in the art course would get first chance at the program, so as to not mess up their timetables, Pete was allowed to enroll. I was expected to do a monthly report on his progress to ensure that he was not wasting anyone's time.

After Pete nearly completed his first year of high school, medical professionals decided that Pete should undergo more surgery. The doctors felt that their techniques for isolating problem areas in the brain had improved to the point at which they could almost guarantee success. So, in June of that year, Pete went to the University Hospital for an operation to stop the seizures and finally get him on track.

The operation to stop Pete's seizures was partly successful in that it did stop Pete's

seizures. Unfortunately, an unwanted side effect of the operation was that Pete lost all the peripheral vision in his right eye. In other words, now that Pete is finally able to focus and concentrate on his artwork, he has lost a significant part of his vision.

Pete's second year in the program was successful in that he was able to enroll in the second year of regular program art. His art teacher felt that Pete was an excellent candidate for Art 20, based on his Art 10 work. (I had to check with her to make sure that she wasn't just "giving him" his Art 10 mark because she felt sympathy for him!) I was also able to enroll him into a regular physical education program, after jumping through the same hoops that I had to jump through his first year. I was able to get Pete a work experience placement at the local art gallery as well.

Pete's third year had lots of ups and downs. At parent-teacher interviews that year, Pete's mom revealed that Pete had disclosed to her that he thought he was trans-sexual. As if he did not have enough to deal with, now Pete was saying he felt like he was a girl trapped in a man's body. He began to dress up in women's clothing in his room at home, and stated that he was finding it very difficult to control those impulses.

Pete's mom took him to different counselors and psychiatrists, to help him through this period of his life. I had been searching for a school that would be accepting of Pete's lifestyle and capabilities. We all agreed that the small town college that we were considering probably wouldn't work for Pete with this new dimension to his life.

Manny

Recently I was headed off to bed at my usual time, (10:00 P.M.), when the back door bell rang. I never really know what to expect when this happens; sometimes when the

neighbor's meds have worn off, he is there to let me know about his escape plans, or maybe it is a student looking for a place to crash for the night. This particular night, it was Manny. Sometimes he needs a ride out to the res, sometimes he needs a loan, and sometimes he is selling me ice cream bars. This night it was different.

He greeted me in his usual way, "Hi Einstein, how's it going?" He had sensed how tired I was so he said what he had to say quickly. "I figured out how I can pay you back. I can give you \$70.00 this month, and \$70.00 next month, and that will be all of it."

"That sounds like a good plan Manny." I tried to sound excited about the plan, but it was hard for me to get too worked up about it. I was tired, but more to the point, Manny and I have been working out a repayment plan for the money he has borrowed from me for several years.

I think back to the first time I ever saw Manny. I was on my deck relaxing in the afternoon sun, when I heard a noise coming from the patch of grass between my house and the neighbor's. Pat Myers and her son Michael lived next door. I had some sympathy for Pat, because her common law husband had gone back to Toronto, taking their 4 year old daughter with him, leaving her to try and make a go of it with her son.

When I went to investigate, there was Manny. I found out later he was Michael's cousin. He was looking up at me, waiting for my next move. I told him I didn't want him playing on my property. He never said a word; he just turned and walked around the corner back onto his cousin's driveway.

The next time I saw Manny, several years later; he was enrolled in the RLS class in the high school. It was only then I realized why he had said nothing when I had talked to

him all those years earlier. He finds it almost impossible to express himself verbally. I once had a conversation with Manny in which we were talking about the weather. He said “I like the ... you know, the...” and finally he gestured towards the sun. He could not find the word sun.

This inability of Manny’s to express himself, combined with his appearance, (he is tall, with long hair pulled back into a pony tail), and his racial origin, (he is Cree) all combine to make him one of the most under appreciated people I know. He has a wonderful self-deprecating sense of humor, which he uses to cover his difficulty with language. That is why he calls me Einstein, and that is why he calls Mr. Cowles “Mr. Canoe.”

Manny has difficulty holding down a job. His favorite job so far and the only one he has managed to keep is driving the Dickey Dee ice cream bike around town. He enjoys the outdoors, and he loves children, and he enjoys meeting people, so it is a good vocational match for Manny. The only problem with the job is it is geared for teenagers and preteens, and Manny is in his mid twenties. Luckily, his boss is an understanding man, so Manny is able to return year after year.

He has tried other jobs, but they never seem to work out. The one that surprised me the most was when he was hired as a dispatcher for a new cab company in town. He only lasted one night at that job. No surprise. He continues to try, however. Recently, he and I redid his resume, and he headed off, full of optimism about his chances. I was confused a week or so after he headed off down the street, when he started asking me if I had received any calls. I didn’t realize what he was talking about, until finally the light went

on. He was using me as the contact person. He had no phone, so obviously I was the right person to contact.

One of the reasons Manny likes selling ice cream so much is because of his love of children. When they hear the tinkling of the Dickey Dee bike coming, and when they see Manny, they come running. They know that if he has had a good day, he may be able to hand out freebees for them. And it doesn't take much for Manny to have a good day.

He hit the big time a few years ago, when he figured out that he was the only Dickey Dee salesman with the courage to go out to the local reserve and ply his wares. On a hot day, he can sell out within a few hours. It's a different story in town, with several bikes on the road, and his own territory to cover. He usually doesn't do too badly though, as he is friendly and outgoing. He has even set up a delivery schedule for regular customers.

Another "job" that Manny has held down for many years is as volunteer at the local bingo halls. I don't remember whom it was got Manny involved with bingo, but whoever it was should be given a pat on the back. Manny uses his volunteer work at the hall to accomplish much of what he needs to survive.

Workers always get a meal supplied, as the bingos start at 5:00 P.M. and go until 10:00 P.M. every night. Some of the clubs restrict the amount of food available for the workers, but some of them don't. Many times I have seen Manny leave the hall with a bag of food in a plastic bag. He takes the food to his mother, if she isn't working that particular bingo as well, or for one of his many roommates. He always seems to manage to be asked to volunteer at another bingo when he is working in the hall, so he perpetuates

his food source. I am sure that if it wasn't for the food he gets volunteering at bingo, Manny would be malnourished.

The hall is a great place for him to line up his rides to Hobbema. It pleases me as a teacher to realize another plus for Manny with his volunteer work: he is so popular with volunteer organizations in the community he needed to learn how to write down dates, to keep track of his commitments. He now carries a small book and a pencil at all times. He also records his debts in his book as well. I sometimes wonder what a difference it would have made to Manny if he hadn't connected with the community through his volunteer work.

He might have ended up the same as his older brother, Calvin, who was in my class for a couple of weeks many years ago. His time in school wasn't successful however, and he has spent many years in jail for various offences, including assaulting his younger brother. It always upsets Manny when his brother is around.

When Calvin was in my class, for the short period of time I had him, I remember only one incident. He was very tall, being six feet six inches at least, in a junior high school. Needless to say, he towered over his classmates. He was insisting that he would not sit in a desk, and like an idiot, I was insisting that he sit in one. I remember heading down to the vice principal to complain (he refused to go to the office when I tried to send him), and I also remember being really upset when the vice principal came down to my room and suggested that he would be fine sitting at a table in a regular size chair. I was so concerned that the rest of the class would rebel, and refuse to sit in desks as well. It was shortly thereafter that he was gone. (And my fears about anarchy in the classroom were

abated.) In retrospect, I wonder if that was the defining moment in his life. You know ... a butterfly's wing in China...

Manny started his high school career in a class for students with fairly significant disabilities in thinking skills and social skills. He spent a year in this program, after which he "graduated" to the program I taught. He graduated because of his size, and because of his "street smarts". While he was in my program, I worked on his reading and writing, but mostly we focused on work experience. Manny was able to find jobs fairly easily, and lasted as well as could be expected, given the menial tasks he was given, such as pumping gas, or cleaning. Unfortunately, he grew bored quickly, or misunderstood directions, or had a problem at home, which meant he couldn't be in school for a week or two. Supervisors at work sites, although understanding, usually ended up letting him go. This pattern continues to this day, except for the jobs providing instant gratification, such as selling ice cream, or volunteering at bingo.

As I mentioned previously, Manny is tall, native, and inarticulate, qualities which did not endear him to the administration in the high school. It was his inability to articulate which led to his expulsion from school in his third year. After he was moved to the GOALS program, he still continued to spend time in his old classroom. One afternoon, I was called to the office to deal with a serious situation that had occurred over the noon hour. Manny, and another boy from Manny's previous program, had been caught up on the stage, with the lights out, with one of the girls from the other program. The other boy was not talking, and Manny and the girl were unable to articulate what had happened, so Manny and the other boy were expelled. I had my doubts about Manny's culpability, but

there was nothing I could do. Although he was gone from the classroom, my involvement with Manny continued. His volunteer work at bingo continued, and I got to know him better and better.

When my father lost his ability to drive a few years ago, he sold me his truck, and my relationship with Manny changed again. Manny changes residences on a regular basis, and I have become his official mover. The first move was from his apartment, which was arranged for him by one of the service agencies in town. His workers thought when Manny's AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) funding was in place, he would be able to pay rent on a regular basis, thus they helped him find an apartment. They underestimated Manny's attachment to his mother, and his impulse buying. As a result, there I was, helping Manny move from his basement apartment in town out to the reserve, so he could live with his mother. I thought he would have a few bags and boxes, but by the time we were finished loading the truck, the entire back of the truck was filled. I drove him out to the reserve, and helped him unload.

I did not see Manny for a while after that, as he had to establish connections for his rides back and forth to town. When I did see him again, it was to help him move again. He was back in town, as he and his mother had been asked to leave the reserve house. So we had to go back out to the res, pick up his stuff again and head back to town. This time he had only two garbage bags to haul back to town. Something about rent on the reserve I believe.

The next few times I saw Manny, he was riding a roller coaster of emotions. He had found a girlfriend, and was truly in love. Unfortunately for him, she didn't feel the same

way about him, and she was constantly off with someone else. It was at these times that my heart went out to Manny, as he would be wandering around town looking for her, and I would find him cold, tired and hungry, and so very very sad. They finally moved back out to the res, so that she wouldn't be cruising around town so much. Manny ended up buying a car with his AISH money to impress her, but it quit on him in Ponoka, and after about two weeks of sitting in the impound lot there, it was worth less than what it would cost to get it off the lot. Then she attacked him with a knife, he charged her with assault, and his first true love affair ended in disaster.

After this fiasco, Manny moved several more times, to different houses on and off the res. During taxi runs to his different lodgings, I counted 5 different houses on the res, with one move to a duplex in town in between. The last trip, Manny asked me if I would help him get his stuff and bring it back to town. I agreed, and as we drove up to his latest residence, he was explaining to me why he was leaving his latest place. He pointed out the blackened streaks coming from the window and explained that the people living in this house drank too much, and had somehow started a fire in his bedroom. When he gathered up his gear, which was now reduced to one garbage bag of belongings, he showed me his jacket, with part of one sleeve melted from heat. He explained that it was still fine to wear, other than the melted spot on the sleeve. So it was back to town, and this time he explained that he was getting help from a local service agency, and would soon have his own place again. At this point he explained that he needed a place to store his stuff for a few days, and wondered if I could look after his stuff. I offered my garage, which he gladly accepted. At this time, we ended up going to three different residences

gathering up “stuff”. So now, several weeks later, I have a collection of bags and boxes, an old television set, an old Apple computer and a pair of cowboy boots in my garage and a small (4 inch screen) television in my back entry, waiting for the day Manny finally gets his new digs.

A few years ago, to help with the funding for the high school I started doing casinos in Red Deer. I began looking for volunteers a few months ahead of time, and asked Manny and his mother if they would like to help. They were very pleased to be asked to volunteer, as the time spent in Red Deer doing the casino would be considered a holiday by Manny and his mother. As it happens, it is the only holiday they get.

Alberta Gaming does background checks on volunteers, which involves checks into criminal behaviour any time within the past five years. Manny had been involved in a car theft a few years previously, and thus was not eligible to help. When I asked Manny about this incident I was not able to get any information. I asked around, I found out that Manny had been at a party with some friends, and he and a friend had “borrowed” a car from another friend. He ended up being charged and convicted, probably partly as a result of his inability to speak for himself. I needed Manny to help me find his mother who was then living on the reservation so I asked him to join us anyway.

Manny hung around for the two days of the casino, visiting his cousins who lived in Red Deer, and returning to the casino when he was hungry. (I let Manny participate in the volunteer meals and snacks.) He and I were roommates which was fine, except I discovered that Manny had turned on the pay TV channels, and watched part of 5

different pay as you watch movies in the 4 hours from 2:00 AM until 7:00 AM when we left.

That morning when I interviewed Manny and his mother for my study I found out about the sexual abuse Manny had experienced at the hands of his uncle years earlier; the same uncle who later committed suicide. This may have contributed to Manny's inability to speak and remember... who knows?

Ted

"Be careful Ted, I have magical powers!" I was quickly reaching the end of my patience with Ted. I had been warned about him before he arrived in my class, and the warnings were all proving to be prophetic.

I tapped my cheek bone just below my left eye, and repeated my warning. "I can put the hex on you Ted! Be careful." This was like waving the proverbial red flag. I could see the gears going around in Ted's head. A challenge from the teacher. How could he win this match? The rest of the class watched intently.

They too were tired of Ted's antics, and were wondering where this confrontation was headed. Having taught for 6 or 7 years, I had, kicking and screaming, come to the realization that confrontation and escalation with students with behavioural problems only lead to more confrontation and escalation. I hadn't yet figured out how to avoid these problems, but I was working on it. The phrase "If the only tool you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail" ran through my head.

"What can you do with your eyeball, Miller?" The challenge was dropped. Where would I go with this one?

“Just by looking at you I can control what you do Ted. You are in my power. You had best be careful!” Now I had everyone’s attention. And Ted was winding up. He started to laugh, as he glanced around the room at the rest of the class. I had Ted sitting at the front of the class in an effort to control his behaviour, but this tactic left him more in control than ever, as now he could command not only my attention but also the attention of everyone in the class. How was I to get out of this confrontation with no one losing face?

“Don’t hesitate, don’t give up control, keep moving ahead, you are the teacher, you are the boss.” The internal dialog kept on in my head as I leaned forward, tilted my head down and aimed my left eyeball at Ted.

He laughed again, and miracle of miracles, his quick movement caused his desk to tip over. Ted, his desk, pencils, papers and books all went flying. The class exploded in laughter. We all laughed until the tears streamed down our faces. Ted hesitated for just a second, and then he joined in the laughter. For a few minutes we were one. And things were easier from then point forward. When things started to escalate, sometimes, I was able to defuse with my “look” at Ted, or whoever was getting goofy. Sometimes...

Ted was in my class for two years, his grade seven and eight years. At the end of his grade eight year, I transferred to the high school to set up the GOALS program. His grade nine year was rough, as he tried to break in the new teacher to his way of doing things, and then he moved on to high school, and back to me.

Ted’s high school years were not very successful. He grew from a boy with behavioural issues to an angry young man. He always seemed to be picking on someone.

He chose Jeff most of the time. Jeff, was quiet, shy and disabled with mental illness. For some reason, Ted felt it was his duty to make Jeff's life as miserable as possible. It didn't take much. All Ted had to do was to hide Jeff's backpack in one of the cupboards in the classroom, sit back and watch Jeff work himself into a state. Although Ted was not successful as an academic, he was quite successful in his work experience. He had adult friends all over town, and always managed to find work with them. He eventually moved on, but not until he had made a good connection with the employer, and he rarely left on bad terms. One of his placements was with one of his teachers from elementary school. This placement worked so well, that Ted moved in with the teacher, who happened to be looking for a roommate at the same time Ted was moving out of his house. Unfortunately, another roommate took something from the house, and ran up a large phone bill. Ted was implicated, and he moved on.

He had work experience in a Pizza Hut, which turned into a full time job, as Ted drifted away from school due to his conflicts with students and staff in the high school. Although he and I have since become good friends, during his time in the GOALS program, we had many conflicts. One of the conflicts ended with Ted on the floor at the door, with most of his body outside the room, and his foot hooked around the doorframe, so I couldn't close the door. I was nudging him in the rear end with the side of my foot to get him out so I could close the door, however, to anyone going by, it probably looked like I was giving him a boot in the rear. When we meet for coffee today, we laugh about that episode.

Another time, we were at the lake, boating, relaxing and enjoying the outdoors, when

one of the other students who was 6 feet 6 inches tall, and weighed 240 pounds picked Ted up, carried him out on the pier, and dropped him in the water. Ted decided to do the same thing to Jeff, and I interceded, to prevent Jeff from having a meltdown. Ted turned his attention to me, and it was all I could do to prevent him from throwing me into the water.

A few years ago I was deeply saddened to get a phone call from Ted with the news that his mother had died of a massive heart attack. She was in her forties, and far too young to die. She left behind Ted and his two sisters. Ted's father was still around, but he wasn't allowed near the girls. I never asked why.

It was Ted's mother who instilled his strong volunteer ethic. She volunteered for everything. She and Ted and Ted's sisters and later on Ted's brother-in-law and his niece, all volunteered for bingo constantly.

Ted's job with Pizza Hut took him to Edmonton for two years. He ended up back in town, something to do with a \$50.00 dollar bill that was in Ted's apron. He got confused one day making change, and he forgot all about it until the next day when his boss confronted him. Since then he has had a couple of jobs, and he has managed to maintain his job hauling turkeys. His job is to catch the turkeys and put them in the cages for transport. He calls it "turkey bombing". He started out getting paid by the hour, but now he is on salary. It makes it easier for him to budget, and he doesn't have to hustle for work between seasons.

Terry

I see graduates from the program on a daily basis. We sometimes go for lunch, or talk on the phone, or we meet while shopping. Our town relies heavily on revenues from bingo, and I meet graduates from the program while volunteering for the same charitable organizations.

I knew Terry had been recently married had a new son, and I wanted to congratulate him. I was pleasantly surprised when I saw him walk in, as I had not realized that he volunteered for this particular organization.

Tall and lanky at one time, Terry, now in his early thirties, was gaining weight around the middle. I patted my own expanding waistline and chuckled as I noticed his growing girth. It seemed marriage was agreeing with him.

I jumped up as he approached. "Terry, congratulations! How was the wedding?"

That small shy smile of his appeared and I thought back to my junior high teaching years, when I first met Terry.

He and his buddy Colin were so full of life back then. I got to know them both very well, as they comprised the photography club the first year I offered it. We spent happy hours driving around looking for horses to photograph and hours more developing and printing the photos.

Later when I moved to the high school to establish the GOALS program, I was surprised to see his name on my registration list. In his last year in junior high he had been progressing so well in the EMH class, we moved him into the more challenging IO program. I soon discovered why he was back in the GOALS program. He had major

cosmetic surgery on his jaw, and wasn't doing so well in the high school IO Program, possibly due to missed classes as a result of the surgery, or more likely due to a personality conflict with one of the IO teachers. After Terry recovered sufficiently from his jaw surgery, he and I agreed that he should try English 13, one of the regular accredited courses offered at our school. After the teacher in that program got to know Terry, he did very well in the program, passing, and gaining five credits for his effort. He went on to a transitional vocational program in a nearby college, and ended up with a job care taking in a local school. That job led to a better paying job with the city maintenance department, and now marriage and fatherhood.

"Congratulations also on the birth of your son." I said as I pumped his hand. Now for the first time in a long time, I saw that rare, big smile of his. "I guess you like being a dad?" I smiled back at him.

"Oh, yeh!" he quietly but enthusiastically responded. He had always been the tall silent type, cautious in his response to most things. After we had the obligatory "men changing diapers" discussion, the talk moved on to other subjects.

"How is your job going?" was my next query. At this, his smile was replaced by that look of confused frustration which I remembered so well from classroom days when he didn't quite get what was going on. He liked to be on top of things.

"Laid off." he said with a scowl.

"What! I don't believe it. You worked there for years Terry. What happened?" I asked.

"Reorganization" was his knowing reply.

And so it goes for people with disabilities.

Annie

Annie had been missing lots of school again this month. Annie phoned me from the hospital to tell me that she had been admitted; Annie had picked up a bug and it seemed to have taken over her whole system. Annie had missed lots of school during this, her last year, and I had a sense of foreboding for her. I didn't feel that way when she first came into the classroom three years previously, in fact I had felt very optimistic about Annie.

She came in with her mother to meet me before the year started. Her mother explained that she had not done too well in her other schools, but that they were optimistic about the GOALS program.

Annie didn't do too much talking at that first meeting, nor did she do too much talking her first few months in the program. She reminded me of a spry shy granny, with her head down, and her shuffling gait. I was very impressed with her work ethic; she was so determined to do all the work, and do it correctly.

"Mr. Miller, Mr. Miller, could you please help me with this?" was a refrain to which I became very familiar. It was difficult not to get frustrated with Annie sometimes. She had such an incredible need to succeed, coupled with a very poor opinion of her ability to succeed.

It seemed that I spent most of the first year building Annie's self-esteem. "You can do it Annie, look how well you did on this assignment. Be proud of this work, it is wonderful." It was almost like a mantra that I repeated to her over and over again. Eventually, ever so slowly, she started to believe it.

As she began to come out of her shell, her smile appeared more and more frequently. By the end of the first year, other than Annie's frequent absences due to health reasons, I was very pleased with her progress.

In her second year, Annie blossomed. We continued to work on her reading, writing and math skills and she continued to progress. I added Work Experience to her time table, and in the first semester, Annie chose to work at a daycare. She was wonderful working with the young children under her care, and she received 96% on her evaluation form, one of the highest marks I ever saw from an employer.

Annie started taking better care of her personal appearance in school as well, and it was obvious that she was spending many hours working on her makeup and wardrobe. Her improved self-esteem brought about other changes as well. She developed a big crush on one of the boys in the class. She started spending a lot of time hanging around Pete, laughing at his jokes and listening to his stories. She changed desks about this time so she could be closer to him. I encouraged this behavior some what, believing that what she was learning about relationships with members of the opposite sex was just as important as math, or reading skills for Annie, if not more so.

Annie's mother got into the act too. Pete's family and Annie's family both belonged to the same church; so Annie's mother started phoning Pete's mother, and arranging things for the families to do together. Pete, unfortunately for Annie, was having nothing to do with these machinations of Annie and her mother. It wasn't until long after the fact that I realized why Pete was so adamant that he was having nothing to do with Annie. I had always assumed it was a "girl-guy" thing for Pete. The light came on when Pete's

mother “outed” Pete at Parent-Teacher Interviews. It turned out to be a “girl-guy who feels that he is a girl” thing!

Poor Annie! The first real crush she had, and it is on a boy who is having sexual identity problems. I never interfered in this relationship. I just held my breath and hoped for the best for both of them.

Needless to say, Annie fared badly in this relationship. She started withdrawing more and more from the class, and her health seemed to go downhill as well. Annie’s third year in the program should have been her best. Annie got a work experience placement at a local hair styling salon. She was in class one period a day, and the rest of the day, she was at her workstation. The plan was that she would gain a real taste for work, while upgrading her reading and writing skills as much as possible before graduation. Then, after graduation, she could attend one of the colleges offering the Transitional Vocational Program, which is designed for special education students, or if this didn’t suit her, she could go directly into the work force.

These plans fell through early in her third year. She complained of being sick and she often missed school. Pete’s rejection of her seemed to have really hurt. There was no possibility to explain the situation to Annie, and I doubt if she would have believed me even if I had explained why Pete rejected her. The hairdressers at her workplace took quite a while to adjust to Annie, and she to them, so she didn’t get much satisfaction from work for a while. They eventually did appreciate her style of work, and grew to like her very much, but it didn’t seem to help how Annie was feeling.

I kept hoping things would click for her at some point in the year; however, the

second semester parent-teacher interviews left me feeling quite discouraged. Annie's mother reported that her family doctor, the family, and Annie had decided that Annie shouldn't do anything for 6 months to a year after she graduated. They felt that things were just too difficult for her, and she was exhausted.

I suggested that if Annie tried something new like college it might get her going again, but at this point her mother told me about the deterioration in Annie's behaviour at home. Quiet, mild mannered Annie was having tantrums which involved screaming and throwing objects around the room. Apparently her school assignments were causing such distress that she was literally exploding in anger and frustration, to the point of putting herself, and members of her family in danger.

When I heard this, I stopped advising the family to consider college, and I offered any support I could to help Annie to relax and overcome the stresses she was feeling, in the form of counseling, or referral to a local mental health counselor. I talked with her boss at the hairdressing salon, about the possibility of Annie working there on a part time basis sometime in the next year or so, after she was finished school, and they were very receptive to the possibility. I informed Annie's mother about those options, and hoped for the best for Annie.

Franky

Franky is an angry young man who controls things with his anger and aggression. While talking to the school counsellor one day, and she told me that Franky made a decision when he was in grade four that he was not going to be picked on any more. In order to achieve that, he became the aggressor.

When he was in my classroom, he tried to be in charge. His favorite expression went something like, “Smarten up or I’ll knock your block off.” He talked about “kicking the #@\$% out of (fill in the blank)”, and “scrapping it out with (fill in the blank).” He joked around with me about how he will “scrap me out” if I don’t do things for him. Then he smiled his big smile, we laughed, and got on with our work.

He quite often came to school limping, or hunched over slightly, because of bruises or pain from a fight he has been in the night before. But then he would laugh, and brush it off. I talked to him quite a bit about his aggression and anger, but until a significant incident occurred recently, he was not prepared to change his ways, stating, “You gotta be tough to survive in my neighborhood!”

I taught a media class. There were four parts to the class: photography, computers, silk-screen, and video. The students get a lot of hands on work with equipment of all kinds, they get a chance to find out about different types of jobs, plus have a lot of fun as well. Franky and his partners were working on the video component of the program. The assignment was to go out and shoot a variety of shots with the camera, such as having a conversation, passing vehicles, buildings. The goal was to get the students familiar with the workings of the camera. When Franky and his two buddies came into the room laughing and excited about the shots they had done, I had a premonition that there was something wrong, so I zeroed in on them when they popped the video into the VCR. Franky looked at me and said, “This is a restricted adult movie Mr. Miller, there’s swearing on it.”

What Franky had decided would be cool for the “conversation” shot was him picking

a fight with another student. The swearing was not acceptable, but what more disturbing was Franky being videotaped harassing, pushing, and eventually punching another student, and knocking his glasses off. All Franky worried about was the swearing; the significance of the fighting was completely lost to him. He insisted that he wouldn't really have hurt the guy, "And besides Mr. Miller he's a real Dork."

After a sleepless night wondering how I could turn this experience into a "teachable moment", I figured out a game plan. I wanted Franky to know how serious I viewed the incident, so I called in the Department Head, and asked for his help. When Franky saw both of us together, he started to realize that he was in a tight spot.

I explained again to Franky the school's zero tolerance policy towards violence. His leg started bouncing up and down while this explanation was being given. I asked him what was causing that, and he explained that it was his anger coming out. I praised him for releasing his anger in such an appropriate and acceptable manner, and went on, explaining that I was going to have to call in his parents to let them know what had happened. At this point Franky became quite agitated, so I asked him what was going on. He replied that if I did that, he was not going home. When asked why, he explained that he was afraid of what his father would do to him if he found out about Franky's problem at school. After a few more minutes of talking, we felt that we had the situation under control, and that Franky was accepting of the consequences of his behaviour, and that he would go home that night. I made an appointment for his mother to come in to discuss the situation at 3:00 P.M. and we went on with the day.

The class went down town in the afternoon, to watch Romeo and Juliet at the local

theatre, after which, we headed back to the school to catch buses, and, for Franky, the appointment with his mother. Franky never made it back for the appointment. He skipped out just before we got back to the school.

I explained the situation to Franky's mother, including the fact that Franky was talking about not coming home because he was afraid of what his father would do to him. She tried to reassure me that Franky's father would not harm Franky, although he would be very angry.

That evening, I was scheduled to work a bingo to raise money for the class, and Franky was scheduled to help, so I was quite sure that Franky would be at the bingo hall, and I could help him solve his dilemma.

Imagine my consternation when not only Franky, but his buddy Lars, also in my class, did not show up at the usual time to work the bingo. Instead, Lars' parents arrived, ready to play bingo, and wondering where Lars was. I told them I thought that Franky and Lars would be arriving later, and went off to chair the bingo.

When Franky's father arrived half an hour later, I began to get an understanding of why Franky was so afraid to go home. If Franky could be called an angry young man, his father could be called a very angry older man. I switched to plan B, which was downplaying the incident with the video camera, and stressing how glad I was to meet him, and that "Yes", Franky was having some problems with aggression, however he is making great progress in school, and that he is keen to finish school, and so on.

"Why didn't he come home then, and why isn't he here?" Was the comment I received in answer to my statements.

Not being one to beat around the bushes, I replied, “He’s afraid of you and what you will do to him if he goes home.”

It was all he could do to contain himself at this point. He hissed at me, “That’s the same shit his older sister pulled on me. He’s in big trouble when I find him.”

I talked to him for about 15 minutes, and when he left he seemed calmed down. He asked me to give him a call if Franky showed up.

Franky and Lars never showed up inside the bingo hall. They did appear outside the hall, but by the time I went out to talk to them they had disappeared. They apparently hitchhiked to Lars’ house, and spent the night there. The next day, they both showed up at school. I took Franky aside and inquired as to what he planned to do; he said that he wanted to live with Lars for a month or so until things cooled down at home. Apparently Lars’ parents were in agreement, so I asked about his folks. In response, he asked to phone his mom and arranged to go for coffee with her to talk things out. When he never returned after lunch, I assumed they were still talking; that is until dad appeared half way through the afternoon, still angry, to pick him up. I explained that Franky never showed up for afternoon classes. That really got him fired up. He demanded again to know why Franky did not want to come home, and as I once again explained why Franky did not want to come home, he shouted, “Why am I always the scapegoat?” He then stormed out of the school, cursing loudly.

After this crisis life seemed to settle into a routine again, with Franky returning to school the next day. Things went along normally, that is, until the day I yelled at one of the other students in the class to stop talking and get to work. Franky intervened and told

me to settle down. I told him that his options were to stay out of it or to leave the room, and that if he chose to leave the room, he would have to come back to school with his parents. He said fine, and left. First thing the next day, his parents showed up in the office. By the time I got to the office, Dad had left in a huff. After some talk, Franky said he did not want to be in my class because I was an “asshole”, at which point, I told him to come back next week if he was interested in attending school. He showed up the next week, and after some discussion, he rejoined the class, only to be sent out again, two days later for refusing to do his work.

Shortly after this incident, things came to a conclusion when I confiscated a hashish pipe Franky was playing with during class time. When Franky loudly demanded, “Give me back my #@!\$%ing pipe!” we went to the principal’s office, and after some discussion with the principal, he was given the pipe, and asked not to return to school.

Epilogue

The students who were interviewed for the project are all moving on. As I wrote the final draft of the project, I continued to keep in touch with all of them.

Manny continues to work as a Dickey Dee ice cream salesman. He told me recently with some pride about the two days he sold out his entire stock of ice cream. He could not say the dates he had sold out, but he was able to point out the exact dates when I got him a calendar. He has now settled back into the basement suite I helped him move out of two years ago. When he had left previously, he owed money, but now he has someone from one of the local aide agencies helping him, and most importantly, cosigning his cheques with him, to ensure that he has enough money at the end of the month for food, clothing,

and to pay the rent. He proudly showed me his new sandals pointing out that he got them on sale for \$20.00 regular price \$30.00. This year he was finally able to work a casino for the school, as five years have passed since his trouble with the law. He worked as a chip runner, which involved balancing the chips at the end of the casino. He tolerated my help adding up those long columns of numbers for some time, but towards the end he was insisting on doing it himself. It took longer than it should have, but with some very subtle tips, he managed to do the job. The paid employees in the casino were very understanding. He was full of life during the casino, still playing his practical jokes while he was running chips, jumping out from behind doors, and following me around bumping into me. His biggest accomplishment (from my point of view) is his induction into the local Lions Club. He was inducted for his outstanding volunteer work at the bingo hall. He showed me his badges, and a photo of him receiving his membership was published in the local newspaper. (He still occasionally borrows the fee he needs to attend the monthly meetings.) Last night Manny came to see me as he has applied for a new job at one of the local bars, and he needs a resume. I still have his old resume on a computer at school, so we will go in and update it. There are lots of accomplishments to add this time.

Bill has moved back to town. I guess things didn't work out for his family up north. We have gone out for lunch a few times, and he was very pleased to buy me lunch, since it was "his turn." He has a full-time worker now, and he and his worker are still working on his transition to independent living. He has been attending the local gym for workouts, and is pleased at how his body is filling out. He was anxious to come to my house and get on the internet, so he could show me a site he found that has "great animated explosions,

and storms that he will be able to integrate into the movies he is working on. His new worker managed to get him a very powerful software package, which he is learning how to use, which will enable him to make bigger and better animations. He was stuck for a while with an out of date computer, but he was pleased that he was able to sell a quad, which gave him the money he needed to upgrade.

Bill's most exciting news is that he is going back to school. A new program is starting at Red Deer College, designed for people with disabilities. It is a pilot project with only three candidates to be accepted, and Bill was one of them. A panel of six interviewed him and his mother and his worker. Bill said he was nervous for a while, and then he got very calm, and quite enjoyed the interview. He didn't even mind when his worker and his mother had to leave the room, and he faced the interview panel on his own. He will be taking a course in media, and he will have an aide with him to help with note taking and assignments. The course may last for up to four years, depending on how successful Bill is.

He will be living in a basement suite in Red Deer, so he is taking another step towards independence. He will be responsible for making his own breakfast and lunch (which he does now) and it is hoped that within six to eight months he will be cooking his own evening meals. I wish him well.

Pete continues to live in northern Alberta with his mother. He has started using the internet, so we are keeping in touch that way now. His first email he was very excited and very nervous, as he was about to try to obtain his driver's license. He was sure he would fail the test, but he passed. I asked him about his vision difficulties, and he said that he is

able to compensate by being diligent. His mother lets him drive around his town, but he isn't able to do long trips yet. His art has taken a new direction. He is not drawing much anymore, but he is doing lots of photography. He takes very interesting close-up pictures of objects with lots of texture and detail. He is going to send me some of them so I can have a look. I have started emailing him some of my photos as well. He told me he recently went through a phase of not eating, which he described as anorexia. He is eating well now, so that seems to have cleared up. He asked me about working in school as a teacher's aide; I explained what I knew about the job. He would love to apply for such a job, but he is very nervous about it. He is currently doing volunteer work in three different places, so I tried to reassure him that he would have no trouble as a teacher's aide. He is volunteering at the local museum, at a native drop-in centre, and he is working with children on a summer project called Summer Safari. He seems to be doing well, if he could just get over his fears about his abilities, I'm sure he would do well.

I had coffee with Ted recently. There was a lot of laughter as we talked over old times. Ted has been working at his job loading Turkeys for four years now, and he is thinking about moving on. The "role model" in me took over for a few minutes as I started to lecture Ted about having another job before quitting this one. It was unnecessary, as Ted had some backup plans in place before he actually quit his job. He was thinking about working on a drilling rig with a cousin, or perhaps seeing what the job opportunities were in Edmonton. He assured me that he would not be quitting cold.

He updated me about his volunteer work at bingo. He and his sister have been running a non-profit organization for some time, as the executive members. It meant that

they have been completely in charge of setting up the volunteers for bingo, and then running the bingo in their roles as chairperson, paymaster and the other jobs. Ted likes being bonanza controller, or satellite controller, both jobs requiring a lot of organizational skills keeping track of up to six floor walkers, and their cards and money as well as facility counting money, and ensuring that everyone's money balances at the end of the night. He is very good at this job. He also volunteers for other clubs, and has been chairman regularly for one of them.

He has gradually stopped going to the Legion to play pool. He told me he was organizing tournaments, but he lost interest after a while. He shares a house with someone, but thinks he may have to find another place to live, as his housemate is getting married soon. He still does not have a love interest, but still talks about some time when he gets more settled.

We parted company (with Ted proudly paying for coffee), with a promise to get together again soon.

Duncan

“What do you know about hummingbirds, Miller?” The question came out of nowhere. No introduction or identification, just the question. It threw me off guard momentarily, until I recognized Duncan's voice. The same Duncan whom I had strongly suspected of being involved in the B and E on my house at the end of the previous year. And now this question.

I was at work, my first Friday back in my new job, as Alternate Education counsellor. My sabbatical year working on my counselling degree was paying off. All week I had

been getting calls from parents and students asking about potential alternate education classes either for themselves, or for their children. And now this call.

Cautiously, I answered, "I know they are small and very pretty Duncan, why are you asking?"

"One flew into my house, and when I threw a towel over it I think I broke its wing. What should I do with it?"

An unusual counselling request to be sure. "Why do you think its wing is broken? Is it bent out of shape?"

"Yeh, and it is just sitting there."

"Bring it in, and I will see what I can do."

"O.K., Miller, I'll be right over."

I was dreading Duncan's arrival. What do you do with a hummingbird with a broken wing?

He arrived very quickly, carrying a towel inside a plastic butter container. "Let's have a look, Duncan." I slowly unfolded the towel. A dejected looking young hummingbird sat in the nest that Duncan had created for it. I gently reached down to check for the broken wing as the secretaries gathered around for a look. Suddenly the bird flew up into the air, and landed on one of the air conditioning vents in the ceiling. "I guess its wing isn't broken." was all I could think to say at that moment.

Duncan grabbed the towel, wheeled around, and headed for the door, saying as he headed out, "Good, well you guys can handle it now."

"Wait Duncan, come back here!" I managed to say before he was gone. He wheeled

back around, and came back into the office. I got a chair, and the towel, and slowly stepping up towards the vent, I carefully enfolded the young bird back into the towel. I handed it back to Duncan and asked, "It's just a young hummer Duncan, why don't you take it back and release it in the bushes by your house? The mother bird might be nearby."

"O.K." and he was out the door and gone.

Conclusion

The GOALS program, a program for students labeled EMH (Educable Mentally Handicapped), is situated in a special education classroom in a high school in small town Alberta. In this paper I attempted to evaluate the program to determine whether or not it is successful, through:

- a triangulation of research techniques;
- research of techniques determined to be successful and comparing those techniques to those employed in the GOALS program;
- interviews with former students from the program and their significant others; and
- a narrative telling, an explication of the students' lives through the eyes of the author.

When I reviewed the research I determined that student-teacher relationships, instructional strategies, inclusion and transition are all important aspects to any special education program. For this reason, these are the topics researched and compared to the GOALS program.

As a teacher in the program, I spent a good deal of time developing student-teacher relationships, and the research indicates that this is a very important aspect of student learning. The teachers presently teaching in the program continue to focus on this aspect of the program. This wisdom is not restricted to special education programs, although it is especially important in these programs. In the interviews the former students and their significant others support this statement with their emphasis on the relationship between student and teacher.

Cognitive education strategies which emphasize learning how to learn are important to education in general, and specifically to special education classes. These are based on

the strategies found Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment and are employed in the GOALS program (as described in Mulcahy, 1993). Marzano (2001) generated nine teaching strategies which were shown to improve student achievement based on his meta-analysis of thousands of instructional strategies. These strategies are similar, and in some instances identical to the cognitive education strategies used in the GOALS program. The program teaches Career and Life Management (CALM), Occupations, First Aide, Work Experience and other purposeful instructional programs that generally result in success for students taught using these techniques.

The GOALS program practices a modified version of the concept of inclusion. The students are included to the best of their abilities, based on discussions with the students, the parents, the GOALS teachers, the teachers of the classes in which the students are being considered for inclusion, and the administration in the school. Students have been integrated into such courses as Art, English, Physical Education, Auto Body, and Building construction. Students from other special education programs are also included in the GOALS program. One of the complaints raised by students in the GOALS program is the lack of credit given for the courses taken in the program. This is a valid complaint, and GOALS teachers and administrators are working to overcome this problem. The GOALS program has a successful program of inclusion with students, staff, parents and administration involved in the maximization of the inclusion.

Transition is another concept that is practiced in the GOALS program. From the beginning to the end of the program students are in a state of transition (and they should be before entering the program). Each student is expected to work with parents and

teachers in the design of an Individualized Educational Program, and part of the IEP is the transition plan for the student. The transition takes many different forms; transition into or from one of the other special education programs; transition into regular programming; transition to the world of work, transition to post-secondary education, or transition to community programming for the disabled. For special education students, transition often continues for many years after leaving the program. As a result of this philosophy of transition, the GOALS teachers are in a constant state of flux, attempting to keep up with the changing services offered within the community, and in surrounding communities and educational institutions. The philosophy of transition adopted by the GOALS program leads to success for students in the program, and results in a successful program.

Many statements have been made about the success of the program, based on the above concepts as described and as practiced in the program. The ultimate test of success is difficult to assess. I questioned the ex-students and their significant others about the success of the ex-students. Based on their answers a determination of the respondents' quality of life was made by the author. Based on this determination of quality of life, which indicated that the ex-students were by and large experiencing a good quality of life, I determined that the GOALS program is a successful program.

Bill's mother says it well:

... when it comes to the GOALS Program ... I was really impressed. I can't think of specific things right now but I was impressed. I was happy to see it because I was really worried because I mean in elementary school, like I eventually took him out of school because he just wasn't going anywhere and I was worried about him and then I put him in (a school in Edmonton) for a year and I was worried about, well the

traveling, is there a program here and so I was really pleased to see that. It was well structured and he was happy there. He didn't, he didn't like all the work he had to do, schoolwork, he liked all the fun stuff. Otherwise I was happy with it because he spent three years, almost four years ...

Reflecting upon the project as I finish these last few lines, I find myself back at the beginning of the project, and I ask myself once again, Can I tell someone else's story? As I reflect on the writing undertaken for this project, I come to the realization that in my attempt to tell "someone else's story" I discover the awesome truth, which is that I cannot tell "someone else's story". All I can do is attempt to tell my story, which is what this project turns out to be. As David Smith says:

As a teacher it is impossible to reach and teach children effectively without knowing their stories, just as it is impossible to be available to another person's story unless one undertakes in an ongoing way the profoundly challenging, often fearsome task of deconstructing one's own (Smith, 1999, p. 99).

Just as there is a dichotomy between the analysis of the GOALS program, with the heavily referenced work and the heavily analyzed interviews, and the free flowing stream of consciousness narratives, there is a dichotomy in my life's work; in teaching students with special needs. I have struggled endlessly attending to the needs of the curriculum, administration, and Alberta Learning, as I have struggled attending to the needs of the students facing me in my classroom, (as well as the struggle to attend to my personal needs).

Trying to balance these needs is a difficult task. I recently wrote myself a short note.

In each act, each moment of attention,
Some new thing is created.
What awesome responsibility.
Attend well.

It is between these two solitudes in which I have found myself, between curriculum-as-planned, and curriculum-as-lived. I have finally realized that this space between is free space: my free space. As Gadamer says:

We should have no illusions. Bureaucratized teaching and learning systems dominate the scene, but nevertheless it is everyone's task to find his free space. The task of our human life in general is to find a free space and learn to move therein (Gadamer, as found in Carson & Sumara eds. 1997).

My hope is that I continue to learn how to move therein.

I have "great expectations" for the students who pass through the GOALS program, and the students passing through continue to have "great expectations" about their "prospects". I believe the GOALS program is helping in their endeavors.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview Guide

Before the Interview

“I am going to school right now, and I am doing research. I want to find out if the GOALS program is successful for you GOALS grads. You can help me to make the GOALS program better if you will allow me to interview you. I want you to answer some questions about yourself, what you are doing these days, your work, your play, your family, and anything else you would like to tell me. I would also like to know what you thought of the GOALS program; courses, fun things you did, and stuff like that. I would like to tape record the conversation, so I can remember everything you tell me. The tape will not be heard by anyone but me, and no one will know who you are except me, so the information is confidential. If you want to hear the tape afterwards, I can make a copy for you. Is it OK for me to tape the interview?” Turn on tape, check to see if it is recording!

During the Interview

- Keep to blueprint as much as possible.
- Check the recorder occasionally to make sure it is running.
- Keep It Simple Stupid! (KISS principle)
- Do not interrupt!
- Use probes to keep the conversation going.
- Check the interviewee’s body language to ensure congruency with comments.
- Avoid unprofessional comments.
- Restrict note taking to the absolutely necessary.
- Avoid ritual agreement.

After the Interview

- End tape with details of interview; interviewee, Glen, project, date, time.
- Say: “Thanks for your time, that was a great interview.”
- Check to make sure tape worked.
- Continue conversation.
- Thank interviewee again when taking leave.
- Handwritten notes on ideas, interpretations, off record comments, any other insights.
- Secure tape and notes to ensure confidentiality.

Appendix B. Respondents' Interview Blueprint

1. How is it going?
2. What have you been doing since you graduated/left school?
3. What is your daily schedule like?
4. What was the best thing you learned in school?
5. What was the worst thing you learned in school?
6. What was the most helpful thing you learned in school?
7. What was the least helpful thing you learned in school?
8. Are you working?
9. What is happening with your family?
10. What is happening socially for you these days?
11. Who are you hanging out with these days?
12. Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend/husband/wife?
13. Do you consider yourself successful? If so why? If not, why not?
14. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix C. Significant Others' Interview Blueprint

1. How is X doing?
2. What has X been doing since s/he left school?
3. What is X's daily schedule like?
4. What was the best/worst thing X learned in school?
5. What was the most/least valuable thing X learned in school?
6. Is X working?
7. How is X's family life?
8. How is X's social life?
9. Does X have a girlfriend/boyfriend/husband/wife?
10. Do you consider X to be successful? Why/Why not?
11. Is there anything missing that you would like to add to this interview?

Appendix D. Permission Letters

Dear Marie,

I am conducting a study of graduates from the GOALS program. The purpose of the study is to examine parental perceptions, and the perceptions of GOALS graduates, regarding the success or failure of the GOALS program in terms of graduate's schooling, and how that relates to post-school success. I anticipate that educators and future graduates from the program will benefit from improvements in the program provided by the insights gleaned from the study. I would like your permission for you and Bill to be part of this study.

As part of this research you and Bill will be asked to answer several questions regarding Bill's school years, and post school years. The information gathered will be audio-taped and transcribed to paper, after which, it will be examined for themes that speak to the successes or failures of the GOALS program in terms of helping students to be successful in post-school life. I will also be including my perceptions of Bill and his time spent in the GOALS program.

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Further, all names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. You also have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time. If you so choose, please indicate your willingness to participate and allowing Bill to participate by signing this letter in the space provided below, and return the letter to me.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at (780 352-0086, email glenmiller@cablerocket.com). Also feel free to contact the supervisor of my study (Leah Fowler, Ph. 403 329-2457, email: leah.fowler@uleth.ca) and/or the chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chairperson of the committee is Keith Roscoe, Ph. 403 329-2446 email: keith.roscoe@uleth.ca).

Sincerely,

Glen Miller

The University of Lethbridge

Title of the Study: Special Education...Great Expectations

Principal Investigator: Glen Miller

I agree to participate in this study, and I agree to allow my son Bill to participate in this study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix E: Sample Interview

Glen: So Bill, you were in the GOALS Program a few years ago?

Ted: Yes, quite a few.

Glen: Actually how many years ago was that Ted?

Ted: Do you mean in high school or in junior high?

Glen: Last, last time you were in my class in high school.

Ted: When I was in grade ten, so that'd be probably, oh boy, 1990, 19 ...

Glen: Not sure?

Ted: 1990 about, yeah that's about ...

Glen: No, no, 1988-89. Remember?

Ted: Yeah ok.

Glen: So tell me, how are you doing today?

Ted: I'm not doing too bad uh, there's, I made mistakes in life but you know being in your class taught me a lot of things in life. A lot of values, ways of living, that other people live differently than me now so ...

Glen: Um, hmm.

Ted: Kinda helped me out a lot.

Glen: Umm, hmm. So what is it that, what are you doing now? Tell me what, what your job is and where you are living and all that sort of stuff.

Ted: Well right now I'm living with my sister and my brother-in-law and I work for Pioneer Poultry. That's loading turkeys. We go farm-to-farm, ah sometimes four hours, five hours away and then we, we load maybe five to six thousand birds a day.

Glen: Umm, hmm.

Ted: And then we come back and we just do the same thing, umm, it's basically lot of not strength but will power to do it you know. That's the main thing that people don't want to do nowadays is work hard. Cause you see all these young kids nowadays when they have jobs in stores putting boxes away or working at IGA and that's not really a job to me you know. I look at my age and think I could be doing better things in life.

Glen: Uhh, hmm.

Ted: You know and that's what I was thinking years ago when I was in school. I thought I don't want a five dollar an hour job when I'm this age and I'm not, I have a really good job now. I waited years and years for this job because I went to him when I was eighteen years old and I waited three years for this job.

Glen: Yeah.

Ted: So I think I'm doing pretty good.

Glen: How much are you making right now?

Ted: About twenty-three dollars an hour.

Glen: Wow that's great.

Ted: That's a good living.

Glen: Yeah.

Ted: It's hard work.

Glen: Great. So you were talking about school a little earlier. Can you, can you think,

think for a second and tell me if you can tell me the best thing you learned in school.

Ted: The best thing in school that I learnt from you basically is I couldn't get away with things I normally could with anybody else. If I wanted to do something, you wouldn't let me (laughter) and you made that point across to me.

Glen: Yeah.

Ted: I couldn't bug people like I used to all the time. You were always too smart for me. If I would bug somebody you would know who did it. You know you would know whose knapsack I hid in the kitchen somewhere (laughter) and you know I did it you know you wouldn't let me get away with things. You were tough but then you were soft and then you were tough.

Glen: Yeah.

Ted: You know there's times to be tough and there's times to be soft.