The Use of a Student Support Outline in Inclusion

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Thesis Abstract

This study uses journal articles and research studies to identify methods in collaborative teaming to support the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. It examines the implementation of a student support outline as a vehicle for planning during regularly scheduled collaboration meetings by school teams. In addition, it discusses the application of the Interaction and Engagement Scale as a tool for observing and recording the interactions of students with their peers and teachers. This tool also records student engagement with tasks in the classroom setting.

Each school team, consisting of special and general education personnel, developed a support plan for the inclusion of their students with severe disabilities. These support plans were reviewed at each meeting of the team and the results from the structured observations were applied during team planning for students' academic and social progress. The effectiveness of the planning was evaluated through observations and interviews of both the students and their teachers. Results of the study suggest that the use of a student support outline can improve the process of planning and implementing supports for students.

Chapter One

Introduction

Historically students with disabilities have been educated in segregated classrooms and sometimes had the opportunity to be mainstreamed; that is placed in a general education classroom for a period of time in their school day. Due to court mandates and the implementation of IDEA, the model of inclusion was slowly developed in California, by a group of specialists, who carefully assessed the program needs of students with severe disabilities. IDEA was developed to consider methods to educate students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment while maintaining appropriate supports. There has been a certain resistance to change by individual teachers and research shows that system wide change in the field of education is very slow.

San Diego City Schools was taken to court through a class action suit by parents of students who were not being given inclusive educational opportunities and the California Department of Education produced a writ outlining ten areas of improvement on December 3, 2002. In response, the inclusion specialists developed a series of trainings for all teachers and paraeducators in the district named Phase one, Phase two, Phase three. In addition, in 2002 the case management of students with disabilities was passed to the school sites and was generally assigned to the on site resource teachers. This produced the common complaint that there was a lack of training for teachers, both special educators and general educators in how to teach

students with disabilities. The Integrated Life Skills (ILS) Inclusion specialists, of whom the researcher was one, who had formerly been the case mangers for these students, took on a more collaborative role and the number of students and schools that each one of them was asked to support doubled. They were directed to encourage the schools to take ownership for the students and to attempt to train the new case managers in the various procedures and policies that had been developed.

Some of the training issues were addressed by the phase one, two and three trainings mentioned above. Phase one was a general overview of the philosophy of inclusion and has been given to all teachers and paraeducators in the district. Phase two was a student specific training completed after each change of personnel or Individual Education Program (IEP). It covered the IEP and best practices for educating the student with disabilities. Phase three was a regularly scheduled meeting between the case manager, the general education teacher and the paraeducator, which the district had directed each inclusion school to hold at least once a month. There were, in addition, other opportunities for training that were offered by the specialists' department in order to help with such areas as curriculum modification, scheduling for students, community based instruction, etc. The trainings at all three levels were very poorly attended and so were not an effective means for the specialists to disseminate information to teachers. The trainings for paraeducators were well attended but were only given infrequently due to the issue of pay. In addition paraeducators should be

working as part of a team and should not take on the role of case manager of the student.

Purpose of the Research

There was general agreement among the inclusion itinerants that the inclusion of students with disabilities in a general education classroom continued to need improvement. It was the researcher's hypothesis that the student support outline (SSO) presented in figure 1 of chapter 3 can be implemented in a more formalized manner. When a student entered inclusion, the Integrated Life Skills Inclusion Itinerant generally designed student supports. This may be done with or without the input of the various other important team members such as the general education teacher and the paraeducator. Recently the district designed a student support outline, hereafter referred to as SSO, which had four columns: classroom activity, student participation and modification, IEP objective and materials/equipment/position. This form was being completed sporadically and rarely in a team context. If the SSO was completed and revised as part of phase three training, what improvements in the inclusion model would there be? To answer this question, the SSO was completed as part of a team process to give focus to the current monthly collaboration meetings that were supposed to be occurring on all sites where there were inclusion students in San Diego City Schools. If the SSO was discussed and completed as a team process the teachers and paraeducators involved were receiving training in context. This seemed to be an effective means for the inclusion specialist to disseminate information. Additionally

the student support outline needed to be evaluated for effectiveness. While research has been conducted on a limited basis, i.e. with a limited number of students (Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering, 2003) there are many environmental factors, which affect various kinds of schools and the manner with which they deal with inclusion, that need to be investigated.

There were several possible outcomes of formalizing the student support outline. While the specialists had designed three phases of training, there was a perception that teachers do not understand inclusion and its philosophy. The student support outline addressed the need for continued training and allowed the individual teacher to access the information that other teachers on the team might have. In addition the perception existed that the inclusion itinerant teacher had "all the answers". If teachers worked as a team to design the supports, would they change these perceptions? Would the teachers take more ownership when they are part of the design process? If so, the student support outline would help the district implement its vision of site responsibility for students with disabilities.

The planning for individual students was not always effectively completed. Often plans were suggested but not implemented due to various factors. If student support outlines were discussed in a team forum, in such a way as to encourage evaluation of the plans, then the implementation of the plans could improve. Would a team planning process increase desirable student outcomes, for example interactions with peers? What factors might influence these student outcomes? The answers to

these questions would give the teams involved a reason to change their current practice and perhaps to see the value in spending the time on the planning process.

To summarize the significance of the study, it suggested a focus for phase three training so that progress would continue to be made in strategies for implementation of inclusion, it examined a change in perceptions of teachers in regards to inclusion and it provided the opportunity for professional development in context.

Definitions

Special education terminology used throughout this document includes at least the following:

Inclusion is defined as having a student with moderate to severe disabilities who is included in a general education class for more than 80% of the day.

Training is defined in this paper as the inclusion specialists teaching of other teachers, both special educators and general educators, as well as paraeducators, in the implementation of inclusion according to the district model.

Implementation means endeavoring to use best practices to effectively educate a child with moderate to severe disabilities.

The ***case manager*** is the teacher responsible for coordinating the services needed for the student's education and completing the required paperwork. This role is usually assigned to the on site Resource Teacher (RSP).

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

A number of research studies have been conducted in the area of inclusion investigating programs, practices and outcomes for students with severe disabilities. Much of the research had been in a limited geographical area or with a limited population. Thus there were many identified problems, which bore further study, and a variety of methods needed to be applied to them. For the purpose of this study, these many studies have been sorted into the following categories. The area of educational change is a broad category but has particular relevance to inclusion and how it has been implemented both in California and in many other countries in the world. The next category identifies the barriers that are perceived to hinder the spread of inclusion, across schools and districts. This is followed by the practices that are found to be most effective in the education of students with severe disabilities. Finally, there is the area of social relationships in the inclusion model and how they affect the student and their progress.

Educational Change

Various researchers from various countries have examined the area of educational change. The impetus for research is often the slow pace of change in the educational environment and the resistance to change that is perceived to exist. Quite often real change does not take place without a degree of resistance. In fact, change that is mandated to occur is often superficial and has no real effect upon the practice

and culture of a school. It has been theorized that if no resistance exists, then the change has not affected the lives of the professionals involved (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). The concerns raised by "resistant teachers" need to be addressed as they offer an insight into the issues at the heart of the change. Once this approach is taken the impetus to lay blame can be put aside.

Change in most environments has been found to be successful when certain supports are in place. A range of substantive supports needs to be identified before the change occurs. The plan of implementation should not be complex as it soon becomes unwieldy and loses effectiveness (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000). In their research in Scotland, Wilson and Pirrie identified four areas that they believe are crucial to change; a common goal and a shared vision of the future of the particular organization, the institutional support available to the organization, the contribution of individuals committed to the change and the clarity of roles identified to make the change happen. It becomes apparent that these are rarely all addressed by large school districts when they are proposing a change in practice and procedures. Thus a number of barriers to the success of an inclusion model are easily identified.

Barriers to Inclusion

During the last decade the new legislation and policies in the field of education have changed so that they are based upon academic excellence, choice and competition. This standards driven agenda is in direct opposition to an inclusion model. The issues of assessment and ranking of schools has put a great deal of pressure upon teachers at

all levels. At the same time, parent involvement in schools has diminished as society imposes more constraints upon their time. Their ability to volunteer in classrooms, attend school meetings and other activities, which allow them to be part of the school team, has been reduced.

In a study done in Great Britain there has been a correlation established between students who are identified as special education and permanent exclusion from general education settings, particularly if the student has behavioral issues (Evans & Lunt, 2002). This research identified six limitations to greater inclusion of special education students. One limitation was the attitudes and beliefs held by school staff that the school score would be lowered in national tests and that some children's needs are too complex to be supported in general education classes. Another was the difficulty in obtaining resources whether it be funding for programs or economies of scale when children are grouped at a special school and the investment in the buildings themselves. A further limitation was the structures already in place so that it would be difficult to reorganize support services to meet the inclusion model and there was a lack of policy direction to accomplish the reorganization. Parents did not always wish to choose inclusion preferring the experienced and effective special education teachers. Socially, special education students were excluded or marginalized and so a change in culture would have to occur in order for their successful inclusion. The final limitation cited was a lack of school "provision". In other words the physical environment was

difficult to manage for some students and the staff involved lacked the training needed to differentiate their curriculum.

Some further notions on the barriers to inclusion arise from the work of McLeskey and Waldron (2002). They note that inclusion has often been put into practice as a location change rather than the substantive change it was designed to be. Each school has a culture that has been developed consisting of the essential features that are chosen by its staff. This leads to a defensive position when inclusion is proposed. At the same time the school district may not have a full understanding or vision of what the inclusion program should look like.

"Extensive evidence reveals that IEPs for students with disabilities have not been implemented in many cases, both in special education classrooms and in general education settings" (Haynes & Jenkins, 1986). This research is certainly disconcerting as it reveals that the top down approach, which emphasizes correct and legal IEP's does not guarantee that the outcome of designing supports for special education students will be positive. With all these limitations and barriers in mind, how does one then identify the best practices that can make inclusion successful?

Issues and Practices in Inclusion

Quality inclusion is not static. It needs to evolve as new teachers, new students and new research; both action research and formal research become influential in the program. According to McLeskey and Waldron (2002) quality inclusion contains the following components; it must fit the details of day-to-day classroom instruction, it

must be perceived by teachers, as being effective for all students and it must enhance the teacher's current repertoire of instructional methods. In order for teachers to learn and employ new skills, a balance needs to be achieved between challenging their practices and reinforcing their essential skills. In this way teachers may evidence the characteristics needed for best practices in inclusion i.e. take responsibility for all students, meaningfully differentiate their instruction, use standards based content, apply cooperative learning strategies and provide student centered activities (Weiner, 2003). The schools they work in should be described as dynamic, responsive, engaging and dedicated. When a school has low student achievement, it is considered a challenge to improve as opposed to a reason to complain. It becomes a reason to reflect critically upon practice. This leads to experimentation and innovation as teachers and whole schools struggle to meet the needs of their learners.

Sobel, Taylor & Anderson, (2003) devised a model to examine the effectiveness of teaching staff in a large public school district and urban university The model had the dual purpose of evaluation of teachers, both practicing and beginning, as well as giving direction for mentoring efforts in the area of diversity responsive teaching. An observation documentation form was developed containing three sections. One section involved direct classroom observation, one was guided questions for conversation and the last section contained an analysis and recommendations. The conclusion stated that collaborative projects are potentially rich in identifying curricular strengths and weaknesses.

The idea of a multidisciplinary team is suggested in many research articles. It does not suffice to place people into such a group without developing a shared understanding of inclusion. Professional development needs to occur. This development should take place based on the needs of the school so that it becomes a part of the daily lives of teachers. It should involve continuous reflection on practice so that growth can come about over time. A multidisciplinary team is an ideal forum for this development. It provides an opportunity for peer-to-peer support and an increase in shared responsibility. Where possible a team teaching model is most effective as it creates the unification of special education and general education in order to design success for all students. Integration of students is accomplished in a systematic way and the expertise of each member is valuable (Hunt, 2000)

There are some important elements that allow a collaborative team to function effectively. Regular face-to-face interaction needs to take place so that ideas can be built upon to generate novel solutions. Positive interdependence needs to be created among team members by such avenues as group goals, distribution of leadership roles and common rewards for accomplishments. Small group interpersonal skills such as trust communication creative problem solving, decision-making and conflict management need to be developed. The functioning of the team in accomplishing its tasks needs to be discussed. Finally methods of holding team members accountable for responsibilities need to be identified (Thousand & Villa, 2000).

The role of the inclusion support teacher needs to be defined in this team context. In order to participate fully, the inclusion teacher should be in classrooms on a weekly basis. He or she should address the natural resistance to inclusion and speak to the staff when staff meetings take place. He or she should give informal academic assessments, which identify the strengths and weaknesses of the students. Then an instructional modification profile can be developed, so that the teacher can group students flexibly, select materials and create instructional strategies that are individualized. Finally the inclusion teacher should arrange visits for teachers to model schools (Weiner, 2003).

In a study completed in San Francisco some interdisciplinary teams were developed which included parents, a research team member, a general education teacher, an inclusion specialist and an instructional assistant. The focus of these team meetings was to develop a Unified Plans of Support (UPS) for various students using a collaborative relationship among the staff. The UPS was an individualized listing of curricular supports to promote classroom participation and interaction. Team members were identified as responsible for these supports and at subsequent meetings the supports were evaluated for the extent to which they were implemented. This allowed the team to refine, expand or drop the support or to add additional supports as needed. The results from this study showed an improvement in interaction levels, academic participation and productivity, as well as increased motivation and persistence in

completing tasks, for the special education students. Parents reported a similar level of progress in the home setting (Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering, 2003).

An outcome of this research is a reallocation of resources. Resources include site leadership, funding for programs, parent involvement, teacher preparation, professional development, discipline, supplies and materials. Principals are at the heart of this process because they are advocates for resources for their school. They provide a forum for the development of ideas. They allow consensus building so their staffs can develop that shared vision (Hunt, 2000).

An independent analysis by Metis Associates conducted in 2001 showed a higher percentage of students in inclusion classrooms improved by at least one performance level when compared to students in noninclusion classes (Weiner, 2003). If education staff is committed to creating a community where all learners are valued that is a catalyst for change to universal inclusion.

Social Relationships

A community is developed when certain criteria are present. It is not the physical or geographical relationship that makes a community. It is a sense of belonging, the feeling of being safe and a shared responsibility for all. Norman Kunc proposes an inverted Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Thousand & Villa, 2000). In it he states that the first level of needs is physiological, that is for food, shelter and warmth. The next level is safety and freedom from fear. After that level one attains self-esteem, which includes respect, recognition and mastery. Next one arrives at belonging and

love of friends and family. The highest level is self-actualization, when the ability to pursue fulfillment and creativity are possible. In the current education environment however, even when you achieve winning, you still don't know if you're good enough because membership is contingent upon sustaining that level of achievement. So in order to build the ideal community in schools the cultural, language and ability differences of the student body should be embraced.

The social curriculum is thus just as important as the academic curriculum. Students need to learn the same skills in collaborative teamwork that are quoted above, if they are to function as a member of a class. These skills represent life long learning. As noted in the British study there is a group of children outside the mainstream because they have been excluded for reasons of their behavior (Evans & Lunt, 2002). More models of social skills education need to be instituted and researched, so that behavior will not be a reason for exclusion. Inclusive settings give students with disabilities the acceptance, interaction and friendships that they require. Parents report acceptance and belonging as a major positive inclusion outcome (Hunt & Goetz, 1997).

In summary there are a broad diversity of topics and questions to be addressed in the area of inclusive education. The social relationships that are continuing to develop between students with and without disabilities will have implications for the future of our society. The notion of community and homogeneity as it once existed is no longer viable. Conditions in the world are driving a change to acceptance of diversity. It is the job of education to respond to that diversity. The process of real

change in education does not come about easily. Research has given educators guidelines as to the necessary supports. Inclusion specialists need to define their roles as part of school based teams so that professional development for teachers can be meaningful. The inclusion program can and should continue to evolve so that the needs of all students are met.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The research questions that were addressed in this study were the following. If the SSO is completed and revised as part of phase three training, what improvements in the inclusion model will there be? If teachers work as a team to design the supports, will they change the perception that the inclusion itinerant teacher will have "all the answers"? Will the teachers take more ownership and will collaboration improve among members of these school teams? To answer these questions, the SSO, presented in Figure 1, was completed as part of a team planning process during monthly collaboration meetings that occurred on the sites chosen by the researcher. Figure 2 illustrates three different supports from actual SSO forms completed for focus students. The supports were designed so that each focus student could participate in a classroom reading activity in a way that also addressed the IEP goals and objectives developed for that student.

Student:_____ Subject:_____ Grade: ____
School Year:_____

Classroom Activity	Student Participation and Modification	IEP Objectives	Materials/Equipment/Position

Figure 1. SSO form.

Student:_____ Subject:_____ Grade: ____
School Year:_____

Classroom Activity	Student Participation and Modification	IEP Objectives	Materials/Equipment/Position
Read aloud at carpet	Hold theraputty or other materials in hand	Exhibit appropiate classroom behavior	Theraputty
Word study activities	Substitute grade two level words in same activities	Read multisylable words	Individual word list
Independent Reading	Oral review of main ideas after each page or two	Identify main ideas	Individual book at own level

Figure 2. Examples of SSO interventions.

Population and Sample

This research study was conducted in the San Diego City Schools district. The enrollment at the time of the study was 140,890 students. The researcher had chosen to study a variety of grade levels in order to widen the applicability of the use of the SSO. In addition the schools covered a range of socioeconomic levels, as they were represented in San Diego City. The population of students in special education programs was divided by the diagnoses given on the student's IEP and the level of intervention that a student may require to be successful. The students in this study were chosen from the students currently in the Integrated Life Skills Inclusion program.

Three of the students were in a high school setting in grade twelve and two were expected to complete high school and move on to a transition program of some sort. JG and SR are female and JL is male. The next student BW was in grade 4 and is female. The next student RC was in grade five and is female. Another student SS was in grade two is also female. The final student JT was in grade seven and is male. All of the students had a diagnosis of developmental delays, except for the oldest SR who had traumatic brain injuries. Each of these students had paraeducator support and was fully included in a general education class except for the specialist services, such as occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech language pathology.

Methodological Steps

The methodology for this study involved the four steps described in the following sections.

Methodology Step 1: Team Identification

The first task in the study was to identify teams at each school site. This was accomplished by inviting team members to the monthly collaboration meetings, which occur for each of the students. The focus of the first meeting was to discuss and complete an SSO for each student. The SSO was filled in using a collaborative forum with members of the team sharing their knowledge and expertise in order to identify the classroom activities that take place, whether there is an opportunity for the IEP objectives to be practiced and the support the student needs to participate in the activities. The identified activities need to be generic, in other words ones that all the

students do on a regular basis. As we consider the various grade levels, the SSO becomes more complex as the number and difficulty of activities increases. Members of the team were encouraged to take responsibility for various supports, depending upon their expertise and their involvement with the student.

Subsequent to this meeting a second meeting was called in the following month to consider whether the interventions have been implemented and whether they need to be changed. At this time new supports were suggested and there was some discussion about whether team members have followed through with their individual responsibilities. Notes taken from these meetings were reviewed to find common themes and differences between teams. The interactions of the teams were observed so that the collaborative process and functioning of the teams was considered.

Methodology Step 2: Interaction and Engagement Scale

The Interaction and Engagement Scale (Hunt et al., 1996; Hunt, Farren-Davis, Wrenn, Hirose-Hatae , & Goetz, 1997) is a tool designed as a measure of interaction and engagement variables utilizing a partial interval recording procedure. Figure 3 shows the recording form used during interval recording of observation. Table 1 presents the definitions of the codes used for the Figure 3 recording form. It was developed and has been used at San Francisco State University over the past six years. Each 10 minute observational period consists of twenty intervals. Within each interval there are fifteen seconds for observing and fifteen seconds for recording. The observer notes the first communicative interaction (e.g. speech) involving the focus student, the

identity of the partner in the interaction and who initiated the interaction. The communicative function (i.e. a request, protest, comment or assistance) as well as the quality of the interaction (i.e. positive, negative or neutral) is also noted. Engagement variables are also measured including the level of engagement (i.e. active, passive or not engaged) and the grouping pattern that occurred during the majority of each interval.

Student:_____ Observation:_____
Observer:_____ Setting:_____
Date:_____ Time:_____

Int. #	Who	OTHER I				A	FOCUS STUDENT I				A	QUALITY (Reciprocal Int. Only)			ENGAGEMENT CATEGORIES				
1.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
2.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
3.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
4.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
5.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
6.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
7.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
8.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
9.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
10.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
11.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
12.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
13.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
14.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
15.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
16.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
17.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
18.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
19.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
20.		R	P	C	A	A	R	P	C	A	A	Pos	Neut	Neg	Act	Pass	NE	Sa	Sg
Total:																			

Figure 3. Interaction and Engagement Scale record sheet.

Table 1

Interaction and Engagement Scale Definitions

INTERACTION MEASURES	
STRUCTURE	
I	Initiation: Any verbal or active nonverbal behavior that engages or attempts to engage another person.
A	Acknowledgement: Any verbal or nonverbal behavior that appears to be in response to an initiation. This can include: (a) gazing at the initiator, (b) nodding (yes/no) in response to an initiation, (c) carrying out a direction that has been given, (d) physically or verbally resisting the initiation, (e) significantly changing expression or intentional eye contact, and (f) responding to physical assistance.
I & A	Reciprocal interaction: Communicative exchanges in which there is both an initiation and an acknowledgement.
FUNCTION (for initiations only)	
R	Request: To ask for objects, actions, or information. [Reminder: All questions are "requests" (e.g., "Is it raining?" "Do you want to read with David?" "What did you do this weekend?")] [A direction is "assistance".]
P	Protest: To indicate a desire to avoid an undesired stimulus or to escape an ongoing stimulus.
C	Comment: To make a remark or provide information. [Reminder: Reading aloud is "commenting".]
A	Assistance: To provide information or other assistance that helps the partner accomplish some outcome. [Reminder: Teaching (including lecturing to the whole class) is "assistance."]
QUALITY (reciprocal interactions only)	
Pos	Positive: One or both partners in the reciprocal exchange demonstrate positive affect (i.e., verbal praise or compliments, sharing or helping, smiling to indica pleasure, physical or verbal humor, and/or physical or verbal affection).
Neut	Neutral: The reciprocal exchange is made with neither positive nor negative affect (e.g., conversation, discussion, answering teacher's questions).
Neg	Negative: One or both partners in the reciprocal exchange demonstrate negative affect (e.g., anger, irritation, indignation, discourteousness, and/or exasperation).
WHO (identity of the partner)	
P	Paraprofessional
T	General education teacher
Ts	Special education teacher
Th	Therapist (Related Services Personnel)
A	Other adult
S	Student without disabilities
Sd	Student with disabilities
ENGAGEMENT MEASURES	
Act	Active engagement: Student is actively engaged by himself or herself or within a small or large group activity. Student is participating through verbal/alternative communication or physical movement.
Pass	Passive engagement: Student is passively engaged by himself or herself in small or large group activity. Student is participating by attending and waiting for his or her turn, giving direct eye contact, passively listening, and/or attending to the teacher or group members.
NE	Not engaged: Student is not actively or passively engaged in activity. Student is either not attending to ongoing activity, not being attended to by staff or students, or not assigned to a task or given materials.
S_A	Student alone: Student is physically alone (e.g., on the playground) or is working by himself or herself or with an instructional assistant on an activity unrelated to the activity of other students in the area.

In this study, the focus students were observed three times during a school activity and the interaction and engagement scale completed. The data from these observations was analyzed to measure the change in engagement of the students and their interactions with peers. In order to analyze the change in engagement, the number of times a student was engaged in the activity during the observation period was converted into a percentage. The percentage for each observation was placed on a bar graph, so that there were three bars for each student. When analyzing student interactions, the number of times the focus student interacted with the teacher or a peer, during the observation period, were converted into percentages and graphed as above. Interactions with the paraeducator, although noted, were not used in calculating the percentage. The predicted outcome was that the focus students would interact with peers more frequently and that they would more often be engaged in classroom activities.

Methodology Step 3: Student Interview

The third tool used in this study to examine the effect of the implementation of the SSO was direct interviews with the students themselves. While this method of research is not as widely used, particularly with students with disabilities, it is considered a valid method of research. The researcher believes that the students have a role to play in their own education; however this perspective is not widely accepted among parents of students with disabilities. It is often difficult for the students to communicate their ideas. Sometimes they do not remember the word(s) they need to clearly communicate their ideas. Some students require additional time to process oral

information or need visual cues to help them. Some students do not speak and have devices or systems, which allow them to communicate. These can range from pictures on paper to quite sophisticated computers.

In order to be able to get information from the wide variety of levels, each question had additional format(s) by which it could be asked. For example "Who's your friend" might elicit an oral answer. Another format would be "Draw a picture of your friend". A third format would be "Show me your friend" (in person or on a device). The usefulness of this question is to identify whether the student relates to another child or perhaps an adult with whom they work. Students were given the opportunity to draw a picture of themselves at school, which allowed them to indicate a place where they feel happy or comfortable.

The researcher flexibly interviewed the students, modifying the way each question was asked as needed. The student interviews were recorded on paper and the researcher also looked for common themes in the student's perception of their work with classmates. It was the researcher's assumption that the student be willing and able to answer the interview in some way.

The questions and directions that were used to interview students were the following:

1) Who's your friend?

   Draw your friend.

   Show me your friend.

2) What do you do with your friend?

   Show me what you do with your friend.

3) What do you like at school?

4) Who do you work with?

5) How do kids help you?

6) Show me you getting help.

7) Show me your best work.

8) If you like you can draw a picture of you at school.

Methodology Step 4: Focus Group Interviews

The researcher conducted team interviews to assess the team perspectives on the growth in academic and social participation of the students. The use of focus group interviews is a well-used strategy that allows the researcher to find out what people really think about an issue (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The questions were opened ended to provoke discussion and reflection on the part of the team members. An example of this is "What have you noticed about the student's interactions with others?" This information was correlated with the information gathered from observing the students. The focus group interviews examined the perception of the team in regards to the social and academic progress of the focus students. Do the teachers believe the students are actively involved with their peers? Do they feel the students are progressing academically? It also considered the teacher's perception of the usefulness of the SSO. Additional ideas for the effective use of the SSO can emerge

particularly from the high school teams. Notes taken from these meetings were reviewed to find common themes and differences between teams and relationships to student outcomes. It was an assumption that the teams functioned in a comfortable way so that the interviews show the teams real viewpoints on the SSO.

The questions that were posed to members of the focus groups were the following:

1) What have you noticed about the student's interactions with other students?
2) How often do you think the student works with a peer in class?
3) What kind of products, which demonstrate learning, has the student made in class?
4) Do you think the student has any friends at school? How do you know?
5) Do you think the student is learning to be independent? Why?
6) How do other students help the student?
7) Does a discussion of supports for the student help you?
8) What conditions do you feel are necessary for successful inclusion?

Chapter Four

Results

The intent of this study was to investigate ways in which collaborative teams could use the Student Support Outline to plan. The research questions were: If the SSO is completed and revised as part of phase three training, what improvements in the inclusion model will there be? If teachers work as a team to design the supports, will they change the perception that the inclusion itinerant teacher will have "all the answers"? Will the teachers take more ownership when they are part of the design process and will collaboration improve among members of these school teams? The results are as follows:

Results of Implementing the Student Support Outline

At most of the schools, the teams met on a regular basis to discuss student progress and supports. The SSO was completed as part of a team process and became a part of the current monthly collaboration meetings that occurred on the sites chosen by the researcher.

In the elementary schools, the teams mostly consisted of the resource teacher hereafter called the RSP, the paraeducator and the general education teacher, as well as the researcher. The participation on these teams was more easily formed and there were a greater number of supports for students discussed.

Second Grade Team Results

For the student in grade two, SS, two and a half pages of SSO information was completed. The team reviewed information at each meeting so that previous supports that had not been implemented were discussed again and team members had the opportunity to reevaluate and take ownership of instituting supports. This team had historically relied upon information from the paraeducator to drive discussion as she had several years of experience in her position and the teacher and RSP who were relatively new to the inclusion model had few ideas for student support. The regular meeting of the team using the SSO as a focus gave the teacher and the RSP a better opportunity to contribute ideas for support. An additional complication at this site was that the RSP went on a leave of absence during the research study period and the substitute RSP did not choose to be a participant during the last team meeting.

Fourth Grade Team Results

The student in grade four, BW, had a variety of supports and the model of RSP support at that site, which involved the RSP working with students in the class two to three times a week during written language resulted in ongoing collaboration and evaluation of the focus student's participation in the classroom. The supports for BW were clearly identified during discussion and the team members were willing to change their supports to meet her needs if they felt it was warranted. This team was clearly collaborative from the start and the use of the SSO was more of a formalization of the process.

Fifth Grade Team Results

The supports for RC, the fifth grade focus student, were less clearly defined by her team, to start with. The paraeducator had less direction from both the general education teacher and the RSP about her role in the classroom. While the teacher "didn't mind" her helping other students, she was not seen as an active support for all students in the classroom and was thus less able to facilitate the peer interaction desirable for RC. This lack of direction was partially caused by the fact that the collaboration meetings were not taking place in a team context. In other words the RSP met with the teacher and the paraeducator separately. Once a meeting was established with all of the team, including the speech teacher, there was a lack of consensus as to the supports that would benefit the student. The subsequent meeting of RC's team found that supports had not been instituted uniformly and it was clear that several meetings would be needed to improve team functioning.

Seventh Grade Team Results

At the middle school, members of the team were the resource teacher, the site based diagnostic resource teacher and some of the general education teachers. The student, JT, had many behavioral challenges and the team had instituted a behavior support plan as well as academic supports. JT had been at the school the previous year but had a new paraeducator for the current year. Approximately half way through the research study JT's paraeducator resigned for a variety of reasons.

This site was another example of collaboration meetings, which had not taken place in a team context. The paraeducator met with the RSP and the RSP went into the classrooms periodically and talked to the teachers. The paraeducator did not get enough supervision and training, partly due to the scheduling at the middle school level. At this particular site the schedule of six blocks rotated daily, which was very confusing for the students and the teachers, and JT thus encountered five different teachers with five different styles and expectations. It became apparent that regular team collaboration was the most important aspect that could be improved.

After the resignation of the paraeducator, JT had a variety of substitutes. The RSP, who as the case manager was charged with obtaining a replacement, did not have the experience or training to evaluate potential candidates. This would have been a good opportunity for team input, as all the teachers who need to work with the new paraeducator could have discussed and reviewed the information from the interviews held by the RSP, however the school calendar prevented this from occurring. The school had an intersession break of one month, so most of the teachers involved were not available. A long-term substitute was eventually hired.

As far as the SSO meetings, improvements occurred over the course of the research study, so that participation increased and supports were being discussed in a team context. One of the ideas for support that emerged was to change the role of the new paraeducator to one of a shadow, in other words introduce the person as another adult assisting in the classroom, rather than just focused on JT. The advantage to this

model is that it fulfills the student's desire to be the "same as his classmates", however it requires that the general education teachers intervene to the same degree, if not more, as the paraeducator in addressing behavioral and academic needs. This model was just beginning at the completion of the research study and so its overall effectiveness for JT could not be judged. The immediate effect of the model was to engage the teacher's in a more collaborative effort in order to plan instruction for JT, so that modified materials, particularly in the subjects requiring reading, appeared to be made by the teachers. The teachers also needed to take a more active role in planning the support model that the paraeducator provided.

Twelfth Grade Team Results

The high school was a very challenging site on which to get team participation. During the research period one of the students, SR, had an operation and was absent from school for approximately six weeks. The team of teachers that support her do not generally function in a collaborative way and thus participation on the team was limited to one teacher, the paraeducator and the case manager. Data that was collected for SR reveals little progress in the area of peer interactions and little improvement in collaborative support planning. It was in fact during the IEP meeting that the general education teacher discussed supports for the inclusion of SR in the most challenging academic subject, economics. This student was 21 years old and her placement was highly controversial.

The high school was the most challenging site on which to achieve a regular collaborative meeting. The schedule for these students involved six teachers each day. It took four months of encouragement to get the majority of the teachers to attend and even then the involvement of the site vice principal for special education was needed. Two of the grade twelve students, JL and JG, had been in the inclusion program for students with severe disabilities during all their high school years. When the researcher attempted to discuss the supports for the students, the teachers expressed a lack of ownership. An example of this was the request of a teacher for a paraeducator to assign a grade for his class. To quote from the first meeting when student supports were discussed teachers responded, "The aides are great." While this was true, it spoke to a lack of teacher understanding about the student's needs and IEP goals. Thus the notion of how supports were being implemented and by whom, had to be revisited at each meeting. Another difficulty was the issue of time. In order to get more participation on the team, meetings were called at various times in the week. Finally after school was chosen as the time most teachers could attend. Meetings needed to begin promptly and take no longer than one half hour, however, in order to increase participation. Thus discussion was somewhat limited and even though an agenda was developed before each meeting, all agenda items were not always covered. After one of the final meetings of this team the Speech Language Pathologist was annoyed that she had not been specifically invited to attend, despite the fact that the meetings were widely publicized and were held near her office.

Positive Outcomes in Team Functioning

The effect of instituting the SSO had a positive effect on the content and functioning of the teams during monthly collaborative meetings. One theme between all sites studied was that individuals who were initially willing to participate in meetings, led to teams that were flexible in their approach to planning supports. The role of team members in supporting ILS inclusion students has evolved continually and will continue to do so. In conjunction with this evolution of roles, the role of the ILS inclusion specialist has also changed. As school teams met and discussed supports and concerns for their students, their understanding grew. Even if teams were struggling to meet and collaboratively plan, they were making progress toward an ideal inclusion model. While it was evident that all teams, made progress solely by the fact that a regular meeting with a focus of the SSO was occurring, it was also evident that progress was not, nor can it be, consistent across sites.

Team Challenges

One challenge was to find a time when all members of a team were able to meet. This was influenced by a variety of other factors. Sites where members of the team resisted meeting had difficulty in designing supports and shared less information about current best practices. Another challenge was the duration of the meetings, in other words having a meeting long enough to plan and review effectively but short enough that team members could fit it into their schedules.

A second challenge was that some issues could not be predicted. Sometimes an immediate resolution is needed and precludes a team approach to support design. Sometimes the attitudes about roles and responsibilities that members bring to the team are difficult to change and alter the team's effectiveness. This challenge is coupled with the willingness of team members to understand and implement changes to their practices. Teachers with less experience were more open to change. Perhaps this was because they had fewer preconceived notions as to their roles in teaching special education students.

Another challenge was in establishing the importance of independence and friendship to the student, when the usual focus is on the academic areas. In some cases, a teacher focused on the paper that needed to be completed instead of on the student. A final challenge to collaborative team building was the change of staff members that took place during the study.

Interaction and Engagement Scale Results

Each student was observed three times over the period of time the research was conducted. Of course the results from such an observation vary with the activity in the class and the natural differences, which occur in student behavior from day to day. Although the researcher was the only one completing this instrument, it appeared to be valid and the teams were interested in and accepting of the feedback, which resulted from its use.

Data from the Interaction and Engagement Scale were analyzed to measure the change in engagement of the students and their interactions with peers. The researcher added all the columns for each student record sheet. Then the column showing active engagement in the assigned task and the column showing with whom the student had each interaction, were converted into a percentage of the total observation intervals. These percentages were converted into bar graph formats, which give a visual representation of the percentages. See Figure 4 for the percentages of student interactions with peers or teachers. See Figure 5 for the percentages of focus student engagement with tasks.

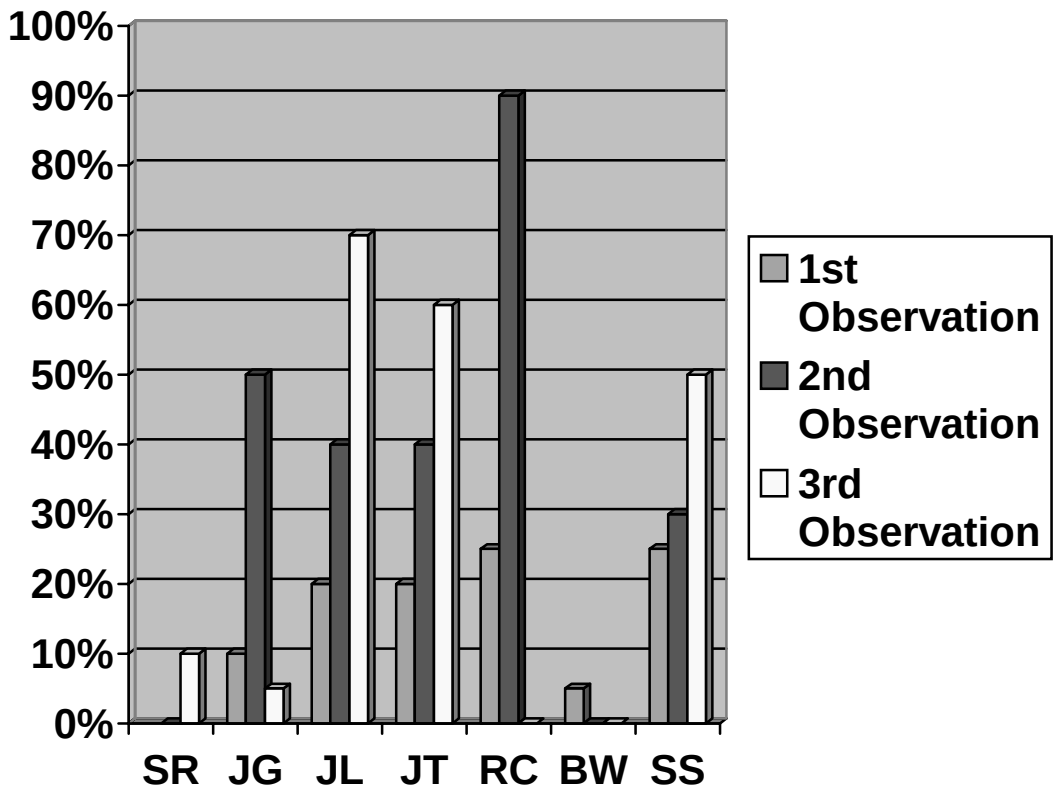

Figure 4. Percentage of focus student interactions with peers or teachers.

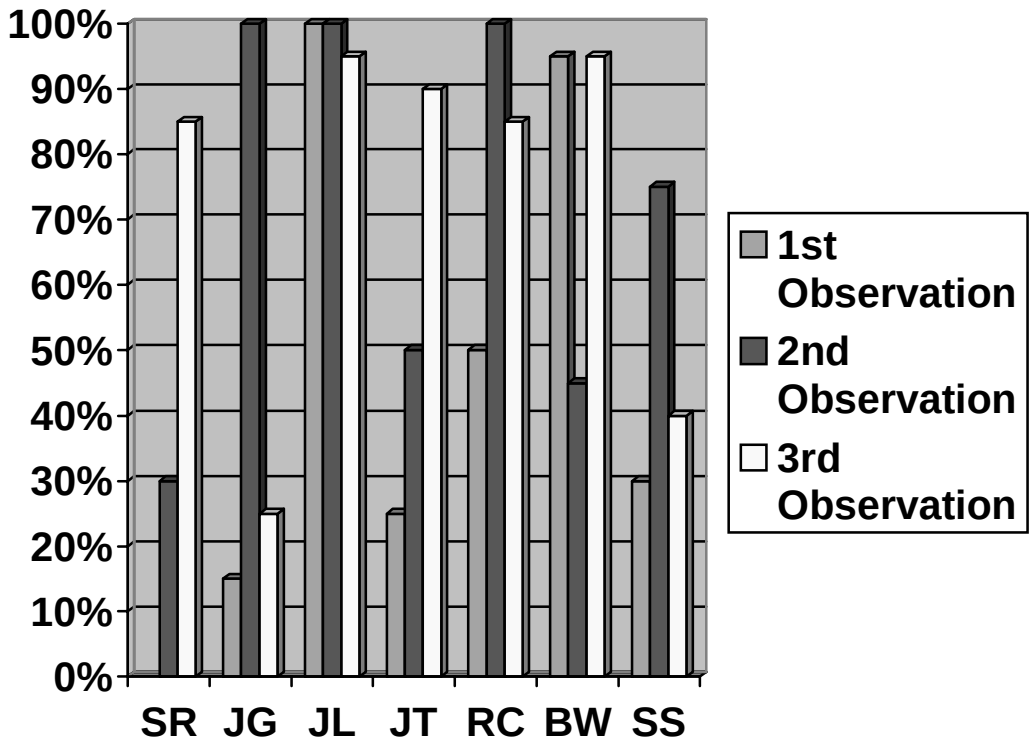

Figure 5. Percentage of focus student active engagement with task.

Analysis of Interactions of "Low Interaction" Students

The percentages of interactions varied widely from 0% to 90%. As Figure 4 shows, two students, BW and SR, stood out as having low levels of peer and teacher interaction. Observations revealed that the low ratings were not from the student having no interactions at all during the 10 minutes of observation, but rather having only interactions with the paraeducator. The reason the interactions with the paraeducator did not count on the table is simply that the researcher was attempting to measure interactions with the teacher and with the other students in the classroom. The

interactions with the paraeducator are certainly valid from the point of view of student learning. For example in the case of BW, her interactions with other students were all minimal even when the paraeducator was not present but she was certainly making progress on her IEP goals and objectives. The bigger question was whether she had the opportunity to learn the necessary social interaction skills. The ability to demonstrate this to the school team was an important way to allow the team to reevaluate their ideas of support based on the focus of peer interaction.

Examination of the interactions, showed SR stood out as being isolated. She was absent during the first observation period and although she had many interactions with her paraeducator, she had very few with peers. In one instance, the researcher observed that she put up her hand but was not acknowledged by the classroom teacher and in fact the subsequent interaction with her paraeducator was negative in quality. Her schedule of classes was somewhat unique as she had a number of non-academic classes. One would expect more opportunities for interaction in that case, for example in a transition skills class where there are fewer students and more opportunities to speak with teachers and peers and in fact the percentage in this setting rose to 10%. It was, however far from enough for her to be a true participant.

Analysis of the Patterns of Interaction

For most of the students there were three factors, which affected the interaction level the researcher observed. The first factor was the kind of group activity, which was being conducted during the observation period. Clearly teacher lecture is a time of low

interaction possibilities. When classes are designed so that students sit in a group it allows the focus student more access to peers. The second factor is the subject matter. When the student is able to participate with fewer prompts from the paraeducator, he is more likely to interact with peers or the teacher. If the subject matter is one that is very difficult for the student, the paraeducator tends to take more of a role and the teacher feel less able to effectively teach the student. This leads to the third factor, which is one of position. If the student is seated beside the paraeducator, fewer interactions with others take place, even when the student is seated in a group, especially if the paraeducator is between the student and his peers.

Thus discussion within the team setting is essential to evaluating the interactions of the focus student and devising ways to increase them. In the case of SR the team was small and the key players, the general education teachers were reluctant to participate. So during the course of this study her interaction level remained minimal.

The skills of the paraeducator in facilitating interaction are also crucial. An example of how the paraeducator can affect interaction was JT. In the first observation period he had a paraeducator that needed more training in various areas and JT's behavior often resulted in negative interaction quality with others. During this observation his interaction rate was calculated at twenty percent. Then his paraeducator resigned and the substitute working with him, who was actually the resource aide, appeared to have more experience and training. He was observed to be working in a group for the entire observation period and his interaction rate increased to

forty percent. During his last observation there was no paraeducator present. The setting was a small group, as he was attending intersession, however the subject matter was mathematics, one of his hardest subjects. Observation calculations showed a sixty percent interaction rate. These findings correlated with a similar increase in active engagement with tasks.

Student Active Engagement with Task

As Figure 5 shows, the percentage of active engagement increased from the first to the third observation for most students. This suggests that the SSO process was successful in affecting student outcomes. Surprisingly, even students with low interaction levels had an increase in engagement levels. One caution is that engagement of the student was done on an observation basis by a single researcher. The levels of active engagement were much higher than expected and further study into the area of engagement would be improved by the use of inter rater reliability.

The cases where variability of student engagement was observed were affected by the activity of the classroom observed. For example, in the third observation of JG the class was listening to a teacher lecture during the entire observation time. Thus the student appeared to be engaged during 25% of the lecture, which is consistent with the level of comprehension, and focus that would be expected of an inclusion student, particularly as the researcher did not observe how long this format had been taking place. The teacher in this class did not participate in the SSO team and previous observation of the class did indicate engagement by the majority of the students. The

younger students in the study, BW and SS also had varying engagement levels. In the case of BW, it was again an observation of teacher lecture during which a 45% active engagement, her lowest, was observed. In the case of SS paper activities were times of lower engagement. She engaged 30% and 40% of the observation intervals as compared to 75% during group oral reading and discussion, which occurred during the second of the three observations.. This is explained by the fact that students with disabilities find paper activities more difficult.

Student Interview Interpretations

The interviews with the students chosen by the researcher were less difficult to conduct than the researcher had believed. The students were able to answer the questions readily and it is interesting to note that their perceptions of their interactions with peers seemed to correlate with the Interaction and Engagement Scale results. For example, the student in grade two, SS, when observed in a reading group activity, had interactions with peers in fourteen out of the possible twenty observation intervals. She sat beside a student whom she was able to name and she was able to articulate ways in which the student helped her during her interview. In contrast, the oldest student, SR, could only name students with whom she used to be friends before her accident and her Interaction and Engagement Scale results during an economics class revealed eleven out of twenty possible interactions were solely with her paraeducator.

Student Perceptions of Friends

Of the seven student interviews recorded, there were several common themes. Every student was able to name at least one friend. This is almost certainly a result of the inclusion model, which ideally encourages students to appear like all the other children, in whatever way they can. It is also an indicator of interaction possibilities, which can take place throughout the school day. This was confirmed by answers to the question "what do you do with your friend?" which produced a variety of answers such as painting, playing jump rope, eating snacks and talking a lot. These answers have implications for SSO planning which tends to focus on academic topics, because that is the area of expertise for most team members.

Student Perceptions of Adults

The role of the paraeducator is a crucial one when planning supports and this is reflected in the students' answers as to whom they work with. Of the seven students, four named their paraeducator first, one, a friend, one, the teacher, and one said he didn't know. Three students named the teacher as a second choice and one the paraeducator. So the for the majority of the students the paraeducator is seen as the prime source of assistance. This can be interpreted as both positive and negative. Ideally the teacher should be the first source of information for all the students in a class, but teachers rarely have time to sit with one student for extended periods in order to facilitate that student's learning. When designing the SSO, the team needs to consider the natural supports available within a classroom and ways to increase

interactions between students with disabilities, their peers and their teachers. So the fact that students name their paraeducator first means that paraeducators are effective at helping, which is positive, but it also means that peer support is much less common, which is negative.

Student Perceptions of School Activities

When asked about preferences for activities at school, only one student indicated an academic activity (i.e., math). The other answers involved sports or play. This can be interpreted as a reflection of the difficulty of academic study that is inherent for these students, but should also be interpreted as opportunities for active participation in groups as well as for learning social skills and considered by teams when planning the SSO.

When asked how kids help them to do work, there was a definite difference between those who had more frequent interactions and those who had less. Students who had regular opportunities to work in groups were more clearly able to articulate ways in which peers helped them. An example was SS in grade two that said "kids help me write." and who had eleven interactions out of twenty possible during one observation period. JG in grade twelve said "They show me how to use the equipments" and she was observed in a ceramics class working in a group of six, with no paraeducator present at the time. On the other hand, students who were observed to work less often in a group, such as SR, when asked if kids help, said, "I don't really think so." Interestingly, none of the students who chose to draw a picture of himself at

school included anyone else in the picture. Every student could describe some schoolwork that they were proud of, which indicated that the model of inclusion, no matter how challenging, does give students a feeling of success.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews took place during the final team collaboration meetings of the research study. Participants were eager to discuss their experience with inclusion and had a variety of perspectives, which added depth to the study.

Second Grade Team Results

When the second grade team considered the SSO process they felt it ensured good communications between team members. It made the paraeducator feel that she had someone to tell her concerns to and thus important issues would not be overlooked. The general education teacher felt that she had the opportunity to learn and to increase her skills. The team agreed that the student had made great gains in independence during the school year and was developing maturity. They also felt that her success at making friends was limited to school and its related activities rather than “real” friends. The chief characteristics the team identified for successful inclusion were patience, flexibility, collaborative support in identifying materials and understanding that the inclusion model should be viewed as a positive experience. In other words the paraeducator and the student can contribute positively to the class. The paraeducator also mentioned the use of an overhead projector as a prime tool for special education students.

Fourth Grade Team Results

The fourth grade team viewed the SSO process as providing a time and structure for talking and planning to ensure student success. It seemed more natural to this team to reflect upon the supports for the student and to revise them as needed. There did not seem to be any reluctance to take responsibility. The area that had been overlooked, however, was the peer interaction level of the student in the classroom. The team had begun to find ways to facilitate social interactions in free time but the interaction and engagement scale results in combination with the team interview questions led the team to reevaluate classroom interactions.

When this team was questioned about the necessary conditions for inclusion, they listed several ideas. Supportive parents and teachers who are willing to accept adaptations and modifications to the curriculum of the classroom were considered most important. The academic focus of the school caused the team to have to seek additional knowledge about the needs of the student outside the school setting in their planning. The environment of the classroom and of the whole school was important to the acceptance of the student and the administrator at this school encouraged acceptance and was involved with the students when they were outside playing. The expectation that inclusion will work was also discussed as it encouraged teachers to strive for its success. Flexibility was also discussed as teachers and the paraeducator tried to implement, evaluated and changed supports for the student.

Fifth Grade Team Results

For this team, team members felt that the SSO process helped to clarify the goals identified for the student and the materials needed to implement these goals. It also provided the opportunity to review supports to see if they were appropriate and also to discuss the expectations of the team members. There was a difference of opinion as to whether RC had friends, as she had difficulty in recognizing what is appropriate to say in a given context. While certain students volunteered to help her in the class, she had no consistent friends on the playground. The teacher went so far as to say that she had lied about other student's actions and this was causing conflict. The team agreed that teamwork was a vital factor in the success of inclusion and that a student like RC needed a lot of supports to be successful. The teacher felt that the paraeducator was extremely important to help the student maintain her routine.

Seventh Grade Team Results

This team had a lot of ideas about their inclusion experience. The teacher felt that the SSO process gave her access to the inclusion specialist's knowledge, which allowed her to learn more strategies for effectively teaching special education students. The Site Based Diagnostic Resource Teacher, who oversaw special education services at the school, also took part in the interviews. She said that the SSO addressed the fear of the unknown, which is characteristic of a teacher's first experience with inclusion, by allowing the teacher to feel supported. The case manager stated that the SSO really helped to improve communications between the teachers. He said that the review of

supports allowed the team to “stay on the same page”. He felt frustration with getting teachers together for meetings and thought the help of the administrator as the authority figure would be one way to address this problem. He also recommended using the school calendar to choose meeting dates at the beginning of the school year and commented that the attitudes of teachers who felt overwhelmed interfered with the process.

When considering JT’s progress toward independence it was noted that while he had grown socially, his frustration at being different had also increased and he experienced the most success when he was able to do what his peers were doing. This provided him with a sense of satisfaction and gave him the motivation to complete assignments that were quite difficult for him. His teacher had made the effort to plan daily peer work for him, which of course varied according to the skills involved. The case manager commented that it was important to teach the other students how to help, particularly as JT was sensitive to criticism.

When considering the important components of inclusion, the teacher said that the class makeup, i.e. the kind of students and particularly their behavior, were an important factor as this allowed the focus to be on content rather than behavioral issues. The Site Based Diagnostic Resource Teacher stated that a high level of training and support for the staff was essential for inclusion to work. She highlighted the need for regular communication so that a consistent analysis of the students needs could be conducted. She also mentioned that the teacher needed to develop a culture in the

classroom that was inclusive of all students. While this is not something that can be measured the results can be easily seen in the students. The case manager said that the differences in theoretical viewpoints of special education caused friction between teachers and made it initially difficult to get their "buy-in" for the inclusion model. Thus he believed that choosing the teachers carefully was a very important factor.

Twelfth Grade Team Results

Issues discussed in relation to friendships were somewhat different in grade twelve. One of the students, JL, had become interested in the opposite sex but was unable to understand that he should not verbalize what he was thinking. He had made inappropriate comments to several people including his paraeducator who was quite young and tried to give presents to the girls in his classes. Also he insisted he had a date for the prom, although he was vague about the identity of his date. So the notion of friendship becomes much more complex at this level and is tied in with the student's desire to move into the adult world. When asked about the important factors for successful inclusion the paraeducators were mentioned first as they were at every SSO meeting during the study.

The team agreed that the paraeducators needed to be adept in modifying curriculum so that the inclusion student could get the most out of the experience. The idea of more social skills learning outside the classroom was suggested by the case manager as a way to address some of the social issues at this level. He felt that participation in clubs and sports on campus were important. In addition, he had several

suggestions about ways to coordinate with community organizations to improve the transition of inclusion students such as being involved with the Senior's Center and the Teen Center located nearby. The team discussed the importance of peer buddies in the successful inclusion model and the difficulty in getting the involvement of teenagers in tutoring or buddying with special education students unless they are offered some incentive such as community service hours or class credit. It was interesting that no comments were made on the teacher's role, which was in contrast to the previous team.

Chapter Five

Discussion

In this research study, conducted in San Diego City Schools, each of the school teams involved in the study, consisting of special and general education personnel, developed a support plan using an SSO, for the inclusion of their students with severe disabilities. These support plans were reviewed at each meeting of the team and the results from the structured observations were applied during team planning for students' academic and social progress. The effectiveness of the planning was evaluated through observations of students and interviews conducted with both the students and their teachers. Results of the study suggest that the use of an SSO can improve the process of planning and implementing supports for students with disabilities.

Positive Outcomes of Team Building

A positive outcome of team building through the SSO process was the increased participation in meetings over the course of the study. That is not to say that all possible team members decided to participate, however actual meetings taking place in order to address student supports was a great improvement over the practice of signing a monthly report of a meeting. Participation led to a greater understanding of the role each teacher needed to take in order to include the student more successfully. Teachers were encouraged to take responsibility for designing and implementing supports when they were in a team context and when the implementation was under review.

Another important positive outcome was that participants were encouraged to analyze and reflect on supports before making changes. As they discussed issues in the team context they had the opportunity to learn from their peers, in the same way that it is beneficial for the students to learn from their peers. Their perspective on a student often broadened as they considered other aspects of the student's education from the one they were familiar with. Teams felt that the inclusion specialist was an important member of the team, since the specialist contributed a district perspective both in the area of diversity of students and in the area of policies and procedures. Thus they continued to feel the necessity of an inclusion specialist's role.

The SSO process of support planning when combined with discussion about interaction and engagement observations appears to provide a means for changing the interactions of students with others and thus developing student independence.

Limitations

One limitation was the number of schools and therefore the number of students that were involved in the study. While the researcher had access to 15 school sites, it was not possible to study all 15 schools in depth. However the schools involved did span the grade levels so that the effects of differing systems could be discussed.

A second limitation of this study was team participation. Historically it has been very difficult to get all team members together for the more formal IEP meetings, which they are mandated to attend. Most teachers identify the lack of time to complete their work as a main constraint when asked to participate in meetings. This was linked

with the acceptance of the process of completing a student support outline as being a valuable activity rather than just another piece of paperwork. Teachers of special education in particular have a great number of forms to complete and are thus resistant to completing more.

A third limitation was the perception of individuals on the team of the implementation of the strategies they have designed. Often it is assumed that a strategy is in place and people may be reluctant to take observational data to support that assumption. For the purpose of the study, the researcher took the data; however, it would have been preferable that team members take part in this process so that they have control over their own understanding of the support outline.

The fourth limitation was that the school district was very large and so the application of any process across the entire district was problematic. Communications were often lacking and staff did not receive information in a timely manner. In addition there were many new staff development activities taking place, not the least of which was a revised district wide computer applications system, and it was difficult for teachers to prioritize in which area they would develop new skills. Research has shown that effective schools need to select and integrate innovations from "the external amalgam of complex and uncoordinated phenomena" (Fullan, 2000).

A fifth limitation was the whole question of the differences to be found in elementary, middle and high schools. The pure number of teachers involved at the upper grades makes any kind of planning very difficult to achieve. The grading system,

testing and graduation particularly affect priorities at this level. Thus some of the most difficult sites for the inclusion specialists to give support in are often the high schools.

Recommendations for Use of the SSO and the Collaborative Team Process

There are a number of recommendations that the study suggests about the format of the monthly collaboration meetings. The SSO or a similar form could be used on a monthly basis for designing and implementing supports. It becomes a vehicle for the consistent analysis of the student's needs and also serves as documentation of meeting information. The SSO format could be improved so that a column is included to note who would take the responsibility for implementation of a particular support. The teams could be broadened to include the attendance of the DIS providers and parents who also have important contributions to make. The inclusion itinerant could attend all the collaboration meetings for each of the students so that their wide-ranging perspective and experience is available to the team. The use of the interaction and engagement scale could be continued to assist teams in their planning, however it could be improved so that more than one person does observations. This would be beneficial in order to ensure the reliability of the observations and the experience of observing would be an enlightening experience for the case managers. The high school level could become an area of focus for this process of collaborative team building, as it is the setting where the researcher experienced the greatest difficulty in forming teams and conducting meetings. One comment repeated by members of every team studied was that teachers felt supported by participation on the team. Teachers could cite many

instances when they did not feel supported and so the support of teachers through collaborative team building could become a focus for all schools with an inclusion program.

Implications for the Use of this Study

The results from this study of the SSO and collaborative team planning could be applied to other student populations beyond the small population of Integrated Life Skills (ILS) inclusion students. The ILS students have a range of severe disabilities and their educational program is based on the functional application of academic skills. There are a variety of special education students who are included in general education classrooms but do not fall under the ILS umbrella. The students with autism or asperger's syndrome, for example, although participating in academic activities at a higher functioning level, require various structures and supports to be in place in order to address social and communication needs. Thus school teams could apply the use of the SSO in planning supports for the inclusion of these students throughout the school environment.

Other students, requiring a high level of support are the students who are mainstreamed from special education classes into general education, without the support of an inclusion specialist who could offer suggestions to teachers. The case manager has little opportunity to design supports. Thus, the use of the SSO could provide a structure for school team planning to utilize the experience and knowledge of a whole team for a broad range of students.

Further Research

One suggestion for further research is to continue a study of collaborative teams using the SSO process over a longer research period. A year of data collection would yield results in how team functioning is transformed over time. Secondly, additional formats similar to the SSO could be designed and piloted to improve and increase participation on the collaborative team. Third, a study could be conducted to determine the correlation between the implementation and use of the SSO and student progress as measured by tests in the academic subjects. Fourth, a follow-up study could expand the scope of the current study to include different kinds of teachers, service providers and parents with students in various grade levels.

Conclusion

The inclusion of students with disabilities continues to be controversial, as various structures and methods are tried out by school districts charged with providing students free and appropriate public education. The support needed by both students and teachers is a crucial element in the success of the inclusion model. This research study suggests one vehicle for improving the functioning of school teams in designing supports for students. In continuing to improve the collaboration among the teachers of students with severe disabilities, schools that welcome diversity in their student population seem possible.

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