FOUR SECONDARY TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON ENHANCING
THE INCLUSION OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

By

KYLE ROBINSON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Education

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
August 2015

Copyright © Kyle Robinson, 2015
ABSTRACT

Recent reports suggest that the number of students receiving special education services in Ontario has risen from 14% to 23% in a ten-year span (People for Education, 2015). Thus, there is a growing need to study which teaching practices are being used with exceptional learners in regular classrooms and whether they are consistent with professional documents and research advising teachers on how to create the best inclusive learning environment (Kretlow, Cooke, & Wood, 2012; Swanson, 2001). In Ontario, Learning for All (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a), the professional document designed to advise secondary school teachers on inclusive teaching practices, is notably lacking in research conducted within secondary schools. This could be due to the lack of research on inclusive education being conducted in secondary schools.

The current study described in this thesis was designed as a starting point to fill in this gap. Specifically, this multiple perspective case study describes the cases of four diverse secondary school teachers in Ontario and how they facilitated the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms. In talking to secondary teachers about inclusion, I hoped to gain an understanding of how teachers create an inclusionary space using the tools provided to them by the Ministry of Education, as well as those provided by their individual schools and school boards.

The findings of the study suggest that the four secondary teachers in this study facilitate inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms by considering how the students’ functional needs impact their learning of the curriculum; in fact, three of the four consider functional learning and assessment needs of all students, not just exceptional students, when planning and teaching their classes. This study provides
useful information for Ministries of Education, school boards, and schools in tailoring professional development days and professional documents to guide teachers in including students with exceptionalities in secondary schools.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most importantly, I need to extend the deepest of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Nancy Hutchinson. You saw something in me that many did not, and your mentorship and encouragement to develop my skills brought me to this point. The past two years of working with you to develop and conduct this study has been the most eye-opening and life changing experience. I cannot thank you enough for everything, and I look forward to continuing our friendship.

To my committee member, Dr. Derek Berg, thank you for agreeing to join me on this adventure. You were willing to take a chance on a student you barely knew, and for that I am immensely thankful. I look forward to working with you further in the coming years as I move on to the next phase of my academic life.

To Yvonne, Amy, Meaghan, Ahmed, Ian, and the rest of the crew from the graduate lounge, thank you for your help, encouragement, and friendship. In each of you, I know I have friends for life.

Kim, you have been there through the hardest parts of this journey. Thank you for your countless hours of patience as I stared at a computer screen, instead of paying attention to you. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for us.

Finally, to Mom and Pops: I bet you cannot believe this is where I ended up! Thank you for everything you have given me; I know I can be a handful at times. Thanks for being patient during the late night phone calls, dealing with my stress, and for feeding me and doing my laundry whenever I came home. I strive to make you proud, and I hope this thesis does just that.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................................... iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................................................. v

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................... 1

  Purpose .................................................................................................................................................. 3
  Key Terms ............................................................................................................................................... 4
  Rationale ................................................................................................................................................ 6
  Overview of Thesis ................................................................................................................................. 7

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................................................................... 8

  Exceptional Education in Ontario ........................................................................................................... 8
  Different Cultures .................................................................................................................................. 12
  Inclusionary Teaching Practices Used in Secondary Schools ................................................................. 14
    Co-teaching ......................................................................................................................................... 16
    Tiered Instruction and Assignments ...................................................................................................... 17
    Response to Intervention (RTI) ........................................................................................................... 18
  Identifying Student Needs ....................................................................................................................... 21
  Professional Development of Secondary In-Service Teachers ............................................................... 24
  Summary ................................................................................................................................................ 26

CHAPTER 3: METHODS ............................................................................................................................ 27

  Research Design .................................................................................................................................... 28
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Study Participants’ Defining Characteristics .......................................................... 31
Table 2: Categories and Themes that Emerged from the Data .......................................... 38
Table 3: Themes and Categories as They Appear in Each Interview ................................. 40
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I attended a mid-sized high school of 800 students. It was located in the heart of an old suburban area, surrounded on all four sides by blocks of mid-twentieth century houses. I was a good student, perhaps great, consistently receiving grades in the 90s in all my subjects. However, to many, I was an “interesting” child—I required more attention than most, I was impulsive, I spoke out of turn, and I had more energy than most. I assumed I was like many students—I never started an assignment earlier than I had to, and I spent more than a handful of late nights finishing an assignment that was due the next day. My parents and teachers thought nothing of it, applying the age-old saying “boys will be boys” to my behaviour, and assuming I would grow out of it.

I realized that I was not growing out of it in the first year of university. My concentration was low, and my memory seemed to be waning. I would attend lectures and take notes like my peers, but as we walked back to our dorm, I was unable to take part in discussing that week’s content because I could not remember what I had just “learned.” Having taken a combination of history, politics, economics, and English classes, I was often faced with hundreds of pages of text to read in a week to prepare for classes. The reading was difficult and slow, and I could rarely comprehend or remember what I was reading. I needed to read paragraphs and pages multiple times to even grasp the most basic of concepts within a text. Needless to say, my grades dropped dramatically. I was receiving grades in the mid-fifties, and I failed classes for the first time in my life.

In discussing this with a school physician in my third year of university, I was sent to a psychologist to be formally assessed on my psycho-educational abilities. I was
diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), combined type. I was 21. I was medicated, given strategies and minor accommodations, and my marks improved. I was accepted into a Bachelor of Education program, and began my life as a teacher.

I spent much of that year learning to be a teacher reflecting on my high school years. In order to be diagnosed with ADHD, I had to provide copies of my report cards, statements from my parents, surveys, and all manner of documentation. From this, my doctor was able to strongly suggest that my ADHD was nothing new, and that I had simply found strategies to work around the learning deficits brought on by the disorder. It just seemed that these strategies were not effective enough for me to succeed in university. In my classes on special education, I often wondered how big a role my teachers played in helping me overcome the functional deficits of ADHD in high school. Since I was not diagnosed until 21, I never had an individual education plan (IEP) of any kind. What role, then, did my teachers and administrators play in creating a successful and inclusive learning environment for me?

Inclusive education is the process by which teachers use a variety of teaching strategies, including universal design for learning (UDL), response to intervention (RTI), and differentiated instruction (DI) to insure that all students, regardless of exceptionality, are included (Hutchinson, 2014; Hutchinson & Martin, 2012; Jordan, 2007). It is, in essence, “education for all,” which Hutchinson (2014) notes, serves “as the title of a recent [2005] report in Ontario that introduced these three concepts to teachers” (pp. 6–7).
The movement towards inclusive education comes with both positives and negatives. Students who were once ostracized from their peers are expected to be learning in an environment that does not see them as “the other.” Rather, the use of UDL, RTI, and DI has enabled instructional techniques that benefit both exceptional learners and typical learners. With this movement towards inclusion comes a greater need for regular education teachers to develop skills in the teaching of exceptional students. Teachers working in a special education class in Ontario, as in many other jurisdictions, require additional qualifications beyond a bachelor of education. Depending on the province in which they teach, teachers may require professional development workshops, advanced coursework, or a graduate degree. If teaching a class comprised solely of exceptional students requires additional qualifications, it would seem that there should also be a requirement for teachers including exceptional students in regular classrooms to hold some form of advanced coursework.

Purpose

The purpose of this multiple perspective case study was to describe the cases of four diverse secondary school teachers in Ontario and how they facilitated the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms. In talking to secondary teachers about inclusion, I hoped to gain an understanding of how teachers create an inclusionary space using the tools provided to them by the Ministry of Education, as well as those provided by their individual schools and school boards.

The research was guided by the following specific questions:

1. How do classroom teachers view their roles in the teaching of exceptional students in inclusive secondary classrooms?
2. How do these teachers see their roles in relation to the roles of others 
(administrators and special education heads) within the secondary school?

3. What types of instructional methods do secondary classroom teachers report 
using when teaching exceptional learners in a regular classroom?

4. How do these teachers report using ministry documents (such as Education 
for All [Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), 2005], Learning for All 
[OME, 2013a], and Growing Success [OME, 2010b]) to inform their 
educational practice?

5. Where do these teachers go to further their knowledge and attain new skills in 
instructing exceptional learners?

6. How does current professional development on instructional strategies for 
exceptional students help or hinder these teachers? What kinds of 
professional development would they value most to stay informed about 
teaching exceptional students?

Key Terms

Inclusion needs to be defined because, as Ryndak, Jackson, and Billingsly (2000) 
note “the term inclusion is [relatively] new to special education and currently has many 
uses in the literature and the field” (p. 101). Although the term inclusion has been used to 
describe classrooms that respond to the needs of students who are part of a minority 
(whether through race, culture, or otherwise [Graham & Slee, 2008]), inclusion has 
typically been used by scholars and educators in the study and education of students with 
disabilities. However, narrowing the use of the term to just students with disabilities does
not necessarily provide a clear definition. Ryndak et al. (2000) analysed the definitions provided by 147 authors of relevant literature, finding that inclusion includes 7 themes: (a) placement in natural typical settings; (b) all students together for instruction and learning; (c) supports and modifications within general education to meet appropriate learner outcomes; (d) belongingness, equal membership, acceptance, and being valued; (e) collaborative integrated services by education teams; (f) systemic philosophy or belief system; and (g) meshing general and special education into one unified system. (p. 101)

This study uses a definition of inclusion focused on similar themes to those found by Ryndak et al. (2000). For the purposes of this study, the term inclusive classroom is used to describe a classroom in which students with exceptionalities are included for the majority of the school day as part of the regular day’s instruction. These students are given accommodations and modifications that help them to achieve their academic potential, and these are conducted in a way that allows them to feel accepted within the classroom. These accommodations may be provided in a variety of ways, including one-on-one support from a school appointed educational assistant (EA).

The term *exceptionalities* is also used in a specific way in this study. The Ontario Ministry of Education (OME, 2001) currently identifies five categories of exceptionalities: behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, and multiple. For the purposes of this study, a student with exceptionalities falls within one of these five categories. This information is then included in the student’s IEP—a document which purports to describe “the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student’s strengths and needs—
that is, the strengths and needs that affect the student’s ability to learn and to demonstrate learning” (OME, 2004, p. 6). The only exceptional students that this study does not focus on are those identified as “gifted” by the Ontario Ministry of Education. This study focuses on students who experience a learning deficit.

Rationale

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the U.S. federal agency tasked with collecting and analyzing educational statistics. The NCES reports that the number of students supported by special education programs has risen by 5%, from 8.3 to 13.8 percent in recent years (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Within Ontario, the recent rise is much more dramatic, with one study suggesting the number has almost doubled, rising from 14% to 23% in a ten-year span (People for Education, 2015). This increase in the number of students receiving some special education attention has been accompanied by a rise in special education publications from the Ontario Ministry of Education, with the past 15 years seeing the release of at least six major policy documents regarding inclusion and special education practices (OME, 2002a; 2002b; 2004; 2005; 2010b; 2013a). Most of these documents are well aligned with the context of elementary schools, where inclusion was first implemented (Bennett & Wynne, 2006; OME, 2005). What is not clear is how effective these documents are for providing guidance in the secondary context. Thus, there is a growing need to study which teaching practices are being used with exceptional learners in regular secondary classrooms, whether these practices are consistent with research, policy, and guidelines designed to create the best inclusive learning environment (Kretlow, Cooke, & Wood, 2012; Swanson, 2001), and how secondary teachers come to use these specific practices.
Research like this study may serve to help ministries of education, school districts, and secondary schools to prepare documents, policies, and professional development that better inform in-service secondary teachers.

**Overview of Thesis**

The goal of this research was to understand how teachers perceive they have facilitated inclusion in secondary schools. Throughout the research, the perspectives of four classroom teachers were obtained. The teachers had varying levels of experience in teaching in the classroom, and each was uniquely positioned to talk about their experiences including students with exceptionalities.

This chapter has introduced the study. Chapter Two reviews the research on inclusionary practices in secondary schools. It also examines three current Ontario Ministry of Education documents and analyzes why their focus on elementary schools may limit successful implementation of the strategies within secondary schools. Chapter Three reports the methods used to recruit participants and collect data. I also describe the process of analysis. Chapter Four reports the findings of the study. The last chapter, Chapter Five, discusses the findings in relation to previous research, discusses the study’s limitations, and makes recommendations for further research in the area of inclusion in secondary schools, and offers implications for practice. Finally, the thesis ends with my personal reflections and concluding thoughts about the study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review surveys the research surrounding the educational experience of students with exceptionalities in Ontario. In particular, this literature review addresses five areas: (1) the current state of exceptional education in Ontario, (2) the different educational cultures of elementary and secondary school, (3) the inclusionary teaching practices used by teachers in secondary schools, (4) how teachers identify student needs, and (5) the professional development of teachers. For some of these areas of inquiry, there is little research being conducted in Canadian contexts or by Canadian researchers. Therefore, the Canadian studies are supplemented with content from around the world, but most prominently with research being conducted in the United States. In choosing which studies to review, I focused primarily on studies of Canadian secondary teachers that included interview data.

Exceptional Education in Ontario

The educational experience of students with exceptionalities in Ontario has changed drastically over the past 20 years. Originally placed in segregated classrooms, sometimes known as “special education classes” or “auxiliary classes” (in the early half of the twentieth-century), exceptional pupils have slowly been integrated into the regular classroom in a movement towards a more inclusionary educational system. The OME has mandated the full inclusion of exceptional students, releasing more than 15 “documents and other information sources outlining policies and guidelines related to special education [the inclusion of exceptional students]” since the turn of the century (OME, 2010a, p. 8). Of these, more than half are documents directly aimed at teachers, designed to provide clear guidance for how to implement teaching strategies in the classroom.
Arguably the best known, *Education for All*, focuses on literacy and numeracy skills for students in Kindergarten through Grade 6. The document uses seven beliefs “to develop a framework, based on solid research, that would support the efforts of Ontario’s teachers to improve the quality of instruction for all their students, from Kindergarten to Grade 6” (OME, 2005, p. 13). Of importance is the desire to improve quality of instruction for all students, as the document clearly lays out strategies that would benefit typically developing as well as exceptional students.

It is within *Education for All* (OME, 2005) that the Ontario Ministry of Education advocated an adapted Response to Intervention (RTI) process, which is often called a tiered system (OME, 2005). This approach uses several levels of intervention. The first tier is intended to provide evidence-informed practice in the classroom to which most students would be expected to respond. The second tier is used for responding to the needs of students who require more intensive instruction, which could include small-group or one-on-one instruction, in addition to the sound teaching used in tier one. The final tier is for students who do not respond to the first two tiers, and are often the students who require psychoeducational assessment and specialized instruction after their case has been examined by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (OME, 2004, 2005).

*Education for All* (OME, 2005) also encourages teachers to use Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL sees “[e]very student as unique, and will therefore benefit from a flexible curriculum that provides him or her with the appropriate pathways for reaching learning goals, as well as fair and accurate assessment” (OME, 2005, p. 10). Universal design for learning differs from differentiated instruction in so far as UDL
encompasses the entire process of learning; including the learning environment, assessment, and expectations. Differentiated instruction (DI) refers specifically to the variety of ways in which material is presented to students, such as lectures, videos, handouts, and readings.

Besides setting out the suggested ways of teaching exceptional students, *Education for All* (OME, 2005) also emphasizes the need for professional development, noting that:

> With the advancements in evidence-based research and our understandings of students’ unique learning strengths and areas of need, teachers are presented with the additional challenge of not only acquiring this new knowledge and understanding, but also implementing them in their classrooms. (p. 139)

Building upon this idea, the document lists several key areas for future professional development of teachers in Ontario, including (a) universal design and differentiated instruction, (b) the learning and emotional needs of students, (c) the learning and assessment processes for literacy and numeracy, (d) and curriculum-based, organizational, and management strategies (OME, 2005). This emphasis on teachers’ reading and understanding recent research on differentiating teaching highlights the need for research that reports on the ways in which in-service teachers currently develop their professional knowledge.

In 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education released *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools*. Like *Education for All* before it, *Growing Success* includes techniques (this time, techniques specifically aimed at assessment and evaluation) that teachers are expected to use for both typically developing
and exceptional students. Its layout is particularly teacher-friendly as “[t]he first part outlines the policy, and the second part discusses the context for the policy or additional considerations related to the policy” (OME, 2010b, p. 3). There is also a section on accommodating and modifying assessment and evaluative tasks for exceptional students.

Several years later, the Ministry of Education repackaged and updated *Education for All*, and released it under the title *Learning for All*, which is intended to be applied to the full range of public school grades, Kindergarten to Grade 12. Published in 2013, this document cites far less research to make its case—while *Education for All* cites almost 350 research articles, technical reports, government documents, and books, *Learning for All* cites only 70. It is troubling to note that even of those 70 references, a quarter were cited in *Education for All*. This contributes to the problematic fact that the average age of sources cited is earlier than the document it endeavours to replace—when the 16 documents written by the Ontario Ministry of Education are removed, the average publication date of research cited in the 2013 document is 2002—*Education for All* was published in 2005 (and, even with the Ontario Ministry of Education documents, which are some of the most current citations, the average publication year is still only 2003).

This is in direct contention to the ministry’s assertion that “successful instructional practices are founded on evidence-based research, tempered by experience” (OME, 2013a, p. 13). This lack of current research provided to teachers reaches even farther, as it complicates teachers’ ability to adhere to the Ontario College of Teacher’s Standards of Practice, which provides “a framework of principles that describes the knowledge, skills, and values inherent in Ontario's teaching profession” (OCT, 2015). With regards to their professional knowledge, members must: “strive to be current in their professional
knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice” (OCT, 2015). In an era when research is published daily, the research contained within Learning for All cannot, in any way, be considered current (some of the research is from as far back as the early 1980s). If the documents that are developed, written, and distributed by the ministry are not current, how can teachers be expected to remain current?

Perhaps even more problematic is that little to none of the research cited in either document, 2005 or 2013, was conducted in a secondary school setting; rather, the 2013 document attempts to stretch research conducted in elementary education settings to apply across the entire spectrum of grades. This may work in theory, but the differences between the cultures of elementary and secondary schools make it nearly impossible to approach differentiating teaching for exceptional learners in the same way in the two contexts.

**Different Cultures**

The school cultures of elementary and secondary school are very different, as any teacher who has taught in both settings can attest. For the purposes of this thesis, the term “culture” refers to both the work culture within a school, such as the difference in teaching workloads and administrative duties, as well as structural differences such as the amount of time teachers spend with students, the rotary style of secondary schools, and the class sizes. Numerous studies have alluded to the fractured (sometimes called “balkanized” or “siloed”) nature of a secondary school; that is to say that the division of teachers into departments creates a natural separation of teachers (e.g., Brady, 2008;

A study about differences in working conditions between elementary and secondary schools, funded by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), found that the departmental structure in high schools led to “significant opportunities for collegial [intra-departmental] collaboration” but that “there were more opportunities for school-wide collaboration in elementary [schools]” (Leithwood, 2008, p. 13). Administrative roles were also flagged as being substantially different, with a “near unanimous view … that elementary school principals were much more visible, gave [teachers] more feedback on their instruction, were more hands on and were more supportive” than principals in secondary settings (Leithwood, 2008, p. 16).

As Hargreaves and Macmillan (1992) noted, these cultural differences between schools “contribute to the development of status hierarchies among students … special needs students are frequently regarded as ‘anomalies’ and are often considered to be at the bottom of the [hierarchy in high schools]” (as cited in Brady, 2008, p. 15). Furthermore, Finley (1984) found that the structure of high schools leads teachers to “prefer to isolate these [special needs] students from others,” as well as preferring to “avoid them wherever possible” (as cited in Brady, 2008, p. 15).

These cultural differences raise questions about the assumptions made by OME (2013a) that the strategies cited in OME (2005) and repeated in OME (2013a) which have
been found effective in elementary will necessarily be effective in secondary. However, further issues arise when we consider that secondary schools are, according to Hargreaves and Goodson (2006), essentially impervious to change due to “their size, bureaucratic complexity, subject traditions and identifications, and closeness to university selections” (p. 4). These characteristics of secondary schools have been described repeatedly as leading to difficulties in adapting to changing learning needs of students (Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Given the recognition of distinctive roles and challenges associated with meeting the needs of exceptional students, it would appear to be important to study how secondary educators view professional development on inclusive education, and how they use current professional documents to inform their teaching practices.

**Inclusionary Teaching Practices Used in Secondary Schools**

As the lack of secondary school based research cited in *Learning for All* suggests, there has been little research focusing on the teaching practices of secondary school teachers when acting to enhance the education of exceptional students. In one of the few notable exceptions, Paterson (2007) studied five teachers’ “in-flight” thinking, which he defined as “the thinking of teachers as they engage in classroom teaching” (p. 428), in inclusive classrooms in Australia and Canada. The participants, while not strictly from secondary schools, were a mixture of middle school (Grade 8) and high school (Grade 9) teachers, and were chosen based on their previous experience teaching students with learning difficulties in inclusive classrooms. Through a combination of observation, semi-structured interviews, and stimulated recall interviews, Paterson (2007) wrote that he was able to view teaching practices at a previously “unobservable cognitive level,”
finding that “participants were thinking not only about the whole class, but also about individual students, recognizing their experiences, personalities, skills, and preferences and making ongoing adjustments to the lesson in accordance with that recognition” (p. 432). Four of the five teachers demonstrated extensive knowledge of the learning needs of individual students with learning difficulties. Rather than focusing on the categories of exceptionalities, as they appear in the research and some of the documents (e.g. OME, 2004), these teachers adjusted their teaching, as is characteristic of DI, based upon the individual student’s characteristics.

While Paterson (2007) focused on teachers from across a variety of secondary subjects, Edwards (2000) focused on inclusive practices in secondary science classrooms. In interviewing and observing three science teachers within a single Ontario secondary school, Edwards (2000) looked for similarities in inclusive teaching practices, finding that all three participants shared six teaching strategies: (1) they created supportive environments; (2) they accommodated for individual differences; (3) they used activity oriented lessons; (4) they used a variety of teaching strategies; (5) they let students take more responsibility for their own learning; and (6) they collaborated with other teachers. Like Paterson (2007), teachers in Edwards’ (2000) study used strategies consistent with DI, along with other student-oriented inclusionary practices. Both these studies suggest that secondary teachers who teach inclusively may focus primarily on learning needs, rather than on categories of exceptionalities as recorded in students’ IEPs.

Research on inclusionary teaching practices of Canadian secondary teachers is scarce. Edwards’ (2000) and Paterson (2007) represent the landscape of such research. There is, however, a wealth of information on practices that teachers could use in
inclusionary classrooms, and how they might choose to implement these practices—although none are aimed at secondary teaching exclusively.

Co-teaching

Co-teaching, for example, is often described as one of the best methods of inclusive education (Friend & Cook, 2012), and involves two teachers who “plan lessons and deliver instruction together” while sharing “responsibility for assessing students’ mastery” (Friend & Cook, 1992, p. 30). The two teachers take on different roles within a typical class; for example, one teacher may teach the entire class, while the second circulates, paying attention to the needs of students who are struggling to learn the lesson’s content (Friend & Cook, 1992). As Cook (1995) notes, co-teaching was, as far back as the 1960s, suggested as a new model for teaching in secondary classrooms, and was even recommended as a way to reorganize secondary schools in both the United States and the England (see also Trump, 1966; Warwick, 1971). In their 2001 meta-analysis, Murwaski and Swanson set out to provide a synthesis of all quantitative data on the effectiveness of co-teaching. At its core, the meta-analysis attempted to “quantify the co-teaching literature in terms of the magnitude of treatment outcomes” (Murwaski & Swanson, 2001, p. 259). Their findings were not supportive of the statement that opens this paragraph—the researchers found that the overall mean effect size was only 0.40 (Cohen’s $d$), which suggests that “co-teaching is a moderately effective procedure for influencing student outcomes” (Murwaski & Swanson, 2001, p. 264). There are several limitations to this analysis, including the fact that only three studies (of the six analyzed) reported on effect size with relation to exceptional students. Most important to the proposed research questions the current looks to answer, however, are the effect sizes of
studies by Lundeen and Lundeen (1993), Walsh and Snyder (1993), and Rosman (1994), which reported on the effect sizes for students in secondary school. The effect size in Grades 9-12 was lower than the reported mean of the meta-analysis, with these three studies only averaging 0.30. Each study’s individual findings do merit some discussion, as there were some significant variations between co-taught and independently taught classrooms.

In Walsh and Snyder’s (1993) study on the effectiveness of co-teaching, they strove to include data from co-taught classrooms across all subjects (science, social studies, math, and language arts). The only area where co-taught classrooms did not lead to a significant increase in in course grades or comparative test grades was in science. The other three saw significant \((p < 0.01)\) increases in the percentage of students passing a minimum comparative test (both social studies and math saw this percentage almost double, while the language arts percentage rose from 87% to 100%). Similar results were found in both Lundeen and Lundeen (1993) and Rosman (1994), which suggests that the co-teaching model is best used in some subjects (such as the humanities) and not for others (such as the sciences).

**Tiered Instruction and Assignments**

Besides co-teaching, researchers have suggested the use of tiered instruction and assignments in order to accommodate the unique learning needs of students with exceptionalities. Tiered activities offer “opportunities for students to work at varying levels on tasks (and the associated assessment) drawn from the curriculum. This approach conforms to many of the common aspects of universal design for learning (UDL) as well as many of the goals set out in *Growing Success*” (Robinson & Hutchinson, 2014).
Tiered instruction has also been described as the “meat and potatoes” of differentiated instruction (Adams & Pierce, 2003; Tomlinson, 2014).

In tiered instruction, students work in groups, usually assigned by the teacher, to grasp a specific concept. Groups are based on the individual needs of the students, or they may be formed based on readiness levels, learning profile, or student interest (Adams & Pierce, 2003). Tomlinson (2014) calls tiered activities a “readiness-based strategy … [allowing] all students to focus on essential knowledge, understandings, and skills, but at different levels of complexity, abstractness, open-endedness, and independence” (p. 133). There is no research on the effectiveness of tiered instruction and assessment at any grade level; publications tend to focus on the potential benefits.

**Response to Intervention (RTI)**

RTI, as mentioned earlier, is referred to within both *Education for All* (OME, 2005) and *Learning for All* (OME, 2013a), but has been renamed in these documents as The Tiered Approach to Identification and Intervention. RTI provides an alternative to the “wait to fail” model of diagnosing learning disabilities (LD) in school, whereby schools and school systems only provide special education support after students have failed to learn, and have fallen behind their peers. Rather than identifying based on deficit, RTI identifies students based on risk; this creates an identification system that is proactive rather than reactive (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Teaching and intervention under this system is tiered, and all students, regardless of the presence of an exceptionality, fall into one of three tiers of support. Tier one, also referred to as Universal Programming, constitutes sound, evidence-based classroom teaching strategies that conform to
principles of both DI and UDL (OME, 2013). When effectively applied, around 80% of students are able to learn and retain the content (Matattall, 2008; Katz, 2012).

Students who continue to struggle after receiving tier one level instruction are moved to tier two. Teaching in tier two consists of more intensive instruction, which may include additional help during or after school (either from the classroom teacher or a tutor), extra homework, varied readings, or co-teaching support (OME, 2013). It is important to note, as Katz (2012) did, that “the interventions take place in the original classroom, over a set period of time, with different students involved, depending on the skill or concept being addressed” (p. 139). Around 15% of students will learn the curriculum content using this method.

The final tier, which researchers suggest only about 5% of students will ever need to access, involves intensive, individual instruction. It is at this stage that students may be referred to educational psychologists for identification or diagnosis. Some inclusion researchers suggest that instruction could also be on study skills, or “learning strategies provided outside the content area classroom that will enable students to learn independently once they are in content area classes” (Cook & Tankersley, 2013, p. 101).

Applicability issues. As Prewett and her colleagues (2012) noted, “scientific knowledge about the effectiveness of RTI in secondary settings is lacking” (p. 136). The small body of research surrounding the implementation of RTI in secondary schools focuses on its use for students with reading difficulties. Vaughn and Fletcher (2012) reinterpreted RTI to work within a secondary school context. Tier two, which is normally “conceptualized as a preventative” is no longer feasible (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012, p. 248). Tier 2 is reconceptualised as additional teaching time, as each student received an
extra period daily of additional reading intervention. Tier three was an intensification of intervention, and students received individualized intervention. Students in tier two saw strong gains in foundational reading skills such as decoding, reading fluency, and comprehension. However, the individualized instruction provided in tier three did not produce significant gains, suggesting there are additional things to “consider when designing interventions for older students with reading disabilities” (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012, p. 251). Vaughn and Fletcher (2012) further noted that their “empirical and clinical evidence suggests that the application of this multitiered approach to instruction and intervention is different for older students” (p. 252). RTI, as currently conceptualized by OME (2013), therefore is not well designed for secondary students; they need to be assigned to more or less intervention based on current reading scores, and they do not need to move through successive tiers of more intensive instruction. As a result, Vaughn and Fletcher (2012) noted that RTI in secondary should be based more on “current performance and instructional need rather than ‘responsive [sic] to intervention’” (p. 252).

There are other applicability issues facing RTI in secondary schools. In a study of American special education directors, Sansosti, Goss, and Noltetmeyer (2011) found that the structure of secondary schools creates a barrier to properly implementing RTI, as the “inflexibility of student schedules, [means] finding time to provide interventions to students within a secondary schedule is difficult” (p. 13). Furthermore, several studies have posed important questions about how to implement RTI in secondary schools: How do teachers successfully implement RTI for a Grade 10 student who is reading at a Grade 2 level (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007)? As well, while reading and math have been the primary
focuses of RTI studies, how is RTI successfully implemented for other subjects, such as social sciences (Robinson & Hutchinson, 2014)?

There has also been little research on teachers who have adopted RTI, by their own decision, as an inclusionary teaching strategy; research has focused on it being implemented by either researchers within a classroom, or schools implementing it for research purposes. There is, therefore, a need to study further what practices teachers report using in their classroom, and what sources inform their inclusive teaching practices.

**Identifying Student Needs**

The methods described previously, known collectively as methods of accommodation and modification, can be applied in the daily teaching methods of secondary school teachers. They serve a variety of purposes, and some (such as RTI) are designed to accommodate students who have been identified with a wide variety of exceptionalities. It may not be easy to decide what teaching methods to use to accommodate students, though. Teachers must decide which strategy will best serve the student. As previously stated, teachers in Ontario can receive information about a student’s identified exceptionality from their IEP—a document which purports to describe “the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student’s strengths and needs—that is, the strengths and needs that affect the student’s ability to learn and to demonstrate learning” (OME, 2004, p. 6). However, the classification system used to create the IEP is based upon a strict adherence to certain guidelines. Disabilities are grouped into larger categories; in Ontario there are five such categories: behaviour, communication,
intellectual, physical, and multiple. Simeonsson (2009) suggested these kinds of categories are “often idiosyncratic to specific service systems” (p. 70). They do not fully encapsulate the life and experiences of a person, which is necessary to truly understand their needs (Lillvist, 2010; Simeonsson, 2009; Simeonsson, Scarborough, & Hebbeler, 2006). As Stein (2006) argued, it is important to focus on the functioning needs, not the disability label:

The functioning of children is always a moving target, as children mature at different rates, live in different cultures with different expectations of independence and self-sufficiency, and grow up in environments that vary markedly in the demands that they place on the performance of activities by children. (p. 145)

Lillvist (2010) expanded on this idea, suggesting “many children diagnosed with the same medical condition show an array of different consequences resulting from the condition” (p. 1131). Yet, Ontario continues to categorize and label students with disabilities, rather than focusing on functionality.

Recently, however, there has been a shift from the medical and social models of disability to a functional model focusing on the problems of everyday life (Lillvist, 2010). The World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF) (2001, 2007) is more closely aligned with this functional model. ICF views disability and functioning “as outcomes [due to an interaction] between health conditions and contextual factors” (WHO, 2002, p. 10). The consequences of a particular disability, then, are context sensitive, as the environment both restrains and facilitates function (Lillvist, 2010; Simeonsson, et al., 2006). The ICF
aligns well with Stein’s (2006) suggestion that the consequences of the disability need to be at the forefront of the conversation about intervention and treatment, since many “children with the same diagnoses … have different types of consequences as a result of their disabling conditions” (p. 150).

As of 2015, only one country has adopted ICF (as well as the 2007 revision which added more information on both children and youth). Portugal voted to replace using a medical diagnosis as a predictor of special education needs with a description of the student’s functional needs—and directly referenced ICF in its decision—as they understood “the limited utility of one-dimensional and categorical disability classifications for educational planning” (Sanches-Ferreira, Silveira-Maia, & Alves, 2014, p. 329). In explaining how ICF might be used in practical settings, the WHO takes nine pages to explain the importance of ICF to education. Specifically, it notes that ICF “helps to overcome past approaches of describing or labelling disability that may have led to segregation or discrimination” (WHO, 2013, p. 94). Among the uses that WHO envisions for ICF in education, they propose it can be used as a tool to support continuity “during entry into education, and during the transitions from one educational level to the next or into subsequent work” (WHO, 2013, p. 94). Furthermore, it provides a “common language for the coordination of services provided by educational, social and health systems” (WHO, 2013, p. 94).

ICF’s focus on the functional aspects of a disability, as well as the need to consistently re-evaluate functional needs based on the context of learning, can be seen in Corno’s (2008) research on adaptive teaching. According to Corno (2008), “good teachers capitalize on the capabilities and styles of their students, adjusting teaching for
different conditions” (p. 161). She called this process adaptive teaching. Adaptive teaching is nothing new, as both Corno (2008) and Snow (1982) noted, there are references to principles of adaptive teaching in Chinese, Hebrew, and Roman texts from as far back as the 1st century B.C.

Adaptive teachers are using principles of DI and UDL, sometimes unconsciously. Corno (2008) managed to summarize her research findings into a description of one lesson:

differentiation … was not something [adaptive] teachers did routinely, or even an experience they could plan ahead for … rather, their adaptions were spontaneously responsive to the individuals in their particular classrooms at the particular moments of instruction that occurred. These adaptions were informed by their own prior teaching history and experience with their curriculum. (p. 170)

Furthermore, adaptive teachers value diversity in students, and they embrace and nurture diverse characteristics. Adaptive teachers work with students to build relative weaknesses into strengths.

**Professional Development of Secondary In-Service Teachers**

As with inclusive teaching practices, very little research has focused on what types of professional development (PD) regular secondary classroom teachers use to update their teaching practice. Much of the research focuses on professional learning communities (PLCs), when “teachers work closely and collaboratively with colleagues, communities and parents, linking teacher and school development” (Bolam & McMahon, 2004, p.47). Studies of PLCs tend to be case studies, focusing on what methods the members used to collaborate (e.g. Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Erickson, Brandes, Mitchell,
& Mitchell, 2005; Ramsay, 2007; Villeneuve, 2011). The research does not usually explore whether the PLCs contributed to a change in teachers’ practices, or an update of their knowledge.

Professional development days, or in-service for teachers, have traditionally been given by an external expert on the topic at hand (Macaulay, 2005). Bolam and McMahon (2004) noted that many American schools have a mandatory five days of professional development spread over the school year. Thus, most PD tends to consist of a short, single day session. Macaulay (2005) noted this method adopts “a one-size-fits all approach; little consideration [is] given to the subject matter, the age of the teacher’s students, or their level of cognitive development” (p. 47). Researchers have suggested that PD needs to be quite different from of what is traditionally offered—Palombo (2003) clearly laid out important aspects of effective professional development, noting that it “focuses on student learning, is owned by teachers, is connected to daily practice, is structured to promote collaboration, and is supported to ensure sustainability” (p. 28). Collaboration is especially important, as both Little (1993) and Moll (2001) discussed the importance of social relations within professional development, with Moll (2001) describing that “what we learn depends crucially on the company we keep, on what activities we engage in together, and how we do and talk about those activities” (p. 123).

Studies focusing on what types of PD secondary school teachers prefer do not seem to exist. In order to accurately tailor professional development to what is most effective and most acceptable for the most teachers, more research needs to focus on teachers’ preferred method of updating their teaching practices. There is a need to understand what topics secondary teachers feel their PD should focus on. Subsequently,
there is a need to understand what methods of PD they prefer in order to maximize their learning.

**Summary**

This literature review has argued the importance of inclusion in Ontario, as evidenced by the Ministry of Education’s distribution of more than a dozen documents on inclusion over the past 20 years. However, while some of the documents purport to be for secondary school teachers, they cite research conducted in elementary schools to inform recommendations. Due to the large differences in culture between elementary and secondary schools, it is impossible to know whether the successful inclusionary practices of elementary teachers are helpful to their secondary school colleagues, or whether these secondary teachers are even using the documents or recommended practices. A lack of research on teacher practices in secondary schools may be to blame for the subsequent lack of research cited by the Ministry in its documents. Similarly, there is a lack of research on PD in secondary schools, and whether the current methods are helping or hindering educators to update their practices. Thus, there is a need to study the practices of secondary teachers when acting to enhance the education of exceptional learners, to understand how they collaborate with the varied educational roles in secondary schools, to learn what their preferred method of PD is, and how they use current professional documents to inform their teaching practices.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This research used a multiple perspective case study to describe the cases of four diverse secondary school teachers in Ontario and how they report facilitating the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms. The first segment of this chapter describes the context of teaching in Ontario. The second segment is devoted to describing the research design. The next three sections of the chapter each describe a separate phase of the research. The first phase was the recruitment process, including a description of the four participants eventually selected. The second phase was the data collection process, followed by a final phase devoted to describing the process of analyzing the data.

Context

The four cases reported in this study are of teachers working in a single school board in the province of Ontario. This school board includes urban, suburban, and rural schools. When the study was conducted, Ontario had an oversupply of teachers and many young teachers were experiencing long periods where the only teaching jobs available were supply positions. Ontario Regulation 274/12, introduced in September 2012, strictly regulated the hiring of teachers, and laid out the number of supply days and long-term teaching contracts teachers needed to fulfill before they could be considered for a permanent job. Teachers needed to teach at least 20 days of supply work in a ten-month school year before they can receive long-term occasional contract (LTO). LTOs were supply teaching contracts that lasted longer than ten school days, and applicants needed to be interviewed before being hired for these jobs. Only after completing an LTO that lasted longer than four months could a teacher be considered for a permanent teaching position within the board. When fulfilling these requirements, teachers could be
completing a mixture of LTOs and single supply days, and many teach in one school in the morning, and then drive across the city to teach in another school in the afternoon. 
Three of the four participants in this study—Claire, Jack, and Erika—do not have permanent teaching positions within the board.

Based on my own personal experience, and conversations with experienced teachers, I recognize that PD within this board can focus on issues germane to the Ontario Ministry of Education, but usually reflects the priorities of the individual school or the school board, especially the school or board’s yearly improvement plan.

**Research Design**

In order to fully explore the research questions posed earlier, I needed to study a subsection of the teaching population of secondary teachers, and collect data about constructs not easily quantified (beliefs about roles, methods of inclusion). A qualitative research approach, then, was the most appropriate option to provide a detailed and complex response to the questions to be studied; Creswell (2013) suggested that “this detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we [the researchers] expect to find” (p. 48). For these reasons, the study took a qualitative methodology approach.

Qualitative research, however, can be conducted in many forms; this research was conducted as a multiple perspective case study. Merriam (1991) suggested that a case study “offers a means of investigating complex social unity consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon” (p. 32). As one of the goals of this study was to contribute to the improvement of the professional
development and teaching strategies used by secondary teachers, Merriam would argue that case study is the best methodology to use, as case studies allow “[e]ducational processes, problems, and programs [to] be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice” (Merriam, 1991, p. 32). As well as improving practice, Stake (1978) argued that case study research is superior for “reporting to lay audiences and for studying lay problems … frequently that everyday perspective will be superior for discourse among scholars for they too often share among themselves more of ordinary experience than of special conceptualization” (p. 6). This research was conducted through a series of interviews, which Seidman (2013) described as the “recounting [of] narratives [which] has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience” (p. 8).

**Recruitment**

My research was conducted in a mid-sized city in eastern Ontario. This catchment area was chosen due to its wealth of potential participants, as well as my familiarity with a number of educators within the area, potentially allowing for an efficient recruitment process. There was no need to select a specific school or school board, as the issues being examined within this research—inclusion of exceptional students in the secondary school—are prevalent throughout all schools and school boards in Ontario, as it is a mandated process (OME, 2005, 2010b, 2013). Therefore, all teachers across the province would know about inclusion and should have come into contact with exceptional students during their teaching careers.

Initial ethical approval was obtained in August 2014 from the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at Queen’s University. Due to a change in the design of the study, I
amended the ethics application and received final approval in January 2015. This allowed me to begin recruitment. The participants in this study were recruited using a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling. Recruitment emails (see Appendix A) were sent to four purposefully selected teachers, allowing me to gather an initial pool of participants whom I viewed as “information rich and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest; sampling, then, is aimed at insight about the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). These emails included an attached Letter of Information (LOI; see Appendix B) and Consent Form (CF; see Appendix C). The recruitment email included a request for the recipient to forward the email to any friends, family members, or colleagues they believed fit the recruitment description. Participants only needed to have taught in an Ontario secondary school, and needed to have been involved in the planning of a course; as such, Bachelor of Education students who have only taught on practica were excluded, as were teachers who had only done work as an occasional teacher. The use of snowball sampling allowed me to reach the largest audience in the shortest time frame, as it “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information rich” (Creswell, 2013, p. 158).

After four weeks, I had received responses from four interested teachers, each with a different teaching background. For a brief snapshot of each of the participants, refer to Table 1. As each participant’s background and experience differed greatly from the others, I have chosen to provide a brief description of each participant, using words drawn from their interviews. All participants have received pseudonyms to protect their identity.
At the time of data collection, all four participants taught in the same school board, located in south-eastern Ontario. This school board services students from rural, suburban, and urban areas. The board is spread over a large geographic area, and it services multiple counties and towns as well as a mid-sized city.

Table 1

Study participants’ defining characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Panel</th>
<th>Teaching Subjects</th>
<th>Grades Taught</th>
<th>Schools Taught At</th>
<th>AQs Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>&lt; 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>English, Drama</td>
<td>9, 10, 12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Guidance &amp; Career Education, Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>&lt; 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P/J</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>9, 10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reese</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>&gt; 40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>English, Geography, History</td>
<td>9–12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Primary Division, Computer Science, Principal’s Qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>&lt; 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>English, Drama</td>
<td>9, 10, 12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Guidance &amp; Career Education, Part 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants

Jack. Jack is a young, male graduate student in education at a mid-sized Ontario university with a Faculty of Education; at the time of completing his interview, he was under thirty years of age. Although he graduated with his Bachelor of Education in 2011, and he immediately applied to become an Ontario Certified Teacher, he has spent the majority of the past four years working part-time as an occasional teacher. Jack is qualified to teach in the primary/junior (P/J) panel (Kindergarten to Grade 6), although he has spent around two years in the secondary school, including during his alternative practicum during his Bachelor of Education program. Despite this, he views himself as primarily a P/J teacher, although he has taught in a board-wide secondary school literacy program, which was run in “four or five different high schools.” He is quick to remind
people that he was not necessarily employed directly by those high schools; rather, he was hired by the school board’s literacy program. He taught in this program for two consecutive years. Jack explained that the program was “really remedial literacy instruction.” He described the program as a place where “the students involved … did not get the explicit instruction that they should have had through K-6 with [regards to] reading and writing. So basically, we start again.” The program has two parts: “The first part is during the school year. It was six weeks of work where we would be in the school and I would have something like 20 to 40 students on my roster.” Each session provided one-on-one tutoring to a student. A typical session was scaffolded: Jack would begin with “here’s how I activate my prior knowledge and here’s the value of it. Then let’s try it together, [then] let’s see you try it on your own.”

The second portion of this program was a two-week summer program where students would be paired up with between eight and ten others from their grade and go through everything again with the help of an instructor and a teaching assistant (TA). The program was “teaching towards the test,” where instructors would heavily focus their teaching towards items that appear on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), a mandatory standardized test all students in Ontario must pass to graduate high school. All the content that was taught was designed to specifically help struggling students pass the OSSLT, including time spent writing an opinion piece, a newspaper article, and practicing reading skills. Jack taught in a school that had students from homes representing a wide range of socio-economic status, as well as a range of cultural backgrounds. Students were also representative of a range of streaming options, as the school offered academic, applied, and locally developed streamed classes. Most of the
answers Jack gave to interview questions were based on his experiences in this role and setting.

**Claire.** Like Jack, Claire is a graduate student in Education at a mid-sized Ontario university; she is also under thirty. She graduated from her Bachelor of Education program in 2011, and she is certified to teach in the intermediate and senior (I/S) divisions (Grades 7 – 12) in both history and drama. She immediately entered the workforce, and has spent the previous four years substitute teaching, including a number of long-term occasional (LTO) jobs in both her teachable subjects. “At least five” have been longer than a month, including two “that have been the entire semester … from start to finish.” The nature of these LTOs has allowed her to teach various classes outside of her teachables, including courses in civics, careers, history, law, and world issues. One of her drama LTOs gave her the opportunity to teach in a “focus program, a specialist high school major” in one secondary school. She is also qualified in Guidance, a qualification she received by taking an additional qualification course (AQ). Over the course of her LTOs, Claire taught at four high schools in her district school board.

Claire has also taught full-time, although at the time of her interview, her course entitlement was on hold due to maternity leave. During her time as a full-time teacher, Claire taught as an English teacher and a resource teacher. She has “taught all grade levels, except for Grade 11,” and has “never taught an [advanced placement] course in any grade, [but she has] taught an academic stream for Grade 9 and 10, [and] only ever the college stream for Grade 12.” She has also taught an open stream course for Grade 12 students, Writer’s Craft, twice.
**Erika.** Erika is an Ontario Certified Teacher, qualified to teach in the I/S division. She is also under 30 years old. Having graduated her Bachelor of Education in 2009, Erika had six years of teaching experience at the time of her interview. Her teachable subjects are in music and history, although during her time as an LTO teacher she taught in civics, careers, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and English. She has taught in classes ranging from Grade 9 – 12, and, when interviewed, she reported having taught at seven secondary schools within her board. Like Claire, Erika does have entitlement to a single course a year (in music), and she supplements that with LTOs.

**Reese.** Reese has been teaching for 20 years within the board, having graduated from his Bachelor of Education in 1995. He is in his mid-forties. He has taught courses in all grade levels and in all streams, and he is qualified to teach four subjects: “English, history, geography, and computer science.” Upon starting his career, he also did LTOs in both science and in special education classrooms. He has taught at 11 different secondary schools. Since graduating from his Bachelor of Education, he spent nine years as a vice principal at a secondary school. When interviewed, Reese had returned to classroom teaching.

**Data Collection**

Data collection occurred over a three-week period in March 2015. Each participant suggested a time and place comfortable for them to participate in their interviews. Two participants invited me into their home to conduct the interview, another asked to do it at their school, and the final participant chose a neutral site. Before I conducted the initial interviews, participants were given copies of the LOI and CF, and they then signed a copy. Any questions they had about the research process were also
answered at this time. Once they felt comfortable with the procedure, each participant took part in an initial, audio recorded, semi-structured interview, lasting from 25 to 60 minutes. The average initial interview was 41 minutes. I used an interview guide to “ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed” (Patton, 2002, p. 343; see Appendix D for the interview guide). The semi-structured style of questioning allowed me to probe more deeply into a participant’s responses and experiences, allowing for a richer understanding of the phenomena. Questions revolved around the same general topics, but, due to the conversational nature of semi-structured interviews, individual questions were worded differently at times to get a better sense of the differing experience of each participant. Questions were divided into five clusters: background, roles and role expectations, instructional methods, professional development, and “magic wand.” I used a participant’s answers from the first section—background—to compile a brief case profile, as presented previously in this chapter. The last section of the interview, consisting of questions relating to a “magic wand” (some participants referred to it as a “blank cheque” informally after the interviews), asked participants about their needs in the classroom. I asked participants what they would do were they handed a “magic wand,” specifically: if they could be provided with anything to help them facilitate the inclusion of exceptional students in their classroom, what would it be? Participants were also asked if there was anything they would like to discuss that had not come up during the interview.

As part of the research process, I asked that each participant be available for a follow-up interview, which could be conducted in person, over the phone, or via email. The follow-up interview was intended to enable me to probe deeper any of the
participants’ answers, or to ask clarification questions about terms or ideas found within the transcript. I conducted a follow-up interview with only one participant, Claire. This interview took place two-weeks later, and Claire graciously allowed me into her home a second time. Like the initial interview, the follow-up was audio recorded. The follow-up interview lasted 43 minutes. This interview was semi-structured and used an interview guide specifically based on Claire’s responses in the initial interview (see Appendix E for the follow-up interview guide). Questions were designed to learn more about Claire’s experience as a teacher and to probe further for experiences Claire found relevant to the questions asked in the initial interview. I also asked clarification questions about terms she has used during the initial interview.

**Data Analysis**

As per qualitative tradition, all interview data were transcribed verbatim using a word processing program. After transcribing all four participants’ interviews, I began the process of analyzing the data using Atlas.ti (MAC, version 1.0.22). Boyatzis (1998) called this process *seeing*, then *seeing as*, “that is, you first make the observation that something important or notable is occurring, and then you classify or describe it” (p. 8).

Data were analyzed three separate times. Initially, interview transcripts were skimmed, one by one, for relevant information regarding each participant’s teaching background. Quotes were pulled out of the interview data and stitched together to form the four participant descriptions contained earlier. This initial analysis not only allowed me to construct these descriptions, but it enabled me to become intimately familiar with the data, a necessity when analyzing qualitative data (Agar, 1980; Creswell, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2002).
After crafting the individual participant profiles, I started the process of formally analyzing the data. I used Atlas.ti (MAC, version 1.0.22), and analyzed each case individually. I began by coding Claire’s interview, generating a large number of codes (close to 100). However, many of these codes proved to be similar to one another, varying slightly in their wording. For example, when Claire was discussing administrators and her view that they should support her in the classroom, I coded separate instances as “administration support,” “administration as support,” or “administration provides support.” After I finished an initial round of coding, I began to engage in a method of constant comparison, whereby I compared “the already coded incidents … with each other and with incidents not yet coded” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 194). This process allowed me to compile codes with identical meanings to create a single code. This drastically reduced the overall number of codes. Interviews from the other three participants were coded in the same manner, and in each case I used codes from the coded interviews and new codes emerging from the interview I was analyzing.

After the four interviews were coded, I began to group these codes into larger categories, and then later into themes. This process was done by hand, rather than through the use of a computer and analysis software. At this stage, I printed out a complete list of codes for each participant and began to group codes into categories using coloured highlighters. As per the suggestion of Glasner and Strauss (1999), categories emerged from the data, rather than being forced upon it. As I reviewed each code, I placed it within the category that most represented the initial intention of the code. Codes were placed into categories by highlighting with that category’s colour. After I finished categorizing the codes from the first interview, I continued to categorize codes from the
remaining interviews using categories derived from the initial interview. If a code did not fit into a previously established category, a new category was created. As categories emerged from the data, I continued to use the constant comparison method, however, I the began to compare both codes to category and category to category (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Combining codes and using constant comparison resulted in nine categories. For a list of the nine categories, see Table 2.

The final stage of analysis was to take the categories that had emerged from the data and form them into themes. Like the creation of categories, this stage was also done by hand. I began by printing out the categories on individual pieces of paper. I then compared them to my initial research purpose and questions, and began to group them into larger themes. This process generated four themes. Table 2 contains a list of the themes and their respective categories.

Table 2

*Categories and themes that emerged from the data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The challenge of staying current | Updating teaching  
Wish list |
| Structures and people         | Teamwork  
Infrastructure for inclusion |
| Meeting everyone’s needs       | Accommodations  
DI/UDL  
Accepting/safe learning environment |
| Knowing your students          | Limitations of IEPs  
Gathering student information |

After coding the data, all the themes and categories from each participant were analyzed in a cross-case analysis. Themes, and categories were brought together to find the commonalities among these four teachers.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I report the central themes that emerged from analysis of the four participants’ interviews. The participants in this study come from diverse educational backgrounds, and they have been employed in different roles within the secondary school. Because the participants vary in background, the findings of this study are presented in four sections. Each section is devoted to the findings for one participant.

Once data had been analyzed using the method described in Chapter 3, four themes emerged from the data: (a) the challenge of staying current, (b) structure and people that facilitate inclusion (which can also be thought of as the context), (c) meeting everyone’s needs, and (d) knowing your students. Although these themes were found in the data provided by all four participants, the nine categories that make up these themes were not present in every participant’s interview data. Seven of the nine categories that emerged from the data were apparent in the interviews of all four participants. Table 3 contains a visual representation of which categories are present in each participant’s data.

The order in which participants’ findings are reported is deliberate; the most robust cases are presented first, and within each case the predominant theme is reported first.

Table 3

Themes and categories as they appear in each interview. The prominent theme in each case is highlighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structures and People</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Claire: x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jack: x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reese: x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Erika: x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure for inclusion</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DI/UDL</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting/safe learning environment</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting everyone’s needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing your students</td>
<td>Accepting/safe learning environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limitations of IEPs</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gathering student information</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Updating teaching</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wish list</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenge of staying current</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Update teaching</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wish list</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40
Claire: Become Aware of the Students and their Needs

Claire’s description of her job as a teacher captures the heart of her story. She believes that she must “first of all, become aware of the students and what their needs are.” Much of her two interviews provided specific examples of how she comes to know her students and how she then uses that information to tailor her teaching to meet their needs. Her responses also illustrated concrete examples of how she thinks other educators and administrators could use their roles more effectively to support and guide her efforts to teach in a way that ensures every student learns and feels included. The account of Claire, as an inclusive secondary teacher of English and drama, begins with what she sees as her role and what she does to fulfill that role. Then the account moves to what Claire thinks others can do to support her to be the teacher she aspires to be.

Knowing Your Students

As captured in the quote above, Claire understands that her first role as a teacher is to “become aware of the students and what their needs are.” Claire discussed there are a number of different ways to get information on a student, both formally (through items such as the student’s IEP or Ontario Student Record [OSR]), or informally (such as through conversations). While both have limitations, Claire mainly focused her interview answers on the limitations of IEPs in general, and focused on the importance of gathering student information through channels outside of the school.

Limitations of IEPs. A student’s IEP contains important information about a student’s needed accommodations, and Claire reports that “I always start with [the] IEPs and I go from there.” The information contained within an IEP is typically lacking in her opinion, leading Claire to feel like she is “not prepared, when it comes to accommodating
them, or even understanding what it is that they have … And I feel like I’m failing them. … How can I have a student with dyslexia and not know what dyslexia is? I’ve got to do that research.”

Although Claire has been both a classroom teacher and an occasional teacher, this feeling of unpreparedness is not limited to one role or the other. Claire discussed the limitations of being a long-term occasional (LTO) teacher and how the IEP system limits her ability to teach to the needs of the students. Some schools within the board have “occasional teacher packages, in which [the permanent teacher] can write down behavioural notes or accommodation notes, or anything that would have to happen on a day to day basis.” While Claire appreciates this practice, she believes that these notes need to be better used:

When I look at them as an occasional teacher I see “These two chat a lot, don’t put them together,” which is a very helpful thing for managing behaviours, but it would be nice to say something like, so and so needs extra time, so when you’re giving them thirty minutes to answer the question, don’t stress them out by saying you’re going to collect them [soon]. … those are the kinds of things that teachers need to know.

Claire explained a scenario where more detailed notes are required in order to fully include a student with an exceptionality in the classroom without stigmatization:

I was at [a local high school], and there was a student, [who] needs everything on different coloured paper because she has dyslexia, and they were writing a test, and the teacher did make a note that said this copy is [hers] because it’s a blue copy … What they didn’t say was whether or not the student is cool with you
saying “Oh this one is yours.” Or do you need to count it and slip it under the pile so that it happens to land on her desk? Those are pieces [of information] that are really important.

Though Claire believes that these notes are not being used to their full potential, even more problematic to her are the schools that do not offer them. At some schools, Claire has received “a map and that’s it. And that’s not okay, because most classes are going to have at least five identified students, sometimes the whole class is identified, and you need to know that.”

Beyond that, Claire has found that the information contained within an IEP is not available to all teachers that need it. As an LTO, Claire has had difficulties accessing a student’s OSR or IEP to get crucial information that would inform her teaching practice. While she “understands there’s confidentiality issues that go into that,” she expands on the notion, suggesting that it is important to know students’ needed accommodations:

At some point it would be nice if someone, from student success, or whatnot, came to see you and said, “Okay, you’ve been here for a few days [and] we need to make sure these things are happening in the classroom. Do you have any questions?” Because sometimes it’s like a maze trying to find out, first of all, who do you even ask to see those [IEPs]?

**Gathering student information.** The lack of information contained directly within the IEP has forced Claire to seek the information she needs from other sources. “As a teacher,” she explained:

[You] have to advocate and find the people to talk to, you have to call the parents, you have to, umm, talk to the student, or go and do some research on
your own, to figure out where this kid is coming from and you should be doing that if you’re a good teacher.

Claire always turns to previous teachers as a way of learning about her students, as a way of looking at “what has worked in the past.” However, one of her biggest sources of information is the parents of the student, who she has turned to, with great success, on multiple occasions. She makes sure to call as many parents as she can, regardless of the presence of an exceptionality, but “the first calls are always to [those] with IEPs, and I ask the parents, you know, what does that look like? And that’s very, very eye opening for me.” She continued with an example of a young student in one of her classes who was currently being accommodated for her dyslexia through the use of a reader pen. The student:

Went and talked to her parents, and she didn’t want to use that. Not because of stigma, but because it was confusing and it was too much work. And they suggested to just print the work on pink paper; it’s a lot easier for her to see.

Also talking to the students themselves can be an easy way to gain valuable insight into their learning, as Claire notes that she always tries to “kind of have a conversation with the student, and, then whenever I am designing lessons, I sort of keep them in the back of my head.”

**Meeting Everyone’s Needs**

Claire’s desire to learn about her students and their needs allows her to develop a teaching pedagogy that largely revolves around the need to provide engaging, safe learning environments for all students, and she goes “by that mantra of what’s good for one is good for all.”
Accommodations. As Claire plans her lessons and how she might need to accommodate students, she is continually thinking about how she might reduce any stigmatization that may arise from the student receiving an accommodation. For example, one student in her class needed handouts printed on coloured paper, which led Claire to realize that “it’s easy … to print pink for everybody, it doesn’t identify her among her peers.” This extends to other areas of instruction as well, as she finds “that [she is] often inclined to give extra time to everybody, to give the carrels, the quiet space, you know, to everybody… That helps out with the piece about stigmatization, especially as students get older … They need these things, but they don’t want to be singled out.”

In order to provide many of these accommodations, Claire often looks to others, including the EA and resource room teacher. Because one of Claire’s teaching subjects is English, she needs to find ways to draw students deeper into the experiences of characters in the texts her class reads. In an attempt to bring Canadian literature into her classroom, Claire assigned the novel Crabbe (Bell, 1986), to her class of 13 Grade 9 applied students, “11 of which were identified, and two [who] were not identified, but probably are by now.” Crabbe follows the story of a young man as he makes the decision to forego society, move to the wilderness, and live off the land. As a culminating review of the novel, Claire prepared a “fun station activity” where students would experience some of the things the main character would have experienced preparing for his trip. Stations included “packing a backpack full of supplies, and which supplies would be appropriate for the type of journey Crabbe went on,” and at “another station they created a trail mix, and … they had to write a descriptive paragraph about the trail mix using the five sentence [structure].” One of the stations involved doing “some orienteering, so for that
station, they had to leave the classroom.” This proved a challenge as many of the students experienced difficulties:

Leaving the classroom, following instructions, taking the instructions with them and not having them verbalized, not having prompting. A lot of them needed help with scribing … When I was coming up with the idea of the stations, the EA and I worked together … I said these are the things I need to evaluate … how can the two of us make sure that all these kids are successful, how do we make sure all the kids succeed. So we established that I would stay in the classroom, and monitor those stations, and with the orienteering station they would go off with the EA, so that she would be there to scribe for the students, and we made sure … that in every group we wouldn’t have more than one student who required a scribe, so that she would be able to write down just for one and the station would move smoothly.

This method of using the EA to help accommodate the lesson plan is something Claire often finds herself doing “for anything. You know, we’d meet at the beginning of the day and I’d say, this student needs some help with their homework, can you sit with them and help them finish.” In this case, the EA worked as more of a co-teacher than as an assistant to an assigned student. The resource room teacher has also proved to be an effective collaborator to facilitate inclusion, especially when it involves specific accommodations that Claire may not be able to fully implement in her classroom. They “arrange for extra time for students to work on things” and they become a scribe when they have a test that requires one.
Scribing is one accommodation that Claire spoke of at length. Prior to completing her initial interview, Claire had recently volunteered as a scribe for a student taking the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. The training for scribes matches Claire’s view on how to properly implement some accommodations, especially those that involve learning a new skill or technology. As part of the job, scribes are required to go through an “entire period’s worth of a sort of preliminary scribe training.” But more important to Claire, the training is more than just training for the scribes:

It includes the students as well. They set it up so they go over the rules, what it means for everybody … these are the rules for the scribe, this is what the scribe can and can’t do, and they talk about the different accommodations that [students] can and can’t have.

These meetings fulfill Claire’s belief that many accommodations need to be practiced. These sessions enable students to understand what they can and cannot ask for, as Claire notes that she has

To turn into a robot, and if they want you to read something they have to say “read this line here.” And it’s really important, because on the test day, he needs to know that he can’t say to me “was that a good answer?” and he needs to know that all I can do is do what I’m told.

Training the students, and working with them to get the most out of their accommodations, is important to Claire; she explained that with accommodations, boards can “train the teachers all you want, but the students are driving it. So if they don’t know, if they don’t know how to drive that, then it’s not going to be successful. And they will be failed on a really important test.”
**DI/UDL.** As an integral part of her pedagogy, Claire practices differentiated instruction (DI) and universal design for learning (UDL) in her classroom. For example, Claire reports that:

I tend to give a lot of verbal instructions, but I would always provide another mode of instruction, so it would either be visual or kinaesthetic … And I know those are sort of out-dated, but I find that those are very effective because there are students who learn better in a certain way, … I think that’s an accommodation piece that everyone can benefit from … having instruction delivered twice.

Assistive technology has been helpful in providing this multi-modal instruction, as Claire reported using “Kurzwell [a text-to-speech application] with students, not so much for them to get definitions, but [for] the reading component, to help them, because a lot of the students do better when they have the audio plus the visual—without it, they get confused and lost on the page.”

Claire likes to work classroom EAs into her pedagogy of universal design for learning:

Even if they are assigned to a specific student, which doesn’t happen that often, I encourage them to understand that in the classroom we’re all supporting each other so we are supportive of all students, whatever those students may need, and whether they are identified or not.

She has even worked with the resource room, a place typically reserved for students with exceptionalities, and together they have turned it into a place for all. Claire told the story of a Grade 9 business class she was assigned to:

I had a pretty unruly and enormous grade nine business class, which was right
next door [to the resource room] and because we were working on computers, that was great, because a lot of the accommodations could be built right in for anyone who needed anything … It actually worked very nice because we didn’t have enough computers, students would end up pairing off and they would have to switch off, so often kids who didn’t really need accommodations were being sent to the resource room, just to finish up … it became a really nice way of avoiding any type of stigma, or feeling they were missing anything. It was very routine to send students there. And the resource teacher always made sure that period that the bank of computers would be available.

All of these differentiation techniques fall under universal design for learning, the most fundamental aspect of Claire’s classroom. She hopes that this “allows for all those [with] exceptionalities and everyone to access the different types of things in the curriculum that they need to be successful in the course.”

**Accepting/safe learning environment.** As part of Claire’s attempt to create a classroom based on universal design for learning, she has also found herself advocating for, and actively creating, a learning environment that is both safe and accepting. She provides basic items in her class, such as an agenda, organizational tools, or a missed homework binder, and has found that all “can contribute to a sense of comfort, that somebody is in charge, somebody knows what they are doing.” Claire believes that if students “feel like someone understands them, or cares for them, they’re going to be better [self-]advocates, they’re going to be more comfortable.”

Part of creating an inclusive, safe, and accepting classroom is developing a sense of community, which Claire feels is an important part of a being a teacher. It is a
teacher’s role to “educate the class … on inclusive classrooms … if I have one student on a computer, explaining to [the class] that this isn’t a preferential thing, it’s just giving everybody what they need.”

**Structures and People: Infrastructure for Inclusion**

Infrastructure for inclusion is one of the two categories within the theme of structures and people. Claire’s responses did not touch upon the other category in this theme, teamwork. However, Claire discussed how the infrastructure that exists within her school board could, at times, create challenges to including students with exceptionalities. Claire’s responses tended to focus on implementing and supporting technology issues that arose within her teaching. As technology is being developed and implemented at a rapid rate, Claire felt she is unable to properly implement this technology into her lessons, and she felt unable to help students who struggle with the technology. She needed time to learn the intricacies of this technology: “release time would be great for that, where you’re not feeling like you’re using up your opportunities for PD.” This rapid technological change, combined with the wide variety of choices of assistive technology that can be assigned, also causes challenges. Claire discussed the need for standardized assistive technology, suggesting that the board needs to decide on a set list of technologies available that cover the widest possible range of accommodations:

If they somehow sort of universalized that, and got [all the teachers] to learn about that … I feel like maybe that being the reason [the students] don’t always use [technology] is maybe they feel it’s not something that I’m not as familiar with as I could be. If I was more familiar, maybe they’d use it more. I don’t know, but let’s rule that out.
To use a metaphor, Claire has an issue with the board’s buffet-style options for assigning assistive technology; with so many options, it is difficult for her to maintain the knowledge to properly implement these technologies in the classroom, and to subsequently assist students in their use of the technology. According to Claire, using a set-menu of assistive technology may be helpful.

While Claire discussed the need to limit choice when it came to assistive technology, limiting other options for students with exceptionalities was a point of contention. As a drama teacher, Claire discussed having students in her classes who needed to fulfill their art credit requirements. Students only have three options to fulfill these requirements (music, art, or drama), but students with exceptionalities were even more limited. Claire told a story about a legally blind student in her class who was not receiving the accommodations they required (possibly due to the nature of drama class), noting at the end of the story that “I think [they were] just fulfilling [their] Grade 9 credit requirements … [their] only other options were music or art, which is more difficult [to accommodate].”

Of all the participants, Claire had the most experience working with educational assistants (EAs). Her discussion of working with these paraeducators revealed a number of interesting challenges, but perhaps, most importantly, Claire discussed her board’s inability to provide enough EA support to students requiring it. In her experience, she has “noticed that [EAs] will often be assigned to the entire class, in order to say that all those students who require an EA are being served.” Claire recognizes that being an EA is “a challenging role” but assigning one EA to an entire class has caused challenges,
especially in classes where one student needs more support than others. Claire discussed one specific example:

I had a huge class, and one student who … he had demonstrated violent behaviour in the past, especially towards women. He had Tourette’s, and he was also on the [autism] spectrum, and he was so needy in terms of the things he needed just to get through the day, that she [the EA] ended up having to sit beside him the entire day and anytime she got up, there would inevitably be a problem … As a result, the rest of the students did not get served by that EA. It was a huge class to begin with, so they [already] did not get served in the way they needed … so when it came to accommodations, in that semester and in that class, I was not doing the things that I should have been achieving.

The Challenge of Staying Current

Claire’s interview responses tended to discuss the challenges and pressures she felt as a new teacher, especially a teacher currently completing a graduate degree, in keeping her teaching strategies and pedagogy up to date and current. Her responses focused on what she found herself doing most often in an attempt to stay current, as well as what she needed from professional development sessions and from other educators.

Updating teaching. Claire feels a strong need to participate in professional development, whether it is self-directed or board-provided. When discussing the need to get to know students, Claire explained that “not all teachers have time to do that, and I think … that’s why PD is important … especially in high school.” Her own PD manifests in several ways: through reading literature, taking additional qualification (AQ) courses, informal discussions with colleagues, and through board- and ministry-provided PD days.
While Claire is currently enrolled in a graduate degree in education program, which is a type of professional development in and of itself, “most of [her] professional development has been [geared] towards acquiring AQs.” Since graduating, she has become “qualified in guidance.”

Claire has tried to read a lot of literature in an attempt to stay current. At the time of the interview, Claire was taking a graduate course on the inclusion of exceptional students; she admitted that most of her professional reading was from that course. Outside of that course, her reading is limited, generally, to what is put directly in front of her by either the board or union: “I read what our board puts out in terms of letters, I stay posted in our union, but, to be honest with you, I’m not doing as much as I probably could.” Claire also reads Professionally Speaking, a bi-monthly magazine published by the Ontario College of Teachers, which covers everything from new teaching technologies, to the latest disciplinary actions against members. She even makes sure to read the suggested readings provided to her by the board. She talked at length about her board’s policy on reading educational books, and how they reward teachers who do:

[The board] didn’t assign [it], but they suggested we read the growth mindset book [Dweck, 2006], and they sort of encouraged, I think even gave release time, for like, book clubs to talk about it, and then all of the [teachers] would bring it up [at meetings] … That was sort of a neat way to do it, because you didn’t have to participate, but if you didn’t you felt like you didn’t know what was going on. But that’s the language we’re using, so for those of us who read it, we feel like we know what we’re talking about.
Claire made reference to using this incentive style system to entice teachers to read professional documents (such as *Learning for All* or *Growing Success*). When asked about whether she herself had read professional documents like *Learning for All* and *Growing Success*, she remarked that while she had read them once when they were initially released, she read them once “and kind of absorbed what [she] needed.” Other than these ministry provided documents, she also reported using a handbook for secondary teachers “that comes out from the board.”

Having been a teacher for only four years, some of which was spent doing both long-term occasional contracts and short-term substitute teaching, Claire has not experienced much professional development provided by either the board or the ministry. What little she has been able to partake of has not focused much, if at all, on inclusion. When she was first hired, Claire was automatically enrolled in the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), a board sponsored form of PD where new teachers are matched with experienced teachers, and both partake of various PD sessions together. This is the only PD Claire received that focused, in some way, on the inclusion of exceptional students, as it touched on “universal design and … without sort of saying they’re talking about inclusion, they’re touching on it.” Claire thinks that there may have been “a half day session on IEPs … I know that that was about you know, accessing documents, and what we needed to help facilitate inclusion in the classroom.” The majority of the program was focused on delivering and understanding curriculum, which has been a theme across all of her PD.

As she tried to delve deeper into the only PD session specifically focused on the inclusion of exceptional learners, Claire had difficulties remembering the content or the
details, suggesting that either it was so long ago it is difficult to remember, or that the PD was not effective enough in conveying its message. The PD, she thinks, was a hybrid of lecture and hands on: “I think that we had speakers come in, and we had sort of an interactive kind of hypothetical situation where ‘here’s the IEP you’ve got, draw from it, take this lesson design and kind of weave it into here and make sure everything in the IEP is covered.’”

In addition to literature and PD days, Claire often turns to various colleagues as a way to gather new information. Most often, she turns to either a professor she had during her teacher education, or her mother. Her old professor taught a course on at-risk youth, and the two have “had a lot of conversations over the years. … He sends me a lot of literature.” Her mother, a teacher in a different school board, also provides Claire with current literature such as “journal articles, various videos, TED talks … she sends me links to people who have written things she thinks [are] applicable.”

Claire believes that there are colleagues within her school who should be available to provide PD on an as-needed basis as well. The resource room teacher, who typically has an extensive knowledge of inclusionary strategies, is a place she feels she can go to receive ongoing PD, especially on assistive technology. In some schools, Claire has found that the resource teachers “are really hands on and they’ve been the sort of people that would provide the PD and the technology.” This is not the case in every school, but, “ideally, it would be a place where I could go.”

Claire accesses new information in a variety of ways, including reading, conversations, and formal PD. However, her responses tended to show that she is not
receiving much, if any, PD about the inclusion of exceptional students within her board; PD is touching on it in ways that are not always explicit.

**Wish list.** As Claire discussed the challenges she faces in staying current, a wish list began to formulate of things she feels she needs to be provided with, either to stay current in her field, or to better include students with exceptionalities in her classroom. An example used in the previous section, where Claire discussed the ideal role that a resource room teacher would fulfill, is just one example of many Claire feels would be beneficial to the process of including students with exceptionalities in her classes.

Continuing from her earlier discussion about resource room teachers, Claire expanded on exactly what else their role should entail (beyond being a PD provider): she explains that they should be “like your IT guy”—when a teacher is not an expert in technology, students should be able to think that “at the end of every class I take my laptop down to Mr. X [the resource teacher], and he’ll help me with that.”

If resource room teachers provide teachers with PD, Claire believes that the administration also needs to provide for teachers; in their role they provide the actual tools that educators need to properly facilitate inclusion. Claire discussed one incident where she was not provided with the resources she needed as a teacher. The student, discussed earlier, was legally blind and required an electronic reader, where the student “would go up, scan whatever it was, and he would be able to see it really, really well” but Claire was not provided one. The administration knew the student needed one, as “people casually said ‘Here’s his IEP, he can’t see very well, so accommodate him,’” but they never provided one, possibly because of the perceived nature of a drama class. As Claire reported, there is a myth about the type of work assigned in Drama class, with many
asking “they’re in drama, how much paper and pencil writing is there going to be?” In her opinion, administrators must provide the technology and physical items needed to include exceptional students, regardless of the subject.

In addition to the technological implementations, Claire wants administrators to provide the initial professional development that goes along with adopting these new technologies. If administrators are bringing in new technological supports, or they are introducing a new idea, the administration would need to “provide PD to cover that, or they would direct you to a more senior teacher to help you out with that, or they’d provide you with release time” to learn the technology. Some administrators have provided this, as Claire reports:

I’ve had principals seek me out and go, you know, we’ve got training for OneNote [a Microsoft program similar to Kurzwell] … they were offering me the release time for it, so I was able to go down and meet with some people they had brought in to teach teachers mini tutorials on it … as opposed to [letting teachers figure it] out on their own. Which was great, because then you know that the technology is not just there for you, but you also know how to use it, and make the kid feel more secure when you use it.

As can be seen, Claire needs the educators in the roles around her to fill very specific roles in supporting her and her ability to include students with exceptionalities in her classroom. Both roles she discussed in the interview—administration and resource room teachers—need to be there to provide her with PD and assistive technology in an effort to increase classroom inclusion.
Summarizing Claire’s Perspective

Throughout her interview, Claire proved herself to be a teacher who feels, with all her heart, that her primary role in classroom is to get to know her students; she then uses this knowledge to teach to the needs of both the class and the individual student. Although she feels she has some of the tools she requires to gather this knowledge, she also talked at length about what those around her can provide her in order for her to better know her students. Her responses about PD were especially poignant, as she discussed the issues she faces with the constant updates to assistive technology.

Jack: A Classroom Should Feel Like a Family

Halfway through Jack’s interview, his speech speeds up, and his breathing becomes sporadic and short. If you had never met him, you might think that he’s just nervous, or that he had just come from an intense workout. With his next comment, however, Jack gets at the heart of who he is as both a person and a teacher; talking about including students with exceptionalities in his classroom, Jack exclaims “I’m running out of breath here, I’m really excited”! You can feel this enthusiasm for inclusion in all of his answers, from his belief that a classroom should feel like “a family. We all know each other, and I will do whatever it takes to help [them] ... It’s not about being friends … it’s like everybody is there for each other, it’s a collective. It’s awesome.” The account of Jack, as an elementary teacher who found himself teaching in a secondary school literacy program, begins with this notion—his belief that classrooms should be safe, accepting environments. It then moves into how he believes others can help him create these environments.
Meeting Everyone’s Needs

Of all the themes identified within this study, Jack’s responses were most often connected in some way with the overall theme of meeting everyone’s needs, which would seem obvious to anybody who has spent even a few minutes in a room with him.

**Accepting/safe learning environment.** Jack is particularly proud of his ability to create a classroom that is safe, accepting, and inclusive while continuing to motivate his students. As mentioned previously, he sees the perfect classroom as being a second family, and he reminisced about one such class “especially near the end, where [we] feel like a family. I feel like I’m with my brother and my Mom and my Dad … it’s like everybody is there for each other, it’s a collective.” This collective sense of community, where members feel more like siblings than classmates, “goes such a long way” because of what it leads to:

Peer to peer mentoring, students taking challenges and taking risks in their learning, it leads to students exploring what they’re interested in, instead of doing what’s expected of them … [Then] kids aren’t making fun of each other, they aren’t trying to get away from the learning because they’re all, like, we’re here for the same reason.

Part of the sense of community is feeling safe, something Jack understands and wants to promote. When given the chance to wield a hypothetical magic wand, one where he could create anything he wants to help facilitate inclusion, Jack immediately answered that he would want something that promotes safety. Jack imagined what he would want “something that I could sprinkle … that made every kid feel comfortable and safe.” Jack feels that safety is the biggest challenge he faces as a teacher:
Kids don’t trust, or don’t feel comfortable taking a risk. Maybe because some of them have an LD or some challenge, or people think things of them, they’re expected to do things, they don’t learn. They don’t buy into the learning.

For an idea more grounded in reality, Jack suggested that having extra time with his students could achieve the same effect as his imaginary powder: “Like maybe, I had an extra week, or maybe I just do it for a week, where the whole week is just about building culture and acceptance.”

**DI/UDL.** In order to create a community of learners who feel safe and accepted, Jack uses many forms of DI and UDL. It was important to Jack that his classroom was tailored to the students within that space, as each student has certain “types of environments they seem to flourish within and environments [that] seem to detract from their learning.” As a graduate student studying cognition, Jack has begun to understand “there is a lot of social cognition involved with learning and that can be really important for teachers to notice.” And he knows that “what [he is] doing or the environment [can] really influence [students’] learning.”

Part of creating that tailored environment is providing various strategies for students to use. “Because really,” Jack explains, “to teach is to help students access information to grow, to challenge themselves. [You are] guiding them through that process.” It is important, then, to give each student the opportunity to be the expert on a topic, which Jack finds is easy to do when he implements jigsaw activities. Students, especially those with exceptionalities:

sometimes they can feel like they don’t have prior knowledge, they don’t have this bank that other students seem to have where they say, “Ya I know this, I
know this, I know this.” … When you’ve got somebody with a role that’s defined, they feel like they are an expert at this, they feel a little more plugged into the learning, a little bit more motivated, and they’re going to feel a little more self-efficacious.

When teaching new material, or introducing new learning goals, Jack makes sure to scaffold the information in such a way that any student can grasp the concept, no matter what their learning ability, Jack finds it important to ask, “What support can I give this student?” Eventually he is able to determine that “this student needs a little bit less support, and this one maybe doesn’t need any at all, they can just do the task as I defined it.” From there, Jack is able to “scaffold learning especially within areas of need.”

Part of Jack’s teaching includes the use of both learning goals and success criteria, two important parts of DI and UDL. Jack, however, likes to “co-create it with the students.” He explained how this works in his class:

You say … “What is a summary paragraph? Well let’s put everything on the board that we can think of.” … And [I would] use their language, and I would try to only put things up on the board, like anchor charts up on the board, or around the class, that we did together. … But, the nice thing was, at the end of the year, when I got really good at this program, or what I felt was good, I would have all of my students...

At this point, Jack mimed what a student would look like as they looked around the room at the various posters summarizing the lessons’ learning goals or success criteria. He continued:

And that tells me it’s brilliant because we created this so that they would use it,
and it’s like their checklist for success. So they know that when I’m writing a summary paragraph, do I have a topic sentence? This is what a topic sentence is. This co-creation of success criteria is not only an attempt by Jack to use DI/UDL, but also a way of creating a learning community within his classroom.

**Accommodations.** Jack talked in detail about the various accommodations he uses. He believes that one of the most important accommodations he uses is a bump-up wall. He describes this as an “assessment as learning for them, a little bit, because they’re able to assess themselves and make comparisons to both the success criteria and the bump-up wall.” Bump-up walls are a visual rubric, where students look at a posted rubric to determine what level they are currently working at, and figure out how to improve their work, or bump it up to the next level.

Jack reported he offered the same accommodations in his classroom that are available to students while taking the OSSLT: “A lot of them had scribes available, a lot of them had extra time available, things like that.” Due to this, modifying the content of his lessons to include teaching “about [properly] using the scribe, [and properly] using the extra time” was important. Even scheduling was subject to accommodation, as Jack considers flexible scheduling to be a key way of accommodating his lessons. He further explained the importance of flexible scheduling:

An example of that would be, say … we’re doing activating prior knowledge on day one, [and] we’re making connections day two, making inferences day seven. If by day seven we weren’t ready for that yet, I would … make a judgment call and say, “I can’t go by this schedule,” … [The schedule] would say, you’ve got to do summary paragraphs in three days. To me, a summary paragraph is such a
foundational skill, [and] if you don’t have that, then maybe you’re going to struggle with an opinion piece. So you need to make judgment calls all the time about whether or not you’re going to need an extra day with something, and how you’re going to do that with students.

The tight nature of the literacy program—teachers had two weeks (which often was only nine teaching days) to get through the curriculum—created a situation where Jack could not deviate from daily goals. Jack would create some flexibility in the schedule by using what he called “consolidation periods”—times at the end of every day where Jack could go back over material from the day that some students had found particularly challenging.

**Knowing Your Students: Gathering Student Information**

Jack feels that his role, as a teacher, “is just to find a way to get to know my students … if you know your students then you can find access points and you can find appropriate challenges for them.” Accordingly, he feels the need to gather as much information about his students in as many ways as he can. In order to do this, Jack always holds student conferencing sessions where he can determine:

- what they think they’re good at and what they think they aren’t good at. That is sometimes more important than what they actually are good at and what they actually aren’t good at. Because what they think can set limitations or set directions for them.

He also likes to collect “actual examples of their work” to gather knowledge of what other teachers believe the student can or cannot do. Collecting this information is
important to Jack, as he believes that having a deep understanding of your students is an integral part of any DI:

To me at the heart of DI is every student is at a different place. Every human being is different, right, everyone’s at a different place, everyone’s got different experiences. … I want to emphasize the challenge. I think that the challenge is just as important.

Jack further noted that for students, “it’s not just about where are they and what do they need, it’s where can I push them to go next.”

**Structures and People**

Jack has taught in several different high schools in the board; his unique role has given him insights into the secondary school context that many of the other participants in this study did not have access to. Jack’s responses could be categorized into both teamwork and infrastructure for inclusion, the two main categories of this theme.

**Teamwork.** Jack found that within his program there was a need for teamwork between all levels of educators—the administration, the resource teachers, the classroom teachers, and the EAs (or, in his case, the TAs). There is a need for each role to be accountable to the other roles, as he notes the administrators would come “into the class at least once a day, and they would observe my teaching, and they would observe student learning, and the classroom environment, and the TA, how they were doing.” The administrator observing the class led to some unique instances where administration and teacher could work together to solve issues within the classroom, or to point out issues that may have been missed by the teacher. Jack explained that “they would say, ‘Hey did you notice Tommy kinda had his head down there, what do you think that was about?”
What do you think we can do together to find out what was going on?” This created a “really great relationship” between administration and teachers. It is important that administrators hold teachers accountable, as Jack “would hope, if I wasn’t doing my job properly, the administrator would come in and say, here’s where you need to focus your attention, you’re missing this completely, so [their job is] to hold me accountable too.”

The administrators continuously worked with the teachers to provide the right learning spaces for students, even offering up their own offices in times of need, which Jack referred to as “a resource; to provide an alternate place for them to really get some work done.” These resources also extended to dealing with students who provided an extra challenge, as Jack needed only to discuss the issue with an administrator and “they [would] go off and find something, and chat with the student, [and ask] what has worked for you in the past.” Administration was “really just providing support as needed.”

Jack reported that he loves to co-teach, and he would love to be able to implement this strategy not just with other teachers, but with administrators as well. “I love co-teaching so much. I would love to see administration get involved and say, I used to love teaching this, and can we get together and work on it. Teachers working together.” He regrets that implementing it can be difficult within the current secondary school system, as it can be so hard to get teachers to buy in … but I think if you got the right people in a room, with the right mindset, and people who spend time planning, you know, they don’t just shut off when the bell rings.

Although co-teaching is not occurring to the degree that Jack would like, he does note that teachers work together to solve some problems. Rather than discussing teaching
methods or content, Jack found that “what [I] do talk about sometimes is ‘I’m having trouble with this student, I don’t really know what I can do here, or I’ve tried doing this with news reports and it doesn’t work, can you think of something else that will work?’ Kind of anecdotes to help each other grow.”

**Infrastructure for inclusion.** The unique structure of the literacy program offered various ways to teach students with exceptionalities, many of which may not be feasible in a regular classroom without additional support. During the school year, Jack worked with students at-risk of failing the OSSLT in a setting that was “one-on-one.” This scenario, while ideal, is difficult to implement on a board wide basis, as Jack acknowledges; “teachers are so overtaxed with their time” that this individual tutoring may only be feasible within the literacy program.

Jack also discussed that he feels there is a lack of language for the things teachers are doing, which makes it difficult to collaborate. As we discussed various research based teaching methods, Jack remarked:

I think the funny thing is with these terms … there’s a lot of things we all do, we just don’t have a language for it … I get frustrated by all the terminology … I do think of assessment for, of, and as learning, and DI all the time. These are not necessarily things where I’m like “Oh, I guess I need something for DI, or I guess I’m doing DI” … You just kind of do it.

**The Challenge of Staying Current**

As a relatively new teacher who has never had a permanent teaching job, Jack had difficulty speaking to a wide variety of professional development experiences. However, his responses on how he would prefer to stay current, and how training works in the
literacy program, shed light on ways secondary school teachers may be able to stay current in a teaching world dominated by elementary school literature.

**Updating teaching.** As part of his job working for the literacy program, Jack was required to take several days of training each year, which he discussed in some detail. The training was heavily focused on literacy, and there was very little explicitly on inclusion. The first time Jack took the training, he “had little [formal training] on literacy.” He reported that he “was focused on what can I learn about teaching English? Basically, so how do I teach English, what do I focus on?” This may be problematic, as Jack noted that “upwards of seventy-five percent” of his students were formally identified with an exceptionality. However, when he retook the training in his second year, the underlying message of the training become obvious:

> Embedded in that training was here’s what it means to make a connection, they’re telling you all these DI techniques, and they’re telling you when things are not working. And that’s … the tiered approach or RTI. What do you do next if something’s not working? Because for me the first level [of the training] was what am I teaching, and the next one was how do I teach. And again DI is all about how I teach this stuff.

The underlying training on inclusion and inclusionary methods also became obvious as Jack learned more about the literacy consultant that ran the program, as Jack stated “he’s [become] one of my biggest mentors. I think he thinks so much about teaching, and so much about individual students, it was sprinkled throughout his trainings.”

Although Jack is currently a graduate student in education, he still finds a need to update his teaching by talking to colleagues. He lists the people he visits when he feels
the need to further his teaching, noting that he often learns from his professors, and his colleagues within the program, specifically those who work within the field of inclusion. But, being a graduate student in education, he also admitted that he reads an ample amount of literature: “I read a lot of [research] journals, specifically, *The Journal of Learning Disabilities, Learning Disabilities Quarterly, LD Teaching and Practice*, and some literacy journals too. I will go to literature that has nice summaries on how to apply research.”

When asked about how (or if) he uses professional documents, Jack expressed that the documents are not high on his resource list. He finds that:

In general, those documents contain the same things … What assessment for learning is; what is UDL? What is DI? … But a lot of the concepts I learned in my B.Ed. program are in these documents, and they’re just things that I kind of do. He admitted that OME documents “give you the language for talking about these things.” Thus, Jack does not “use them when I need a strategy or I need to know what to do here, or to remember what this is. But I do use them indirectly, because the information that is contained within them drives my teaching.”

**Wish list.** There are a number of things Jack wishes could occur in professional development sessions in order to create the most productive sessions possible. In discussing what his perfect PD session would involve, Jack discussed his belief that PD should give me an opportunity to share what I’m doing and to hear what others are doing. Because, like, I often take a lot from what others are doing … The opportunity to talk with somebody that really knows what they’re doing.
In order to accomplish this, Jack believes that PD should not be led by “somebody who is just in the role of doing it, it’d be somebody who is excited about it.” PD needs to be conducted in a workshop style, as it would “combine lecture elements and interactive [elements].” As for the ideal time for such PD to occur, Jack’s view might be considered by many to be unorthodox, and he knows it:

It would be something through the summer. I know that sounds crazy, and some teachers wouldn’t be interested, but I think if I have PD during the year, I’m like, that’s great but I don’t have time to plan something like that.

His justification for summer PD is based on his time teaching an online additional qualification course during the school year, where he finds teachers often say “this sounds great but I don’t have time to try it.” PD in the summer would give teachers time to plan and then to try any new teaching strategies in the new school year.

**Summarizing Jack’s Perspective**

Throughout his interview, Jack’s responses continually showed his complete commitment to including students with exceptionalities in his classroom. His enthusiasm is infectious, and talking with him makes me want to be a better teacher. Jack’s wish to see more teamwork, as well as to participate in more collaborative PD, are all part of his desire to create a classroom environment that feels like a family; after all, his teaching pedagogy revolves around that desire.

**Reese: Administrators and Teachers Work as a Team**

At the time of his interview, Reese was celebrating two decades as a teacher. His career has taken him in many directions: he has been both a classroom teacher and a vice-principal. His career has spanned three different decades of educational progress,
especially when it comes to inclusion, and his comments reflected that history. He recounted the changes in his colleagues’ views early in his interview, suggesting:

I certainly find that the mindset of teachers around accommodating students isn't as black and white any longer. I find that most of my colleagues, particularly at this school, don't question the need for accommodations and support and alternate methods of demonstrating learning. I think that they are pretty progressive in that mindset. And that isn't true for when I started my career. There would be lots of [negative views on inclusion then].

Reese’s story is rooted in his extensive experience; however, he is also the parent of a child with a learning disability and his responses are also influenced by his role as a parent. The account of Reese, as an both an educator and a parent, begins with his beliefs about how inclusion is facilitated outside of the classroom—Reese spoke at length about board policies and PD experiences. His case then moves into how he accommodates students with exceptionalities in his classroom.

**Structures and People**

Reese has taught at more than a dozen of the secondary schools within his board, and he was able to discuss, in depth, the ways that the board facilitates the inclusion of exceptional students. His responses to the interview questions covered both categories of this theme—teamwork and infrastructure—and Reese makes a clear push for the use of teamwork in schools, possibly more than any of the other participants in this study.

**Teamwork.** Having been an administrator, Reese gave a unique perspective on the ways he believes that administrators and teachers work together to facilitate inclusion. Administration plays a large role in teachers’ responsibilities—including inclusion—and
Reese believes that “it’s the accessible administrators that are the most effective ones.”

But accessibility is not easy to accomplish—there is a delicate balance to be maintained, especially when it comes to communication. Reese explained that he understands that at times, teachers forget

the administration has to balance a couple of different things that don't necessarily back my teaching. I think every administrator has to decide at what point do I need to share this information or should I share this information even though maybe it is sensitive … I haven't worked with an administrator who is neglectful of trying to do the right thing for a student.

But, it can be difficult to balance the need for information with confidentiality. When sharing information, Reese considers educational communication to be part of a four-quadrant system composed of information that is either: “urgent [but] not important, urgent and important, not urgent [but] important [and neither urgent nor important].”

Some administrators “get stuck in the urgent but not important role … [but] teachers do the same thing often to administrators. They report urgent but not important pieces of information and don't necessarily get to the important but not urgent [information].” It is “important” that good teams of educators work to understand when each type of information is required. Reese believes that “a staff is at its peak level of success when they have people who can attend to all four areas and make sure they're doing the right thing for students in that moment.”

The resource room teachers also play an important role in the overall school team and in supporting the teacher when including a student with exceptionalities. The resource room and resource teacher fulfill two roles: “information sharing and support as
necessary.” Reese is uncomfortable with the style of inclusion where a student receives “a packet of materials that we might cover in the next two weeks and [the teacher is] having the student work on that independently [in the resource room].” In order to best teach the student, Reese “needs for [resource teachers] to help the student stay integrated in the classroom and stay engaged with what we're doing and provide those supports, not necessarily provide the escape.” Resource room teachers need to support him in this decision, and help students who are accustomed to working in the resource room become comfortable working within the regular classroom.

The final members of the team in secondary schools are the teachers. Teamwork amongst the teaching staff can be difficult to properly implement, as Reese has found that co-planning and creating common assessments “starts to create barriers because not everybody, and not all of our colleagues, demonstrate the same understanding of being flexible.” It becomes even more problematic when it comes time to accommodate lessons, as each teacher adapts their teaching differently. By the time a co-planned lesson or assessment is used, it may look entirely different because Reese has “accommodated it differently” than the other teacher.

Because of the nature of accommodating students, Reese tends to stay away from both co-planning and co-constructing assessments, but he recently had a teaching experience that opened his eyes to a new way for teachers to collaborate: team teaching. Reese explained his experience:

This year, we had two sections of Grade 9 English running in the exact same time slot, which is a really interesting benefit … [The other teacher and I] did quite a bit of team teaching, and I think that the team teaching model really allows for the
differentiation to be supported because we can work together, but we can also have that extra professional who can work with those who are maybe having difficulties or those who are needing to be enriched, or whatever the exceptionality is.

Although the lesson needed to be co-planned, Reese saw the benefit in team-teaching as it allowed for individualized or group instruction to occur within the larger classroom. Both teachers know the content, and know how the lesson is planned, and are able to easily work with students who need additional support while the other continues with the lesson.

**Infrastructure for inclusion.** Although Reese has worked within a number of secondary schools, his responses did not typically discuss whether or not the infrastructure of his school, or his board, helps or hinders inclusion. However, he did mention a number of board specific procedures that have helped inform his own inclusionary teaching methods. Reese noted that ministry documents, such as the *School Effectiveness Framework* (OME, 2013b), provide “some good indicators of what teaching … what the classroom teacher can be doing,” Reese was clear to point out that “curriculum expectations are really what drives … most of what I do.” Even *Growing Success* (OME, 2010b) does not necessarily inform his teaching; Reese is “more prone to use our board assessment policy, which is based on *Growing Success*.”

**The Challenge of Staying Current**

Reese discussed professional development over the past 20 years of teaching. His involvement in PD is extensive, and he was able to offer insights into areas of the PD process that the other participants could not.
Updating teaching. For the most part, Reese discussed updating his teaching practice through a few very specific examples. He also suggested that, while he has signed up for PD opportunities he has found outside of the board, he usually does not actively seek PD opportunities. The most recent PD Reese took part in was particularly useful to him, in that it was not a typical way of updating his teaching. He explained that “we collected … summative assessments … and the inquiry team I was on worked to offer observations about what was being assessed, to look at the strengths of how the students were being assessed and to demonstrate their assessments.” This form of collaborative inquiry was a method of PD that Reese came to “really value,” as it gave him insight into how to better design his assessments to meet or accommodate the abilities of all his students. For this project, Reese was paid for the work outside his normal teaching responsibilities. But Reese also discussed the ways in which giving teachers raw data to analyze, independent of the board, is a powerful way of letting teachers guide their own professional development:

We have a lot of data collection methods in our board to get information from students, and that really should be informing what we learn … We’re often presented with [this] data in its raw form … And then we're left with the opportunity to identify questions that come from that [and] investigate [them]. Reese called this a “teacher-led inquiry model [that] leads to really strong knowledge of what's going on.” This method works for Reese and other teachers, as he believes that there are many teachers who do not like having “somebody telling me what they think I should know.” Rather, Reese finds that teachers want to further their knowledge in ways
that are unique to them, or answer questions in ways that are unique to their teaching style. This “teacher-led inquiry model” allows for a teacher to identify a question that they personally think “is worth pursuing.”

Other than inquiry based in-service, Reese reported that he does not believe “that the board has an exclusive method of providing PD,” and that a variety of different types of PD have been offered to him, “including [attending] conferences or supporting having professionals who are not teachers come in [to lead PD sessions].” Reese has been supported in attending a few conferences, but his PD tends to come from sessions offered by the school and the school board.

Although Reese tended to focus on his positive experiences with PD, he did note that there were some areas in which he felt his board’s professional development plans were lacking. For example, the board does “a miserable job in schools of consolidating PD.” Reese has found that teachers have been given release time in order to attend conferences where “they are shaken to the core” by the information presented there. However, upon the teacher’s return to the classroom the next day, “suddenly it's the same old, same old.” Reese believes that the board needs to work with teachers to ensure that teaching strategies, content, and pedagogy teachers are learning during PD become part of their own practice. Otherwise, Reese wonders, “what’s the point?”

There are subjects that Reese feels he has never received PD on, despite their perceived importance. For example, Reese explained that he has never received any in-service on EAs in the classroom. Reese explained the consequences of not having ever received this type of PD: teachers “don't always maximize the skills of the EA that we're working [with] … because I don't think we're ever taught as teachers how to be a
manager of another adult in the classroom.” Without this training, Reese questions how the EA and the classroom teacher will ever work effectively as a team. Furthermore, Reese has “not received much in the way of in-servicing” on *Learning for All* (OME, 2013a), the OME document for teachers on methods of inclusion. How can the board expect teachers to use inclusionary methods set forth in *Learning for All* (OME, 2013a) if the board does not provide PD on them?

Reese had no more to say on typical PD sessions, but he did talk about *Professionally Speaking*, as an unlikely source of PD. Reese discussed “the blue pages,” which are the list of disciplinary hearings against members of the OCT, and are given the name “the blue pages” as they are typically printed on a blue background. Reese called them a “litmus test for your own practice,” suggesting that:

Aside from the scandalous behavioural ones, there are complaints lodged against teachers who aren't including or accommodating students, and I find that those are actually quite interesting … you can think, "Okay, that's ... you know, I understand it," or, "I don't understand that."

If a teacher does not understand why a complaint was made, it provides them with the opportunity to further delve into the issue, which may change their practices to be more in line with the standards of practice of the Ontario College of Teachers.

**Wish list.** Reese’s number one wish for PD is that it needs to be given by experts in the field. These experts could be either medical professionals or teachers, and the choice of which was appropriate would depend on the material being in-serviced. Reese discussed what makes PD work for him: “I find it personally helpful to have an information session from a practicing medical professional.” Having PD taught by
experts gives Reese the confidence that the information he is learning is current. Understanding that not all teachers have the same mindset as him, Reese also suggested that he wishes that PD had more opportunities to “cross pollinate,” which he described as teachers leaving their home school or moving to a different panel, “or even subject to subject.” Allowing teachers to work with other educators outside their school allows them to “hear some different things,” and bring these ideas back to their home school. Finally, Reese’s ideal PD would include “an action piece at the end” and a chance for teachers “to consolidate and do something [practical] with what they’ve learned.”

Meeting Everyone’s Needs

Reese’s goal is to create a learning environment that meets everyone’s needs. He feels that “the most important thing about being in [his] classroom is that [students] are engaged with what I’m doing at a particular time.” Much of what Reese does in the classroom reflects that belief.

Accommodations. Accommodations are an important part of Reese’s classroom, like they are for many teachers, and certainly for the participants in this study. Reese’s philosophy on teaching students with exceptionalities, identified or not, differs in a nuanced way from others as he tries to “make sure that [he doesn’t] do anything to exclude those students.” He developed this idea further as he talked about his general inclusion strategy, which is based on “trying to be mindful of what it is that we ask students to do and to identify the barriers that would make it difficult for a student to do that.” It is not enough to just identify the barriers. Once he identifies them, Reese works to “get rid of those barriers or accommodate those barriers.” Although this may be similar to what other teachers are reporting, it is important to note that Reese uses this strategy to
include any student, regardless of the presence of an exceptionality. Reese understands that students may need temporary accommodations based on issues such as mental health, family emergencies, or other short term crises.

Reese has found that modelling strategies is the best way to include students with exceptionalities, as it can often have a positive effect on the entire class. For example, Reese reported that he often finds himself using “guided reading” because of its ability to “really support students.” When he teaches using guided reading, Reese reads aloud, asking himself questions a typical reader might ask as they read. After reading, he asks questions such as: “How did you read this?” and “What strategy do you use?” Reese finds that “talking [about] the process of learning” allows for students who may be having difficulty learning to understand steps they might be missing. In addition, Reese also makes sure to have a “variety of different readings available.” He understands not “everybody has to read the same thing.” Since all students learn at different rates, allowing choice is a simple way to allow students to read at a level that challenges them without frustrating them. Reese’s practice of modelling aspects of learning does not end with reading; he reported that he is “mindful of trying to model how to use assistive technology” as well.

Reese is always conscious of the anxiety that surrounds learning, which he knows can be amplified in students with exceptionalities. One accommodation he makes for all students who show signs of anxiety is to develop an exit plan. Exit plans are safe ways for students to leave the classroom, while allowing Reese to have knowledge of where his students are at all times. Reese explained that rather than an anxious student asking to use the washroom everyday at the same time, he would much rather work with the student
and “develop the kind of relationship with the student where the student can be clear
[about his or her needs] and not lie to me.” Reese views this as an effective way of
teaching students to advocate for their needs. For those students who may be anxious, but
not needing to leave the class, Reese makes sure to provide some way “for students who
wouldn’t traditionally throw their hand up in the air or do other things to also
demonstrate [their] learning.” By giving varied ways for students to demonstrate their
learning, Reese is demonstrating the importance of understanding what a student needs.

**DI/UDL.** Reese’s pedagogy is rooted heavily in concepts of DI and UDL, even
though he never uses either term to describe his teaching. Reese recognizes that if an
accommodation or modification “works well for students with one particular
exceptionality, it may have benefit to students that don't have that exceptionality.” This
extends into his overall assessment policy for a class. He reported that “it's reasonable to
say that not every student does exactly the same thing to finish the class” which Reese
believes is the fairest way to assign a grade. Reese stressed that “there are things that
some students aren't able to do in one way, but they could do it another way.” This
confirms that Reese values that students learn in various ways, and makes sure his
teaching does not “set up the barrier to say, ‘You have to do it this way or you can't be
successful.’"

The assessment strategy Reese uses in his classroom reflects many of these
values. “I try to collect evidence everyday,” he explained, “So when we get to the end, if
a student hasn't necessarily completed all of the assignments, but has demonstrated those
expectations in other ways,” he is able to give a passing grade. Reese reported that he
does not “believe that the only time a student can demonstrate something is on a summative [assessment].”

On top of performing some form of assessment on a daily basis, Reese feels the need to assess more than just a student’s written work, which informs his views on how students with exceptionalities should be using the resource room. To Reese, the resource room should only be used in extreme circumstances, as Reese is unable to get a complete picture of the student. If they do their work in the resource room, Reese only sees “the written side; and there are so many other ways to demonstrate understanding beyond just the written word.” For example, a student may not “do a very good job of completing written tasks, [but they] may do a spectacular job of sharing knowledge with me orally … I lose that if they're not in my room.” Using the resource room as a place for students to complete all their work is counter to Reese’s overall teaching strategy of removing barriers, as it actually creates barriers, because it does not allow students to express their learning in a way that makes use of their skills.

When assessing students, Reese finds that providing choice is an effective inclusionary method. For example, as reported earlier, Reese knows that “it’s not always that everyone needs to read the same thing.” Sometimes he allows for a choice between readings that “can be complementary,” where “students … select from a pile.” What has amazed Reese about adding an element of choice in his classroom is the selections students are making, as students “pick what I wouldn't have expected,” even when he tries to “steer it towards a group of students thinking this may be a bit more accessible for them.” Choice is a “powerful tool” for Reese, because it allows students to show their strengths.
Once he has learned his students’ strengths, Reese uses ability grouping in an effort to maximize differentiated instruction. Reese described an instance where he used ability grouping to include a student with autism in his class. This student has “super good work skills, but had a very difficult time with abstract thinking,” but Reese found the student had excellent skills at “straight recall of information.” In creating ability groups, Reese was able to “make [the student’s] skills, which are really strong in this area, available to some of the students who don't have those [skills].” Reese views ability grouping as a way to “identify the strengths of all the individuals and not use the weaknesses as the decision, but [think about] how to support them.” Not only does this allow for more “powerful” learning experiences, but it also teaches advocacy. However, as Reese pointed out, it “probably is fair to say that that style may not work well for some students,” and he ensures that, when using small groups, whether for assignments or discussion, that “we mix the peer groups frequently, and we share and report in a short period of time to discuss, hear back [from the groups], that kind of thing.” Again, Reese shows that he is cognizant of students’ varying learning needs, as he understands that small group instruction is not the best method for every student.

**Accepting/safe learning environment.** Like the other participants, Reese strives to create a learning space within his classroom where students feel both accepted and safe. He reports doing this, in part, by representing “inclusion in the sense of culture and ethnicities and identities, but also inclusion in the terms of learning styles and other formal identifications or informal identifications that we see, just to get kids feeling comfortable and understanding.” This fits with Reese’s view that teachers need to do a better job of teaching “students about who they're in classes with.” As students without
exceptionalities (or students from differing races or cultures) may not understand what other students’ experiences are, Reese deliberately talks “to students about inclusion and who might be in our [classroom.]” Returning to the student on the autism spectrum he spoke about earlier, Reese talked about how he taught the class about the needs of the student, without directly calling the student out for his exceptionality:

[The student] sometimes had unusual things to say because the [other] students were working at a different level of abstract thinking than he was able to … We did a reading on what teenage cognitive development looks like. And [the parent] was quite willing to have that happen.

In this scenario, teaching the class about the differences in learners and learning styles created a space that was more inclusive for the student with autism. Throughout the lesson, Reese reported that he could see “that students were learning and making some connections to people that they are aware of, and that allows for [them to have] a little more empathy and sensitivity and understanding.” Students need this direct form of teaching inclusion, because teenagers can be self-centred, and “they just assume that everybody's exactly like they are … and when you help teach the differences … it just opens their eyes to the possibility that not everybody is exactly like they are.” Teaching students about the differences between learners is not only creating an inclusive learning space, but it is also preparing students for the world outside of school. In the example provided by Reese, directly addressing inclusion was successful, and he believes “it's something that [he’s] going to try and do more and more of.”
Knowing Your Students: Gathering Student Information

Reese did not talk about teachers’ need to gather information about students. In Reese’s opinion, administration shoulders the job of gathering the information that teachers need to do their jobs, especially when it comes to the “informal information from students who are identified.” The largest population administration gets to know is “high-risk exceptional students.” Due to the high-risk nature of these students, it is especially important that administrators share any information they have in a “timely manner.” Reese described that the school administration gathers so much important information for teachers about exceptional students, that a unique relationship is formed between the two. Because of this, Reese believes that “administration serves those students well when they touch base in the classroom and come into the room and see how things are going.” For this reason, he wishes that administrators would visit more often to create an environment that feels safer for students. Administrators visiting the classroom also plays a role in creating a team of educators working together to facilitate inclusion.

Summarizing Reese’s Perspective

The responses Reese gave during his interview were insightful, and showed his character as an educator who cares not just about including the students with exceptionalities, but all students, in his class. Although Reese would, at times, reference his son who had been diagnosed with LD, he made sure that his answers reflected his position as an educator more than his position as a parent. He also spoke from the perspective of a former vice-principal. Reese discussed the need for more teamwork in the schools; he also expressed his desire for PD to be tailored towards individual
secondary teachers, while providing teachers the opportunity to practice that PD in their classroom.

**Erika: This School Board Needs More Resources**

Erika’s story is of a music teacher struggling to include students with exceptionalities in an environment that does not easily lend itself to modifications and accommodations. As a new teacher, she works to balance her desire to become a full-time teacher with her awareness of the current educational climate in Ontario. Although Erika works for the same board as the other participants in the study, Erika’s experiences take place in schools that are not within the central areas of the board, that is mainly in rural schools. Her responses paint a picture of a teacher who relies on other educators to provide much of the infrastructure, PD, and information she needs in order to include students. The account of Erika’s interview begins with her discussion of the context of her teaching, as she had strong views on her ability to include all students effectively in the classroom within the structure of her board. It then moves into how she, as a music teacher, attempts to include students with exceptionalities in her classroom.

**Structures and People**

Erika’s perspective about inclusion within her board differed from the other participants in this study. While Jack, Claire, and Reese certainly had some negative views towards some areas of inclusion in their board, they balanced those views with positive notes. Erika, however, has an inherently negative view of her board’s ability to support teachers in facilitating the inclusion of students with exceptionalities. Within the first five minutes of our interview, Erika exclaimed that “this topic [inclusion] … it's not good, it's not good in this board.”
Teamwork. In Erika’s opinion, there is little teamwork taking place in the board, either among teachers, or among the various levels of educators. When asked what role the administration played in facilitating inclusion, Erika responded simply with “nothing. Not unless I have a behaviour concern.” As she described her feelings, Erika noted, “they’re usually pretty good with behaviour exceptionalities.” However, Erika has also “had examples where I’ve tried to have admin help me deal with behaviour [issues] and [they] have not and said I should just do it myself.” This quote explains how Erika approaches inclusion—she requires support from others and is not receiving it.

If the administration is unable to help, Erika has found that working with her fellow teachers does not help her facilitate inclusion either. The issue here is not that there is no co-teaching or co-planning going on, as Erika admitted, “almost every time I teach history or civics, it’s co-taught and planned, only music is not.” Furthermore, Erika explained that “I’m not qualified to teach English, so I needed a lot more support [from co-workers].” In those courses, she has seen times “where we go, like, minute by minute over each lesson. Other times … we just have the same summative [assessment].” When it comes to facilitating the inclusion of students with exceptionalities, however, Erika finds that in her opinion, teachers do not have the time or the resources to accommodate or modify lessons for students with exceptionalities. She feels she is only able to give the most basic of accommodations, which is allowing extra time.

The lack of resources is not limited to providing students with the assistive technology or accommodations they need—even important staff members are sometimes reduced to part-time positions in what Erika believes is an attempt to reduce operating costs. Erika delved further into this issue, explaining that she finds that in “some of the
[smaller] schools … you might want help but [the resource teacher is] part time classroom teacher and [part time] SST [student support teacher],” and this means Erika has been unable to get the help she feels she requires. However, when Erika is able to get their help, generally she has found the rapport and teamwork between her and the resource room to be extremely satisfactory and helpful, because the resource teacher “updates me on the student and offers suggestions for how to help make that student successful.” In this successful case, Erika had a student who “needs to be withdrawn because she gets too distracted by everything that's going on in the classroom.” Not knowing what to do, Erika approached the resource teacher who “suggested that I set up a room where she can go and work independently.” With the SST’s help, Erika was able to book a nearby classroom that allowed the student the withdrawal support she needed.

Erika also reported that she feels the rapport between teachers and some EAs within her board is strong, noting that she recently substituted in a behaviour class with “an EA that was really good. She was really calm with them and consistent and, like, had really good rapport with them.” Although here Erika described a situation in which some EAs are also personal support workers at a local mental health support facility, “so [the EA] could buy them things and drive them places and [give the students] that extra … rapport and support that they needed.”

Based on her responses, the educators Erika has come into contact with do not seem to be working in sync with one another; in Erika’s view, while some EAs and teachers are on the same page, teachers and administrators usually are not. The support and resources Erika believes she needs are not being provided, and limited resources are hampering the ability of the resource room to help teachers.
**Infrastructure for inclusion.** Erika’s perceived lack of resources in the board is clearly frustrating to her. In her view, everything she needs to do her job properly is lacking, from EAs to resource teachers, to a more general lack of information (or, at the very least, she feels there is a lack of understanding about the information that is available). For example, Erika feels that there is inadequate EA support in her classroom, and that leads to issues with her ability to accommodate a student. Furthermore, she often feels that “some of the things that are in their IEP conflict with something that might be in their behaviour safety plan or something that we’ve been told we have to do with them.” Erika discussed one student in her band class, who “isn't allowed to be around loud noises and has to be in small groups and have extra time.” But, due to the nature of band class, the only way Erika feels she can achieve this is by “withdrawing” them. Erika feels conflicted between the need to withdraw the student, and the student’s behavioural safety plan, which states the student is “not allowed to leave the classroom … because of their mental health.” The only way Erika can envision properly accommodating this student is through administrative support or giving the student a one-to-one EA, neither of which is occurring. Thus, she feels that she cannot ever accommodate this student. The lack of communication about complex cases like this one was a theme in Erika’s responses, and I expand on it further in the IEP limitations section of this case. She is not able to provide a quiet space within her own classroom—Erika believes the physical classroom is poorly designed, as “the walls don't even go all the way up to the ceiling, so it's never quiet,” even when students are not playing instruments.

Erika was also keen to point out that she feels there is a general lack of availability when it comes to the resource room and the resource teacher. “If I have to
send a kid” to the resource room, Erika has found that there is no space to accommodate that student. It frustrates Erika, especially when she perceives the reason there is no space is a general lack of resource teachers to help accommodate her students; in her opinion, the “problem is that there's however many hundreds of IEP's and one [resource] teacher.”

There is also a lack of information within the board on how to include students with exceptionalities, and Erika thinks that may be due to what she believes is a constantly changing focus within the board. Each year, “the board will come up with a buzz word, or concept, or whatever, like differentiated instruction or co-whatever teaching.” And, although Erika feels that the teachers want to delve deeper into the topic, after “six-months” to a year, the board comes up with another “buzz-word” to focus on. Erika finds this cycle is never ending, and the board is “throwing five terms at us and then we have to learn five more terms the next year, and it doesn't really [end].” Erika wishes the board would “pick a concept” and allow teachers to “actually perfect it, and figure out how it works really well over the course of a couple years.” Erika feels that she is unable to even grasp a concept before a new one is given to them.

This system of the board continually changing their focus was most obvious when I asked Erika about the Tiered Approach to Early Identification and Intervention, which is laid out in both Education for All (OME, 2005) and Learning for All (OME, 2013a). Although Erika had read both documents before the interview, as well as Growing Success (OME, 2010b), “so that [she] could say with truth that [she does] not use [the documents],” she had no knowledge of this concept, confirming that, in her experience, no one at the board or at an administration level had discussed either document with teachers, nor some of the teaching strategies contained within each.
The Challenge of Staying Current

Like the other teacher participants, Erika has difficulty staying current in her field, especially when it comes to issues of inclusion. She feels as though others around her are not doing enough to inform her of new strategies for teaching, and that the board is not doing enough to support her as a teacher and as a learner.

Updating teaching. Erika reported that she has tried taking PD sessions that deal with including students with exceptionalities, although in both instances, she found the information contained within the session to be irrelevant to a secondary school teacher. In one instance, Erika took a board-sponsored workshop on dealing with students who have experienced trauma. She was extremely interested by the topic, but “it was very geared towards elementary even though [the board] said that it wouldn't be.” She was also frustrated by the leaders of the session. Because they “were not [from the] board,” Erika felt they did not understand what teachers could ethically do, and “so a lot of the things that they said kids who'd experienced trauma needed were things that” teachers cannot do. For example, the PD focused heavily on using physical touch as a tool for reassuring students, something Erika knows teachers cannot do without potential repercussions. Erika was frustrated that the content of the seminar was not helpful to her, and felt the board was delivering “useless” teaching strategies to her.

Other board-sponsored PD sessions were irrelevant not because the content was useless, in her view, but because Erika and her school do not “necessarily have access to” the tool the board is focusing on. Erika described one session where the board “had the iPad people come in … and we had to go in on our preps and learn how to use the iPads … it was useless. The guy didn't have much that was helpful in my subject, and what he
did have was glitches and he didn't really know how to [use] it.” Erika feels that her prep period could have been used in a way that was more beneficial. Additional qualification courses, which are typically run by a university using a province-wide curriculum, are not immune to information that Erika views as irrelevant. She described signing up for the Guidance and Career Education, Part 1 AQ, but Erika felt that the textbooks and readings were too old to provide her with the information she wanted.

Since the job action in 2013, Erika has noticed that school- and board-based professional development sessions have declined in quality. In Erika’s view, the information on these days is presented by people who do not have the depth of knowledge required to in-service teachers.

The only PD that Erika has taken that she could recommend was a panel session given by a local teacher. The session, “on including LGBT rights” contained information that Erika thought, “would be interesting.” The information was also presented in a way Erika felt was particularly useful, as the session was built around a panel of “trans students” who talked about “how they wanted to be treated by classroom teachers.” After the panel presentation, teachers were given the chance to discuss with each other what they would do to include students transitioning between genders. Erika wished to see more of these workshops/panels, especially those “that were teacher run.” This way, she was guaranteed to receive information that is useful to her in her music classroom.

**Wish list.** Erika had a number of things she wished for when it came to staying current. The first thing she wished for, touched upon earlier in this chapter, was more teacher-led PD. The most interesting PD idea, according to Erika, would be teachers facilitating “an exchange, like I go to [another board and] then I can come back and share
what I learned.” Or, at the very least, Erika wished there were “more workshops that might actually be relevant.” She wants to “take away something from it that [she] can actually implement into [her] classroom.” She returned to the workshop on iPads as an example: “So, like don't do a workshop on iPads if you only have ten iPads at your whole school.”

Extending her comment about making sure that workshops on technology were about technology that teachers could access, Erika added that she would like to have “adequate resources, like technology or otherwise.” This included items that she feels are not being provided to her, such as “a big enough classroom, enough normal-sized desks for everybody, enough computers … or enough instruments.” She feels that the board and the school are not doing enough to create space she can teach in.

Erika also feels that the board needs to offer “adequate course offerings for students at all levels.” She feels that it is inappropriate to have typically developing and exceptional students in some courses, such as the open level civics course. Erika believes that this “doesn’t work.” She feels that it is “really hard” to instruct all levels of students in a way that suits their learning needs, as she finds “the gifted kids are really bored,” while the students who face a learning deficit are not, in her opinion, “smart enough to do it, so they get behavioural.” In order to combat this, Erika believes that her board needs to offer locally-developed courses at all schools. At one rural high school, Erika has found that “they don’t offer any locally developed courses.” Because of this, students who would typically take locally developed courses end up in a higher stream, such as applied, and Erika believes these students “can’t do it” and that “it’s too hard for them.”
As a teacher who would like to update her teaching practices, Erika feels like she is running into barriers on a constant basis. The people she leans on to facilitate the inclusion of exceptional students in her classroom are not providing what Erika believes she needs. Her suggestions might inform first steps for helping her, and other secondary school teachers in a similar situation, to update their teaching to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities.

**Meeting Everyone’s Needs**

Erika understands that her classroom is a place where all students need to learn, and there are going to be students who require accommodations, even though they may not have a formal, or informal, IEP. She believes that her job is about “making [the classroom] a safe place.”

**Accommodations.** When Erika discussed accommodations, most of what she focused on was how EAs are assigned and used in her classroom. When assigning EAs, Erika admits that it is hard to accommodate all students who need an EA as there is one assigned to a class where many students require one. In a civics class, which she had previously reported she found hard to teach, Erika found that she and the EA did not work well together. Because the EA had a pre-established relationship with some of the students outside of the class, Erika felt that the relationship between the EA and the students in the class bordered on inappropriate; Erika also reported that she felt the EA would “just get up and leave … without saying where she was going or how long she would be.” Erika believes that this behaviour on the part of the EA was “enabling” students in their poor behaviour, which made Erika’s job more difficult. This was on top of the fact that, in Erika’s view, the ratio of EAs to students who required one was too
low. In Erika’s experience, EAs are also typically only assigned to behavioural students, rather than to students who have learning exceptionalities. This meant that a support person that Erika expected and needed in order to facilitate inclusion was not there.

**DI/UDL.** Erika makes sure that, when she feels she can, she accommodates all students regardless of the presence of an exceptionality. For example, she reports giving “extra time to everybody.” Similarly, she makes sure that she only assesses what is necessary, such as when she does not “count spelling or grammar on [something] like a history test.” In Erika’s view, this “helps kids with IEPs because they know the content but [sometimes] it just doesn't come out the same way written down.”

Erika’s teaching pedagogy uses a number of principles of DI and UDL, as she uses a strategy called “gradual release. Usually, like, we'll do an example all together, so I'll have it like on a computer and we'll talk through it, and it's on the projector screen, and they probably have a handout as well.” Then, students gradually work on the task independently. She also makes sure she teaches to “all different types of learning styles.” Through these techniques Erika hopes to meet the learning needs of as many students as possible.

**Knowing Your Students**

Erika has found that there is a lack of information presented to her in sources such as IEPs and OSRs. Therefore, she finds she needs to look to others to provide her the information she feels she requires to teach.

**IEP limitations.** Erika reports that the IEPs that she has consulted have been lacking in the information she believes she requires in order to do her best job as a teacher. When discussing IEPs, Erika noted the issues in getting useful information from
them, as in her experience, “the IEP’s are not up-to-date or are not provided to the
classroom teacher until months into the teaching term or never.” Once she feels that she
needs more information, she has to “specifically go in [to the office] and sign it out.”
Because no one is providing her with this information, Erika has “had students with like
schizophrenia and [she] don't know about it until maybe the end [of the course].” This
seems inappropriate to Erika who believes information about the students’ mental health
crises is critical information that should be provided to her.

Similarly, Erika suggested that IEPs should contain information regarding
students’ “background concerns, like that they've just been removed from their home
because of abuse or neglect.” Erika feels this directly “affects their learning” more than
an exceptionality. The only way she feels she can “find out that information is through
making friends with [other teachers].” In Erika’s view, this information should be
provided to her; Erika feels she should not have to seek it out for herself.

Even if the IEP had all the information Erika requires in order to best include
these students, she also believes that the Ministry of Education and the board need to
limit who receives an IEP. Erika believes that we need to make sure that the IEPs are for
diagnosed disabilities. In Erika’s view, “suddenly everyone has anxiety” even though
there has been no diagnosis. Erika believes that this leads to there being too many IEPs
with listed accommodations, and that “everyone gets extra time.” She believes that
without a diagnosis from a trained professional, students should not be eligible to receive
an IEP.

**Gathering student information.** Erika gathers any additional information she
needs about students from one of two sources. First, she makes sure that she is always
“asking students … what methods they prefer or find the clearest” and she subsequently modifies her teaching methods to use “those methods more.” Erika talked about an instance where she was “teaching a theory lesson once and [the music students] were just not responding.” Erika paused the lesson, and asked the students “why they weren’t engaged in the lesson.” Upon hearing the lesson was too hard, Erika reported that she “explained to them that it was my fault for making the lesson not clear and not their fault for not getting it.” The next day, Erika decided to use “chunking,” where she “re-taught it in a more broken up way, with smaller steps.” However, Erika did note that she did not modify her teaching style to suit the needs of the students until after they were having difficulties. Erika also makes sure she talks to colleagues, but that tends to be to one particular teacher with whom she has cultivated a “mentor-type relationship.”

**Summarizing Erika’s Perspective**

Erika believes that the educators and administrators around her have a big role to play in her facilitating the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in her classroom. She feels that others need to provide her with the information, resources, and teaching strategies she requires in order to teach to the needs of all students. At times, Erika came across as a teacher who is struggling to find her place within the education system, as she tries to navigate how to include students with exceptionalities in her classroom while not being provided what she believes she needs.

**Summarizing Chapter 4**

The four cases recounted here represent a diverse range of educators from one mid-sized school board in Ontario. This chapter has reported on the experiences of teachers at schools in rural, suburban, and urban areas, as well as teachers who have
taught a variety of course subjects. This chapter has reported on the perspectives of both beginning and experienced teachers. The four themes emerging from the data were: the challenge of staying current, structures and people, meeting everyone’s needs, and knowing your students. An analysis of the themes across the four cases is presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study describes the cases of four diverse secondary school teachers in Ontario and how they facilitate the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms. I begin this chapter by discussing the four themes and relating the findings to the larger body of literature. The second section uses these cross-case findings to answer the original research questions posed in Chapter 1. In the third section, I reflect on the study as a whole, including discussing the limitations of the research, as well as posing recommendations for further research and practice. Finally, I end this chapter, and this thesis as a whole, with some concluding comments on my experience and on the research.

Connections with the Literature

As comparisons were made between the four cases, several themes emerged, which are detailed in Chapter 4. These themes are shown in Table 2 (p. 31). All four major themes: the challenge of staying current, structures and people, meeting everyone’s needs, and knowing your students—were found in responses given by each participant. Here, each of the four individual themes is presented, and the description of each theme is interwoven with comparisons to the wider body of research.

The Challenge of Staying Current

All four participants talked about the difficulties of keeping their teaching practices up to date, especially within the current system of professional development days. The professional development that permeates most of the responses participants gave appears to follow the short, single day sessions that Macaulay (2005) discussed in her thesis. None of the teachers seemed to find these days particularly useful and they
were eager to discuss other ways of attaining new skills. Especially in the case of Erika, who discussed attending PD day sessions that were either targeted at the wrong age level or AQs that were out of date. A large number of the PD sessions these teachers reported attending did not consider “the subject matter, the age of the teacher’s students, or their level of cognitive development” (Macaulay, 2005, p. 47).

Each participant was given the opportunity to design their own optimal professional development day. While there were minor variations in the details surrounding each, there were clear themes that emerged from the participants’ answer. The largest was that all four teachers wanted professional development that is led by teachers, whether that is through workshops led by in-service teachers, or collaborative inquiry driven by groups of teachers. Development opportunities like these are consistent with Palombo’s (2003) five aspects of effective professional development, most obviously in the ability of collaborative inquiry to promote collaboration in teaching. Erika’s attempt to engage in a collaborative inquiry project with her peers mirrors Moll’s (2001) comments about how the company we keep influences what we learn—suggesting that the best way for Erika to learn about including students with exceptionalities in her classroom is by participating in PD with other music teachers. Similarly, participants wanted PD that is directly linked to daily practice, such as Reese’s desire for the board to implement a PD consolidation process, which again links to Palombo’s (2003) work on aspects of effective collaboration in teaching.

The collaborative inquiry team described by Reese is arguably also a PLC as defined by Bolan and McMahon (2004). Unlike many of the research studies surrounding PLC groups, Reese’s account of his summer collaborative inquiry project contains some
reporting that the experience and outcome impacted his classroom teaching and assessment. Little to none of previous research into PLCs has suggested whether the practice is effective in updating teachers’ knowledge; this study goes beyond current research, and suggests that, in Reese’s case, the PLC he was involved in changed his assessment and classroom teaching methods.

Meeting Everyone’s Needs

All four teachers reported using principles of DI and UDL, although at times their usage seemed to be at an unconscious level; only one participant used either term to describe their teaching methods, and only after probing. Arguably, these four teachers are using a modernized version of adaptive teaching proposed by Corno (2008). Although the current study did not observe teaching practices in the classroom, participants reported teaching in ways that are similar to the findings of Paterson (2007), in that these teachers are thinking about the whole class, while simultaneously recognizing the needs of the individual student. Reese, Erika, Jack, and Claire desired to create engaging, safe, and accepting learning environments for all students, which mirrors the teachers in Edwards’ (2000) study who also looked to create supportive environments. Reese, Jack, and Claire also reported using other teaching strategies that overlap with Edwards’ (2000) findings, including letting students take more responsibility over their research and collaborating with other teachers.

All four talked about co-teaching and planning, and Jack considered it to be one of the best forms of inclusive education, in line with Friend and Cook (2012). Reese was able to give concrete examples of a course where co-teaching was a possibility, and his description that he was able to do something that was “exciting” suggested that the co-
teaching model provided great learning opportunities for students in the English classroom, which is verified by the results of Walsh and Snyder’s (1993) study on the effectiveness of co-teaching.

Reese is using a form of tiered instruction when he groups by students’ abilities. His use of the method is in line with research by Adams and Pierce (2003) and Servillo (2009), although he did not go into specifics on what tasks he assigns when using this method. Reese’s use of choice, especially when assigning readings, is also seen in research by Servillo (2009). Although there has been research on RTI done in secondary schools (e.g., Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012), none of the participants in this study reported using the method; two teachers reported not knowing what RTI entails, suggesting that the findings of Sansosti et al. (2011) hold true, that as it is currently conceptualized, RTI is not designed for secondary schools and their unique, departmentalized structure.

Some of the current study’s findings go beyond what is found in the research. The methods of reaching all students reported by these teachers are typically described in research as ways of adapting curriculum and teaching to students with exceptionalities. These four teachers, however, use these methods as a way to reach all the students within their classroom, whether they are identified with an exceptionality or not identified. This suggests that these methods do not have to be used just to reach exceptional students, but they can be used to help any student succeed in the classroom.

**Structures and People**

Although all the participants did not report Erika’s suggestion that the board “is terrible” at inclusion, they all had similar ideas for how the board can help to facilitate the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in their classrooms. They all agreed that, in an
ideal situation, there would be some form of teamwork among all levels of educators: classroom teachers, special education teachers, and administrators. Both Jack and Reese reported that they wished to see the administration take on a larger role in the classroom, which may include daily visits to classes. This idea, along with Erika’s opinion that administration has “nothing” to do with inclusion, is in line with the findings of Leithwood (2008) who suggested that administrative roles were different in high schools, where leadership was less visible and more hands-off when it came to the classroom. This suggests that these teachers wish administrators would be more like their elementary counterparts. Although Leithwood (2008) suggested that the balkanized nature of secondary schools offers “significant opportunities for collegial collaboration,” the four teachers in this study report little collaboration, inter-departmental or otherwise. Reese discussed some form of team-teaching, and he seemed open to trying it again, while Jack described a desire to implement team-teaching in his classroom, although he does not have much experience with the practice. Cook (1995) suggested that, in theory, co-teaching is tailor made for secondary schools, but, based on the responses of these four teachers, it is not happening in practice. The four teachers reported that they do not ever co-teach, as it is not feasible with the limited resources provided.

**Knowing Your Students**

The four participants in the study discussed the need to know their students at a level that students’ files (such as the IEP or OSR) do not allow. Jack and Claire—and to some extent, Reese—discussed getting to know the individual learning needs of their students and then catering their teaching to meet them. They largely ignored the label placed on students by an IEP and looked for information on the students’ functional
learning needs at any given time. This is in line with the International Classification of Functioning and Disability (ICF; WHO, 2001, 2007), which characterizes the functional needs of a disability as ever-changing, based on a person’s health and contextual factors. Jack, Claire, and Reese understood that students’ learning needs change, often between annual IPRC meetings, and they constantly gather information to understand the students’ needs at any given moment. They then used a teaching method similar to Corno (2008) to adapt their teaching to the strengths of the students.

The findings from the current study extend beyond existing research as the data strongly suggests these four teachers do not rely on the information contained within the IEP or OSR in order to understand a student’s needs. Some go so far as to ignore the information, if they were able to access it at all. Three of the four teachers feel there is a need to gather key information from the primary sources, such as the student, the parent, or previous teachers. There is no previous research suggesting secondary school teachers are ignoring information provided to them by annual IEP or IPRC meetings, nor is there any that suggests they vigorously gather information on students’ needs from multiple sources.

**Revisiting the Purpose**

The four secondary teachers in this study facilitate inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms by considering how the students’ functional needs impact their learning of the curriculum; in fact, three of the four teachers consider functional learning and assessment needs of all students, not just exceptional students, when planning and teaching their classes. They do this by taking initiative to learn about the students’ needs mainly thorough informal means, such as talking with the students, their
parents, and other teachers. They pay much less attention to the formal diagnosis and IEP
documentation that is produced in accordance with the legislation and policies of the
OME. Similarly, they pay little attention to the OME documents intended to guide
inclusive teaching and assessment, which are geared much more to elementary school
classrooms (e.g., Learning for All [OME, 2013a], Growing Success [OME, 2010b]) and
three of the four take personal initiative to remain current, seeing this as their
responsibility. All would like more relevant, hands-on PD, but already use many DI and
UDL strategies. And all would like to see more collaboration with colleagues and more
structural support for inclusion. These findings suggest, for these teachers at least, the
OME has not focused on the resources and information most important to secondary
teachers who are committed to inclusive education.

Answering the Research Questions

Comparisons between previous research and the findings of this study have
shown that there are some connections to be made with the wider body of literature
surrounding the inclusion of exceptional students in secondary classrooms. However,
while it is important that the findings are compared to the literature that informs this
work, it is also important to describe how the findings answer the research questions
posed in Chapter 1. To reiterate, these questions were:

1. How do classroom teachers see their roles in relation to the teaching of
   exceptional students in inclusive secondary classrooms?

2. How do these teachers see their roles in relation to the roles of others
   (administrators and special education heads) within the school?
3. What types of instructional methods do classroom teachers report using when teaching exceptional learners in a regular classroom?

4. How do these teachers report using ministry documents (such as *Education for All* [OME, 2005], *Learning for All* [OME, 2013a], and *Growing Success* [OME, 2010b]) to inform their educational practice?

5. Where do these teachers go to further their knowledge and attain new skills in instructing exceptional learners?

6. How does current professional development on instructional strategies for exceptional students help or hinder these teachers? What kinds of professional development would they prefer to stay informed about teaching exceptional students?

Each of these questions will be addressed in a separate subsection.

**Question 1: Teacher’s Roles**

The four participants of this study expressed similar opinions on what their role is in teaching exceptional students in inclusive classrooms; each expressed notions that they were there to provide all students with teaching that is engaging, inclusive, and that conforms to the principals of both UDL and DI. In Jack, Claire, and Reese’s minds, providing a student with what they need is not limited only to students with exceptionalities—all students need to learn. The answer to this research question is captured well by Jack:

My role [as a teacher] is to teach every student. It’s no different. I think it’s like when you have children and your children are different, and I would think, I’m not going to parent one or the other, I’m going to do what I can to help all of my
kids grow.

For Erika, the role of a teacher is to modify and accommodate the curriculum for students with exceptionalities, but she notes that it is not always possible under current conditions.

**Question 2: Other Educator’s Roles**

All four teachers defined their role in relation to others in the same way—both the administration and the special education head or resource teachers are there to support the classroom teacher in their efforts to create an inclusive classroom. The administration might facilitate communication, for example during transition years (Grade 8 to Grade 9), they may provide access to PD or they may provide the assistive technology needed in classrooms. Special education heads should, according to these four teachers, be providing specific, on-demand PD for teachers on assistive technology. They should also be available to implement some of the accommodations that require the presence of an additional educator, such as extra time or scribing.

**Question 3: Instructional Methods**

Teachers in this study reported using instructional methods that conform to principles of DI and UDL, although most of them did not necessarily use either term to describe their teaching. In developing and implementing teaching methods, participants discussed striving to meet the individual needs of students, and focusing on their functional needs in the classroom, rather than going by what was contained in individual IEPs and OSRs. This conforms with newer thinking on special education, including the ICF. Like the implementation of DI and UDL, the participants were not necessarily aware that they were doing something that conformed to a new way of thinking about special education; rather, they taught this way because they felt it was their job.
**Question 4: Use of Ministry Documents**

Interestingly, teachers in this study reported that they rarely use the ministry provided documents (such as *Education for All* [OME, 2005], *Learning for All* [OME, 2013a], and *Growing Success* [OME, 2010b]) to inform their teachings. At most, these participants read the documents when they were first printed or when the teachers were first hired. After that, they did not return to the documents in order to gain additional knowledge—although one did report using a board-developed version of *Growing Success* (OME, 2010b). Some participants reported not having ever read the ministry documents until immediately before the interview, while another mentioned having never received in-service on the newest inclusive education document, *Learning for All* (OME, 2013a), despite it being written with secondary school teachers in mind.

**Question 5: Sources of New Knowledge**

Teachers in this study reported going to multiple sources in order to further their knowledge and attain new skills in instructing exceptional learners. These participants regarded fellow teachers as the number one way to attain new skills, so much so, that participants reported that they wished in-service teachers taught PD. Participants also reported conferences, AQ courses, and collaborative inquiry projects as valued methods of PD.

**Question 6: Current Professional Development**

The first part of this question is hard to answer, given that the responses from the participants indicated that there is little professional development currently going on within the board that explicitly deals with instructional strategies for exceptional students. All four participants were unable to name a professional development day or course,
offered through the board, that dealt with these ideas directly. Only one participant, Claire, was able to discuss this PD in some way, as she was required to take a half-day session on IEPs as part of her NTIP. However, she was unable to remember details surrounding the information contained within this PD, suggesting that it was ineffective. All four participants held strong beliefs when it came to the second part of the question about what types of professional development they would prefer. Each participant was very clear what that wanted PD that was not taught in a lecture style format, and they all preferred a workshop style approach that had some practical hands on components. They also all expressed desires for the PD sessions to be run by other practicing teachers, or, if this was not possible, that experts be brought in from outside the board to run PD.

**Limitations of the Research**

There were three notable limitations of this study. The first limitation is the size of the participant group. The small number of participants could limit the transferability and generalizability of the study. This study sidesteps the need for a larger group of participants through the use of a multiple perspective case study approach, but the information contained here may not be representative of the wider group of secondary school teachers in Ontario. Subsequently, the small number of participants also led to four participants who, while diverse, do not necessarily reflect a wide range of teaching experience or content areas. All four teachers taught in humanities classrooms, and three of them taught in some form of an English classroom. The perspectives of science teachers are not reported. As well, the participants were on two ends of the experience spectrum, with three being relatively new teachers with less than five years’ experience, and one with 20. There is no representation within this study of teachers who completed
their bachelor of education in the early 2000s, when full inclusion was becoming the norm in Ontario secondary schools.

The second limitation is the process of recruitment. Starting snowball sampling with a purposeful selection of initial contacts created a scenario where several of the participants were friends. I know both Jack and Claire through a graduate program. Because of this, I knew what kind of participants these two would be, and knew, to a certain degree, what views on inclusion and teaching methods they would report. I worked around this by making sure I followed the interview protocol with both participants, although the study may have been strengthened by having four participants who were unknown to me, or if these interviews had been conducted by a third party.

The third limitation is with the participants, and the process of recruitment. Because this study sought volunteers as participants, there is a chance that only teachers who have a positive view on inclusion would respond to the recruitment emails. Eventually, this might lead to a group of participants whose responses would be entirely positive toward the topic, even though there are teachers who believe that schools should not be practicing inclusion. Three of the four participants in the current study gave responses that were positive towards inclusion and inclusionary methods, while the fourth is not as positive. Finally, the nature of the study may lead to the participants feeling some social desirability, the phenomenon where research participants “attempt to act in ways that make them seem desirable to other people” (Furr, 2010, 1395). In this case, the participants may have given responses that are positive in an attempt to facilitate the overall research questions. However, the robust nature of the data suggests that the participants were giving responses that reflected their true beliefs and teaching practices.
Recommendations

I make five recommendations: three recommendations for future research, and two recommendations for educational practice. The research recommendations include expanding this study to include teachers from all subject areas, as well as expanding the research to other school boards in Ontario. I also recommend a follow-up study on teacher’s knowledge and use of OME developed professional documents. Further, there needs to be additional research on using ICF in Ontario as both a teaching tool and a tool for developing more adaptive IEPs. As for practice, I make large scale recommendations that the OME and its school boards reorganize their PD to recognize the teachers’ learning preferences and pedagogical needs. As well, I call for school boards to both find and fund further research in secondary schools in order to develop resources that are more applicable for secondary school teachers in Ontario.

Recommendations for Research

First, although this study follows Creswell’s (2013) suggestion that a multiple perspective case study should have “no more than four or five cases” (p. 101), this study could easily be reconceived as a typical qualitative study where between seven and ten participants of diverse backgrounds are interviewed, and their data are analysed together. In fact, that is how this study was initially conceived, before I settled on four participants. However, expanding the study to include more teachers would allow for more varied perspectives on how secondary school teachers include students with exceptionalities in their regular classrooms. It would also increase the chances that the participants would be varied in their teaching subjects. Further research needs to seek participants who teach in subjects other than the humanities in order to create a more robust picture of the state of
inclusive teaching in Ontario. Future research also needs to be expanded to include participants from multiple boards, in order to consider whether secondary school teachers are consistent across Ontario, and, if they are not, what boards are doing to help their teachers to achieve different inclusive teaching methods.

Second, further research needs to be conducted on secondary school teachers’ use and understanding of professional documents. Of the participants who have been employed as teachers in regular secondary school classrooms (Claire, Reese, and Erika), none of the three had any knowledge on the OME’s recently released *Learning for All* (2013a), a document designed and created with the purpose of helping teachers, including secondary teachers, include students with exceptionalities in their classrooms. While researching for this study, I came across no literature on teachers’ use of these documents, or whether teachers had knowledge of the information contained within them. A study needs to be conducted that determines whether the cost (in both money and personnel) of producing professional documents such as *Learning for All* (OME, 2013a) leads to teacher use of them.

The final recommendation for future research involves investigating the usefulness of the WHO’s ICF (2001, 2007) in Ontario as a means of enhancing teachers’ inclusion of students with exceptionalities. As studies conducted in Portugal (e.g., Sanches-Ferreira et al., 2014) attest, ICF can replace a psycho-educational diagnosis in special education with a description of the functional needs of the student. This may allow for more students to receive an IEP—formal or informal—as the wait for psycho-educational testing could be avoided. I can locate no studies attempting to determine if
ICF could be implemented successfully as part of Ontario’s special education program. Simply put, there should be such studies.

**Recommendations for Practice**

All four teachers spoke about needing PD that is tailored to their personal teaching and learning styles, as well as their pedagogical needs. When taken together, responses from the four participants reveal that their board seems to decide what teachers need to focus their PD on, regardless of the needs expressed by teachers. This has led to experiences such as Erika’s, where she attended a board sponsored PD session full of information for elementary teachers. Boards should consider adopting more PD experiences like Reese’s collaborative inquiry experience, or consider adapting their PD plans to follow the five essential elements of effective professional development articulated by Palombo (2003). They also need to foster social experiences in their PD, as recommended by Little (1993) and Moll (2001).

Secondly, the OME needs to fund more research in their secondary schools, especially research focused on developing or testing teaching methods for students with exceptionalities. There is not enough research being conducted in secondary settings. It is obvious when one examines *Learning for All’s* (2013a) cited research that such documents rely on research conducted in elementary schools. If the OME wishes to keep their secondary teachers up to date on the latest methods of inclusionary teaching, they need to fund research to make sure these methods are being developed appropriately for the unique culture of secondary schools.
Concluding Thoughts

To conclude, this study suggests that the professional documents produced by the OME are not used; yet three of the four teachers used methods of inclusion that conform to the principles of DI and UDL. Furthermore, these teachers strive to ensure that all students, not just those deemed exceptional, are included in their classrooms. This study also suggests that these secondary teachers are adapting their teaching styles based on students’ functional needs, rather than on their label.

As I continue on my journey to become an academic teaching preservice teachers at a faculty of education, this study has shown me that I need to tailor my teaching to the functional needs of my students, exceptional or otherwise, much like Reese, Claire, and Jack tailor their instruction. Furthermore, I need to ensure that my courses highlight the importance of getting to know your students and their needs, as well as the importance of their colleagues. I have begun to do both of these in some of my teaching, but this study has reinforced my desire to continue to do so.

I want to end by returning to the story that gave the context for my desire to conduct this study. I ended my introductory story by posing a question: “What role did my teachers and administrators play in creating a successful and inclusive learning environment for me?” This thesis has potentially reached an answer to this question. My teachers may not have recognized that I had an exceptionality that needed to be identified, but they did recognize that I needed them to adapt their teaching style to my functional learning needs. As we reach a point where more and more students require special education services, I hope that all teachers will adapt their teaching in the way
that my teachers, and the participants in this study, do. It will undoubtedly lead to many more students with unidentified exceptionalities thriving in our education system.
REFERENCES


116


Ontario Ministry of Education. (2005). *Education for all: The report of the expert panel on literacy and numeracy instruction for students with special education needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6.* Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario.


Rosman, N. J. S. (1994). *Effects of varying the special educator’s role within an algebra class on math attitude and achievement* (Master’s thesis). (ERIC number ED381993)


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Recruitment Email

Subject: Participants needed for research on inclusive education in secondary school

Hello;

My name is Kyle Robinson and I am currently completing research for my Master of Education thesis, entitled “Secondary School Teachers’ Perception of Educational Roles that Enhance the Inclusion of Exceptional Students.” The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how secondary school teachers in Ontario facilitate the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms. It aims to understand how teachers understand their role and the roles of others when including exceptional students in regular classrooms; what methods of inclusion classroom teachers use in facilitating the inclusion of exceptional students; how educators use Ministry of Education documents (such as Growing Success and Learning for All) to inform their teaching; how current methods of professional development for inclusion help educators; and what methods of professional development secondary school educators prefer.

For the purposes of this study, I am looking for research participants who teach in inclusive secondary school classrooms. Participants can either be currently teaching, or they may have taught in these settings within the past two years. Participants should have been involved in the planning, teaching, and management of the course. As such, teachers who have exclusively taught short-term LTOs or have only substitute taught are not eligible.

If you agree, the research would entail taking part in two interviews. The first would be between 45-60 minutes in length, would be in person, and would involve questions about your background as an educator, how you see your role in providing education to students with exceptional needs, what inclusionary teaching practices you currently use in your classrooms, how (or if) you use professional documents (such as Growing Success and Learning for All), and what kinds of professional development on inclusion you have taken and what types you would prefer. The second interview would last 15-30 minutes, and could be conducted by email, over the phone, or in person – whichever is of most convenience to you. It would consist of any follow-up questions from our initial interview, and you would have the chance to review the transcript of our first interview, or a three-page summary, should you wish. The total time requirement for participating would be no more than 1.5 hours.

Your participation is completely voluntary and every effort will be made to protect your anonymity through the use of pseudonyms.

The General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University has given ethical clearance for this study to be conducted.

Please find attached both the Letter of Information for the Study, as well as a sample consent form. These should answer any additional questions you may have. However, if they do not, or you wish to ask me (the principal researcher) any additional questions, please do not hesitate to call me on my cell phone at 647-629-0644 or email me at 7kr6@queensu.ca. If you wish to contact my supervisor, Dr. Nancy Hutchinson, she may be reached at hutchinn@queensu.ca; 613-533-3025.

If you know of any other teachers who are currently teaching in inclusive classrooms in Ontario and would be interested in participating in this research, please forward them this recruitment email.

Please let me know as soon as possible whether you are interested in participating in this study.

Thank you for your time. I hope to hear from you soon.

Kyle Robinson
Appendix B: Letter of Information

Secondary School Teachers’ Perception of Educational Roles that Enhance the Inclusion of Exceptional Students

This research is being conducted by Kyle Robinson (Master of Education, Candidate) under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Hutchinson in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen’s policies.

What is this study about? The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how secondary school teachers in Ontario facilitate the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms. It aims to understand how teachers view their role and the roles of others when including exceptional students in regular classrooms; what methods of inclusion classroom teachers use in facilitating the inclusion of exceptional students; how educators use Ministry of Education documents (such as Growing Success and Learning for All) to inform their teaching; how current methods of professional development for inclusion help educators; and what methods of professional development secondary school educators prefer.

What will this study require? If you agree to participate in this research you will be asked to be interviewed on two separate occasions—with the first interview lasting 45–60 minutes, and the second lasting 15–30 minutes. The first interview will ask you questions about: your educational experience; your experience with special needs students in inclusive classrooms; how you define your educational role and how you see it interacting with other educational roles; the methods of professional development you have been involved in; and what methods of professional development you feel work best for you. Interviews will be conducted at a location of your choosing, will last a maximum of one hour, and will be recorded in digital audio files.

The second interview will occur about 2 weeks after the initial interview. You will have the choice of what format this interview can take—it can be conducted through email, on the phone, or in person. This interview will consist of any follow-up or clarification questions after the initial interview. As well, you will have the option to review either a transcript or three-page summary of the initial interview. This interview will also be recorded in digital audio files.

The total estimated time required for participation is 1.5 hours’ maximum.

Is participation voluntary? Your participation is completely voluntary and choosing not to participate will not result in any adverse consequences. There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study. Further, you are free to choose, without reason or consequence, to refuse to answer any questions. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences. If you withdraw from the study, you may choose to have your data removed.

Will my responses remain confidential? Confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible. None of the data will contain your name or the identity of your place of work. To protect your identity a pseudonym will replace your name on all data files and in any dissemination of findings.

What will happen to my responses? The interview recording will be transcribed and then the recording will be destroyed. All electronic files will be password protected. Paper and audio data will be secured in a locked cabinet. I will maintain copies of the transcripts for a minimum of 5 years and may use the data (with names removed) in subsequent research. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible. None of the data will contain your name or the identity of your place of work. To protect your identity a pseudonym will replace your name on all data files and in any dissemination of findings. This research may result in publications of various types, including journal articles or other professional publications.

What if I have concerns? Any questions about study participation or a request to withdraw from the study may be directed to Kyle Robinson at 7kr6@queensu.ca; 647-629-0644 or the supervisor Dr. Nancy Hutchinson at hutchinn@queensu.ca; 613-533-3025. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at (613) 533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.
Appendix C: Consent Form

Secondary School Teachers’ Perception of Educational Roles that Enhance the Inclusion of Exceptional Students

Name (please print clearly): ___________________________________________________

1. I have read and retained the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I will be participating in the study called Secondary School Teachers’ Perception of Educational Roles that Enhance the Inclusion of Exceptional Students. I understand the purpose of this research is to explore the way secondary school teachers understand their roles and the roles of others when including exceptional students in regular classrooms, along with the methods of professional development on inclusion best suited to secondary teachers. I understand that participation in this study will entail a maximum of 1.5 hours of my time involving: an audio recorded face-to-face interview (maximum 60 minutes) and a follow-up interview by either email, phone or in person (of which I may choose the most convenient method) (maximum 30 minutes).

3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without adverse consequences. I understand that if I withdraw from the study, I may choose to have my data removed. I understand that the data may also be published in professional journals or presented at academic conferences. I understand that every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality to the extent possible now and in the future.

4. I am aware that any questions about study participation or a request to withdraw from the study may be directed to Kyle Robinson at 7kr6@queensu.ca; 647-629-0644 or my supervisor Dr. Nancy Hutchinson at hutchinn@queensu.ca; 613-533-3025. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at (613) 533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

Please sign one copy of this Consent Form and return to the researcher.
Retain the second copy for your records.

I have read the above statements and had any questions answered. I freely consent to participate in this study.

Participant’s Signature: ___________________________________________________

Date: ___________________ E-mail address: _______________________________
Appendix D: Initial Interview Guide

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet today. I know it’s a busy time right now, and I appreciate you taking time from your personal schedule to talk with me. To sum up what we discussed in regard to the study:

- This interview should take no more than 60 minutes, although, should you wish, we can go over that time.
- The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy of information recorded and used for the project. You will receive a copy of the transcript (or a three page executive summary) that you can look over and verify, if you wish.
- You will not be identified, as pseudonyms will replace your name and any identifying information.

As part of my research, I am hoping to gain an understanding of how secondary school teachers in Ontario facilitate the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms. I’m going to be asking you questions about how you view your role as a teacher, what methods of inclusion you use in your classroom, what types of professional development you’ve taken and prefer, and your use of ministry documents. I’ll also give you the chance to add anything extra you feel is important that I don’t cover.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Background
1. How long have you been a certified teacher in Ontario? When did you complete your Bachelor of Education?
2. What subjects do you teach? Grades?
3. Do you have experience, either through LTOs or otherwise, teaching other subjects?
4. How many schools have you taught at?
5. How often do you see exceptional students in your classroom? Out of an average class size of thirty, how many would have formal IEPs? Informal?

Roles & Role Expectations
6. How do you see your role in the overall teaching of students with exceptionalities?
   6.1 How do you see the administration’s role as interacting with that?
   6.2 Can you give an example of a time that an administrator provided what you needed?
   6.3 Can you give an example of a time that you needed something and the administrator did not or was unable to fill this role?
   6.4 What about the head of special education (the resource room teacher)?
   6.5 Can you give an example of a time that an administrator provided what you needed?
   6.6 Can you give an example of a time that you needed something and the administrator did not or was unable to fill this role?
Instructional Methods
7. What types of instructional techniques do you find most effective when teaching exceptional students in your class?
   7.1 Differentiated Instruction?
   7.2 Co-teaching/planning?
   7.2 Heuristics?
   7.4 Response to Intervention?
   7.5 EAs

8. Have you ever used documents written by the ministry of education to directly influence your teaching of students with exceptionalities?
   8.1 Learning for All (2013)
   8.2 Education for All (2005)
   8.3 Growing Success (2010)

Professional Development
9. What types of in-service or professional development on inclusion do you most often receive?
   9.1 Workshops?
   9.2 Lectures?
   9.3 How often?
   9.4 Can you give me an example of one incident of professional development you received?

10. What sources do you use most frequently to update your teaching and assessment strategies?
    10.1 Are you subscribed to any journals, other than Professionally Speaking?

11. What types of in-service or professional development do you see being most effective for yourself? (Examples: workshops, lectures, email newsletters, pamphlets, lengthier documents)
    11.1 If you could design your ideal PD day (or days), what would it look like?
    Walk me through it.
    Length of time
    Topic
    Who gives it?
    Who is there?
    What level is it at ... school? Board? Province?

Magic Wand
12. If you could be provided with anything to help you facilitate the inclusion of exceptional students in your classroom, what would it be?
13. Is there anything else you’d like to talk about you think I missed?
Appendix E: Follow-up Interview Guide for Claire

1. What do you mean you would like administrators to “provide for us”? What exactly would you like them to provide?
   1.1 Can you give an example of a time that an administrator provided what you needed?
   1.2 Can you give an example of a time that you needed something provided and the administrator was unable or unwilling to provide it for you?

2. Can you provide an example of something that the resource room teacher did for you that was really helpful for each school you’ve been at?
   2.1 Can you provide an example or two of things you wish they had done in certain scenarios that they didn’t or couldn’t?

3. You’ve mentioned that you wished that the resource room teacher is someone who is an in-between for you and your students …. Can you give a specific example of a time that the resource room worked this way for you?

4. We talked a little about using EAs in your classroom. Can you give a specific example of how you have worked with an EA recently?

5. I want to make sure I know what you mean - you mentioned learning in two modes – can you tell me about something that you did recently in one of your classes where students learned in two modes?

6. Do you have a recent example or a story to tell about one time you asked an EA for help in making something out of the ordinary happen in the classroom?

7. You mentioned Growing Success and the board handbook … Are there any other documents you use?

8. Can you give me an example of a PD day where this has been the case? Walk me through that day.

9. We talked about your preferred method of PD, which you said was workshop style. If you could design your ideal PD day (or days), what would it look like? Walk me through it.
   9.1 Length of time
   9.2 Topic
   9.3 Who gives it?
   9.4 Who is there?
   9.5 What level is it at … school? Board? Province?
Appendix F: General Research Ethics Board Approvals

1. Initial study approval from GREB, August 08, 2014.

August 08, 2014

Mr. Kyle Robinson
Master’s Student
Faculty of Education
Queen's University
Duncan McArthur Hall, Room A106
511 Union Street West
Kingston, ON, K7M5R7

GREB Ref #: GEDUC-737-14; Romeo # 6013244
Title: "GEDUC-737-14 A Multiple Perspective Case Study of Educational Roles that Enhance Inclusion in One Ontario Secondary School"

Dear Mr. Robinson:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDUC-737-14 A Multiple Perspective Case Study of Educational Roles that Enhance Inclusion in One Ontario Secondary School" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Nancy Hutchinson, Faculty Supervisor
    Dr. Christopher DeLuca, Chair, Unit REB
    Dr. Stacey Boulton, c/o Graduate Studies and Bureau of Research

February 13, 2015

Mr. Kyle Robinson  
Master’s Student  
Faculty of Education  
Queen's University  
Duncan McArthur Hall, Room A106  
511 Union Street West  
Kingston ON, K7M5R7

Dear Mr. Robinson:

RE: Amendment for your study entitled: GEDUC-737-14 A Multiple Perspective Case Study of Educational Roles that Enhance Inclusion in One Ontario Secondary School; ROMEO# 6013244

Thank you for submitting your amendment requesting the following changes:

1) All participants will now be general classroom teachers;

2) To draw participants from schools in eastern Ontario;

3) To increase the number of teacher participants from a maximum of five to a maximum of seven;

4) The study will now report the perspectives of high school teachers on their educational role, how their role interacts with other educational roles, how professional development helps or hinders their understanding of teacher practices, and also describe these teachers’ reports of their classroom practices when acting to enhance the education of exceptional students;

5) To recruit participants using snowball sampling methods.

By this letter you have ethics clearance for these changes.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.  
Chair  
General Research Ethics Board  
c.: Dr. Nancy Hutchinson, Supervisor
3. Title amendment approval, July 16, 2015.

July 16, 2015

Mr. Kyle Robinson
Master’s Student
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Duncan McArthur Hall, Room A106
511 Union Street West
Kingston, ON, K7M 5R7

Dear Mr. Robinson:

RE: Amendment for your study entitled: GEDUC-737-14 Secondary School Teachers’ Perception of Educational Roles that Enhance the Inclusion of Exceptional Students; ROMEO# 6013244

Thank you for submitting your amendment requesting to change the title from “A Multiple Perspective Case Study of Educational Roles that Enhance Inclusion in One Ontario Secondary School” to “Secondary School Teachers’ Perception of Educational Roles that Enhance the Inclusion of Exceptional Students.”

By this letter you have ethics clearance for this change, and the Romeo file has been updated accordingly.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c.: Dr. Nancy Hutchinson, Supervisor

July 16, 2015

Mr. Kyle Robinson
Master’s Student
Faculty of Education
Queen's University
Duncan McArthur Hall, Room A106
511 Union Street West
Kingston, ON, K7M 5R7

GREB Romeo #: 6013244
Title: "GEDUC-737-14 Secondary School Teachers' Perception of Educational Roles that Enhance the Inclusion of Exceptional Students"

Dear Mr. Robinson:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB) has reviewed and approved your request for renewal of ethics clearance for the above-named study. This renewal is valid for one year from August 8, 2015. Prior to the next renewal date you will be sent a reminder memo and the link to ROMEO to renew for another year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period. An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours. Report to GREB through either ROMEO Event Report or Adverse Event Report Form at http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/GeneralREB/forms.html.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes in study procedures or implementation of new aspects into the study procedures. Your request for protocol changes will be forwarded to the appropriate GREB reviewers and/or the GREB Chair. Please report changes to GREB through either ROMEO Event Reports or the Ethics Change Form at http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/GeneralREB/forms.html.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c.: Dr. Nancy Hutchinson, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Liying Cheng, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Erin Wicklam, c/o Graduate Studies and Bureau of Research