How Effective Teachers Differentiate Instruction
and Interact With Students Who Engage in Off-task Behaviours in the Classroom

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover and describe how two teachers effectively interacted with and differentiated instruction for students who displayed off-task behaviors in the classroom. Through the use of observations and interviews, I described how two teachers interacted with students who display high-frequency, low-intensity off-task behaviors; identified strategies these effective teachers used in dealing with these behaviors; described where the teachers’ behaviours, attitudes, and practices lay on the Preventive-Restorative (P-R) continuum of beliefs of inclusion; and discovered how the teachers’ self-efficacy is related to P-R orientations and effective teaching behaviors.

The teachers were chosen based on their principals’ belief in their effectiveness in dealing with off-task behaviours. The principal and the teacher collaboratively chose the students who displayed off-task behaviours on a consistent basis. The findings of this study confirm the existing research; the two teachers, whose beliefs lay on the preventive end of the continuum of beliefs of inclusion, tended to use effective teaching practices; these beliefs and practices were related to the teachers’ beliefs of their capability in being able to effectively help their students; these two teachers, who have preventive beliefs and high efficacy beliefs, interact in ways that are beneficial to students who display off-task behaviours.

The common themes that emerged through the analysis of both teachers’ data included the belief in and the use of differentiated instruction; the belief in the importance of having a positive classroom environment; the practice of ensuring student engagement; the teachers’ use of their knowledge about students; and the teachers’ beliefs about
inclusion and efficacy beliefs. The diversity of the teachers and their classroom contexts resulted in some differences in the findings, which are also discussed.

This research extends previous research about teachers’ beliefs about inclusion and efficacy beliefs to teaching practices used for and interactions with students who display off-task behaviours. The findings also extend previous research revealing a relationship between teachers’ beliefs about inclusion and the belief in the importance of creating a positive classroom environment. Implications of this research for practice and for future research are discussed.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As inclusive education becomes an integral part of the current school systems, teachers face increasing challenges within the classroom. One of the most demanding of these challenges involves students who engage in off-task behaviours. Teachers respond to these behaviours and to other students with exceptionalities, that is disabilities, in many different ways.

Anne Jordan and colleagues (Jordan, Kircaali-Iftar, & Diamond, 1993; Jordan, Lindsay, & Stanovich, 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan & Stanovich, 2004; Jordan, Stanovich, & Roach, 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998) suggest that teachers who have different belief systems, regarding their personal and professional roles and responsibilities in the classroom, interact differently with students who are perceived as having exceptionalities. Teachers who hold positive views about inclusion tend to be more effective in their teaching practices and are more positive in their views of the success of students who have exceptionalities. Research by Jordan and colleagues describes teachers’ beliefs about inclusion as being either preventive or restorative (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). Teachers who hold preventive beliefs tend to think that the teacher is responsible for providing support for students with exceptionalities within the classroom and that challenges that students have result from the environment. Teachers who hold restorative beliefs about inclusion tend to prefer that issues, faced by students with exceptionalities, be dealt with by special education specialists rather than the classroom teacher.
The students involved in the studies conducted by Jordan and colleagues included those students who had been identified with an exceptionality, were at-risk for school failure, or were typically achieving (Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). The Ontario Ministry of Education specifies five categories of exceptionalities, which include behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical disabilities, or multiple exceptionalities involving more than one of these categories (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). To be identified with a behavioural exceptionality, students must exhibit specific behaviours that affect their educational performance and may include an inability to maintain personal relationships, significant fears or anxieties, compulsive reactions, or an inability to learn that cannot be linked to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). Jordan, in the reporting of the research, did not specify the particular types of exceptionalities with which the students had been identified.

The framework about beliefs about inclusion developed by Jordan and colleagues (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan & Stanovich, 2004; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998) can be applied to the inclusion of students who display off-task behaviours in the classroom. Interactions between teachers and students who display off-task behaviours may differ according to teachers’ beliefs about inclusion. Off-task behaviours occur along a continuum of severity and frequency. Low frequency, high-intensity behaviours include behaviours such as aggression, non-compliance, and behaviours associated with depression that may also be related to emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) (Lopes, 2007). These behaviours are high in severity but are not common in the
classroom.

Research has found that the behaviours that teachers consider the most challenging and that are the most prevalent in the classroom are high frequency, low-intensity behaviours (Jones, Charlton, & Wilkin, 1995; Lopes, 2007; Merrett & Wheldall, 1993). These behaviours, which are open to individual interpretation, include talking-out, inattention, general disobedience, and disrupting other children (Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, & Stogiannidou, 2000; Houghton, Wheldall, & Merrett, 1988; Jones et al., 1995; Lopes, 2007). These high frequency, low-intensity behaviours, are present in almost all classrooms, and are dealt with by most teachers.

The comprehensive definition of inclusion used in this thesis refers to shaping the classroom environment and practices to enable all students, regardless of ability or exceptionality, to participate fully in the classroom community. Therefore, while all students who display off-task behaviours may not have identified behavioural exceptionalities, students who consistently display these behaviours do require special attention. This is especially true in inclusive classrooms in which there are several students requiring differing types of support and attention. These students often need teachers who are willing and able to alter instruction so that they can be included in and succeed at classroom activities.

During my experiences observing in various elementary classrooms, I have noticed that teachers adopt diverse approaches to deal with students who display these high frequency, low-intensity off-task behaviours. Some teachers dealt with these types of behaviours effectively, the off-task behaviours slowly subsided through the course of the school year, and, as a result, the behaviours did not pose a significant barrier to
effective classroom teaching. Other teachers had more difficult experiences; off-task behaviours became a significant issue in the classroom, and time spent dealing with these issues took considerable time away from instruction. I began to think about what factors influenced these differences. What types of environments, teaching practices, and behaviour management practices made some teachers more effective in solving behaviour challenges? What other factors play a part in influencing the occurrence of off-task behaviours of students? After reviewing research in the area of behaviour challenges and exceptionalities, I questioned how these practices related to teachers’ self-efficacy and varying views about inclusion of learners with exceptionalities in the classroom.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover and describe how two teachers effectively interact with students who display what teachers consider to be off-task behaviours in the classroom. The specific purposes of this research are:

1. To describe the specific ways in which these two teachers effectively interact with students who display off-task behaviours in the classroom;

2. To identify the types of strategies these two effective teachers use in dealing with off-task behaviours in the classroom;

3. To describe where the two teachers’ behaviours, attitudes, and practices are situated on the Preventive-Restorative continuum;

4. To describe how the two teachers’ self-efficacy is related to Preventive-Restorative orientations and effective teaching behaviours.

Through the study of two teachers who are effective in dealing with students who display off-task behaviours, I examined the types of interactions that occur between these
teachers and their students. During observations, I identified strategies that teachers used to deal with off-task behaviours effectively. Using interviews to examine teachers’ beliefs about inclusion of students with exceptionalities and about their self-efficacy, I described how these beliefs were related to effective teaching behaviours and student-teacher interactions. The broader, more practical purpose of this study, was to provide teachers with examples of practices that other teachers find effective in dealing with students who display off-task behaviours, so that other teachers may utilize some of the practices that they believe may have potentially positive effects in their own classrooms.

Overview of Thesis

The second chapter reviews the literature on teachers’ beliefs about inclusion, teachers’ efficacy beliefs, as well as teaching practices and interactions related to students who display off-task behaviour. Chapter three discusses my rationale for using qualitative methods to carry out this study. I describe the sampling procedures, data collection methods, and the steps I took to analyze the data. I then provide a description of the practices I used to ensure the reliability and validity of my study and the results.

The fourth chapter reports the findings of the analysis of the qualitative observational and interview data. I describe the categories that emerged from the data, and the themes that were formed from these categories. Chapter five includes the cross-case analysis of the findings for the two teachers and the discussion, which relates these findings to relevant theoretical and empirical work. I also address the questions asked in the purpose and how my research has answered these questions. I then discuss the limitations of this study and how I attempted to counteract these limitations. Finally, I consider the implications for practice and for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature that is relevant to the issues of off-task student behaviours, student-teacher interactions, teacher beliefs, effective teacher practices, and teacher efficacy. I begin with an overview of the issue of behaviour challenges in the classroom, describing the importance of the influence that teachers have on the behaviours that students exhibit in the classroom. This description is followed by an examination of the literature on the different types of interactions that occur between teachers and students with exceptionalities and the impact that student-teacher relationships have on student outcomes and behaviour. I then describe the work of Jordan and her colleagues (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan & Stanovich, 2004; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998) that deals with teachers’ beliefs about inclusion and effective teaching practices associated with these beliefs. Finally, the literature is reviewed on teacher efficacy and on how this construct relates to teachers’ effective practices and practices specifically related to dealing with off-task behaviours in the classroom.

Behaviour Challenges in the Classroom

Teachers play an important role in influencing students’ behaviour in the classroom; teachers’ practices can result in the increase, decrease, or maintenance of off-task behaviours that students exhibit. Abidin and Robinson (2002) and Jussim (1989) argued that the agreement between teachers’ ratings of student behaviour and students’ observed behaviours was not a result of the self-fulfilling prophecy phenomenon, as some
research has suggested (Cooper, 1979; Rosenthal, 2002). Teachers participating in Abidin and Robinson’s (2002) study completed the Social Skills Rating System Elementary Teacher Form (SSRS-T) to assess students’ social skills, problem behaviours, and academic competence in addition to the Achenbach Teacher Report Form, which is a checklist that obtains descriptions of problem behaviours and adaptive functioning. The researchers found that teacher ratings of students’ problem behaviours were consistent with independent observers’ ratings of the students’ behaviour; as students’ off-task behaviours increased, so did the teachers’ ratings of such student behaviour. This finding demonstrated that teachers are accurate in identifying behaviours that students exhibit and are not acting upon their assumptions of how a certain student is expected to act. These findings emphasize the importance of discovering the practices that teachers use to effectively reduce the occurrence of off-task behaviours; it is not teachers’ expectations that primarily alter students’ behaviours, but teachers’ practices that can have a positive effect on the behaviours that students display.

Because teachers have an impact on student behaviour, it is important to examine the types of interactions that occur between teachers and students who display off-task behaviours so that effective and ineffective interactions can be understood. In addition, because student behaviours have a significant impact on classroom climate, it is necessary to find a way to reduce the occurrence of these behaviours so that the student and the whole classroom environment can be successful.

*Student-Teacher Interactions*

*Student-Teacher Relationships*

The relationship between a student and his or her teacher can have a considerable
effect on the student’s attitude toward that teacher and toward school in general (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Milhalas, Morse, Allsopp, & McHatton, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This attitude toward teachers and toward school can affect the academic outcomes of students as well as the types of behaviours that students exhibit.

Students place great value upon caring, respectful relationships with their teachers (Cothran, Kulina, & Garrahy, 2003). Cothran et al. (2003) interviewed 182 physical education students in Grades 6 through 12 about what contributed to or impeded off-task behaviour. The importance of positive and caring relationships emerged as a consistent theme in students’ responses. Students defined caring relationships as ones in which teachers communicated with students, listened to students, and took an active interest in the lives of their students (Cothran et al., 2003). These types of positive relationships were associated with students having more respect for teachers (Cothran et al., 2003). Positive relationships were also related to teachers effectively dealing with student behaviour and preventing off-task behaviours (Cothran et al., 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wentzel, 1994, 2003).

Patrick, Turner, Meyer, and Midgley (2003) characterized positive student-teacher relationships as being academically and emotionally supportive, emphasizing mutual respect, promoting an enthusiasm for learning, and including the communication of clear and high expectations. Students in participating classrooms were surveyed about their perceptions of their classroom environment and the types of avoidance strategies that they used (cheating, avoiding seeking help, or engaging in disruptive behaviour). Among eight classrooms with 176 Grade 6 students, classrooms with a positive climate
were associated with greater intrinsic motivation, less avoidance, and less disruptive behaviour (Patrick et al., 2003; Wentzel, 1997). This finding suggests that students in positively oriented classrooms tend to be more motivated and engaged with academic tasks. In addition, these classrooms had warm and respectful climates in which students felt valued and were comfortable to make mistakes rather than engage in off-task avoidance behaviours (Patrick et al., 2003). Students in classrooms of less supportive teachers had a controlling environment imposed on them by their teachers, who placed an emphasis on extrinsic motivation for academics. Students in these classrooms were more fearful about making mistakes, and participated in significantly more avoidance behaviours such as cheating (Patrick et al., 2003).

The impact of student-teacher relationships extends to students’ motivation to engage in socially appropriate behaviours in the classroom. Wentzel (2003) postulated that social competence is a major factor in the motivation that students have to engage in appropriate behaviours in the classroom. Social competence involves students’ achieving prosocial goals that are valued by the individual and the group in a manner that is deemed acceptable by the group; by achieving these collective prosocial goals, students also achieve their own personal goals (Wentzel, 2003). Like Ryan and Deci (2000), Wentzel (1994, 1998, 2003) suggests that students are more likely to adopt the collective goals of the classroom when they perceive a positive relationship with their teachers. Wentzel (1994) surveyed 475 students in Grades 6 and 7 and their teachers regarding students’ prosocial goal pursuit in school, social behaviour, and perceived teacher support. When these students perceived social and academic support from their teachers, the students were more motivated to pursue goals that were in line with the collective goals of the
classroom. When students adopted these collective goals, which tended to promote the achievement of positive outcomes, they were more likely to engage in more appropriate behaviours, be more socially competent, and have better academic outcomes than students who did not perceive a positive relationship with their teacher (Wentzel, 2003).

Positive student-teacher relationships are also related to student engagement, which is important to the learning that takes place in a classroom. Klem and Connell (2004) obtained elementary and middle school students’ ratings and their teachers’ ratings of student engagement and students’ experiences of teacher support from six elementary schools and three middle schools. The researchers used data sets from a previous study that were collected between the years 1990 and 1995 on teacher support and engagement from 1,846 elementary and 2,430 middle school students in Grades 3 to 8. The researchers operationalized student engagement as the extent to which students are interested in and involved in academic work, and teacher support as the perception that their teacher is involved, cares about his or her students, provides structure for students, and is fair in dealing with students. Students who reported experiencing high levels of teacher support were more likely to be engaged than were those students who perceived low levels of teacher support. In addition to engagement, teacher support was also related to student achievement as measured by academic test scores.

The impact of student-teacher relationships can potentially carry on into future behavioural outcomes of students (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Hamre and Pianta (2001) showed that early conflictual relationships between students and their teachers predicted more problem behaviours in later school years. The researchers examined how early relationships that Kindergarten teachers had with their
students were related to students’ academic and behavioural outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The study followed 179 students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. Students entering Kindergarten in 1988 were given a school screening battery measuring cognitive development (Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale-Revised), reports of classroom behaviour (Teacher-Child Rating Scale), teacher perceptions of the student-teacher relationship (Student-Teacher Relationship Scale), the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, teacher-reports of student work habits, and disciplinary records (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). These measures were collected for each student throughout the nine years of the study.

Kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of negative relationships with their students were related to students’ grades, standardized test scores, and work habits in Grades 1 through 8 (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Students who were reported to have high levels of conflict with their Kindergarten teachers tended to have fewer positive work-habit scores in elementary school and more discipline infractions and problem behaviours in upper elementary school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Students who had negative relationships with their teachers in Kindergarten were more likely to have behaviour challenges later in school. The results also corroborated other researchers’ (Klem & Connell, 2004; Wentzel, 2003) work in finding a relationship between student-teacher relationships and academic outcomes; students who had positive student-teacher relationships in Kindergarten, even if they displayed challenging behaviours, were more likely to do well academically than those who had negative student-teacher relationships. These results emphasize the importance of the teacher-student relationship; even if problem behaviours exist, if teachers have positive relationships with their students, academic outcomes could still be unaffected.
By modeling caring relationships, having clear expectations, using positive reinforcement, taking into account individual needs, and taking a genuine interest in their students, teachers can foster a caring environment in their classrooms. Through the positive interactions that these practices promote, teachers can motivate students to engage in more behaviours that are appropriate and therefore allow students to be successful (Wentzel, 2003).

**Effects of Student-Teacher Interactions**

It is important to recognize the impact of positive interactions as well as the effect that negative interactions have on student behaviour. Negative interactions between a student and a teacher can result in a cycle of increased problem behaviours that lead to an increased occurrence of negative student-teacher interactions (Gunter & Jack, 1994; Mayer & Patriarca, 2007; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Shores et al., 1993; Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000).

Differences exist in the way that teachers interact with students who display off-task or disruptive behaviours in the classroom (Jack et al., 1996; Mayer & Patriarca, 2007; Shores et al., 1993; Van Acker & Grant, 1996). Shores et al. (1993) studied the types of interactions that served as antecedents and consequences to problem behaviours exhibited by students with emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) in inclusive classrooms and in segregated classrooms that served students identified as having severe behaviour disorders (SBD). After conducting observations and analyzing the sequence of interactions between teachers and their students, Shores et al. (1993) reported that negative interactions between students with and without SBD and teachers occurred more often than positive interactions. The researchers also found that, despite exhibiting
positive behaviours, students still received praise infrequently, and were significantly more likely to receive reprimands for noncompliant behaviour. Jack et al.’s (1996) study found that negative interactions occurred at a higher rate than positive interactions between teachers and students with SBD, which corroborates the findings of Shores et al. (1993).

Mayer and Patriarca’s (2007) study illustrates the importance of exploring interactions between teachers and their students. The researchers explored research on problem behaviours and teacher practices and found evidence of an amplification effect, wherein students’ problem behaviours were exacerbated over time through repeated negative interactions with their teachers. The interactions between students and teachers had reciprocal effects on both individuals; the teacher’s behaviours shaped the students’ behaviours and the students’ behaviours shaped the teacher’s behaviours. Mayer and Patriarca (2007) suggest that these continued interactions resulted in the development of behavioural scripts, which they define as “entrenched patterns of thought and behaviour that students learn over time” (p. 3). These interactions result in a disruptive cycle that perpetuates the negative behaviour of students.

Van Acker and Grant (1996) explored student-teacher interactions with students who exhibited aggressive behaviours and found that interactions differed significantly on the basis of risk for aggression. The study involved 25 teachers and 206 of their students in Grades 2, 3, and 5. Using the Teacher Report Form of the Child Behaviour Checklist (Achenbach, 1991) as a measure of disruptive behaviours, the researchers found through four 20-minute observations of each teacher-student pair, that students who exhibited aggressive behaviours experienced a more negative school situation and differential
treatment by teachers than students who were not at risk. Specifically, reprimand, which was identified as correction of an academic response, a correction of inappropriate behaviour, or a physically refraining a student from exhibiting inappropriate behaviour, occurred more frequently between teachers and students who exhibited problem behaviours and could be predicted with significance, while praise could not be predicted above chance levels (Van Acker & Grant, 1996). Even an at-risk student’s correct response to a teacher-initiated question did not consistently give rise to teacher praise. This was not true for students who were not at risk, as these students were consistently given praise after responding correctly (Van Acker & Grant, 1996). In addition, students who were at high risk for aggressive behaviour were less likely to be called on by teachers even when they volunteered. Other students, who did not consistently engage in disruptive behaviours, were given significantly more opportunities to respond than those who did show these types of behaviours (Van Acker & Grant, 1996).

The researchers posit that reprimand may have served as reinforcement for students in the form of attention, causing the behaviours to be maintained (Van Acker & Grant, 1996). Because students who are at risk are meeting the goal of receiving attention from the teacher, they may not have perceived receiving verbal reprimands as a negative experience as the researchers have assumed; however, this interaction is not beneficial to the student or to the classroom climate. The findings reinforce the notion that students who display disruptive behaviours experience more verbal reprimands from teachers, which can be a factor in exacerbating negative student behaviours. This study emphasizes the importance of exploring student-teacher interactions to describe what types of interactions are related to specific behaviours exhibited by students. Because Van Acker
and Grant’s (1996) study used only a quantitative measure of behaviours, it was not possible for them to discover the motivations behind behaviours exhibited by students. This absence makes it difficult to know whether the students actually perceived their school situation as negative, as the researchers assert.

Shores et al. (1993) found that teachers’ use of positive consequences was significantly related to compliance; however, in classrooms that included students identified as exhibiting aggressive behaviours, the use of positive consequences for positive behaviour rarely occurred. In further support of these findings, Van Acker and Grant (1996) found that reprimands by teachers did not decrease the occurrence of inappropriate behaviour, but instead increased the occurrence of these behaviours (Van Acker & Grant, 1996). These results are discouraging, as research shows that increasing the amount of praise provided to students decreases disruptive behaviours (Gunter et al., 1993; Shores et al., 1993; Sutherland et al., 2000; Van Acker & Grant, 1993). The way that teachers deal with students’ behaviour is an important factor in determining whether behaviours will continue or diminish. Because teachers seem to have such a significant influence on students’ behaviour, it gives teachers the hope and the knowledge that their practices can help improve students’ behavioural outcomes.

Sutherland et al. (2000) conducted a study that compared students’ rates of on-task behaviour when they received more behaviour-specific praise than non-behaviour-specific praise or no praise. An instance of non-behaviour-specific praise is if a teacher told a student that he or she did well during class. In contrast, an instance of behaviour-specific praise would be a teacher telling a student, “thank you for remembering to raise your hand today when you wanted to speak during class time.” The behaviour-specific
praise indicates exactly which behaviour the teacher is praising, so the student knows what behaviours are expected, and this in turn makes it more likely that the student will engage in these positive behaviours in the future. The researchers observed one teacher and his nine students who had EBD, and recorded the frequency of on-task behaviour, behaviour-specific praise, and non-behaviour-specific praise. After obtaining baseline frequencies of the different types of student and teacher behaviours, an intervention that aimed to increase rates of student on-task behaviour by increasing the frequency of behaviour-specific praise given by the teacher was implemented. Researchers recorded the frequency of praise and student behaviour once the intervention was put into action. When the teacher increased the rate of behaviour-specific praise given to students, on-task behaviour increased (Sutherland et al., 2000).

Gunter and Jack (1994) also found, through observations of interactions between teachers and students who had EBD and between teachers and students who did not have EBD, that when teachers responded negatively to students’ disruptive behaviour, this response resulted in an increase in negative student behaviours. Gunter and Jack (1994) used evidence from previous research that explored interactions between teachers and students with EBD to suggest that teachers do have a significant impact on students’ behaviour. In their study, the way in which teachers responded to students’ behaviour had an impact on whether or not the behaviour was repeated. Negative responses from teachers led to an increase in negative behaviours exhibited by the students.

The paper provided suggestions for how to increase positivity in classrooms such as using positive reinforcement, and assessing the possible causes of the disruptive behaviour (Gunter & Jack, 1994). Using qualitative methods allowed the researchers to
understand the types of practices that resulted in specific interactions. Gathering this information made it possible to suggest alternative practices that could reduce the occurrence of negative teacher reactions.

Differences in the types of interactions that occur between teachers and students can be attributed to not only the behaviours the students display, but also to teachers’ beliefs about inclusion and views of students who have exceptionalities (Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997). Jordan, Lindsay et al. (1997) found that teachers who held more positive views about inclusion were more likely to have consistent interactions related to academics that involved effective dialogues about the content of students’ work, thereby contributing to students’ learning, than teachers who held less positive views. These types of beneficial interactions contrasted with less effective, inconsistent, and superficial interactions that only involved ensuring that the student with an exceptionality was on task. It is clear that the interactions that take place between teachers and students are important in predicting the future types of behaviours and interactions that will occur, and whether this impact will be positive or negative. It also seems that these interactions are impacted by beliefs that teachers have of students and of teaching in general.

*Teachers’ Beliefs About Inclusion*

Teachers’ beliefs shape what they perceive and know, which in turn affect their practices (Jordan & Stanovich, 2004). The literature has shown that the types of interactions that teachers engage in with students who have exceptionalities vary among teachers who have different beliefs about inclusion (Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997). King-Sears (1997) identified the
importance of beliefs being consistent within the school community. The existence of a shared vision of inclusion as the most important factor in inclusive education programs. To have an effective inclusive setting, teachers and administration must all have the belief that students with and without exceptionalities should learn in the same setting.

Jordan and her colleagues (Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998) explored teachers’ beliefs and the interactions between teachers and students who were considered to be at-risk for school failure and between teachers and those with identified exceptionalities. The researchers contended that teachers’ beliefs about inclusion lay on a Pathognomonic-Interventionist (P-I) continuum. To avoid using pathognomonic language in this study, I will refer to the differing beliefs as restorative (pathognomonic) and preventive (interventionist), terms introduced by Jordan et al. (1993). The restorative belief about inclusion views students’ challenges as being permanent and originating from within the students; the teacher believes that it is not the duty of the classroom teacher to solve the problem. The preventive belief about inclusion attributes students’ challenges to interactions between the students and the environment; the teacher believes that it is the responsibility of the teacher to alter the learning environment so that the students can be successful (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). Teachers can have mixed beliefs oriented to either side of the continuum (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001). Practices of teachers with mixed beliefs can have elements of the preventive belief, but also have elements of a restorative view and teachers may, for example, attempt to change their teaching practices but abandon their efforts if unsuccessful.

The triangulation of survey, interview, and observational data revealed that
student-teacher interactions differed in specific ways based on the belief that the teacher held about the inclusion of students with exceptionalities (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). Schwartz (2008) stated that, “if we are to improve student outcomes we need to know how to influence teacher practice and therefore need to understand how beliefs are played out in the context of the general education classroom” (p. 1). This statement emphasizes the importance of observing teachers’ practices and learning about teachers’ beliefs. If the researchers had simply administered the P-I questionnaire, which determines where the teachers’ beliefs lie on the preventive-restorative spectrum, the only information that they would have obtained is the nature of the teachers’ orientations (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). This technique would not have provided descriptions of the teachers’ interactions with the students. The qualitative approaches used allowed the researchers to uncover ways in which teachers’ attitudinal orientations were related to how teachers interacted with students who had exceptionalities.

Teachers whose beliefs lie closer to the restorative end of the continuum of beliefs about inclusion, tend to attribute the challenges a student has to the individual student rather than to the environment that is created by the teacher. Teachers who hold this belief about inclusion may not feel as responsible to solve their students’ problems. Poulou and Norwich (2002) explored the extent to which teachers thought EBD was remediable, teachers’ attribution of the students’ problems, and these teachers’ perceived responsibility in helping students with EBD overcome their problems. The researchers found that, the more the teacher attributed the problem to the child, the more stress and
helplessness the teacher felt in being able to help the student. However, the more teachers attributed the students’ problem behaviours to the teacher and the classroom environment, the more they believed that the problem could be resolved. This belief of the problem being attributed to the teacher-created environment influenced the actions the teacher took. If the teachers felt that the responsibility rested upon them, they were more likely to believe that they could make a difference and take action to help the students resolve their problems.

Examining beliefs is important in educational research, as it can help researchers identify beliefs and practices associated with these beliefs that tend to lead to effective teaching (Schwartz, 2008). Schwartz (2008) used the P-I Interview, the Classroom Observation Scale (COS), the Teacher-Student Interaction Scale (TSIS), and Student Engagement Scores (SES) to describe teachers’ epistemological beliefs and practices with students who had exceptionalities or were at risk.

The Pathognomonic-Interventionist (P-I) interview was developed by Jordan and her colleagues (Jordan et al., 1993). This semi-structured interview allows teachers to describe their practices that they use with students in their classes who have exceptionalities. The topics covered in the interview include: referral and assessment, programming, and communication with staff and parents. The interview is used to describe where teachers’ beliefs are situated along the preventive-restorative continuum (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998).

The COS is a checklist that can be used during observations to identify various teaching behaviours that have been supported in the literature as being effective classroom practice (Jordan & Stanovich, 2003). The behaviours are grouped into time
management, classroom management, and lesson presentation (Jordan & Stanovich, 2003). The TSIS is part of the COS, and is coded simultaneously with the observation and coding of the COS. This scale is used to code the prominence of various types of dialogues that occur between a teacher and a student. These dialogues are rated on a 7-point scale, which ranges from “no interaction with the student” to “elaborates student responses” (Schwartz, 2008, p. 55). The SES is a sub-score of the COS, which measures how well the teacher maintains students’ engagement in the instructional component of lessons. The measure is made up of five items in the COS that involve student engagement. The items include whether the teacher provides explicit expectations for seatwork and transition times; establishes clear lesson routines; gains and maintains students’ attention during the lesson at a level of 90%; circulates among students; and maintains a high responding rate during activities (Schwartz, 2008).

By triangulating data from these methods, Schwartz (2008) identified how different combinations of beliefs affected the teachers’ practices and the decisions that teachers made in relation to students with and without exceptionalities. Analysis of the data revealed that teachers who scored high on the COS and high on the TSIS had effective beliefs and used effective practices. These beliefs and practices included the belief in students learning cooperatively; that students learn at different paces; that it is the teacher’s responsibility to help students succeed and to alter the environment so that this success is possible; and that knowledge is not rigid, but can be understood differently. This set of beliefs and practices contrasted with the teachers who scored low on both the COS and the TSIS. These teachers understood the nature of knowledge as rigid and factual, and placed an emphasis on students’ performance rather than on their
understanding. Teachers with more positive beliefs about inclusion and of the nature of learning exhibited effective teaching practices. Such depth of analysis would not be possible without using qualitative approaches.

**Effective Teaching Practices**

As research by Jordan and her colleagues (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998), Poulou and Norwich (2002), and Schwartz (2008), has shown, teachers’ beliefs about inclusion and about their role as a teacher, are closely related to teaching practices that are used in the classroom. Mayer and Patriarca (2007) presented a review of literature about students who show aggressive and disruptive off-task behaviours and about effective instructional practices for these students. This body of research explored effective teaching practices that supported successful classroom environments. Many of the same features Mayer and Patriarca (2007) presented, such as preparing the learner, making lesson presentation clear, adjusting practices to meet the needs of individual students, and the use of effective transitions, can be found in the classroom observation checklist used by Stanovich and Jordan (1998). The concurrence of results by both Mayer and Patriarca (2007) and Stanovich and Jordan (1998) indicates that teaching practices that are considered to be effective in general, and tend to be used by teachers who have positive beliefs about inclusion, are especially effective in preventing and dealing with off-task behaviours. This evidence supports the validity of the COS in discovering effective practices and further emphasizes the impact that teachers’ instructional practices can have on the behaviour that students exhibit.

According to the preventive view about inclusion presented by Stanovich and
Jordan (1998), it is the teacher’s responsibility to take action to alter these interactions and to develop an effective way of interacting with students who display off-task behaviours. This practice leads to teaching that is more effective. Jordan, Lindsay et al. (1997) interviewed and observed teachers to discover the teachers’ preventive-restorative beliefs and how teachers interact with students who are typically achieving and with students with exceptionalities. Teachers with preventive beliefs had almost twice as many interactions with students who had exceptionalities than with those students who were typically achieving. Teachers who held preventive views, which are thought to be associated with more effective practices, maximized their instructional time by minimizing time spent on managerial tasks when they established well-understood routines and clear expectations for behaviour and achievement (Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997).

As Rosenfeld and Rosenfeld (2008) stated, “effective teachers act on the belief that all students can learn, meet the needs of diverse learners, and believe that teachers can intervene to make a difference” (p. 246). Rosenfeld and Rosenfeld (2008), along with Stanovich and Jordan (1998), maintain that effective teachers hold preventive beliefs about students who have exceptionalities. This view tends to lead to effective teaching practices and improved student performance and self-esteem (Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 2008). Gunter and Shores (1994) also adopt the idea of the preventive view about inclusion and state that it is the responsibility of the teacher to change the conditions of the environment to decrease the likelihood of off-task behaviours occurring. By educating a teacher on how to change his or her practices to accommodate a student who displays problem behaviours, the negative behaviours displayed by the student can be reduced
In a later study, Stanovich and Jordan (1998) used the COS to assess effective teaching behaviours with students who were at-risk, identified with exceptionalities, and typically achieving. The COS included reports of classroom management, instructional management, lesson presentation, and seatwork management. Effective teaching practices, as defined by the COS, were associated with higher scores on the P-I interview. This result demonstrated that effective teaching practices were related to positive beliefs about inclusion as described in the preventive model (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998).

A review of the literature on effective teaching behaviours and practices reveals a group of practices that are most beneficial for students who display off-task behaviours; these practices are consistent with items on the COS. The literature focuses on the importance of differentiated instruction, effective lesson presentation, effectively engaging students during class time, and having clear and high expectations of students.

**Differentiated Instruction**

Due to the increasingly diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms, differentiated instruction is a way for teachers to ensure that all students’ needs are being met. Differentiated instruction recognizes that not all students learn in the same way and that different strategies should be implemented in order for all students to succeed (King-Sears, 1997; Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Tobin & McInnes, 2008; Tomlinson, 2002). Differentiating instruction involves accommodating students by creating different levels of expectations for task completion, a choice of different activities, different ways of demonstrating understanding, or changing the environment to help students be more successful (Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Tomlinson, 2002). These accommodations
“capitalize on strengths while circumventing or compensating for weaknesses” (Corno, 2008, p. 162) and give students the opportunity to reach the goals that are met by all students in the classroom.

Dunlap et al. (1994) demonstrated the effectiveness of giving choices to students who displayed off-task behaviours at a high frequency in a special education classroom made up of nine students. The students were two boys in Grade 5, who were recommended for participation in the study by their teachers because their teachers described them as consistently being off-task and displaying disruptive behaviours. During a choice condition, the students were each given individualized lists of spelling words or English academic tasks that they could choose to complete during a 30-minute period. During the no-choice condition, up to two activities were written on the board that the students had to complete. The researchers found through observations that the display of off-task behaviours decreased when students had a choice of academic activities compared to when the students did not have a choice. The students, who were able to demonstrate their learning using a task of their choice, exhibited less off-task behaviours when this choice was given, and completed the academic activity that was consistent with the concepts being taught in class.

Kern, Childs, Dunlap, Clarke, and Falk (1994) conducted a study that focused on differentiating instruction for an 11-year-old male student who consistently displayed off-task behaviours when required to complete academic tasks. The student was observed by the researchers, and several hypotheses were formed as to what conditions existed when the student engaged in on-task behaviours. It was determined that the student was on-task when completing tasks that were of a shorter duration, when tasks required the use of
problem-solving skills, when he was redirected to be on-task, and when completing a task that did not require much handwriting. The researchers suggested practices that the student’s teachers could use to create an environment in which the student could be more on-task. The solutions that were created addressed each of the situations in which the student was on-task; tasks were broken into shorter segments, activities were alternated with questions that required a problem-solving application, the student was given opportunities to use a computer or to audio-record responses rather than engage in handwriting tasks, and the student was asked to self-monitor his on-task behaviour at specified intervals. When on-task intervals were assessed and compared to the baseline condition prior to the implementation of these accommodations, it was found that the student engaged in significantly more on-task behaviours after the accommodations were in place (Kern et al., 1994).

As results of the studies by Kern et al. (1994) and Dunlap et al. (1994) indicate, differentiated instruction can decrease the aversiveness of the schooling situation that often causes a student to exhibit off-task behaviours (Gunter, Denny, & Venn, 2000). By altering the difficulty of a task, adjusting the amount of time allocated for students to complete tasks, or altering the way in which a student can respond to instruction, a teacher can prevent a student from having to exhibit problem behaviours (Gunter et al., 2000).

When teachers differentiate instruction, they continually assess individual students’ progress and needs. Being flexible and changing instruction based on what works for individual students, or engaging in microadaptation (Corno, 2008), supports students’ weaknesses and challenges their strengths. Teachers who teach microadaptively
are flexible in the support that they provide students. This support changes according to when the teacher recognizes that the student can be independent and can develop his or her capabilities (Corno, 2008). Microadaptive teaching and differentiated instruction fit well with the preventive belief about inclusion and the practices used by teachers who hold these beliefs. Based on the existing literature on effective practices and the nature of preventive beliefs, it is expected that teachers whose beliefs lay closer to the preventive end of the continuum of beliefs will be more likely to differentiate their instruction, and therefore be more effective teachers.

Differentiated behaviour management. Just as students learn in diverse ways, they also have different behavioural needs. Teachers must recognize that students exhibit off-task behaviours for different reasons and therefore require the use of different strategies to reduce the occurrence of these behaviours. Just as a teacher would adjust his or her teaching practices to accommodate a student with different ways of learning, teachers can adjust their classroom management practices to recognize the needs of their students who display off-task behaviours.

One intervention that has been found to be consistently effective in reducing off-task and disruptive behaviours of individual students is functional behaviour assessment (FBA). This intervention utilizes the principles of differentiated instruction; this approach assumes that students have different needs in terms of behaviour.

Students who display off-task behaviours are often grouped into the same category (Neel & Cessna, 1993). If the occurrence of these behaviours is frequent, teachers may implement various strategies or interventions that may or may not be effective. Teachers hope that these students will eventually conform to what is expected
of them as members of the classroom environment. By viewing the behaviours that students exhibit as originating from within the students, the context surrounding the behaviour is often not recognized (Neel & Cessna, 1993). Without knowing what is causing the student to exhibit off-task behaviours, it is difficult to know which approach should be used to help the student be more on task.

Functional behaviour assessments (FBA) aim to eliminate much of the uncertainty of how to reduce the occurrence of off-task behaviours. Through the FBA process, antecedents and consequences of a student’s behaviour are identified and used to develop an action plan that directly addresses the causes of the behaviour for that student (Scott & Caron, 2005).

As in differentiated instruction, the process of FBA begins with the child and his or her individual needs (Neel & Cessna, 1993). Behaviours that the student exhibits that inhibit his or her functioning in the classroom are identified. The second step is to identify the antecedents to the behaviour, which is accomplished by specifying what exists in the environment that predicts the occurrence and non-occurrence of the behaviours.

The function, or the consequences that occur as a result of the behaviour, is then identified through observations of the student and his or her environment and through interviews with teachers, the student, and parents (McIntosh, Brown, & Brogmeier, 2008). For example, the function of off-task behaviour could be access to attention or escape from difficult tasks. Hypotheses are developed that identify how the behaviour, the antecedents, the environment, and the function are related. Finally, based upon the hypotheses, an individualized behaviour support plan is developed that aims to neutralize
triggers of the behaviour, teaches adaptive behaviour, and alters the environment to
encourage appropriate behaviour (Ingram, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 2005; McIntosh et al.,
2008). The support plan includes teaching the student behaviours and skills that can
replace the problem behaviour. The environmental context surrounding the problem
behaviour may be redesigned and the reward that the child was experiencing from
exhibiting the problem behaviour must be minimized. If the intervention that is
implemented is not effective, then the behaviours must be reassessed and the intervention
should be altered until the behaviour no longer occurs and the student is successful
(McIntosh et al., 2008).

Ervin, DuPaul, Kern, and Friman (1998) displayed how appropriate academic
accommodations can be provided for students with exceptionalities to reduce the off-task
and disruptive behaviours related to academic difficulties. Two 13- and 14-year-old male
students who met the diagnostic criteria for both attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
(ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) were referred for the study due to off-
task and disruptive behaviour in school (Ervin et al., 1998). Both students were on
stimulant medication for symptoms of ADHD. Hypotheses of the behaviours were
developed following interviews with teachers, the students, and observations of the
students’ on-and off-task behaviours. One of the student’s off-task behaviours was
observed to be maintained by escape from writing tasks. The interventions tested for this
student were modifying how the student completed the writing tasks, by allowing him to
use a computer; giving the student extra time to complete the task by allowing a
brainstorming period before beginning the writing process; preventing escape by
requiring the student to continue the task when sent to the office for disruptive behaviour;
and allowing the student to have short breaks from writing.

The combined treatment of brainstorming time and the use of a computer to complete writing tasks significantly increased the on-task behaviour of this student compared to baseline conditions. This result indicated that the hypotheses were correct and effective interventions were used to reduce the occurrence of off-task behaviour (Ervin et al., 1998).

The second student’s disruptive behaviour was hypothesized to be maintained by peer attention. The potential interventions included reducing access to peer attention by separating students, providing contingencies for appropriate behaviour such as self-monitoring, changing the seating arrangement so that the student was close to the teacher, and providing consistent and frequent reinforcement and punishment. When the student was required to self-evaluate his own on-task behaviour, the occurrence of off-task behaviour was significantly reduced compared to baseline conditions (Ervin et al., 1998).

This study was conducted within the classroom and the classroom teacher carried out the interventions (Ervin et al., 1998). By manipulating the antecedents to the behaviours, the occurrence of disruptive behaviours was reduced. The students were given a way to prevent the behaviours by, in the first case, removing the trigger of the behaviour by providing accommodations, and, in the second case, by making the student aware of and responsible for his own behaviour (Ervin et al., 1998).

Teachers play a significant part in the behaviours that students exhibit and therefore can help students learn to engage in positive behaviours. While FBA is an intensive intervention and is intended for those students whose behaviours do not respond to management strategies used for the whole class, the basic principles of this approach
are consistent with preventive beliefs about inclusion and effective practices associated with these beliefs. Identifying the specific behaviours that a student is exhibiting and understanding the reasons behind these behaviours involves knowing the needs of a student, which is an inherent belief held by teachers who have a preventive orientation to their beliefs about inclusion (Gerk, Obiala, & Simmons, 1997). Recognizing that the environment that the child is in affects how he or she behaves is a step toward helping the student succeed (Cessna, 1993). Teachers must understand the causative factors that contribute to off-task behaviours in order to help students reduce the need to display these behaviours. If a student’s needs are recognized, an effective teacher can utilize this knowledge to enhance the potential of the student.

In an inclusive classroom, teachers must consider the needs of individual students as well as of the class as a whole. By differentiating instruction to include all students, teachers create an environment in which all students can thrive and reach their individual potentials. Practices such as altering physical arrangements and routines to prevent predictable problems are some of the fundamental aspects of the FBA process (Scott, Park, Swain-Bradway, & Landers, 2007). By implementing these changes according to what students require, the classroom environment can be transformed from one in which there is conflict caused by behaviour management issues to one that is cohesive and harmonious.

*Lesson Presentation*

Lesson presentation can often influence the types of behaviours that students exhibit during a lesson (Evertson & Emmer, 1982). The literature on effective lesson presentation supports certain practices that ensure that students are engaged during the
academic activities, that off-task behaviours are prevented, and that students learn what was intended from the activity academically. While it is agreed among individuals who present information on effective lesson presentation that the practices of preparing the environment and the student, ensuring that students experience success, and ensuring that students are engaged, are important aspects of creating effective lessons, not a great deal of empirical literature supporting these ideas exists. I have compiled information from various sources and observed that the literature is consistent in terms of what is thought to be an effective way of constructing lessons. However, because there are no empirical studies to support this information, the validity of these ideas must be considered with caution.

Preparing the learning environment. Before a lesson begins, teachers can anticipate issues that may arise during the lesson that result from environmental factors (Evertson & Emmer, 1982; Welko, 1992). By preparing materials, setting out behavioural expectations, and considering the setup of the classroom environment, teachers can prevent many behavioural issues from arising.

Teachers should consider if the physical arrangement of the classroom is appropriate. The area that is to be the focus of the lesson should be visible to all students and areas in which transitions take place should be clear so that transitions can occur smoothly (Kern & Clemens, 2007; Welko, 1992). The seating arrangement of students is also important to consider so that students will remain engaged during the lesson rather than being distracted by peers and other environmental factors (Kern & Clemens, 2007; Welko, 1992).

Preparing the learner. Providing students with a clear explanation of the task at
the beginning of the activity and ensuring that the students understand what is expected of them behaviourally and academically can prevent a number of off-task behaviours (Evertson & Emmer, 1982; Raphael, Pressley, & Mohan, 2008; Welko, 1992).

Gunter and Jack (1994) suggest that many of the behaviours displayed by students who have severe behaviour disorders occur when these students perceive an academic task as being aversive. A task may be seen as being aversive if the student is concerned about not being prepared to complete a task successfully and prefers to escape the situation rather than experience failure. Gunter and Reed (1997) and Welko (1992) have devised methods of beginning a lesson that prepares learners, is effective in preventing off-task behaviours, and in helping to ensure that learning occurs. Literature by Gunter and Reed (1997) focuses on students who have emotional and behavioural disorders, while Welko (1992) focuses on practices that are effective for all students. The researchers suggest beginning a lesson by first gaining all students’ attention; letting students know that the lesson is going to begin helps to make sure that students are engaged and provides them with an opportunity to prepare for the learning structure that is about to take place.

Teachers should then introduce the lesson by reviewing previously learned information to remind students of what they have already done, so that they are more prepared to build upon their existing knowledge (Gunter & Reed, 1997; Welko, 1992). Finally, before beginning the lesson, teachers should discuss the goals of the lesson. This practice prepares students for what is going to happen during the lesson and for what the focus of the activities is going to be (Gunter & Reed, 1997; Welko, 1992).

By preparing learners for the learning activity, off-task behaviours that occur due
to uncertainty, confusion, and the initial aversiveness of the task are reduced. Implementing these strategies of having clear expectations, explaining the task so that all students understand, reviewing previous material, and discussing the goals of the lesson to prepare students for the learning activity at the beginning of a lesson can ensure an effective lesson and reduce many off-task behaviours that occur during academic activities (Gunter & Reed, 1997; Welko, 1992).

Ensuring student success. By frequently monitoring student engagement and comprehension during a lesson, teachers can get a sense of whether students are understanding the material and can prevent off-task behaviours from occurring, as disengagement and off-task behaviours often occur when the demands of the learning exceed what the student feels he or she is capable of at the time (Evertson & Emmer, 1982; Kern & Clemens, 2007; Welko, 1992). By checking the extent of students’ understanding throughout the lesson, teachers can ensure that their lesson is effective, that students are learning, and ensure that off-task behaviours are not occurring due to students finding the material too difficult. If teachers consistently monitor student comprehension, they can go back and review information that was not understood, which will allow students to be successful at tasks during and following the lesson. Students should experience a high success rate when completing tasks independently. Welko (1992) suggests that independent work should have a 90-100% success rate so that the student does not feel frustration in a situation where he or she does not have the direct support of the teacher.

Freeman, McPhail, and Berndt (2002) interviewed 47 Grade 6 students about learning activities that they thought helped them learn well and not as well. By asking the
students to choose from a list of 20 activities that was developed from lists collected from teachers and students, the researchers found that skill level was one of the themes that emerged from the students’ responses. When students perceived an activity as being too difficult, or above their individual skill level, they perceived the activity as not facilitating their learning. This finding suggests that when activities are at a level where students can feel successful, their learning and interest are enhanced, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring student success.

Strategy instruction is a practice that can help students learn how to complete an activity in a manner that suits them and thereby experience success. By modeling the concept that is being taught in a whole-group format, teachers can show students strategies that they can use when completing tasks related to the concept being taught. Students can then be more successful when participating in these tasks independently (Evertson & Emmer, 1982; Raphael, Pressley, & Mohan, 2008). Strategy instruction has been found to be effective for teaching students how to complete tasks in an effective manner (Cassel & Reid, 1996; Hutchinson, 1993; Montague & Bos, 1986). Much of the research has focused on the effectiveness of this practice for students who have exceptionalities.

Cassel and Reid (1996) used strategy instruction to help four students with mild learning disabilities (two in Grade 3 and two in Grade 4) to improve their performance on word problems in math. Students were given a baseline measure in which they were asked to complete 12 word problems, showing their work. The problem solving strategy was then introduced and taught for 35 minutes, three times per week. The seven-step strategy required the students to read the problem out loud; highlight the question;
determine the parts of the problem by circling the numbers that they would use to complete the problem; set up the problem by writing and labeling the numbers; reread the problem to determine the operation, check the chosen operation for accuracy; answer the problem; and check their work. The strategy was taught and then modeled by the teacher. The student and the teacher then worked on the problems together. The student was allowed to work independently until he or she met the criterion of solving five out of the six problems correctly. The researchers conducted a test six and eight weeks after instruction to determine if the use of the strategy was maintained by the students. All students showed an improvement in performance on addition and subtraction word problems. Students’ use of the strategy and performance on word problems was maintained six and eight weeks after instruction ended.

Montague and Bos (1986) conducted a study with six students aged 15 to 19 with learning disabilities and low math achievement scores (Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-educational Battery). Students received strategy instruction on math word problems during three 50-minute sessions with a resource teacher. The strategy involved a seven-step procedure in which students read the problem aloud; stated the problem in their own words; drew a representation of the problem; underlined important information in the problem; created a hypothesis and determined the necessary operation signs that would be used; made an estimate of the answer; calculated the answer; and self-checked. Five out of the six students made improvements from the baseline measure of performance. Four out of the six students were able to generalize the strategy to more complex problems that they were given after the intervention. This study shows the utility of using strategy instruction, but also demonstrates that this type of strategy is not effective with
all students. Teachers need to consider the individual needs of students and determine what types of strategies will be beneficial.

Providing students with multiple opportunities to practice the concept in varied ways can help students successfully apply their knowledge in the future. Modeling and allowing for practice help ensure that students do not engage in off-task behaviours that are motivated by escape. Giving students multiple examples also facilitates students’ learning and ability to transfer their knowledge to other contexts by building networks of connections (Perkins & Salomon, 1990). By expanding the contexts in which students use information, the information can be adapted to different contexts. This practice makes it more likely that a new circumstance will trigger a student’s memory and the student will then be able to apply this knowledge to the situation.

Engaging the student. In order for learning to occur, students need to be engaged throughout the entire lesson. Preparing learners can be an effective way of ensuring that students are engaged at the start of a lesson. In addition, by designing lessons that incorporate students’ interests, students will be more likely to become attentive and involved in the learning (Jones, 1982; Raphael et al., 2008).

By proceeding through a lesson at an effective pace, teachers can ensure that students are not bored if the pacing is too slow, or that the students are not falling behind if the pacing is too fast. By having an effective pace at which students are able to understand the material that is presented, the engagement of students can be enhanced (Jones, 1982).

Kern, Bambara, and Fogt (2002) observed the impact of giving a class of six students choices between two activities and incorporating high-interest activities into
lessons on students’ engagement and the behaviours that they exhibited during the activity. Frequencies of students’ on-task behaviour, or engagement, and disruptive behaviours were recorded before the use of the strategies and after the teacher incorporated these strategies into the lessons. Engagement, which was operationalized as the student looking at the teacher or the materials, and students completing work, increased an average of 30% when compared to baseline levels. In addition, decreases in disruptive behaviours were also observed; students displayed less aggression and cursing, and rates of students leaving the classroom without permission decreased. By increasing the involvement that students have in their own learning and creating lessons that students enjoy, students seem to be more likely to be engaged in the classroom and are therefore less likely to engage in off-task behaviours. While this study by Kern et al. (2002) provided some support for giving students choice and designing high-interest lessons, only the effectiveness of both strategies used together can be assumed; therefore, it is not clear if one of the strategies had the positive effect on student behaviour or if both were required to occur together to improve student behaviour.

McPhail, Pierson, Freeman, Goodman, and Ayappa (2000) described the importance of interest in student engagement and affect while students were involved in activities that they were interested in and not interested in. The researchers asked 47 Grade 6 students about which three academic topics in which they were most interested. From students’ responses, the researchers created a list of four academic topics and then asked students to rate these four topics in order of preference. Students were given either their first or second choice to focus on during four one-hour group inquiry sessions that led to a culminating activity. When students were given their first choice in topic, the
students reported more positive affect and were engaged in these topics of interest for longer periods than students who were given their second choice in topic (McPhail et al., 2000).

When Sutherland, Gunter, and Adler (2003) asked teachers to increase opportunities for students to respond during a lesson to three opportunities per minute, the frequency of disruptive behaviours that students exhibited decreased, the percentage of on-task intervals increased from approximately 55% to 82%, and the amount of praise given by teachers increased. Giving students increased opportunities to respond to academic requests is considered to be a good classroom practice (Sutherland et al., 2003). By asking students questions, teachers allow students greater opportunities to give correct responses, teachers have more opportunities to praise students and prevent off-task behaviour, and teachers are able to monitor comprehension and engagement at increased time intervals.

The Importance of Student Engagement

Engagement is defined by Klem and Connell (2004) as “the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning” (p. 262). In order for students to learn, students must be engaged in what is happening in the classroom. If disruptive, off-task behaviours are dominating the classroom environment, learning cannot take place (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

By maintaining students’ attention on what is happening in the classroom, effective teaching can take place (McGee, 2001). Using the P-I interview, assessing teacher efficacy, and conducting observations of 13 teachers and their Grade 2 to 7 classrooms, McGee (2001) identified effective teachers and discovered the practices that
they used. These effective teachers had clear routines and procedures in place for classroom and time management, students were engaged, and lesson presentation met the needs of all students.

Evertson and Emmer (1982) used the data from three separate studies that occurred over a two-year period, in which they observed classrooms from Grade 3 to Grade 8. The researchers aimed to describe teachers’ effective classroom management strategies. By converging the results of the three studies, the researchers developed a document that describes effective classroom management practices of the teachers involved in their studies. The researchers describe engagement as a major management goal that needs to be present in order for a climate of learning to be in place. In classrooms in which students were engaged, teachers provided variety in their instruction; keeping activities moving at a pace that is neither too slow nor too fast and changing the type of tasks can prevent off-task behaviours from occurring (Evertson & Emmer, 1982).

Positive student-teacher relationships are important to student success. Students are more engaged when they are part of a positive classroom environment in which teachers believe in their students and communicate this belief by having high expectations for behaviour and academics. Believing in students and giving them opportunities for independence while still providing support is inherent to the autonomy-supportive teaching style (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Reeve, Jang, Carrel, Jean, and Barch (2004) showed, that when teachers had high expectations of their students, student engagement increased. The researchers provided 10 high school teachers with training on how to support the autonomy of their students, while 10 other teachers served as a comparison group and received no training (Reeve et al., 2004). The training informed
teachers about the importance of student choice, student motivation, and self-regulation of behaviour, as well as the various types of teaching styles such as autonomy-supportive versus a controlling style. Students in the classrooms of teachers who received the training had higher engagement scores as measured by task involvement, attention, persistence, and effort, in comparison to the classrooms in which the teachers did not receive training. In addition, students in these classrooms took more responsibility for their own learning. The expectations and the trust that teachers have for their students can impact student engagement and the behaviours that students exhibit in the classroom.

Expecting the Best from Students

In order for students to be motivated academically and to engage in positive behaviours, certain contextual variables must be present (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wentzel, 2003). Ryan and Deci (2000) identify three basic psychological needs that must be met for students to be successful. These needs include feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

If students do not feel competent, they will not be motivated to perform a task because they do not foresee themselves successfully accomplishing their goal. Students also need to feel autonomous; they need to have the sense that they have some choice in academic tasks and in choosing their behaviour, and believe that they can take ownership for their successes. When teachers allow their students to be autonomous, they give students the opportunity to determine their own outcomes and, therefore, to determine their own success (Davis, 2003). Students who perceive that they have a choice can see the direct impact of their decisions on achieving their own goals. This perception of autonomy makes meeting goals a more meaningful and motivating accomplishment for
students (Brophy, 1985; Osterman, 2000).

While autonomy is important, students feel safe and secure in a classroom environment in which there is a sense of structure; students identify structure as the existence of effective rules and consistent consequences (Brophy, 1985; Supaporn, 2000). With a balance of structure and autonomy in the classroom, students feel a sense of responsibility for their own success, feel competent, and are therefore more academically and behaviourally motivated (Davis, 2003).

When teachers have high expectations and believe in their students, this is indicative of a positive student-teacher relationship (Davis, 2003). Students need to have a sense of relatedness with their teacher that allows students to feel that they are important, competent, and contributing members of the classroom (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). These types of autonomy-supportive environments usually exist when teachers trust and believe in their students, which is communicated when teachers have high expectations.

*Structure in the classroom.* Classroom rules serve as expectations for student behaviour (Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, & Marsh, 2008). Having high but attainable expectations, both behaviourally and academically, gives students something to strive for. Students desire structure, rules, and predictable outcomes (Brophy, 1985; Evertson & Emmer, 1982; Supaporn, 2000). By teachers creating boundaries, students feel safe and supported because they know what is expected of them and what the result of meeting or not meeting these expectations will be.

Both explicitly through instruction, and implicitly through modeling, teaching students about appropriate behaviour is important so that the rationale behind rules is
clear and specific (Evertson & Emmer, 1982). Bohn, Roehrig, and Pressley (2004) found through observations and interviews with six primary teachers, that effective teachers explicitly taught rules and procedures to their class. Students in these classrooms had higher engagement scores than in less effective teachers’ classrooms.

We as educators do not expect students to follow blindly, but give students the resources to make informed decisions that are best for them (Brophy, 1985; Carpenter & McKee-Higgins, 1996; Jordan & Stanovich, 2004; Mayer, 1995; McGee, 2001; Smith & Rivera, 1995). This idea of allowing students to make their own decisions is consistent with the concept of self-guidance and the autonomy-supportive classroom environment; rather than simply telling students what to do, teachers should discuss the specific reasons for the expectations that are in place (Brophy, 1985; Reeve, 2006). By relating to students how the rules, routines, and expectations will benefit the students, as well as collaboratively designing and posting the classroom rules, students will be more likely to adopt these expectations internally and believe that the expectations are reasonable and are in place to benefit themselves as well as the greater good (Brophy, 1982, 1985; Evertson & Emmer, 1982; Wayson & Pinnell, 1982; Wentzel, 2003).

Having a consistent routine increases predictability and makes it more likely that students are engaged and less likely that students will display off-task behaviours (Bohn, et al., 2004; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Kern & Clemens, 2007; McGee, 2001). Structuring transitions so that they occur smoothly is an important way to avoid problem behaviours that often occur during these times. By establishing routines, the classroom can operate efficiently, which reduces time spent on classroom management issues and allows more instruction to occur (McGee, 2001).
Teacher Efficacy

Teachers’ beliefs about how effective they are in helping students achieve their goals (self-efficacy) are an important indicator of effective teaching behaviours (Jordan et al., 1993; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teachers who have confidence in their ability to help students achieve positive outcomes are more likely to be willing and able to change their practices according to students’ needs. These teachers have been found to use classroom management and teaching practices that are more effective.

Emmer and Hickman (1991) presented 161 preservice teachers and student teachers with six vignettes that described students who exhibited academic difficulty and challenging behaviours. The teachers were asked how they would respond to the scenarios, choosing from a list of reductive and positive strategies. Positive strategies included praise, providing academic accommodations, and developing individual plans for change. Reductive strategies usually involved some form of punishment such as time outs, warnings, and consequences. Teachers’ self-efficacy was positively correlated with teachers’ use of positive strategies, as opposed to reductive strategies, when dealing with academic and behavioural problems presented in the vignettes; teachers who had higher self-efficacy in dealing with the problems stated that they would use more positive strategies to deal with the student’s problems. Positive strategies tend to be more effective in helping students engage in appropriate behaviours (Gunter & Jack, 1994; Mayer & Patriarca, 2007; Shores et al., 1993; Van Acker & Grant, 1996). Teachers who have higher self-efficacy may use effective strategies to deal with the problem behaviours that students exhibit in the classroom (Brophy, 1982). These positive strategies are in line with preventive beliefs; they require changing the teaching strategy or the classroom
environment, rather than punishing a student. The limitation of this study was that the teachers were not observed to determine their actual practices in dealing with the types of situations that were presented in the vignettes.

Poulou and Norwich (2002) also used vignettes to present scenarios involving problem behaviours, but enhanced the validity of their study by also conducting interviews with the teachers. The researchers gave 391 elementary school teachers in Greece vignettes describing problem behaviours exhibited by students. The teachers were then interviewed to discover their intentional behaviour in relation to students who had EBD and their perceptions of their efficacy in dealing with students who had EBD. The researchers found that the more efficacious teachers felt in being able to deal with students who had EBD, the more inclined these teachers were to take action to help students be more successful. If teachers feel that they will be able to effectively deal with problem behaviours that students exhibit, they will be more likely to try to help students resolve these issues than if they do not feel that they would be successful in helping their students (Poulou & Norwich, 2002).

In addition to the evidence indicating the importance of studying teachers’ self-efficacy, Jordan et al. (1993) found a relationship between teachers’ self-efficacy and beliefs about inclusion. The researchers implemented Gibson and Dembo’s (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES), and found that teachers whose beliefs lay closer to the preventive end of the preventive-restorative continuum had greater self-efficacy in dealing with students who had exceptionalities (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997). The research by Jordan and colleagues (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan, Lindsay et al., Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan,
1998) indicates that teachers who have preventive beliefs about inclusion, also have greater self-efficacy, and tend to use effective teaching practices.

**Summary of Literature Review**

The research presented exemplifies the importance of discovering the connections among teachers’ beliefs about inclusion, self-efficacy, and effective practices in relation to students who display off-task behaviours.

Off-task behaviours can greatly affect the classroom dynamic. Because most teachers experience these types of behaviours in their classrooms, it is important to discover how to reduce the occurrence of these behaviours so that the behaviours do not affect students’ learning. When teachers use effective teaching practices and interact with students in effective ways by creating positive relationships with students, the research suggests that these behaviours are reduced and students’ learning can be enhanced. These positive relationships and practices have been shown to be used by most teachers who hold a positive view about inclusion and believe in their own ability to deal with these behaviours.

As classrooms become more inclusive, it is becoming especially important to recognize strategies that teachers use to enable students to succeed so that these students’ learning and other students’ learning are not hindered. It is clear that teachers can have a positive influence on the behaviours that students exhibit, which is why it is important to discover the specific ways that teachers interact with these students that enable them to be successful in the classroom, and the types of beliefs that these teachers tend to hold.
CHAPTER THREE

Method

This chapter describes the qualitative methods that were used during the study. I begin by describing the sampling procedure, followed by a description of the types of data collection methods that were used. I then provide a description of the analysis of data and methods used to ensure validity and reliability.

Setting and Participants

This study employed purposeful sampling to select participants (Patton, 2002). I received approval from the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board (see Appendix A) and a school board located in Eastern Ontario. The school board has a total of 55 elementary schools and 11 secondary schools that are dispersed across cities, towns, and rural areas. I contacted principals in the board and requested permission to interview teachers and observe classrooms in their schools. The principals were chosen based on my thesis supervisor’s awareness that these principals were knowledgeable about the practices that teachers in their schools use to manage their classrooms. I explained to the principals the purpose of my research so that it was clear what I was studying. Ensuring that the principals understood my research assisted me in recruiting teachers who would be effective in helping me answer my research questions.

I chose to study elementary and, specifically, intermediate school teachers and students because my experience has been in working with students in this age range. I believed that it would be informative to discover the practices that other teachers use to deal with off-task behaviours and how these practices work with different students and classroom dynamics of which I have been a part. In addition, many of the off-task
behaviours that I was interested in studying are more prevalent in junior and intermediate grades than in the earlier primary grades.

I asked the school principals who were interested in participating in my study to recommend a teacher in each of their schools who is respected by the principal and their colleagues for being effective in dealing with students who display off-task behaviours in the classroom. I informed the principals that I was looking for a success story: a teacher whose practices have helped his or her students improve and be successful. The principals then approached teachers who they thought would be appropriate for this study, and inquired as to whether they would be interested in participating. After two teachers agreed to take part in the study, I asked the teachers to suggest students in each of their classrooms who they believed presented off-task behaviours. The selection of students occurred collaboratively between each principal and the chosen teacher. I requested that the students that the teachers identified were those students whose parents had already been notified of the types of behaviours that their child exhibited in the classroom. The purpose of this request was so that a conflict did not occur if the parents were surprised by the letter of information requesting their child to participate in a study about differentiating instruction for off-task behaviours.

Research commenced after written consent was obtained from the teachers and one student’s parents in each classroom (Appendices B and C). In addition, on the first observation day, I attained verbal assent from the students. For those who took part, confidentiality was maintained to the extent possible. Names of the teachers, students, schools, and school boards are not revealed in the reporting of the research. The teachers and students were assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
Caroline

One of the classrooms in which I observed was a Grade 7 class made up of 25 students taught by Caroline. The school in which Caroline taught included students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. The school was located in a rural area 30 minutes outside of a small eastern Ontario city. The school had a population of approximately 270 students throughout the grade levels. Twenty-eight percent of the students came from lower socio-economic households (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

Caroline had been teaching for eight years and had taught Kindergarten to Grade 4 in a behaviour class, and had also taught Grades 7 and 8. She had completed the Special Education and Intermediate advanced qualification courses.

Student 1. The teacher and the principal selected this student for participation in this study because of the high frequency of off-task behaviours that he exhibited in the classroom. The student’s parent was very supportive of the administration; therefore, the principal believed that the parent would be willing to allow the student to participate. The teacher informed me that the student was on an individual education plan (IEP) for a non-verbal communication exceptionality. The student had achieved above grade level expectations for reading and was achieving just below expectation in other academic subjects. The behaviours that the teacher observed this student exhibiting included relational difficulties with other students that sometimes resulted in conflicts, off-task behaviours such as calling out, being out of his seat, not being engaged with academic activities, and organizational difficulties. The teacher described using various strategies to help the student be more successful, including redirecting, cueing, provision of response accommodations, and organizational tools for the student to utilize.
Madison

The second classroom was a Grade 5 class made up of 29 students taught by Madison. The school at which Madison taught also ranged from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 and was located in a rural area, approximately 20 minutes outside of a small city in eastern Ontario. The school has approximately 200 students throughout the grade levels. A small part (2%) of the student population came from lower socio-economic households (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

Madison had been teaching for a total of 12 years. She had taught Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Grades 1, 2, and 5 as a permanent classroom teacher, and served as the head of a school in the Caribbean for two years where she occasionally taught Kindergarten to Grade 6. Madison had completed advanced qualification courses in Reading, Special Education, and a board-run Student Support Teacher course. In addition to these courses, she completed several courses or workshops in assessment, bullying, developmental disabilities, and leadership. The classroom in which I was observing was taught by Madison in the afternoon and by another teacher in the morning.

Student 2. This student was selected by the principal and the teacher due to the high frequency of off-task behaviours that he exhibited in the classroom. The student was not on an IEP; however, the teacher was waiting for assessments to be conducted of the student. The off-task behaviours that the student exhibited, according to the teacher, included calling out on a consistent basis, distracting other students, and inattentiveness. The teacher reported using the following strategies to help keep the student on task: redirecting, frequent reminders to return to work, increasing proximity to the student, setting small goals leading up to the completion of a task, and allowing the student to use
a computer for written tasks.

**Research Design**

This study used semi-structured interviews as well as structured and naturalistic observations to explore the research questions. Because I am describing relationships between teachers and students, a qualitative approach was the most effective way to reach the depth of inquiry needed for this type of research. Obtaining detailed information about specific cases will contribute to the knowledge in this area of research better than obtaining broad findings that cover a small portion of what could be studied (Patton, 2002).

Using the Preventive-Restorative (P-I) Interview (Jordan et al., 1993), naturalistic observation, and the COS (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998), I was able to describe how teachers’ behaviours, beliefs, and student-teacher interactions are situated along the continuum of beliefs about inclusion. Anne Jordan has granted permission for me to use these instruments in my study. The use of interviews allowed me to understand the beliefs and practices from the perspectives of the interviewee rather than from my assumptions or based on observational or survey data alone (Patton, 2002). Asking the teachers to provide a narrative account of the student that they identified allowed me to make inferences about how each teacher’s beliefs were related to her practices (Jordan & Stanovich, 2004). Asking each teacher about her experiences with a single student in her classroom allowed the descriptions to be more specific and better detailed than asking about a group of students (Jordan & Stanovich, 2004). In addition, by observing the classrooms on three separate occasions, I was able to attain an enhanced understanding of how teachers’ beliefs are related to their practices.
Data Collection

This study involved each teacher taking part in three main interviews and two follow-up interviews. I also observed each teacher’s classroom on three separate occasions. The total time of involvement for each teacher was approximately 12 hours, with approximately 2.5 hours of that time being interviews. The scheduling and time required for each data collection method is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Timing of Data Collection for Each Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Amount of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Madison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Initial introductory interview with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up interview with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up interview with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Interview with teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews. Each teacher took part in three separate individual interview sessions. All interviews took place in the school, in a room free of distractions, at a time convenient to the teacher. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to produce verbatim accounts, thereby ensuring reliability of the data.

For Caroline, the first interview was completed in the month of November and took approximately 30 minutes of the teacher’s time. The first interview for Madison
took place in February and took approximately 45 minutes (see Appendix D for interview questions). The rationale for conducting the study after the school year was in progress was so that classroom routines and interactions would already have been established. The purpose of this interview was to gather demographic and background information, and to establish rapport. I asked the teachers to identify the types of behaviours the teachers considered to be “off-task behaviours,” and the practices that they tended to use to deal with these behaviours. In the case of Caroline, only verbal consent had been obtained from the parents of the student participant prior to this interview; therefore, in the first interview, the teacher talked generally about her practices with various students. In Madison’s school, written consent had been obtained from the parents of the chosen student prior to the first interview; therefore, Madison and I were able to discuss the student participant specifically. Because I wanted to describe the teachers’ beliefs and practices, it was important to be aware of their beliefs about what off-task behaviours were from each individual teacher’s perspective, since the meaning of the term off-task may vary for different teachers.

The second interview took between 45 to 60 minutes to complete for each teacher. For Caroline, the main interview took place one week after the observation at a time that was convenient to the teacher. For Madison, the main interview occurred directly after the first observation period. I used this opportunity to clarify any actions that I had observed about which I needed more information. During this interview session, I used questions from the P-I Interview developed by Anne Jordan and her colleagues as a guide for the interview in addition to my original questions (Appendix E) (Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan,
1998). The data from this interview allowed me to describe where teachers’ behaviours and beliefs lay on the continuum of beliefs about inclusion, with a focus on the teachers’ views of off-task behaviours exhibited by the focal students and the teaching behaviours associated with these behaviours. Examining teachers’ beliefs allowed me to describe beliefs about inclusion that are related to these teachers’ effective practices and interactions between teachers and students who display off-task behaviours. Examples of questions that were asked are: Tell me what happened when you first encountered the student displaying off-task behaviour? What types of strategies have you used to deal with the off-task behaviours that this student exhibits? Do you feel that these strategies have been successful? Do you do anything special for this student in your program? Do you work with any other teachers on staff?

I also used items from Gibson and Dembo’s (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale during this interview to explore how the teachers’ self-efficacy might be related to preventive-restorative orientations and effective teaching behaviours. Jordan and her colleagues have described the relationship between self-efficacy and beliefs about inclusion of students with exceptionalities. What is unique to my study is that I describe teachers’ self-efficacy in dealing specifically with off-task behaviours and how this relates to effective teaching behaviours and to beliefs about inclusion of these students.

A follow-up or third interview was conducted with each teacher to member check, make clarifications, and corroborate interview and observational data that had been collected and transcribed. The questions in this interview were unique for each teacher; I based the questions on the data that I had collected from the teacher and any points that I thought could be expanded (Appendix F). This follow-up interview took approximately
30 minutes of each teacher’s time. The total time that was needed for interviews was approximately 2.5 hours for each teacher.

*Classroom observations.* Naturalistic observation is a useful qualitative method that allows researchers to observe what is happening without altering the environment that is being observed (Patton, 2002). It was helpful to have this information so that I was able to describe in detail what these effective teachers do in their classrooms, especially to explore interactions between the student participant and effective practices used with this student and the whole class.

Three classroom observations occurred during this study. Assuming the role of an observer-as-participant, I did not participate directly with the class during the observations, and was in the setting primarily to gather data (Adler & Adler, 1994). Assuming this role allowed me to casually interact with the teachers and students while developing an insider’s perspective on the environment, as I am a qualified teacher and have taught as a preservice teacher in junior classrooms.

I conducted an initial observation to obtain a sense of the general classroom routines. The purpose of this observation was to assist me in becoming familiar with the classroom, the teacher, the students, routines, and strategies that the teacher used. I observed the classroom for half of the school day (approximately three hours per classroom), recording all occurrences. At the beginning of each observation period, I recorded the type of classroom structure that was taking place. The different types of structures were identified as: (a) whole group led by the teacher, (b) individual student work, (c) small group work, or (d) a transition period. I recorded any interactions that occurred between the teacher and the focal student, and any practices that the teacher
used when dealing with the focal student and with the whole class. Recording the classroom structure was essential because different types of structures result in the display of different student behaviours (Evertson & Emmer, 1982). For example, in the whole-group structure, individual students having a conversation among themselves would generally be considered to be an off-task behaviour if the expectation was that they should be listening to the teacher. However, in small group instruction, this conversation would be a typical and expected occurrence.

During the two remaining observations, I implemented items from the Classroom Observation Scale Checklist (COS) (Stanovich, 1994; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998) as an observation guide (see Appendix G). The focus of the observation was on interactions between the student participant and the teacher. The total time taken for all of the observations was about nine hours for each classroom.

In addition to field notes recorded during the observations, I also made reflective notes following the session to add to the context of the observations. Following each observation and prior to the subsequent observation period, I conducted an informal interview to member check, ensuring that my field notes were accurate and that no discrepancies existed. After the observation period, I followed-up with each teacher to make any clarifications about what I had observed. These informal interviews took between 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the conversation that unfolded. This follow-up procedure is an important element in a research study that uses more than one data collection method.

Data Analysis

Prior to analyzing the data, I organized the data into different files based on the
participants for whom the data were collected. Using the table function in a word processing program, I assigned each spoken segment of the interview transcripts a sequence number. The columns of the table included columns for the code, the spoken segment, and the segment number. When coding, I inserted the code into the “code” column of the table. I also created a separate word processing document that listed all of the codes and each segment number in which each code was assigned (La Pelle, 2004).

I examined each teacher’s data set separately to recognize that the context for each individual is distinct and should be considered when describing the environment, the teacher, and his or her practices (Stake, 2005). I reviewed the data to make a preliminary assessment and to get a general feel for the data before I began the analysis. Throughout the process of data analysis, I wrote memos as I created codes so that my thoughts and ideas were recorded as they occurred to me.

The second step in the analysis process involved identifying codes through repeated readings of field notes and interview transcripts (Le Compte, 2000). I used inductive analysis to discover patterns in the interview and observational data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). As part of the inductive process, I performed open coding to discover any prominent concepts that emerged from the initial reading, looking for similarities, differences, and anomalies within each teacher’s data set. Concurrently, I used concepts found in the literature to code the data; this process allowed the data to reveal any similarities or differences between the data and the theoretical framework presented in the literature review.

The next step in the coding process was to construct categories of similar codes. I then looked for patterns that were found among these categories. This process allowed
me to link together concepts that were found in the data so that I was able to create a coherent explanation of the relationships, interactions, and beliefs that were being explored in the research. Making connections between the categories led to the formation of broad themes that applied to the data (Patton, 2002). These emerging themes represented an overall picture of what was occurring in the classrooms being studied, including the relationships between the student-teacher interactions, effective teaching practices, and teachers’ beliefs about inclusion and their own teacher-efficacy.

Once each individual case was analyzed, the final step in the coding process was to conduct a cross-case analysis. Stake (2005) emphasizes the importance of gathering data by also looking at other instances through which a particular case can be further understood. This cross-case analysis allowed me to discover whether or not there were any consistencies and patterns across the two teachers’ data as well as to expand my understanding of the uniqueness of the individual data sets (Patton, 2002).

**Reliability and Validity**

This study focused on two teachers and their students. The size of the sample makes it important to describe in detail the context in which the study is taking place to enhance external validity (Patton, 2002). I have described the school context, the classroom context, and each teacher’s background to provide the reader with a more complete picture of the factors surrounding each case.

I engaged in memo writing throughout the research process to identify my own biases and feelings in response to the process (Corbin, 1986). I also used memos and a research journal to track my thinking prior to and during the study. When interpreting interview and observational data, I employed frequent member checking and participant
review. Following each observation and interview, field notes and interview transcripts were corroborated briefly with the teacher to make any clarifications and to ensure that the information was accurate. I also conducted a follow-up interview after all data were collected to corroborate data and make clarifications. I engaged in these validity-enhancing processes, continually asking myself the question, “Do I, the researcher, really understand and describe what I am studying in the same way that people who live it do?” (Le Compte, 2000, p. 152).

Triangulation of observational and interview data enhances the validity of this research study. Triangulation allows the researcher to find consistencies and inconsistencies in the data, and makes up for flaws inherent in the methods employed. This technique also allows the researcher to understand the same phenomenon in different ways (Mathison, 1988). Rather than only describing what the teachers said in the interviews, I obtained a more robust impression of the teachers’ beliefs and practices by also observing their practices.

Qualitative approaches are critical in advancing knowledge about a wide variety of topics and gathering knowledge that is thorough and detailed. When exploring interactions between individuals, it is essential to examine what individuals are saying, what they are doing, as well as their body language and facial expressions. This information allows for the attainment of descriptive detail (Patton, 2002). These approaches can help us know how something happens, in what context, and provide the details of all occurrences surrounding the phenomenon. By using qualitative research, it is possible to explore the unique experiences and perspectives of the individual in an authentic manner.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

In this section, I report the findings from the analysis of both teachers’ observational and interview data. I present the results of each teacher separately in order to allow the context of the cases to be recognized.

Caroline

Overview of Caroline’s Results

Through the analysis of Caroline’s data from her Grade 7 classroom, it is clear that many of the concepts that are supported by the literature emerge as important categories. There was a great deal of concurrence between the types of data that were collected; this teacher’s practices in the classroom generally reflected her responses to interview questions. For example, the teacher stated in an interview that the accommodations that she provided the focal student included “a lot of interviewing, a lot of redirecting, a lot of cueing.” The teacher found that these strategies helped the focal student perform more successfully on academic tasks. In the observations, I saw that the teacher was often in close proximity to the student, thereby allowing her to redirect the student as needed. The teacher guided the student through a math problem by cueing the student, asking him “this is what you’re looking for, what do you know about it?” to which the student responded, “oh, I know the formula for that,” and was then able to complete the math problem. In addition, the teacher allowed the focal student to respond to a writing task in a format that interested him (as a rap), which was consistent with her reference to using different response formats such as interviews.

Another example of a factor that was consistent between the two types of data
was that Caroline encouraged a positive classroom environment. The teacher stated that the classroom rules were aimed at respectful interactions and “bringing out the positive in people.” During observations, I saw that the teacher used polite and respectful language when speaking to students. The teacher encouraged students to be confident in themselves and ensured them that they could feel safe in the classroom, assuring a student that “nothing is stupid” when the student was embarrassed at his response to a question. This type of interaction fostered a safe classroom environment in which students could share their knowledge and opinions and know that they would be accepted and supported.

Because of the agreement between observational and interview data, I present the results in terms of the major themes that emerged from both sets of information that were collected. One of the major themes that was revealed through the analysis of Caroline’s data was the importance of the establishment of a positive classroom climate. She had expectations for mutual respect, used positive strategies to deal with off-task behaviour, made an effort to learn about her students as individuals, and supported her students’ interests. By learning about her students, she was able to use the practice of differentiated instruction effectively. Maintaining student engagement also emerged as a theme; Caroline ensured her students’ success and prevented off-task behaviours by involving students in activities and monitoring engagement consistently. Caroline’s beliefs about her role as a teacher revealed her positive beliefs about inclusion and revealed her beliefs about how capable she is in being able to help her students.

*Creating a Positive Classroom Environment*

Respect and positivity were the expectation in Caroline’s classroom. This
expectation was reflected in the list of class rules posted that was titled “Our Classroom Rules.” This list emphasized respect among all individuals in the classroom, stating that students should “treat everyone how you want to be treated.” The rules encouraged the use of “I care” statements such as “I like how you…; I appreciate it when you…; I would like to help…” to express oneself rather than disrespectful or hurtful language.

Expectations of positive non-verbal communication were also a part of the rules, which stated that, “if I don’t like something I should avoid demonstrating a disrespectful physical appearance.”

The teacher referred to the theme of these rules during class. She reminded students during a lesson that she encourages “collective agreement and togetherness.” When teaching, Caroline often used language that implied that she felt that the classroom was a community with collective values and goals. For example, when discussing an assignment that students had submitted the previous day, the teacher used the phrase “we neglected to remember…” The use of the word “we” referred to the class as a whole, with the teacher included. This type of language implies a sense of community and shared responsibility; these types of interactions are consistent with the classroom rules.

Caroline also emphasized the support of fellow classmates; she asked students to recognize a student’s achievement (use of mental math) by asking the class for a round of applause for the student. I also observed students giving a classmate praise without prompting from the teacher for completing a math problem on the board, recognizing that the student was not confident with math and that this was an accomplishment. There were many instances during the observations that the teacher gave students positive reinforcement for accomplishments in front of the class, in small groups, and
individually, making comments such as “this part is absolutely correct”; “fantastic”; and “thank you for trying.” These positive interactions contributed to the positive classroom environment that the teacher created.

In addition to being aware of the positive influence that she as a teacher could have on the focal student through encouraging his independence, Caroline also recognized that peer relationships are a large part of students’ lives. The teacher believed that social relationships between students are an important influence on student success and an important part of the classroom climate. When talking about the effect that the classroom environment has on the success of the focal student, she stated that, “it depends on his peers; everything really relates to who you’re hanging around with. If he can stay connected with these kids…he has more likelihood of doing well at school academically.”

The teacher was aware that students with non-verbal learning exceptionalities have difficulty in some social situations. “They don’t always know how to be socially appropriate in a group.” She stated that the focal student had made progress and had started to interact in positive social contexts and in academic contexts with other students. “I don’t have to say to him ‘please go join a group,’ he just gets up and joins a group, and it’s with the more academically gifted kids…and he’s on task with them usually.”

Recognizing that the student had difficulty in getting along with students in the classroom, Caroline became the student’s advocate in developing positive friendships. The teacher helped the student establish relationships with other students by encouraging others to see him in a positive light. She promoted the other students’ perception of the focal student “as an academic” and not as a student who was often off-task and
sometimes socially inappropriate. “I praised him openly and so…once the kids started to praise him openly, he knew that he was accepted.” Having positive interactions with other students allowed the focal student to believe that he was an accepted and contributing member of the class community. This realization resulted in an improvement in his social relationships and positive academic and social interactions.

Positive Interactions

Many of the strategies that the teacher described using when dealing with inappropriate behaviours that the students exhibited contributed to the positive climate of the classroom. These strategies included having discussions with students about the situation surrounding the occurrence of the behaviour. “When I see him do something, I often take him aside and say ‘can you tell me what you were thinking about when you did that, and why did you do that, who was it hurting?’” Rather than continually reprimanding students for repeated behaviour, she talked with students about how to create strategies to avoid exhibiting inappropriate behaviours in the future. “If it’s a conflict that happens over and over again, and you’re in a rut, then you’re not learning; do you have a plan of action to fix this for next time?”

Throughout the observations, I did not see the teacher reprimand students. If a student was off-task or being disruptive, she used the strategies of giving a signal, usually involving a facial expression, addressed the whole class and asked for their engagement, or spoke quietly with the individual about his or her behaviour. These observations suggested that the teacher does not often use reductive strategies such as yelling, punishment, or public embarrassment to deal with inappropriate behaviour. This impression was corroborated by the interview, in which the teacher stated that, “I use a
calm voice, I don’t yell. A lot of these kids…that’s all they hear is yelling.”

As shown in these examples, the teacher preserved students’ dignity by discreetly reacting to off-task or disruptive behaviours that students exhibited. “I don’t like to take their dignity from them.” By taking students aside to discuss their behaviours and by using non-verbal or discreet signals to re-engage students, the teacher did not embarrass students and showed that she was sensitive to students’ self-esteem. This sensitivity was further exemplified during one of the observations; two students went to the front of the room and drew large curved lines on the chalkboard after the teacher had cleared the board and was about to begin a lesson. Rather than reprimanding the students, the teacher used this as a learning opportunity, turning the incident into a discussion about rotations, which was their current math unit. When I asked the teacher to explain her reasoning for reacting in this way, she stated that she used it as a way to engage students and that she did not want to reprimand the students in front of the class. “I think I would get more engagement from them to listen to me than if I was to reprimand them for being silly. [For] some of them, it would infringe on their self-esteem.”

During the interviews, Caroline described using the “empathy approach” when dealing with inappropriate behaviours. This way of dealing with behaviours encouraged the students to be considerate of others and to think about the impact of their actions. She stated that she used language that involved recognizing how certain behaviours would make other students feel and discussed the motivation behind students’ behaviours. “I also try to get them to put themselves in a different point of view. How would [you] feel if this happened to you?” In the first interview, Caroline described how she responded to a student when he behaved in a way that was hurtful to another student. “I’ll help you out
if you need me to, but I’m here for you to be successful, so how can you be successful without disturbing anybody else?” These discussions reflected the emphasis on positive interactions identified in the classroom rules she had posted.

Caroline had a very positive relationship with the focal student. She actively took an interest in his life and related to him in a positive way. The teacher learned about the student’s interest in writing song lyrics. To support this interest, she bought him a notebook in which to write his songs. She also allowed the student to complete writing assignments as songs, which not only engaged the student, but the teacher reported that this accommodation allowed him to be more successful at academic tasks. Because the teacher knew about the student’s interests and academic and behavioural needs, she was able to differentiate instruction for the student in a way that incorporated his interests.

Knowing Students

Because Caroline made an effort to know students’ needs, capabilities, and interests, she was able to use effective teaching practices such as differentiated instruction not only for the focal student, but also for the entire class. I observed Caroline activating her students’ prior knowledge by asking students to summarize the novel that they had been reading. The teacher knew at what level the students were in terms of their knowledge and their capabilities, and therefore knew at what point to begin the lesson, what issues to bring up, and what to review. Caroline circulated the classroom often during independent work. She approached students who needed assistance, increased proximity to those students who she knew might need redirecting, and knew which students needed more guidance in completing tasks.

The teacher made an effort to learn about her students’ academic needs and
capabilities, stating that, “I found his passions; science, he loves science.” She also
discovered the student’s personal interests; “I also noticed that he likes to be the Eminem persona.” The teacher used the knowledge that she gained to engage her students. I observed the teacher allowing students to relate personal experiences, such as vacations, and allowed the focal student to develop his skills as a songwriter in classroom activities. She then used this information to engage students and adjust her practices to meet students’ needs.

Throughout whole-group lessons and individual work, the teacher consistently monitored engagement. After the observations, the teacher indicated that she knew which students were on- or off-task; the students who she identified as being off-task were consistent with what I had observed. This statement indicated that she was aware of which students to monitor, further supporting the notion that she knew her students. When I asked the teacher about how she reacts when she notices that a student is off-task during a lesson, she stated that it depended on the student and the academic task that was taking place. “You know who does well with what…if [two students were talking], they’re both solid in math and I can let it go for the moment if they’re not disturbing anybody else…but if it’s somebody who struggles with math or with language…I do tend to grab them back.”

During lessons, Caroline used a brisk but effective pace to proceed through activities. She often stopped to ask clarifying questions and to review so that she could make sure that she was not moving too fast and to find out if she could move forward in discussing the academic concepts. In addition, students were given enough time to complete independent work; I observed that most students had completed or almost
completed their assigned work in the period of time allotted. This observation indicated that Caroline was monitoring progress and was aware of how much time the students in her class needed to complete an academic activity.

*Differentiated Instruction*

Caroline was able to effectively provide differentiated instruction for the focal student to help him be academically successful. Some of the accommodations included providing extra time to complete tasks, allowing the student to re-submit a task, providing him with tools to succeed, and changing response formats.

When discussing how she assesses her students’ learning, Caroline stated that she often uses different ways of assessing students, not only paper-and-pencil assessments.

Mine is more what you can give me as a dialogue…so if he wants to write me a song about something, he can do that. But…they always need to meet the criteria and support the information that they’re giving me.

Consistent with her statement about the types of assessment that she used, the teacher stated that she allowed the student to demonstrate his knowledge in a different response format than other students in the class. The teacher gave the student a choice of how to better complete a task. “So it’s either you take it home and fix it up, you can work on it during recess and fix it up, or you can interview with me.” This accommodation allowed the student to complete the task in a way that he would be more successful and at a time at which he would be more successful. One of the formats in which he was able to respond was through interviews with the teacher. Caroline noticed that the student performed better academically when discussing topics orally than reading the information or writing it down. Knowing this, she said that she would often study with the student and
with the whole class, discussing the material that the students were to be tested on.

If the student completed a written assignment or test, and the teacher knew that the student could have performed better, she would interview the student to more accurately assess his knowledge. “You can do better, what can you tell me?” In other instances, the teacher would allow the student to have more time to complete the task. “I’ll say ‘hey, you didn’t do so hot, how about you take it home and finish it and bring it back?’” The teacher often gave the student extra time to complete activities. She would either allow him to take it home and work on the task, or if she recognized that he could have performed better on an activity, she would allow him to re-submit his work. “If you want to resubmit that, I can reconsider the rubric.” This accommodation allowed the student to show his best work and reach his potential.

The teacher often provided the student with individual academic support. She was aware that the student struggled with math; therefore, she provided extra support for the student during math activities. There was an instance during an observation period that the student was allowed to work with a partner who was strong at math. The student with whom the focal student was partnered provided the student with support and explanations of the math problems that they were required to complete. The teacher also worked independently with the student, cueing him if he was struggling on a written math quiz or test. “He’s into drawing me pictures now on the math quiz of him trying to think through things, like this is me thinking, I know I know it, but I just can’t seem to write it down.” In cases such as these, the teacher would ask the student to complete a problem while she watched so she could guide him through it if necessary.

The teacher observed that the student had trouble with organization. I observed
that his desk was often topped with a pile of papers as well as loose papers underneath and inside of his desk. To assist the student in developing organizational skills, Caroline bought the student an accordion folder in which he could place various worksheets and other loose papers. While his ability to implement this tool on his own was not successful by the time my data collection had concluded, the teacher was still working with the student to improve these skills to help him succeed.

By providing the focal student with support in areas in which he struggled, giving him opportunities to demonstrate his knowledge in different ways, and allowing him to have more time in which to complete the activity, the teacher effectively differentiated instruction for the student, which, in her view, allowed the student to be more successful.

Engagement

I observed the teacher providing students with numerous opportunities to participate throughout all observed lessons by responding to questions and sharing their feelings, experiences, and opinions. Each time I assessed the level of engagement of the whole class, I observed that most, if not all, students were on-task and were engaged in the activity. When the teacher perceived that the students were becoming disengaged, she would stop and regain the attention of the class. The use of this practice indicated that Caroline consistently monitored student engagement.

Caroline ensured that she had students’ attention prior to the start of a lesson so that students were prepared for the learning task. She often used material that the students could relate to; the characters in the novel the class was reading were close to the students’ ages, the situation (a boy putting a raisin up his nose) was one with which students could identify, and the story involved a great deal of humour. The students’
involvement in the story was made evident when the teacher informed the class that the shared reading activity was over and the story would not be completed that day; the students groaned in disappointment at this news.

Caroline communicated the purpose of lessons by stating that learning the concept would assist students on the next activity, that they would need to know the information for Grade 8, or would talk with the class about practical applications of the concept. An example of the teacher using a science concept and applying it to a real-life situation that students might have encountered was relating the concept of potential energy and playing pool. This example made the learning relevant to the students, making the concept more interesting, and therefore more engaging.

When conducting administrative issues at the beginning of the school day, the teacher used a poll that the school was doing of “where students would like to travel” as an impromptu math problem, asking the students to figure out how many student responses they had received if the school was one fifth of the way to meeting their goal of 100 responses? This question related to a real-life situation involving the students and to the math unit that the students were doing in class.

Through asking questions, the teacher was able to engage students in discussions and at the same time monitor understanding of the academic concepts that were being presented. The teacher frequently asked comprehension questions in which the students were required to demonstrate their understanding and to apply their previous knowledge on the topic to the questions. For example, during a shared reading activity, she asked questions that required students to make inferences and predictions about the story. This practice enhanced the level of student engagement.
The clear emphasis on student involvement, the consistent monitoring of engagement, and making learning activities interesting and relevant led to the teacher maintaining a high level of engagement throughout most of the duration of her lessons and ensuring that students were learning.

Teacher Beliefs

Caroline’s beliefs about inclusion were not only revealed by her responses to interview questions, but were also reflected in her teaching practices. She indicated her beliefs by stating that she prefers to differentiate instruction for students in her classroom rather than having a student support teacher come into the classroom and work one-on-one with students, stating that, “I’m able to accommodate the kids in here, so I’m not looking for that.” This statement demonstrates that she feels capable of accommodating for her students effectively. While Caroline did believe in working collaboratively with educational assistants, parents, other teachers, and the principal, and was willing to take advice from experts, she also believed in supporting all of her students within the classroom. “Knowing who is in the school that can help you if you can’t get to what you need to get to.” During her previous experience in a behaviour classroom, Caroline described that she had access to various specialists whose recommendations she tried and modified according to the needs of her students.

Caroline effectively applied what she had learned from working in a behaviour classroom to the students that she currently taught. Her knowledge of exceptionalities was demonstrated by her description of the focal student’s social challenges, which, prior to this school year, often caused him to be sent to the office for disciplinary reasons.

What I tend to find with NLD [nonverbal learning disability] kids, they don’t
always know how to join a group and they don’t always know how to be socially appropriate in a group, and he’s struggled with that...So I found his passions...once the kids started to praise him openly, he knew that he was accepted...

This application of her previous knowledge was further supported both by her descriptions of the practices that she uses with students, and by the observation that many of the practices that she uses are effective in dealing with the different needs of students.

She communicated her belief that changing the learning environment was her responsibility and that teachers should not “give up” on students. “Finding something that they’re passionate about, no matter how long it takes to find it, to always come back and find it and be consistent and then build on that.” This commitment to the success of her students, adjusting practices to suit students, and her preference to find ways to help students within her classroom indicate that Caroline’s beliefs about inclusion lie on the preventive end of the continuum of beliefs about inclusion.

In terms of Caroline’s efficacy beliefs, she is confident in being able to effectively deal with off-task behaviours that students present. This confidence comes from the experience and training that she has acquired throughout her teaching career. The teacher’s participation in an advanced qualification course on special education and her experience in a behaviour class enhanced the resources that the teacher could look to when dealing with students who have exceptionalities. “I was able to tap into [specialists’] experience while working with the student, able to apply their recommendations to see if they worked for the individual students I worked with daily, adapt or modify their suggestions, or disagree with their suggestions.”
When asked whether the home environment or the classroom environment has the greater influence on the behaviours that the focal student exhibits in the classroom, the teacher responded that the peer influence was the most influential on the student in the classroom. She reported that the student did have some difficulty with social interactions, “his social skills aren’t always the best,” but that she encouraged him to interact more with his peers, by asking him to join groups when it came time to doing group work, and by advocating for the student. This practice indicates that the teacher recognizes the importance of the social environment to the student. “If he can stay anchored in this new [more positive] group, I think he’ll do alright.” She has attempted to help the student engage more with his peers by advocating for him and “praising him openly” as an academic so that he can engage with the socially acceptable students and therefore experience positive social influences. These types of positive interactions further support the notion that the teacher believes that she has a role in ensuring student success.

**Conclusion**

Caroline successfully created a climate in which the focal student was able to improve academically and behaviourally, and to be an accepted and contributing part of the classroom community. She accomplished this by providing the student with support through differentiating instruction, creating a positive relationship with the student, and having an expectation of respect in her classroom. Caroline used effective practices such as differentiating instruction, making learning relevant to students, and engaging her students to prevent off-task behaviours from occurring. The positive relationship that she had with her students enhanced the effectiveness of these practices by increasing the trust and respect that her students had for her and the respect that she had for her students. It is
clear, from her actions and her expression of her beliefs and practices, that Caroline has a preventive belief about inclusion. In addition, she has high efficacy beliefs; she is confident in her ability to provide the student with what he needs to be successful.

Madison

Madison communicated that she believed that it was important to create conditions in the Grade 5 classroom that would help the students be successful. When talking about what she thought was effective in helping her students succeed, she stated that, “it’s just making sure that they’re comfortable and that they’re organized and what can I do to support them so that they have a good learning environment.” The way in which she provided students with this type of environment included differentiating instruction, ensuring that students had a consistent routine, and ensuring that students were prepared academically and mentally for academic activities.

Differentiated Instruction

Madison recognized that students have different needs and therefore helped her students make and meet individualized personal goals. “Having students set personal goals, conferencing with them so that I can talk with them specifically about where they need to go personally and academically.” The teacher stated that goal setting was one way in which she provided structure for students in the classroom. By having students create goals for themselves, she gave students something to strive for and also gave them a way to self-regulate their successes and areas where they need more support, thereby supporting their independence.

Madison engaged in many differentiated instruction strategies to allow her students to be more successful. One of the ways in which she used this practice for the
focal student was adjusting the seating plan in a way that prevented off-task behaviours from occurring. This change in seating made it more likely that the focal student would remain on task. When I asked the teacher for her rationale for re-arranging the students’ seats, she stated that she wanted the focal student to have, “more positive workers around him to give him good role modeling and children that he doesn’t clash with…people that stay on task.”

The teacher accommodated the focal student by allowing him to use a computer when completing writing and reading tasks. “Sometimes I put him on the computer because a writing task is going to be completed within a better timeframe…because writing, for him, is very very difficult…The computer makes it…easier for him to remain seated as well.” At the time that I conducted the final observation, the student had received a laptop computer, which was received through a special equipment assistance claim. Madison had noticed a great improvement in the student’s ability to stay on task as well as in the quality of the work that he was producing after the equipment had arrived. To further allow the student to be as focused as possible, the teacher permitted the student to listen to music while doing work. “I allow him to put music on to filter out noise. I ask him to complete things, and he’s able to do it.”

The teacher also differentiated the process through which the student completed assignments.

When we’re doing a writing assignment, all the rest of the kids do a rough copy and then they do the good copy on the computer. I have him skip the rough copy and go straight to the computer, because that’s just going to make him succeed more and cause him less stress.
This accommodation made the academic situation less aversive, thereby ensuring student success, and resulting in an improvement in the quality of work that the student created.

The teacher recognized that the focal student had difficulty remaining engaged with a task for long periods of time and that he needed structure within the activities that he worked on. Therefore, she provided him with frequent and small goals until the task was completed. “I will go around and I say to him ‘when I come back, I would like to see this much done.’ Just giving him small goals just to keep him on focus.” This strategy helped the student to remain engaged and also allowed the teacher to give him frequent feedback, which he needed to persist in being focused on the task. Cueing was another way in which the teacher helped the focal student during writing activities. “I…reiterate the instructions, get him started so he starts writing. I say ‘OK, what are you going to write first?’” This strategy, in addition to goal-setting, ensured that the student had the information that he needed to complete the task and kept him engaged in the task.

The provision of extra time, allowing the focal student to use the computer, setting small frequent goals, and cueing the student were the differentiated instruction strategies that allowed the learning environment to become conducive to the success of the student.

**Consistency**

The teacher stated that all of her students had improved behaviourally since the start of the school year. She credits this change to the consistency and structure that she has in the classroom. “Routine, structure, and also in terms of what I expect, giving them guidelines.” Having consistency in the classroom helped the focal student to be more successful in meeting classroom behavioural expectations.
I’ve been firm in making sure that he adheres to classroom routines, and raising his hand and I put [a sign reminding students to raise their hands when they wish to speak during class time] up; he now raises his hand.

During each observation period, I saw that when students returned from recess, that they were to sit at their desks and read quietly. The students clearly knew that this was the daily expectation, and therefore knew what to do. “They know they read so I get them all to chill out. They get their books out and they read and there’s no talking, and they know it.” This strategy allowed students to effectively transition from being outside for recess to being in a quiet learning environment and preparing for learning activities.

In addition to having consistency and structure within her classroom, the teacher also communicated the importance of having consistency among different adults with whom the student interacted in the school and the strategies that they used. In a meeting about the student, which included the student support teacher, the principal, the educational assistant who works in her classroom, and both classroom teachers, the strategies that would be used with the student were discussed. The purpose of this meeting was, “to make sure that we’re using the same strategies, that my teaching partner and I are on the same page.”

*Engagement*

When I assessed the level of engagement of the class during observations, most students appeared to be engaged. To ensure student engagement during academic activities, the teacher often gave students reminders that she needed their attention before the activity began and during activities if the class became disengaged. When the teacher needed to get the attention of the whole class, she often used a verbal strategy, saying “S-
T,” to which the students replied “O-P.” This was an efficient and effective way to engage students in what the teacher was saying during transitions and when she wanted to begin a lesson.

During lessons, Madison made sure that students were not distracted and, on one occasion, took an object from the focal student and placed the worksheet that he was supposed to be working on in front of the student as a non-verbal cue to remain on task.

Student involvement was one way in which high levels of engagement were maintained during class time. Throughout lessons, the teacher involved students in discussions, asking for their opinions, asking them to provide examples of a concept, and having them answer comprehension-monitoring questions. During a shared reading activity, students were asked to share their predictions of what was going to happen next in the story. The teacher was able to assess comprehension of the story and gave students an opportunity to make inferences. The teacher also allowed students to share their findings from a research activity that all students had completed. This activity enhanced student engagement, as students were actively involved in their learning.

_Behaviour Management Strategies_

The teacher often used various behaviour management strategies to prevent students from engaging in off-task behaviours and to deal with the behaviours that students did exhibit. The teacher had very clear behavioural expectations for her students, which she often communicated with the class. She believed in having “firm, fair, and consistent” expectations and consequences. She stated that she periodically reviewed expectations with the whole class and that she raised her expectations as the school year progressed. “I make sure that I raise the bar on a termly basis. Term one, maybe not so
much; by now, they know what I expect.” She also communicated her expectations of the
class through praising students when they engaged in appropriate behaviours. She did this
by acknowledging students who were ready for the academic activity after a transition,
acknowledged students who were engaged, and communicated her expectation of
students being kind and respectful to one another by acknowledging when these
behaviours had occurred with the whole class. She would say, “let me see who is ready.”
This use of positive reinforcement served as a verbal cue to students to indicate that she
was ready to begin the class activity and prompted students to finish what they were
doing.

When dealing with off-task or disruptive behaviours that occurred, the teacher
often cited rules and expectations with the student. “You can’t get out of your seat all the
time. You have to do your work.” If students talked out during class, she would remind
them to raise their hands, and reminded students to enter the classroom quietly after a
transition period. I observed the teacher giving the focal student reminders of appropriate
behaviours on several occasions. The teacher often communicated her expectations about
how long it should take students to get ready to begin the academic activity after a
transition such as recess or snack time. She wanted to spend as much time as possible on
academic activities and not on waiting for students to get ready.

Madison stated that the students knew the consequences that she had in place.
“Making sure that they’re aware of their consequences, that they’re logical.” During one
observation, the focal student was sent into the hallway for disrupting the class. I asked
the teacher what kinds of behaviours tend to result in these consequences. The teacher
stated that the student knew that was the consequence for his behaviour, that she
consistently used the guideline of the “third strike” to determine when a student would receive that kind of consequence. “That was the third time that he had disrupted the class and that’s an agreement by him and myself because he knows if I have to speak to him three times then that’s too much.”

The teacher often took students aside when they exhibited inappropriate behaviours so as not to embarrass them. For example, when students have a conflict, she would speak with them privately. “I do it in the hallway so it’s a little more private and I speak to them about what’s appropriate and what is not appropriate and guide them in conflict resolution.” This way of dealing with inappropriate behaviours indicates that the teacher has respect for her students and cares about impacting their self-esteem.

Madison teacher often praised students for appropriate behaviour. When she did give students praise, it was behaviour-specific. On one occasion, she acknowledged a student for using vocabulary that they had talked about. She said, “Activating prior knowledge,’ I like that, good use of vocabulary.” She often praised students for being on-task, the whole class for being engaged, or for having a “quiet transition.” By acknowledging positive behaviour, the teacher communicated her expectations and gave students the motivation to exhibit these types of behaviours.

The teacher used subtle cues to engage students and to prevent off-task behaviours from occurring. One of these strategies was to say the students’ names as a cue to get back on task. With the focal student, the teacher used non-verbal cues such as a hand gesture that indicated to the student that his behaviour was not appropriate. In addition, the teacher used the strategy of proximity; she would move closer to the student while teaching when she noticed that he was not engaged. She also took an object that the
focal student was playing with while she was teaching. In another instance, without
disrupting the lesson, she looked at the focal student when he was talking. This was a
subtle and effective way to indicate to the student that she needed him to be engaged.

The teacher used the strategy of circulating among the students as a way to both
prevent off-task behaviours and to monitor students’ work. I observed her walking
around the classroom during an independent academic task, acknowledging students’ on-
task behaviours, checking their progress, and giving students the opportunity to ask her
questions individually.

The use of effective behaviour management strategies was essential to the success
of Madison’s classroom environment. By having clear expectations and routines, using
respectful ways of dealing with off-task behaviour, and monitoring students, the teacher
managed behaviours exhibited by students so that the behaviours did not negatively affect
the classroom dynamic and allowed the students to remain engaged and to learn.

Knowing Students

Madison was very aware of the needs and capabilities of all of her students. The
teacher indicated that she knew her students when pairing students for a reading activity.
When I asked the teacher for her reasons for pairing the focal student with a particular
student for an activity, she replied that the focal student needed someone who was
focused, and she believed that this student would help the focal student remain on task.

To learn about the focal student, the teacher observed him to find out what kinds
of behavioural supports he needed, whether it was assistance with organization, the
conditions that allowed him to work best (with a computer), knowing which students
were likely to be good at assisting others (students who were leaders and were strong in
particular subjects), or times during which the student required more structure (needed extra time to settle after a transition; required frequent goal-setting).

*Teacher Beliefs*

While Madison communicated that she believes in inclusion, she acknowledged that it does come with some challenges. The teacher expressed that challenges exist in her classroom in relation to inclusion such as class size, and off-task behaviours that students exhibit. “It’s very challenging when you’re in the middle of the lesson and have somebody speaking out. It’s not easy, so at times it can be very exhausting.” Because of the diverse needs that the students in her class had, the teacher was often required to deal with various behaviours and needs at the same time. Despite these challenges, the teacher found ways to deal with these demands such as asking other students to help their classmates and by creating a structured environment in which students knew the expectations.

Madison stated that investing extra time with students is important in making sure that students succeed. “Be willing to give up your recesses and just spend the extra time, because I’ve done that and I’ve seen results; I keep students back that require extra time, re-teaching of a concept.” She saw it as her job to overcome the challenges so that her students could have an effective learning environment.

Madison was a strong believer in providing differentiated instruction for her students. “I think it’s imperative to a child’s…personal needs, and just giving them that feeling of accomplishment and success.” She recognized that students have different needs and therefore knew that it was important to provide accommodations for her students in order for them experience to success. “What [the focal student] needs from
me is completely different from what this kid needs, and what this kid needs.”

She stated that she believes that collaboration among different members of the school system is important in ensuring student success. “Making sure you access resources to assist you, like talking to an SST [student support teacher], your principal, having a good relationship with the parents, accessing other assistance through the board.” This belief in collaboration is an important part of the preventive belief about inclusion.

The practices of differentiating instruction, investing extra time with students who require extra support, the belief that it is her responsibility to foster student success, and the belief in and participation in collaboration suggest that Madison’s beliefs and practices are consistent with the preventive belief about inclusion.

Madison had taken part in many courses and workshops to improve her teaching practices. She had taken advanced qualification courses in reading, in special education, as well as a course that qualified her to be a student support teacher in her school board. She was also taking a course on developmental disabilities as well as workshops on bullying and on assessment. “I sign up for stuff that’s just going to make me a better teacher and give these kids more value.” These experiences contributed to her high efficacy beliefs. She believed that because she was able to access appropriate resources, because she made an effort to improve her practices through professional development, and because she had faith in her students, that she was able to help her students be successful.

**Encouraging a positive classroom environment.** The teacher believed that it was important to foster a positive community in her classroom. She also thought that positive
social relationships among students were an important way to help students have a positive experience in the classroom. She believed that it was part of her responsibility to help students develop relationships with fellow students who will be good role models. “Making sure that child has friendships with some of those kids, so they can spin off of watching good things. And just helping them through peer relationships, because…that’s where they lack some social things.”

By asking students to help others, the teacher encouraged her students to be cooperative and work together as a collective whole, helping each other be successful.

I utilize my strong kids in the class, my leaders. If I’m over here with a couple over here, and I know a couple over there need me…I know that I have leaders at every table for that reason so that I can just say, ‘hey, can you please go over what the instructions are with whoever’s sitting beside you?’

She also encouraged individuals to engage in positive interactions with other students by praising students when they committed a kind act, stating that, “this is what I want to see in this class” when a student brought in another student’s hat that was left outside during recess.

*Conclusion*

Madison was effective in knowing under what conditions the focal student could be successful. The type of learning environment that this particular student required was one that had a great deal of structure and consistency. This environment is what she attempted to provide for the student under the circumstances with which she was presented (teaching the class for only half of the day). The provision of structure and accommodations for the student in addition to effective behaviour management practices
allowed the student to gradually improve academically and behaviourally throughout the time of this study.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss the cases of Madison and Caroline together, addressing differences and similarities that I discovered through the cross-case data analysis. I also discuss how the findings of my study address the specific purposes that I identified at the beginning of the research process and how the findings relate to the literature. I then discuss how my research contributes to this area of literature. I address the limitations of my study and how I attempted to counteract these limitations. Finally, I consider the implications that my study has for practice.

Cross-case Analysis

As in much of qualitative research, it can be difficult to make comparisons between small numbers of cases because the contexts are so different. Students have different needs, display different behaviours for different reasons, classroom contexts are different, and teachers and the practices that they use are different. I first discuss some of the contextual issues surrounding the cases.

The two cases had some important differences; Caroline taught a Grade 7 class, and Madison taught a Grade 5 class. The difference in ages of students could have influenced the interactions that the students had with each other and with their teachers. In addition, Madison taught her class for half of the day, which contributed to the context of that particular case; she did not have as much time each day with the students as Caroline did. This difference could have affected the interactions that the teacher had with students as well as the way in which students in the class acted due to the change in teacher that they experienced each day.
While both teachers were regarded as effective teachers, they had different styles of teaching and of dealing with the behaviours that their students exhibited. One of the differences was the type of interactions the teachers had with the focal students in their classrooms. In Caroline’s case, she used effective teaching practices with the whole class to help the focal student as well as all students in the class to remain engaged during class time. She did not have to use as many verbal and non-verbal signals or have to consistently redirect the focal student in particular. Madison consistently used interactions such as redirecting the focal student and giving him verbal or non-verbal signals to help him to remain on task and avoid exhibiting off-task or disruptive behaviours. This difference can also be attributed to the frequency with which Madison’s focal student exhibited off-task behaviours that disrupted the classroom activities, which was much higher when compared to Caroline’s focal student. This difference also demonstrates that practices that are effective differ according to students and contexts.

Because of the high frequency of off-task behaviours exhibited by the focal student in Madison’s classroom, effective behaviour management emerged as a theme in Madison’s data. She used and talked about many effective practices such as keeping rules and consequences firm and consistent, and citing rules and expectations often. She also praised students for positive behaviour, which served as a behaviour management strategy, as this type of positive reinforcement gave students an expectation to strive for. The high expectations for her students as well as the consistency with which consequences were used also contributed to the prevention of off-task and disruptive behaviours in Madison’s classroom.

Caroline managed behaviour through engaging her students, by knowing her
students’ needs and capabilities, and by creating a positive environment that encouraged positive interactions. While these are not traditional behaviour management practices, these practices effectively prevented many disruptive behaviours from occurring.

When off-task behaviours did occur, both Caroline and Madison used respectful strategies to re-engage students. The teachers used subtle non-verbal signals, verbal signals that were fast and effective in re-engaging students, and took students aside to discuss the behaviours that they had exhibited. This way of dealing with off-task behaviours contributed to the respectful relationship between the students and their teachers.

Another similarity between Madison’s and Caroline’s effective practices was the effort that they both made to learn about the needs and capabilities of their students. The teachers were aware of the conditions under which the focal students were able to thrive. This knowledge allowed the teachers to be aware of how to differentiate for their students. In the case of Caroline, her knowledge about the focal student showed her that the student required extra support in math; that he was motivated when allowed to complete tasks in a format that interested him; and that he was able to show his best work when given extra time and when given the opportunity to discuss his knowledge verbally. In Madison’s case, the student required a great deal of structure in the classroom as well as structure within academic activities; he required consistent redirection during tasks; and he thrived during writing tasks completed on the computer.

Both teachers used student involvement as a way to engage students in academic activities. Asking questions and allowing students to share with the class was a way of having students become involved in their own learning. When students became
disengaged, the teachers used attention-getting strategies, which indicated that they were consistently monitoring student engagement.

Both Madison and Caroline believed that a positive classroom environment was an important aspect of a successful learning environment, though this belief presented differently in each classroom. In Caroline’s classroom, respect and community were major themes in the dynamics that I recorded in the data. The expectation of respect was evident in the classroom rules, through the language of community used by the teacher, and in the way in which the teacher interacted with her students. In Madison’s case, she encouraged students to assist others, which developed a cooperative climate between students. She also praised kind, respectful, and caring behaviours among students when these types of behaviours occurred. In the reporting of the findings, I included “encouraging a positive classroom environment” in the section that discussed teacher beliefs because, while it was noteworthy that Madison believed that positive relationships in the classroom were important, positive relationships did not emerge as a major theme in the observational data.

Both teachers’ beliefs lay closer to the preventive end of the P-R continuum. They recognized that students have diverse needs and that these students require that teachers use practices that suit their needs. They also believed that they as teachers are responsible for creating the conditions in the classroom to help students reach their individual potentials.

The teachers accommodated for students within their classrooms, but also took recommendations from other professionals. They were willing to collaborate with other teachers, student support teachers, educational assistants, and the principal. The teachers
also believed that it is beneficial for the student and the teacher when the parents and the school work together toward the student’s success. Both teachers worked to improve their own teaching practices through professional development and applied what they had learned from previous experiences as resources to turn to for supporting their knowledge of what would help their students. This inclination to collaborate and to improve current practices is indicative of a preventive belief about inclusion, and contributed to the teachers’ high efficacy beliefs.

Despite the differences that existed between the contexts and between some of the strategies used by Madison and Caroline, many of the effective practices that they used were similar. Both teachers were effective in providing accommodations for their students; they effectively engaged their students during academic tasks; dealt with off-task behaviours in a respectful manner; worked to prevent many behaviours from occurring; and made an effort to learn about their students. In terms of the teachers’ beliefs, they both had preventive orientations toward inclusion and high beliefs in their ability to help their students be successful.

**Research Questions**

I discuss each purpose that I identified in the introduction of this thesis in terms of how each was addressed by the results and how the existing literature relates to the findings of this study. Due to the uniqueness of each case, I present much of the discussion separately for each teacher.

*To Describe the Specific Ways in Which Two Teachers Effectively Interact With Students Who Display Off-task Behaviours*

*Caroline.* The interactions between Caroline and the focal student who displayed
off-task behaviours and had a nonverbal learning exceptionality were generally positive. She treated the student as an individual for whom she had respect, and as an important part of the classroom community. This modeling and communication of expectations of respect contributed to the successful classroom dynamic (Evertson & Emmer, 1982). These positive interactions became reciprocal; the student respected the teacher and the teacher respected the student. This relationship is consistent with the research about student-teacher relationships; when teachers communicated with students and showed respect toward students, students were more likely to have respect for their teachers (Cothran et al., 2003).

Caroline further showed her respect for the focal student by dealing with off-task behaviours in a positive and effective manner, which also likely contributed to the respect that the student had for the teacher (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wentzel, 1994, 2003). She attempted to turn disruptive behaviours that the student exhibited into learning opportunities rather than reprimanding these behaviours. Contributing to this theme of positive relationships was the emphasis that Caroline placed on preserving students’ dignity; she expressed her perception of the importance of the student-teacher relationship through the interactions that I observed and through the interactions that she described that she had with students. When the student saw that the teacher was on his side and was not going to reprimand him or embarrass him, but would rather discuss how she could help him succeed, he felt secure enough to accept the guidance that the teacher offered and to knew that she genuinely believed in him.

Her encouragement of students to recognize classmates’ achievements promoted positive interactions among classmates. This encouragement also promoted students’
view of her as their advocate, which strengthened the trust that students had in her and therefore made the interactions that occurred between her and her students more positive.

In choosing a focal student whose interactions with the teacher were to be the focus of the observations, I believed that I would observe a very high frequency of interactions between the teacher and the focal student. However, in the case of Caroline, through interviewing and observing the ways in which she interacted with the focal student and with her whole class, I discovered that many of the practices that she used to help the focal student be successful and engaged, were practices that she used with the entire class. Caroline created a classroom environment in which all students could be successful, including students who display a high frequency of off-task behaviours and students who have exceptionalities.

The positive relationship that Caroline had with her students was also reflected in student engagement; students tended to be engaged during most of the academic activities that I observed. This finding is consistent with Klem and Connell’s (2004) study, which found that students who had positive relationships with their teachers tended to be more engaged during class time. This high level of engagement was accomplished by the activities that she chose for her students. Because the teacher was aware of her students’ capabilities and interests, she was able to create lessons that were interesting to students, activities that students could relate to, and she provided continuous support to her students throughout activities, which further demonstrated the respect she had for her students. She cared about her students’ learning, so she created her lessons around their needs and interests.

By using positive reinforcement rather than reprimand, speaking with students
about their behaviour and how they could adjust their behaviour to be more successful, and providing students with academic support so that they did not display behaviours due to the aversiveness of academic tasks, Caroline was able to avoid creating a cycle of negative interactions between herself and the focal student (Gunter & Jack, 1994; Mayer & Patriarca, 2007).

*Madison.* The interactions that occurred between Madison and the focal student were largely based on the off-task behaviours that the student exhibited or on the prevention of these behaviours. This focus on behaviour management was due to the high frequency of off-task behaviours that the student exhibited. Redirecting, cueing, and signaling to remind the student to get back on task were required to maintain student engagement. These interactions were aimed at ensuring the academic success of the student and at preventing off-task behaviours that occurred from disrupting the class dynamic during academic activities.

Madison did learn about the focal student’s interests when he first came into the classroom, but she saw utilizing her knowledge about his academic and behavioural needs as a priority in helping him reach his potential.

*To Identify Strategies that Two Effective Teachers Use in Dealing With Off-task Behaviours*

Both teachers used preventive measures to deal with off-task behaviours. The teachers often anticipated issues that could arise during a lesson that could cause students to engage in off-task behaviours. To prevent these behaviours from occurring, the teachers adjusted seating arrangements and teaching practices, set out rules and expectations, and engaged their learners, thereby creating a base for effective lessons that
were not interrupted by frequent off-task behaviours.

*Caroline.* Many off-task and disruptive behaviours were prevented through the use of effective teaching practices, by creating a positive classroom environment, and through the positive interactions that the teacher had with the focal student. By Caroline having a positive relationship with the focal student and with all students in her classroom, the students were more likely to engage in prosocial behaviour that is consistent with the goals of the classroom, as was posited in the work of Ryan and Deci (2000) and Wentzel (1994, 1998, 2003).

When off-task behaviours did occur, Caroline used the strategy of redirecting the behaviour and sometimes used the opportunity to engage students in the review or learning of a concept. She also maintained her respect toward students by using subtle signals that did not direct attention toward one particular student, thereby avoiding embarrassment. The teacher provided students with praise that was behaviour-specific, which communicated her expectations of appropriate behaviour, and made it more likely that these positive behaviours occurred more often (Sutherland et al., 2000).

Caroline also responded to behaviours that the focal student exhibited in a respectful manner. Discussing with the student about the motivations behind the behaviour, finding ways to avoid exhibiting behaviours in the future, adjusting the environment, and differentiating instruction to prevent behaviours from occurring are all basic ideas of the functional behaviour assessment principles that are identified as being effective in helping students overcome behavioural challenges (Ervin et al., 1998; Ingram et al., 2005; McIntosh et al., 2008).

The teacher did not often engage in negative interactions with her students. She
made it a point to treat her students with dignity and therefore did not usually reprimand students. Because of the positive approach Caroline took in dealing with off-task behaviours, reciprocal negative interactions, as described by Mayer and Patriarca (2007), and similar effects described by other researchers (Jack et al., 1996; Van Acker & Grant, 1996), did not develop. As a result, there was no increase in off-task or disruptive behaviours due to the maintenance of a cycle of negative interactions between the student and the teacher (Mayer & Patriarca, 2007; Van Acker & Grant, 1996).

Caroline consistently monitored the engagement of her students. This monitoring allowed her to know when to use signals to re-gain student engagement and indicated when she needed to adjust her teaching practices to better engage her students. This effective practice not only prevented off-task behaviour and engaged students, but also ensured the success of her students. If students were paying attention to the learning activity, they were more likely to experience academic success and were less likely to exhibit off-task behaviours. This experience of success is essential to fulfilling the three basic psychological needs of students (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Giving students opportunities to feel competent through the experience of success fosters motivation, which further contributes to future success.

**Madison.** Behaviour management was a major theme in Madison’s data; she regularly used behaviour management strategies to effectively deal with the high frequency of off-task behaviours that occurred in her classroom.

Madison emphasized the importance of clear expectations and routines to prevent off-task behaviours. Her students were aware of the expectations and of the consequences for their behaviours, which gave students behavioural goals to strive for (Brophy, 1985;
Evertson & Emmer, 1982; Supaporn, 2000). Jordan, Lindsay et al. (1997) stated that preventive beliefs about inclusion are associated with more routine and consistency in the classroom and less time spent dealing with disruptive behaviours that occur. The benefit of creating this consistency was apparent in the improvement in behaviour and academics that Madison observed the focal student accomplish throughout the school year. By reiterating, re-teaching, and emphasizing expectations and routines, Madison helped the focal student reach the goals that they had set and allowed him to experience great success.

Some of the ways in which Madison dealt with off-task behaviours were similar to the strategies that Caroline used, such as cueing for students’ engagement, redirecting, and giving subtle cues that often were not obviously directed at a particular student. She also monitored engagement by circulating and giving students opportunities to respond, which was a strategy also used by Caroline. This finding was in agreement with Sutherland et al. (2003) who found that giving students opportunities to respond makes it more likely that students are engaged and it is therefore less likely that students are off-task. In addition, involving students in lessons gives teachers more opportunities to praise appropriate behaviour and more opportunities to monitor comprehension, which makes for effective lessons (Sutherland et al., 2003).

As the previous research by Ervin et al. (1998), Gunter et al. (2000), and Kern et al. (1994) has indicated, the provision of accommodations can be of great benefit to the student in preventing off-task behaviours from occurring. By Madison providing the focal student with extra time to complete tasks, setting small and frequent goals during an activity, and allowing him to use a computer, Madison observed that the focal student
was able to remain on task and engaged in less off-task behaviours than when these accommodations were not in place. She stated that she did not have to use the strategies of signals, cueing, and redirecting as frequently as she did prior to the implementation of the accommodation of the computer.

*To Describe Where Two Teachers’ Behaviours, Attitudes, and Practices are Situated on the Preventive-Restorative Continuum*

These teachers believed that it was their responsibility to help their students succeed, believed that they could make a difference, and that their students could overcome their challenges and be successful when given the proper support. These beliefs indicate that these teachers have a preventive orientation towards inclusion (Poulou & Norwich, 2002).

Both teachers believed that if an environment was created to foster success, students would be successful. The teachers created this type of environment by providing their students with accommodations that reduced the aversiveness of the academic situation, thereby reducing the need for students to exhibit off-task behaviours that were caused by stress (Gunter et al., 2000). Poulou and Norwich (2002) support this notion that disruptive behaviours occur due to environmental factors.

Caroline and Madison were open to learning different ways to help their students; the teachers’ preventive beliefs were communicated through their participation in various professional development activities, and the practice of collaborating with others and adjusting their suggestions according to what students needed. This adjustment reflects a fluid conceptualization of education, student abilities, and student needs, and fits well within the preventive belief framework (Schwartz, 2008).
It was clear that, in Caroline’s school, there was a collective belief about inclusion between the principal and the teacher. This support from the principal helped the teacher to effectively provide an inclusive environment for her students (King-Sears, 1997). In support of the research by Jordan and colleagues (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan, Lindsay et al., 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998), the teachers’ beliefs and practices were consistent with the idea that teachers who have preventive beliefs about inclusion tend to exhibit effective teaching practices.

Stating that the focal student could be successful and that this success depended on factors that were external to the student and not dependent on factors surrounding his exceptionality or the behaviours that he exhibited further indicated that Caroline has a preventive belief about inclusion. This statement suggests that she does not believe that the student’s skills and abilities are static, but that he can overcome the challenges that his exceptionality presents. The teacher recognized the improvements that the student had made such as the development of positive social relationships and his success in a math unit, in addition to many other accomplishments in which he overcame challenges.

The teacher used assessments for the focal student that were not restricted to written tests, but also allowed the student to demonstrate his knowledge in different ways, including in formats that involved his interests. Caroline believed that the purpose of assessment was for students to meet the criteria of the activity and to support their ideas rather than emphasizing the format and the time in which the activity was completed. This practice allowed students to focus on the task and not on time restrictions or on completing activities in a way that did not suit their learning style. This
finding is consistent with Schwartz’s (2008) examination of teachers’ understanding of
the nature of knowledge, preventive-restorative beliefs, and their teaching practices.
Teachers who have a belief that students learn through cooperative activities, that
students learn at different paces, and that knowledge is fluid and constantly changing also
tend to have preventive beliefs about inclusion (Schwartz, 2008).

Caroline’s preventive beliefs were also indicated by her practice of providing
accommodations for the focal student. This practice indicates that she believes that
students have different needs and that it is her responsibility to change academic
conditions to allow for individual students’ success. Allowing the student to respond to
academic tasks in varied formats acknowledged his uniqueness and allowed him to
develop his strengths while still meeting academic expectations (Corno, 2008; Lawrence-
Brown, 2004; Tomlinson, 2002).

Caroline’s belief in working to find out how to help students be successful, her
practice of providing accommodations for students, and her belief in the success of her
students in being able to overcome obstacles strongly indicate that Caroline’s beliefs are
consistent with Jordan and colleagues’ conceptualization of preventive beliefs about
inclusion.

Madison. Differentiating instruction by adjusting the environment and by
providing accommodations are practices that are consistent with practices that tend to be
used by teachers who have preventive beliefs about inclusion. Madison recognizes that
students require different conditions under which they can be successful. Changing
seating plans so that a particular student will remain engaged, changing the process by
which a student completes an activity, and setting individual goals with a student indicate
that the teacher believes in adjusting her practices and the learning environment to suit individual students.

Madison believed that all of her students could be successful and stated that it was important for her to support her students in every way that she could. By spending extra time to help her students, she believed that she could help her students experience this success. Madison expressed her belief that, while the focal student had difficulty staying on task, given the right conditions that she could provide for him, he could remain engaged and successfully complete tasks. These statements imply that Madison believes that it is her responsibility as a teacher to ensure the success of her students. The use of differentiated instruction, stating that she believed in the success of her students, and the practice of investing extra time with her students and consistently providing her students with support indicate that Madison also holds preventive beliefs about inclusion.

*To Describe How Two Teachers’ Self-efficacy is Related to Preventive-Restorative Orientations and Effective Teaching Behaviours*

*Caroline.* Caroline had high efficacy beliefs; she believed that she could help the focal student achieve positive outcomes through the support that she provided him such as accommodations and behavioural and social support. This confidence in her ability to help the student be successful came from her previous experiences during her career and also from the improvements that she had seen in the student. These previous experiences led to her using effective teaching practices such as supporting the student’s development of social relationships, finding his strengths, using his strengths to develop his weaknesses, and using resources in the school and information she learned from recommendations from other professionals.
This teacher’s high efficacy beliefs are reflected in her practices. She is able to confidently implement, evaluate, and adjust the strategies that she uses because of her belief in her ability to do so effectively. The effective use of positive strategies such as praise and providing accommodations is also related to her efficacy, and is consistent with Emmer and Hickman’s (1991) exploration of teachers’ efficacy beliefs and the ways in which teachers tended to react to students’ academic and behavioural challenges.

Jordan et al. (1993) and Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) demonstrated the connection between teachers’ efficacy beliefs and teachers’ inclination to adjust teaching practices. Caroline continually evaluated and adjusted her practices to suit her students. This flexibility is related to the practices used by teachers who tend to have preventive beliefs about inclusion. This ability to assess her practices was enhanced by her previous experience and contributed to her efficacy beliefs. Confidence in being able to be critical of the effectiveness of different practices meant that she was not only doing what she was told would be effective, but adjusted the suggestions according to what she knew about individual students and their needs.

Caroline’s efficacy beliefs are related to her beliefs about inclusion; she believed that it was her responsibility to adjust her teaching practices for the student who displayed off-task behaviours; this belief is related to her confidence in her ability to do so successfully.

*Madison.* Madison had high efficacy beliefs in being able to help the focal student have positive outcomes. The professional development that she had completed contributed to the resources that she was able to access when dealing with the behaviours, thereby increasing her confidence.
Although Madison saw some challenges that came with inclusion and in dealing with off-task behaviours, she believed that it was her responsibility to facilitate her students’ success. She also believed that she was able to do so successfully when she had the required resources, which she knew how to access because of the professional development in which she was involved.

The fact that Madison was willing to collaborate with other teachers and educators to gain some of these resources indicates behaviour that is consistent with preventive beliefs about inclusion (Jordan et al., 1993; Jordan, Stanovich et al., 1997). She, like Caroline, also believed that it was her responsibility to help students overcome any challenges that they faced. This belief was indicated by her commitment to improve her practices to benefit her students. These beliefs and practices demonstrate a definite connection between Madison’s preventive beliefs about inclusion and her efficacy beliefs.

**Contributions to Literature**

The relationship between these teachers’ practices and beliefs is consistent with the existing literature. The framework of my study is based on the research by Jordan and her colleagues, which explored the relationship between teachers’ varying beliefs about students with exceptionalities, efficacy beliefs, and how these beliefs are related to teacher practices. Both of the students that I observed and learned about exhibited off-task behaviours in the classroom. One of these students had a non-verbal communication exceptionality, while the other student had not been identified with an exceptionality. I have found that Jordan’s conceptualization of beliefs about inclusion and the practices that are associated with these beliefs extend to students who display off-task behaviours.
and who may not have an exceptionality. Through my research and through the examination of previous literature, I found that the beliefs that these teachers have and the effective practices that they use not only benefit students with exceptionalities, but all students. This benefit to all students was particularly demonstrated through Caroline’s use of effective practices with all students in her class.

The work of Jordan and colleagues focuses on effective practices and effective academic interactions between teachers and students who have exceptionalities, who are at risk, or are typically achieving. My study extends Jordan’s work to positive student-teacher interactions. The findings of my study revealed that these two effective teachers who hold preventive beliefs about inclusion also tend to believe in and strive to achieve a positive classroom climate for their students. This type of climate helps all students to come to perceive their teacher as an advocate and as someone who believes in their success.

Limitations

It could be said, that because teachers who participated in this study are regarded as exemplary in dealing with off-task behaviours in the classroom, the sample was not representative of the population. While this type of purposeful sampling may not have allowed for generalization of the findings, I obtained rich data in a small number of cases, which provided me with a detailed account of the phenomenon being studied. The purpose of this study was not to generalize findings to a population, but rather to provide other teachers with examples of strategies that two teachers use to deal effectively with off-task behaviours. Because I was looking at two specific cases, individual differences between the two classroom contexts could have affected the interactions that occurred
between each student and his teacher. In the case of Madison, she was only with her class for half of the day because she worked at a different school part-time. This difference may have affected the behaviours of the student that I was observing; however, the nature of the case study approach allowed me to explore individual teachers’ practices in a very specific context; I was able to discover how this teacher deals with the behaviours that this student presents in this particular classroom.

One other limitation that comes with the sampling technique that I used is that I relinquished some control over who my participants were. By asking principals to recommend teachers who are exemplary at their practices and asking teachers to recommend students who they believe present off-task behaviours, I was not able to be certain that these teachers and students represented what I was looking for in my desired sample. However, the principals that I approached were recognized as being knowledgeable and have previously participated in research studies. I discussed the purpose of my study with the principal so he or she had an accurate idea of what I was attempting to discover through my research; therefore, it was likely that these principals were effective in making appropriate recommendations.

I also asked the recommended teachers to suggest students who they believed exhibit off-task behaviours in their classroom, which, again, depended on the teacher to make appropriate recommendations. The purpose of this study was to examine teacher practices in relation to students who were perceived by the teachers as showing off-task behaviours; therefore, this is not a limitation and it may have contributed to my findings.

An additional limitation is that the teachers who participated volunteered to take part in the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that studies have shown that
individuals who volunteer to participate in a study are different from non-volunteers. These individuals tend to be more educated and more intelligent as well as less authoritarian and conforming (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Since I intended to look at a special population (teachers who are exemplary in dealing with off-task behaviours), this difference may not have affected my results in a negative way.

The instruments that I used to collect a portion of my data could also have impacted the results that I obtained. The COS, which was originally implemented by Stanovich and Jordan (1998), is a quantitative checklist used to measure effective teaching practices. Some of the questions that I asked in the second interview were adapted from a quantitative teacher efficacy measure (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Using a measure in a manner that is different from its original purpose may be seen as a methodological limitation. However, while the COS was intended for quantitative use, the checklist allowed me to qualitatively identify any behaviour on the list that appeared during observations. While the measure was not used as it was originally intended, it allowed me to quickly identify behaviours that are supported by research as being effective. In regard to the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), I was able to obtain a rich dialogue about how the teachers felt about their own efficacy in differentiating instruction for and dealing with students who display off-task behaviours. In this study, the conversion of these questions to a qualitative format was beneficial in allowing me to describe the teachers’ efficacy.

As a graduate student, I am a novice researcher, which could be considered a limitation to this study. However, I was guided by previous relevant research as well as by my committee members who have extensive research experience and who provided
me with feedback about my research throughout the process. In addition, my supervisor has a great deal of experience in conducting qualitative research and guided me throughout the process of analyzing my research data. By utilizing the support system that I have, I was able to carry out this study effectively.

*Implications for Practice*

While it is difficult to change teachers’ beliefs, it is important for teachers to be aware of their beliefs and of the effect that these beliefs can have on their practices. By reflecting on their own opinions about inclusion, teachers can address how these beliefs impact the ways in which they interact with their students.

These teachers had high confidence in their ability to help their students be successful and to deal with off-task behaviours effectively. This confidence came from their previous experiences, from collaboration with other professionals, and from professional development opportunities. By developing partnerships with others in the school from whom teachers can learn, teachers enhance the resources that they can turn to in making sure that the best practices are being used for different students. Professional development augments the knowledge base that a teacher has in terms of the practices and theories behind what makes certain practices effective. Once teachers have this knowledge, they can be critical in choosing what will work best in their own classroom and for individual students.

The ultimate goal of my study was to discover the practices that two effective teachers used so that other teachers may take these examples and possibly apply the findings to their own classrooms. Engagement was a significant theme that emerged; by teachers providing students with material that is interesting, monitoring engagement
consistently, and finding out under what conditions their students are engaged, students are more likely to be learning from academic activities and will therefore be more successful and exhibit fewer off-task behaviours.

The findings also revealed the importance of creating a positive classroom climate in which students and teachers have respect for one another. Teachers can create such an environment by taking an interest in their students, using respectful ways of dealing with off-task behaviour, and providing meaningful and engaging academic activities. Providing students with a supportive environment is an essential part of a successful classroom environment. This environment, in addition to the use of effective practices that are aimed at meeting all students’ needs, can ensure the success of students with exceptionalities, students who display off-task behaviours, and typically achieving students.

**Implications for Further Research**

The literature and findings concerning how teachers can effectively interact with students who display off-task behaviours is extensive and is for the most part consistent; however, there are areas that require additional exploration. This study revealed the effective practices that two teachers used to help their students. The findings demonstrated the practices that each of these teachers used to facilitate the success of their students were different. It would be beneficial to conduct this study with more participants; this expansion of the study could discover additional practices that different teachers find useful in creating an effective classroom environment for students who display off-task behaviours. The results from a larger study could be applied in even more diverse classroom contexts and be used with students who have different needs and
who display different behaviours.

It would also be interesting to discover if the practices that these teachers have found to be effective for their students, who display high-frequency, low-intensity off-task behaviours, are also effective for severe behaviours.

Expanding this study to qualitatively examine school climate in relation to teacher beliefs and to the off-task behaviours that students exhibit could have further implications for educational practice. By interviewing principals, in addition to teachers, to determine their orientations toward inclusion and toward students who display off-task behaviours, we would learn more about the importance of a shared vision of the benefits of inclusion for these students.

The purpose of this study is for educators to learn about practices that other teachers have found effective in helping their students be successful. One way of further accomplishing this goal is for teachers to undertake action research studies in which they examine their own and other teachers’ actions in the classroom. In dyads, teachers could implement the Classroom Observation Scale to objectively code one another’s videotaped lessons. Teachers can learn a great deal about the practices that they use, how effective these practices are, why they are or are not effective, and about other practices that could benefit their students. Because the teachers in this study gained much of their confidence in being able to help their students from collaboration with other professionals and learning from resources acquired during professional development, this collaborative examination of teachers’ own classrooms could be valuable in improving teaching practices.
Conclusion

Students require a classroom climate in which they can feel comfortable, feel that they are a respected part of the community, and have opportunities to feel successful and competent. The creation of this type of environment can reduce the need for students to engage in off-task behaviours, which improves their learning outcomes. Teachers can create effective environments through the use of effective practices that prepare students for learning, allow students to engage in their learning in ways that best suit the diversity of their needs, and by providing students with consistency in the classroom. Teachers who hold positive beliefs about inclusion also tend to be confident in their ability to help students succeed; this confidence together with the belief that they are responsible for providing students with all of the support that they need results in the teacher using practices that ensure the success of students who display off-task behaviours.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Ethics Approval Letter

August 5, 2009

Amrit Bhangu
1-10 Birch Avenue
Kingston, ON K7L 2G1

GREB Ref # GEDUC-453-09
Title: “Exploring Student-Teacher Interactions: How Effective Teachers Differentiate Instruction and Interact with Students in the Classroom”

Dear Amrit Bhangu:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled “Exploring Student-Teacher Interactions: How Effective Teachers Differentiate Instruction and Interact with Students in the Classroom” 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 (details available on webpage www.queensu.ca/vpr/greb/addforms.html#Adverse ). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or an 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 any 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 in study procedures or implementations of new aspects into the study procedures on the Ethics Change Form that can be found at http://www.queensu.ca/vpr/greb/addforms.htmlChange. These changes must be sent to Linda Frid at the Office of Research Services or FridL@queensu.ca prior to implementation. Ms. Frid will forward your request for protocol changes to the appropriate GREB reviewers and / or the GREB Chair.

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

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Joan Stevenson, PhD
Professor and Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c.c.: Dr. Nancy Hutchinson, Supervisor
Dr. Malcolm Welch, Chair, E-REB
E-REB: c/o Graduate Studies & Bureau of Research, Attn: Celina Frettas

JS/gi
APPENDIX B

Letter of Information for Teacher

Title: Exploring student-teacher interactions: How effective teachers differentiate instruction and interact with students in the classroom.

I am writing to request your participation in a research study. You have been recommended by your principal as a teacher who effectively interacts and differentiates instruction for students in your classroom who display off-task behaviours. The ultimate goal of my research is to help other teachers learn about beliefs and practices that are associated with effectively teaching and dealing with off-task behaviours that students exhibit in the classroom. I am a Master of Education student in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University. This research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, and by your school board.

In this research study, I wish to discover and describe how teachers effectively interact with and differentiate instruction for students who display what teachers consider to be off-task behaviours in the classroom. To do this, I am planning to conduct three formal interviews with two teachers and three observations of each classroom to explore the interactions between each teacher and one student identified as displaying off-task behaviours. I would like you to identify a child in your classroom who displays off-task behaviours. Because I do not want parents/guardians to be surprised by receiving a request for their child to participate, please select only a child for whom you have already told the parents/guardians about the child’s off-task behaviours.

If you are willing to participate, I would like to conduct interviews about your teaching strategies at a time that is convenient for you. The interviews will occur between the months of November 2009 and April 2010. The total amount of interview time will be approximately 2.5 hours, with the first interview taking 30 minutes, the second interview taking between 1 to 1.5 hours, and the third interview taking 30 minutes. All interviews will be audio taped and then transcribed. All paper and audio files will be secured in a locked filing cabinet. Audio files will be destroyed once the study is complete. None of the data will contain your name, or the identity of your place of work. The place of work will be identified using general terms only. I will observe your teaching strategies and interactions with an identified student on three occasions. The total approximate time I will spend observing will be nine hours. A total of 11.5 hours of your time will be required for this study.

We do not foresee risks in your participation in this research. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to answer any questions you find objectionable, and you are assured that no information collected will be reported to anyone who is in authority over you. You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data.

This research may result in publications of various types, including journal articles, professional publications, newsletters, books, and instructional materials for schools. Your name will not be attached to any form of the data that you provide, neither will your name or the identity of your place of work be known to anyone tabulating or analyzing the data, nor will these appear in any publication created as a result of this research. A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. If the data are made available to other researchers for secondary analysis, your identity will never be disclosed.
Letter of Consent for Teacher

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I am being asked to participate in the research project entitled Exploring Student-teacher Interactions: How effective teachers differentiate instruction and interact with students in the classroom.

I am aware that the purpose of this study is to describe teachers’ beliefs and practices in relation to students who display off-task behaviours and benefit from differentiated instruction in the classroom.

I am aware of the procedures of this study and I have been informed that the interviews will be recorded by audio-tape. I understand that I am being asked to take part in three formal interview sessions and that my classroom will be observed on three occasions. I understand that these interviews and observations will take place between the months of November 2009 and April 2010 at times that are convenient to me. The data collection will take approximately 11.5 hours, with observations taking nine hours, and interviews taking 2.5 hours.

I understand that there are no known risks, discomforts or inconveniences associated with participation in the research study.

I have been notified and understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point during the study and I may request the removal of all or part of my data without any consequences to myself.

I understand that I can contact Amrit Bhangu, the principal investigator or the supervisor, Dr. Nancy Hutchinson with questions about the study. I understand that for questions, concerns, or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can contact the Education Research Ethics Board or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board.

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

Participant’s Name: ______________________________________________________

Signature: ____________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________

Please write your e-mail or postal address at the bottom of this sheet if you wish to receive a copy of the results of this study.
Dear Parent/Guardian:

I would like to invite your son/daughter to participate in a research study that is being conducted at [School Name]. This study is being conducted as part of a Master of Education thesis for the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. The study is entitled: Exploring student-teacher interactions: How effective teachers differentiate instruction and interact with students in the classroom. The research has the support of your child’s teacher and the school principal. Moreover, the research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board and approved by the school board.

The aim of this letter is twofold. First, it will describe the purpose and method of the research study. The second aim is to ask you to allow your son/daughter to participate in the study. Please indicate your decision to participate in the study by completing the Letter of Consent form and return it to your child’s teacher at your earliest convenience.

The purpose of the study is to observe how teachers effectively interact with and differentiate instruction for students who display what teachers consider to be off-task behaviours in the classroom. Your student has been identified as benefiting from differentiated instruction targeted at reducing off-task behaviours. Please note that the data collected in this study are about teachers’ beliefs and practices; while the participating student in each class is an important part of the study, no data about their learning will be included in the study. The student’s participation is limited to being observed along with his or her teacher, on three occasions between the months of November 2009 and April 2010, for a total of nine hours.

There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks to your son/daughter associated with participation in this research.

Agreement on your part to allow your son/daughter to become a part of the study in no way obligates your son/daughter to remain a part of the study. If you agree to allow your child to participate, I will also obtain verbal assent from your child on the first day of observation. This verbal record will be audio-recorded and the file will be kept in a locked cabinet at Queen’s University. Participation is voluntary, and your son/daughter, or you on their behalf, may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Further, participation or non-participation will not affect any school mark or report card that your child may receive.

I intend to report the findings of this study at conferences and this research may result in publications of various types. At no time will the actual identity of the participants be disclosed. Only the teachers will be assigned code names and these only will be used in publications.

Should further information be required before either you or your son/daughter can make a decision about participation, please feel free to telephone me, Amrit Bhangu, the principal investigator or the supervisor, Dr. Nancy Hutchinson with questions about the study. If you have any further questions, concerns, or complaints about the research ethics of this study, you can contact the Education Research Ethics Board or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board.
Letter of Consent for Parent

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information and I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my child is being asked to participate in the research project entitled Exploring Student-teacher Interactions: How effective teachers differentiate instruction and interact with students in the classroom.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to observe how teachers effectively interact with and differentiate instruction for students who display off-task behaviours in the classroom.

I am aware that my child and his/her teacher will be observed in the classroom on three occasions and that these observations will take place between the months of November 2009 and April 2010.

I understand that there are no known risks, discomorts or inconveniences associated with participation in the research study.

I understand that confidentiality will be protected by secure storage and access of data and by the omission of my child’s name from the data.

I understand that my child can withdraw from the study at any time and request the removal of all or part of his or her data, without consequences.

I understand that I can contact Amrit Bhangu, the principal investigator or the supervisor, Dr. Nancy Hutchinson with questions about the study. I understand that for questions, concerns, or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can contact the Education Research Ethics Board or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board.

Please complete and sign one copy of this Consent Form and return to your child’s teacher. Retain the second copy for your records.

By initialing the statement below:

[ ] I consent for my child to participate.

[ ] I do not consent for my child to participate.

Name of parent/guardian: (please print) ________________________________

Signature of Parent/Guardian: ________________________________

Date: ________________
APPENDIX D

Teacher Interview 1

Teacher _______________   School ________________   Date of interview __________

1. For how long have you been teaching?

2. What grades have you taught?

3. Where did you acquire your Bachelor of Education?

4. What was your major in your undergraduate degree?

5. Do you have any advanced qualification certificates? If so, which ones?

6. Do you have any students in your class for whom you differentiate your instruction?
   a. For what reasons do you differentiate instruction for these students?

7. Do you differentiate instruction for students who present off-task behaviours in your classroom?
   a. What types of behaviours do these students exhibit? (Please list the behaviours)
   b. How do you differentiate instruction for these students?

8. Have you had contact with any of these students’ parents about the behaviours that he or she exhibits in the classroom?
APPENDIX E

Teacher Interview 2

Teacher _____________ School _____________ Date of interview _____________

1. What is the student's background? Tell me a bit about him or her. How is he/she currently doing? (Academically and behaviourally, on an IEP?)

2. Did you receive any information about this student prior to his/her entry into your classroom? If so, from whom did you receive this information (parent, colleague, etc.) and what did they tell you?

   Did you check any records?

   What steps did you take to learn about him/her?

   Did you actively seek to familiarize yourself with him/her?

   Assessment – did you request/conduct any?

      What did you hope to find out?

      Was that what you expected?

      What did you decide to do?

      Who was involved?

      With whom did you confer? – Parents, resource, previous teacher?

         -How many times? When?

3. Tell me what happened when you first encountered the student displaying an off-task behaviour.

   What did you do to handle the situation?

   Why did you do that?

   What was the outcome of this strategy?

4. What are some of the off-task behaviours that this student displays?

   How often do these behaviours occur?

5. What types of strategies have you used since this first occurrence to deal with the off-task
behaviours that this student exhibits?

Do you feel that these strategies have been successful?

What indicates that they have been successful/unsuccessful?

6. Did you do anything special for this student in your program?

What did you try? – Why did you do that?

How did you deal with curriculum expectations (if on IEP)?

Did you do instructional accommodations? What did you hope he/she would achieve?

What do you think are the kinds of accommodations that the student needs?

Did you accommodate for other areas? How, how often?

- Social needs? Self-concept?

7. How do you keep track of the student’s progress?

Do you do anything to keep track of his/her individual progress?

Why do you do that?

How often?

Do you monitor progress on the IEP (if he/she is on one)?

-Who else is involved?

8a. Do you work with any other teachers on staff? Resource (SERTs); principal?

How does that happen?

Why do you do that?

-Can you explain how it works?

How useful did you find this for the student?

-For you? As a source of advice? Support?

Who keeps track of the IEP (if on IEP)?

Who else do you work with?

8b. Do you work with an EA for the student?

How does that happen? How does it fit with program?
Why do you do that? Can you explain how it works?

How useful is this for your work with the student?

What else do you do?

9. How do you work with the student's parents (guardians, family)?

   When did you meet the parents initially? – For what purpose?

   Did you or the parent initiate the meeting?

   How often do you meet them now? - For what purposes?

   Who initiates these meetings?

   What do you see as the parents' responsibility in working with you? Why do you think that is so?

10. What kind of influence do you think the home environment has on the behaviours of the student in the classroom?

    a. Who do you think has the greatest influence on the student’s behaviour and why?

       (Classroom environment or home environment)

11. What kind of influence do you think the home environment has on the success of the student in the classroom?

12. What do you think are the most powerful influences on a student’s achievement?

13. Do you think that your teacher training has provided you with the skills to be able to differentiate instruction for the student you have been describing?

14. Do you think that your teacher training has provided you with the skills to deal with off-task behaviours effectively?

15. How do you feel about this statement: If a teacher has adequate skills and motivation, he/she can get through to the most difficult students?

16. If a student is particularly disruptive one day, to what do you tend to attribute this change?

    a. What action (if any) would you take in this situation?
APPENDIX F

Caroline Interview 3

1. I first talked to you about the focal student in November, and you said that you have seen some changes since the beginning of the school year. At this point (May), what specific changes have you seen in the student in terms of academics?
   a. In terms of behaviour?
   b. In terms of interactions with you and other students?

2. You talked about the focal student’s attitude, for example, you said that he realized that he did not have his work done and instead of being insulting towards you when you talked to him about it, he realized that it really was a shame that he had lost the work he had completed. Has he had this attitude all this school year?
   a. Have there been times when the student reacted negatively? How did you deal with this?

3. How, if you have, have you adjusted your practices to account for the changes that the focal student has gone through?
   a. Do you do anything differently now than you did at the beginning of the school year?

4. You said in one of the interviews that the student’s academic success is influenced by the peers that he associates with. What kind of influence do you as his teacher have in his academic success?

5. I noticed that you use opportunities to engage in impromptu mini lessons with the students (discussing the poll about traveling and incorporating a question about fractions; the squiggles on the board, talked about rotations). Why do you do this?

6. When you notice that a student is off-task during your lessons or during independent work, there are times when you do address this and try to get them back on task, but there are also other times when you do not say anything. What is the reason behind the differences in your reactions?

7. What do you think the purpose of differentiated instruction is?
8. We discussed the rules that you have posted in the classroom; do you think that in general, students in the classroom follow those rules?

9. What do you think your role as a teacher is in these students’ lives?

10. What advice would you give to a teacher who has a student like the focal student in his or her classroom?
Madison Interview 3

1. Has any progress been made with the assessments for the focal student?

2. How is the computer accommodation working for the focal student?
   a. Have you noticed that his work/behaviour has improved?

3. The seating arrangement is different from when I did my first observation in the classroom. Can you please explain the rationale behind the changes?
   a. Have the changes accomplished the goals that were intended with the change?

4. I have noticed that there is a great deal of relational conflict between the focal student and other students in the class. How do you deal with this in the classroom?

5. I have noticed that because this is such a large group of students with diverse needs, you often cannot address everyone’s needs when they are engaged in independent work. How do you address this challenge?
   a. Do you think it affects their work?
   b. How do you try to prevent this from affecting the students?

6. You said in the first interview that you have structure in the classroom. What did you mean by that specifically?
   a. How does this show up in your classroom?

7. The last time that I observed in your classroom, I saw that you had a points system. I do not think that was in place during the previous observations.
   a. Do you think that it serves its purpose?

8. What consequences do you have in place for off-task or disruptive behaviour?
   a. At what point do you use the consequences? (How far do you let it go. i.e. sending the student into the hall)

9. How do you collaborate with the student support teacher in the school?

10. You have said that you recognize that other teachers may not tolerate some behaviours that you would tolerate, and vice versa; what types of behaviours that may be considered off-task can
you tolerate, and why?

11. Do you and your teaching partner collaborate on units? (Opportunities for cross-curricular)

12. I don’t see any rules posted in the classroom. Do you have any specified classroom rules?

13. What do you think the purpose of differentiated instruction is?

14. What do you think your role as a teacher in this classroom and in these students’ lives is?

15. If you had once piece of advice to give to a teacher who has a student like the focal student in his or her classroom, what would that be?
# APPENDIX G

## Classroom Observation Checklist

Date: __________ Time: _____ to _____ Teacher: ___________ School: _____________

NIE = not in evidence  NC = Inconsistent  CON = consistent  NA = not applicable

### A. Classroom Management

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### C. Lesson Presentation

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### D. Adaptive Instruction

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A. Classroom Management

1. Arranges physical space to maintain minimally disruptive traffic patterns and procedures.

2. Rules and procedures exist for non-instructional events (e.g., movement about room, student talk, distributing materials, bathroom use, etc.) and for instructional events (e.g., getting ready for lessons, expected behaviour of instructional group, obtaining help, seatwork procedures, out-of-seat procedures, etc.).

3. Evidence of rules that involve respect for other members of class and/or provides verbal reminders to students about how to treat others.

4. Consequates rule noncompliance quickly; cites rule or procedure in responding to disruptive behaviours.

5. Positions self in room to provide high degree of visibility (e.g., can make eye contact with all students).

6. Scans class frequently.

7. Uses nonverbal signals whenever possible to direct students in a nondisruptive manner when teaching other groups of students.

8. Administers praise contingently and uses specific praise statements.

B. Time Management

1. Allocates generous amounts of time for instruction (limits time spent on behaviour management, recess, and nonacademic activities and talk, keeps transition time between lessons short).

2. States expectations for seatwork and transitions in advance (e.g., prepares students for transitions in advance by stating behavioural expectations and informing students that lesson is drawing to a close).

3. Establishes clear lesson routines that signal a clear beginning and end.

4. Gains students’ attention at the beginning of the lesson and maintains attention during instruction at 90% level.
5. Monitors transitions by scanning and circulating among students.

6. Maintains students' attention during seatwork at 86% or higher.

7. Circulates frequently among seatwork students to assist students and to monitor progress.

8. Provides active forms of seatwork practice clearly related to academic goals.

C. Lesson Presentation

1. Provides **review** of previous day's concepts at beginning of lesson; actively tests students' understanding and retention of previous day's lesson content.

2. Provides a clear **overview** of the lesson:
   
   a. explains task in terms of teachers' and students' actions
   
   b. states the purpose and objective of the lesson
   
   c. tells students what they will be accountable for knowing or doing
   
   d. introduces topic(s) of the learning task
   
   e. activates prior experiences and knowledge relevant to the topics, strategies or skills to be learned

3. Actively model and demonstrate **concepts**, learning strategies, and procedures related to effective problem solving in the content area:
   
   a. provides an organizational framework that will help students organize the lesson information (e.g., text structure genre, diagram of lesson topics and subtopics, concept maps, semantic web, etc.).
   
   b. points out distinctive features of new concepts and uses examples and nonexamples to show relevant and irrelevant features of the concept.
   
   c. points out organization, relationships and clues in learning materials that elicit learning strategies.
   
   d. models task-specific learning strategies and self-talk that will help students achieve (e.g., rehearsal strategies, retrieval strategies, etc.).

4. Maintains a brisk pace during the lesson.
5. Provides frequent questions to evaluate students' mastery of lesson concepts.

6. Evaluates students' understanding of seatwork tasks and cognitive processes by asking students "what, how, when, why" questions related to the targeted skill or strategy.

7. Maintains high accurate responding rate (70-90%) in teacher-led activities:
   a. repeats practice opportunities until students are not making errors
   b. delivers instructional cues and prompts
   c. provides error correction procedures
   d. using prompting or modeling following errors rather than telling the answer

8. Provides error drill on missed concepts or review of difficult concepts during and at the end of each lesson.

9. Gives summary of the lesson content and integrates lesson content with content of other lessons or experiences.

10. Summarizes the lesson accomplishments of individuals and group.

11. Forecasts upcoming lesson content.