# A Case Study of Inclusive Education Service Delivery in Prince Edward Island's Eastern School District

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## Abstract

This study explores the developments and contributing factors leading to the current model of inclusive special education services in the Eastern School District of Prince Edward Island, Canada. The district is one of three provincially governed districts and has a total enrolment of 13, 290 students in its 43 schools. Responsive evaluation employing case study is used in which documentation, archival data and participant observation are analyzed and highlight the challenges within the District as they compare to other jurisdictions. Emerging themes of increased demands on teachers, lack of consistency and the availability of support structures reflect struggles experienced within the system as well as regionally and globally. This study concludes with suggestions for consideration for an improved inclusive special education service delivery model.

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family in appreciation of their support and patience throughout its course, and to the team with whom I work for their willingness to bare all.

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I wish to thank the many people who supported me in this journey both in the personal challenges it presented and the professional issues it raised. I am especially appreciative of the Department of Education for providing me with a year sabbatical leave during which to complete my degree and the Eastern School District for supporting my application to do so.

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## Table of Contents

## List of Tables

## List of Figures

## Preface

Many people have asked me why I chose to write a thesis. My answer to this is quite simple; I needed to. I needed to do this for reasons other than to satisfy the academic requirements associated with a course of study for a Master of Education. I needed to do it for personal and professional reasons.

Rather than aspiring to become an administrator, I simply wanted answers. I wanted to uncover some of the issues that stand in our way as educators every day and I wanted them known, not buried or sugar-coated so they could be acknowledged and perhaps addressed. I wanted to be able to perform my role at the District and know not that we have all the answers but that our answers are realistic, philosophically harmonious and financially supported within the structure that we work.

As a special education consultant with the Eastern School District's (ESD) Student Services team my job is to support students, teachers and the system that serves them. I find the last of these to be the most difficult and the one which over the last six years as a consultant and the sixteen years of teaching prior to that has most challenged my faith in what I am doing.

Over the past several years I have left an increasing number of meetings feeling bewildered by the gaps in our service and the expectations that our model places on the teachers who deliver it. Teachers are discouraged and my attempts at reassuring them or alleviating their concerns

are, more often than not, bound by a tightly spun web of system-wide inconsistencies and inadequacies. The answers are not simple and the issues are interwoven to the point where it is not simply a matter of addressing one concern, but many. It seems almost as if the concerns are tightly packed in a Pandora's Box and to open it would be overwhelming.

My goal in writing this thesis was to take the time to open that box and to look closely at what it revealed, accepting that the faults within are the result of educators attempting to keep pace with changing times, changing demands and changing priorities. I approached this investigation with many uncertainties, both personally and with respect to what would be revealed. I also approached this investigation with a deep belief that educators do what they do each day with the best of intentions and the welfare of the students they serve as their primary interest.

# Chapter One - Introduction

## 1.1 *General Problem Statement*

Over the past decade Prince Edward Island has joined in a global shift from segregated schools and classrooms for individuals with special learning needs to inclusive learning environments. In the Minister's Directive No. MD2001-08 issued in 2001 by then minister, Jeffery Lantz, the provincial Department of Education commits to inclusive practice, defining it as "the value system which holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in their education" (Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 2005). Prince Edward Island and specifically the Eastern School District have continued to make strides toward offering equal opportunity for all students to be educated along side their age appropriate peers. In doing so, all students, those with and without special needs and their families, have benefited from the experience of an inclusive school community and the realization of the potential for all individuals to participate and contribute to society in general.

Yet, although Prince Edward Island is a small province, there remains significant variance in the degree to which students are included within schools. Factors such as the range of student needs as well as facility and access differences contribute to this lack of consistency across the province (Andrew, 2003; MacKay, 2006; Mackey & Associates, 2002). Regardless of whether one looks at full inclusion models or a less comprehensive derivative, the costs of operating within an inclusive philosophy are growing each year and have surpassed the available funding required to keep pace with that growth (MacKay, 2006).

For inclusion to be successful it must be meaningful and individual planning is paramount for each student (Ainscow & César, 2006). Without the funding to support inclusive models reflective of these priorities, service delivery becomes merely decorative rather than operative (MacKay, 2006). This thesis will illustrate how administrators and teachers within the Eastern School District of Prince Edward Island are caught in a spiral. The growing number of students identified as having significant additional needs entering our system has increased the demand for highly trained special education/resource teachers, support staff such as educational assistants, assistive technology and facility provisions, as well as assessment and transitional processes (Mackey, 2002). This demand far exceeds the human and financial resources that are currently available. The cost of Educational Assistant support alone for the 2007-2008 school year totaled approximately six million dollars, which according to ESD's corporate finances, equals an estimated eight percent of the district's yearly operational budget.

The Mackey and Associates Report, generated in 2002 at the request of Prince Edward Island's Department of Education, sought to review the province's special education delivery model with respect to: identification and assessment processes, student learning outcomes, resource provision and allocation, and management structure. Recommendations were presented within the report and identified significant changes needed to be made within a five year period in order to create and maintain an effective delivery model to meet the needs of all Island children in an inclusive manner. Today, the Department has a more clearly-defined organizational structure, a continued effort toward maintaining teacher/student ratios, updated documentation to support processes and protocols, and advancements in the area of assessment, but is still lacking in the areas of resource support and programs and services for students with

special needs. According to staffing allocation as reported by administrators to District Student Services, resource teacher staffing ratios based on projected enrollments and recommended in the Mackey Report have not yet been met; however, students have continued to enter the system. Essentially, the District is operating on a budget which is far less than that recommended in reports such as that completed by MacKey and Associates in 2002, yet, is providing service to an increased diversity of needs (Evans Renault, 2007).

The result of this imbalance has meant that teachers are feeling overburdened and resources intended for whole school initiatives are being allocated to a small percentage of students with significant special needs, impacting the good of all involved. Each year, schools are stretching resources just to provide the minimum services and supports to a growing number of student needs (see Appendix A). They are reducing services far more frequently and districts are finding themselves in the position of having to juggle and reallocate supports to meet the changing needs services.

Prince Edward Island is respected for its approach to inclusive education as is evident from the acclaim it received for its advanced service model for students with autism as featured in *Education Canada* (Timmons & Brietenbach, 2004). However, this design and delivery system is an example of a level of service which is beyond our province's capacity to support. The nature of this support and the intensive board based involvement on which it is built is explored within section 4.2.2 of this document. This dilemma is not unique to the province of Prince Edward Island. In his commentary of Nova Scotia's efforts toward inclusive education, Paul Sheppard (2004) quotes that province's Special Education Implementation Review Committee

(SEIRC) report, which admits that inadequate funding is predominately to blame for the lack of advancements made in inclusive services implementation. A similar claim is emerging from the perspective of educators in PEI, who believe that students who are integrated into the regular classroom in public schools, are receiving inadequate levels of individualized planning, teaching or support (PEI Teachers Federation, 2007). The model is unsustainable and is negatively impacting the good of the whole. The PEITF Economic Welfare Review Survey Report completed in 2007, reported increased teacher stress from the demands placed on them in meeting classes of such diverse composition and large sizes, as well as feeling under trained in the area of individualized programming.

I have worked for more than twenty years within the field of special education, initially within the Unit Three School Board of Prince Edward Island and since then with the Eastern District, one of three provincial school boards formed as a result of amalgamation. My role for fifteen years as a classroom and special education teacher and for the past six years as a board-based special education consultant provided me with an opportunity for deeper level understanding of the visions and directions of the organizations. This perspective provides me with a practical and realistic understanding of how both its policies and practices play out in the schools.

My direct involvement with the ESD presented an opportunity for an insider's perspective that could influence both my direction of focus and findings but which also provided pertinent details and insight into board practices. Stake (1994) notes the value of researchers having an instrinsic interest in the case and suggests deeper and more realistic findings may result with the

presence of a personal connection. My experiences with support staff allocation and the ongoing quest for appropriately trained teachers gave me new and deeper insights into the current practices and the flaws within them. It was with this understanding that I sought to explore this situation and attempted to gain a deeper understanding of how it may be improved.

### 1.2 *Specific Research Questions*

The Eastern School District (ESD) has recently committed to reviewing its current special education model and is considering recommendations for a more sustainable, meaningful version of an inclusive service delivery system that will do its students justice. One of the purposes of this study was to provide recommendations for changes to the current model of operation. In order to do so I took an in-depth look at the decisions leading to the present inclusive education practices and how services may be effectively delivered to students with special needs in Prince Edward Island's Eastern School District.

My research questions were:

1. What is the Eastern School District's current special education delivery model and what history and factors have led to this model?

2. What are the challenges to effective inclusive education services in the Eastern School District and how do they relate to those elsewhere?

3. What practices found in the literature might provide direction for an inclusive based special education model to be delivered in a more effective and sustainable way ?

4. How might the findings of this study lead to learning or recommendations for the Eastern School District?

## 1.3 *Significance of the Proposed Study*

Effective implementation of inclusive educational practice in the ESD is directly impeded by barriers that are not unique to Prince Edward Island (Lindsay, 2003; MacKay, 2006). The same barriers are noted throughout the country and the world where educators, while attempting to maintain accountability for the school as a whole, are striving to deliver quality programming to students with needs exceeding those of the average student. The result of this phenomenon is that districts and educational communities are clinging to the inclusive philosophies that policies have endorsed, even though they may only be offering a physical integration of these students into peer similar environments (MacKay, 2006). To physically move students into the regular public school system has inarguably been accomplished in Canada but what is offered once there? Are there limits to the vision of inclusive education that cannot be realized in the current educational system unless changes are made to address the inadequacies?

This disconnect between practice and policy in which a 'loose-coupling' model sees administration as providing a protective barrier between the classroom and the public is not unique to Prince Edward Island. Elmore (2000) suggests this 'buffer' explains why schools may continue to promote structures and practices that research suggests are not productive for the learning of certain students (p. 7).

Justification for this study is apparent to those currently struggling to work within the District's current design (Horne, 2001). One could think of the schools as airplanes filled to capacity with students. The destination is inclusion and the flight plan has been laid out as straight forward and efficiently as possible. Complicating the flight is the turbulence that

financial restraints, levels of training, class composition and prevalence of cause (Mackey, 2002). Inclusion is an emotionally and politically charged issue. As Lupart (1999) outlines in her assessment of Canada's progress toward inclusion, teachers and administrators agree that it is theoretically and ethically the right approach. What they do not know is how to solve the ineffective paradigm that exists with its implementation. Teachers and students are suffering because of our steadfast commitment to not experiment with what is morally the right thing to do. What must be explored is whether we can do it differently and more effectively, not whether we should abandon the destination all together but whether the flight plan needs adjusting.

While this study focuses on a specific school district's model of special education service delivery, the analysis and evaluation of that model will provide opportunity in the future for other researchers and readers to make comparisons to other jurisdictions both locally and internationally. As a case, this study provides context and analysis of general inclusive issues within that context. However, the factors that arise as influencing the current practices and possible solutions may be useful to all jurisdictions inquiring into their own systems. This study offers others the opportunity to reflect upon the commonalities and differences between particular geographies, histories, economies and sociologies of this system and others.

# Chapter Two - Literature Review

## 2.1 *What is Inclusion Today?*

There has been much discussion world wide about the shift to inclusive education. The past ten years have seen huge changes in the education systems of the provinces and territories of Canada in their welcoming of all students into the public school system and the move away from segregated centers and approaches. In keeping with the belief that all children have the right to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment as originally identified in the United States Public law 94- 142 (IDEA, 1990), and in accordance with amendments to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 2004), Canada has adopted the philosophy of offering inclusive schooling.

The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as determined in the United States in 1974 Public Law 94-142, the Education of all Handicapped Children Act, describes the right of all children to be educated in the setting closest to that of the general educational setting and places the need for categorizing and labeling disabilities within a focus on individualized programming based on student needs and strengths. It applies to all children. More pertinent is the meaning of 'Least Restrictive' in advocating for the rights of children of all learning capacities and levels of functioning to be given the opportunity to be educated in their local schools with age appropriate peers (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990).

Researchers, academics and educators alike have devoted much study to attempting to establish a universal understanding of the terms 'inclusion' and 'inclusive practice'. Bunch, Finnegan, Humphries, Dore and Dore's (2005) *Crucial Terms Final Report* sought to bring

continuity and clarity to the language and connotation of terms commonly used within the realm of special educational services in Canada. The Crucial Terms Project (CTP), born out of a collective call for clarity in terminology from a variety of Canadian stakeholders defines inclusive education as

> referring to educational practice based on the philosophical belief that all learners, those with and without disabilities, have the right to be educated together in age appropriate class groups, and that all will benefit from education in the regular classrooms of community schools. Within these settings teachers, parents, and others work collaboratively using appropriate and sufficient resources to interpret and enact the regular curriculum in a flexible manner in accordance with the individual abilities and the needs of all learners. (Bunch et al, 2005, p. 39)

The term LRE is often used synonymously with inclusion and in conjunction with special education, inviting overlap and a merging of the terms. It is important to distinguish that for the purpose of this study, special education will refer to the educational services provided to students with additional learning needs based on their disabilities; inclusion as a philosophy on which the delivery of the special education is based; and LRE referring to a guideline of placement in which that inclusive education will occur

Mel Ainscow notes that, "throughout the world attempts are being made to provide more effective educational responses for all children, whatever their characteristics, and that, encouraged by the Salamanca Statement, the overall trend is towards making these responses within the context of general educational provision" (Ainscow & César, 2006, p. 236). The

Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education of 1994 promoted inclusion and suggested that for the majority of children, inclusive schools represent the most effective and feasibly cost efficient means of educating all students, claiming this to be "the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all" (United Nations Educational, 1994, p.iv).

To define inclusion one must identify not only what it means but to whom it applies, opening up the issue of designation of special needs. Categorical based services allocation and indexing formulas are controversial issues in determining to whom the inclusive rights apply. Many countries think of inclusive education as meeting the needs of disabled children, yet Ainscow and Cesar (2006) note that the global understanding is more widely accepted as a movement of espousing equitable services for all and "welcoming diversity among all learners" (p. 1). Schools and educators around the world have come to embrace the belief that all children have the right to an inclusive education. While a panacea remains to be found, there is a strong movement toward inclusive classrooms and the abolishment of special schools and special classrooms for students with additional learning needs (Ainscow & César, 2006).

Schools today are serving a far more diverse clientele than in previous generations and as a result we have seen the definition for inclusion broaden in response to this diversity. Student achievement and the spectrum of needs faced by educators are increasingly impacted by the growth of multicultural populations, socio-economic pressures, social influences and the ensuing behavioral challenges as well as the escalating prevalence and early age of medical diagnosis. Ainscow and César (2006) describe the following five ways of thinking about inclusion as

determined from their international research analysis. The list includes definitions under the following headings:

1. Disability and 'special educational needs': inclusion as addressing the educational needs of those students who have learning challenges and needs, diagnostic based or otherwise, who requiring specialized programming.
2. Response to disciplinary exclusions: inclusion as responding to the needs of behaviorally difficult students or those whose behavior presents challenging consequences.
3. Groups vulnerable to exclusion: inclusion as responding to the needs of those whose access to school is under threat due to social factors.
4. Promotion of a school for all: inclusion as it relates to the development of a school and its ability to meet all needs.
5. Education for all: inclusion as it relates to the progression of educational accessibility to all individuals across the world. (p. 233)

For the purpose of this study the interpretation of inclusion will apply to that population of students who are identified as needing specialized educational planning due to cognitive delays and impairments and/or learning challenges or conditions that affect learning and behavior to the point that grade-level curriculum and traditional teacher-centered instruction are not appropriate or sufficient to meet their needs.

### *2.2 Measuring the Efficacy of Inclusion*

Much of the world appears to have embraced the concept of equal rights for individuals of diverse needs, and educational delivery designs are reflective of philosophies that endorse the

concept of inclusive access for all learners. Yet, there are obstacles to having an inclusive educational system that is operationally advantageous to both the student with special needs and the learning community as a whole. It is these obstacles, rather than the tenet they address, that some suggest impact educators' views toward inclusion. As stated by Nugent (2007) those contesting the principal of inclusive education may often be doing so as a result of "dissatisfaction for mainstream education, rather than a proactive preference for special education (segregated placement)" (p. 52). There are few studies that measure the efficacy of inclusive design as being the one to which educational institutions should be aspiring to increase student learning.

The reason for the above lack of studies may be explained in part by Kavale and Forness (2000) in the argument of the 'vision of the anointed' versus 'vision of the benighted' as first presented by Sowell (1995). Sowell challenges the full inclusion movement as one based on the vision of the anointed which he described as,

> ...a special state of grace for those who believe it. Those who accept this vision are deemed to be not merely factually correct but morally on a higher plane. Put differently, those who agree with the prevailing vision are seen as being not merely in error, but in sin. For those who have this vision of the world, the anointed and the benighted do not argue on the same moral plane or play by the same cold rules of logic and evidence. The benighted are to be made "aware," to have their "consciousness raised," and the wistful hope is held out that they will "grow". Should the benighted prove recalcitrant, however, then their "mean-spiritedness" must be fought and the "real reasons" behind their arguments and actions exposed. (Kavale & Forness, 2000, p. 280)

The tenet of the anointed sees special education as hindered only by a lack of vision and above the scrutiny from logical arguments and empirical reasoning. Efforts to quantify the movement are compared to 'moral bankruptcy' (Kavale & Forness, 2000) in that the basic rights of students to be with their peers warrants no challenge and represents a lack of ethical character. According to this belief, those who challenge the value of inclusive practices or seek to quantify the efficacy are morally in error.

Bunch et al. (2005) begin their report of the work of the Critical Terms Project findings by describing inclusive education as being based on social justice, and efforts to separate or deny inclusive opportunities as in violation of the rights of learners. This and similar claims are not arrived at through studies of efficiency or outcomes but are founded on the long standing efforts of those who have represented individuals with disabilities and additional learning needs and their families in their fight to be awarded what they believe is theirs based on human rights.

The research regarding the efficacy of inclusion can be applied to this argument in that the belief in offering equal rights for educational placement honors the concepts of valuing all humans and their potentials and is based on the compassion and caring that is intrinsic to educators and society in general. To question that efficacy can be compared to the mean-spiritedness that Sowell describes and becomes more a focus of moral and ethical reflection than one based on systemic feasibility, efficiency and student achievement. Geoff Lindsay's 2007 review of literature on the effectiveness of inclusive practices found inconclusive results stemming from findings that showed "Just 1% of over 1300 studies published 2000-2005 reviewed the effectiveness and the results from these studies were only marginally positive"

(Lindsay, 2007, p.16). Lindsay reiterates comments made by Gallagher (2001) that "A number of authors have argued that empirical evidence is either inconclusive or unnecessary because the issue is one of rights not evidence" (Lindsay, 2003, p. 6). Kavale and Forness (2000) also note the lack of evaluative studies concerning inclusive practices asserting that the focus has been instead on the argument for implementation rather than its effectiveness.

There are, however, a far greater number of studies that have sought to evaluate the social implications of an inclusive system. Kennedy (2001) reviews the findings of social benefits of inclusive placements and predicts the increased focus on the value of interdependent skills, best learned and practiced in peer-related settings. The previous emphasis on independence may, according to Kennedy, be too reliant on artificial support structures and more practical when individuals are taught how to seek help from peers and interact productively in real life settings, yielding improved social benefits for those involved.

In contrast to the small number of research studies that empirically assess the impact of inclusive education on individual student learning beyond the social benefits, there is an abundance of research that identifies the challenges and concerns for those directly involved with inclusive education (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Lindsay, 2003; York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke & Ghere, 2005). Much of this research is qualitative and has generated direct feedback from teachers, administrators, parents and, in some cases, students, regarding the barriers or complications impacting inclusive education today. Lindsay (2007) describes the tendency of most qualitative studies to focus on the processes involved in inclusive structuring rather than outcomes as being due to complicating variables such as the participants, intervention definition,

and evaluative methods. The broad range of spectrums and the severity and co-morbidity included complicate the ability to make conclusions reflective of the diversity of the participants. The contextual factors and inconsistency within various regions and programs make comparative evaluation inexact and impact the evaluative methods best suited to each interpretation.

The concerns making up this feedback are markedly similar regardless of the region from which it comes, consistently citing commonalities such as class composition, training and expertise, human resources and availability of funding. All four of these themes are among those reflected by Lipsky and Gartner (1998) which include: "visionary leadership, collaboration, refocused use of assessment, support of staff and students, funding, effective parental involvement, and use of effective program models and classroom practices" (p. 104). Inadequacies and inconsistencies in the above area are repeatedly identified as areas of concern and challenge for effective implementation of inclusion and are also among those long associated with effective change implementation in educational study (Ainscow, 1999).

Both the Mackey Report (2002), composed as a review of special educational services in Prince Edward Island and the MacKay Report (2006) examining New Brunswick's service delivery model present findings that support concerns in the aforementioned areas. Each of these regional reports summarizes the need for a unified vision, the staffing ratios and the levels of expertise required to meet needs in classrooms, a well-funded collaboration of services and a more effective means of determining delivery. The next section will develop these ideas more fully.

## 2.3 *Factors Impacting the Success of Inclusion*

### 2.3.1 *Class Composition*

Class composition is distinguished from class size in the Prince Edward Island-based Gar Andrew Report of 2003. It noted the number of students with additional learning needs as having far more impact on the class content and challenge for the teacher than simply the number of students in the class: "Reduction in class size must be accompanied by improvements in the number of teachers who provide special services to the students, such as special education/resource teachers and school counselors, to produce improvements in student outcomes" (Andrew, 2003, p. 8). Concern regarding class size and the skills required to meet the diversity of student needs is shared among much of Canada as is evident from the 2004 Canadian Teachers' Federation poll. This study reflected telephone interviews conducted with 1001 adult Canadian teachers in which class size and heavy workload ranked as the leading cause of teachers leaving the profession, followed closely by inadequacies in expertise and resources to help teachers of students with special needs (Saskatchewan Bulletin, 2004).

The increase in diverse learning needs is repeatedly cited as impacting on the workload and hence, the stress load of eastern Canada's teachers as well as those across North America and globally (MacKay, 2006; Mackey, 2002; Andrew, 2003; Kavale & Forness, 2000; York-Barr et al., 2005). MacKay identifies class composition as one of the primary concerns impacting education in New Brunswick: "Calls for controls on class composition aim to control the work load and improve working conditions for teachers facing these challenging classes. They aim to ensure that all students in the class can have a positive educational experience" (MacKay, 2006, p. 202). Limitations such as those identified in Ontario's Ministry of Education Programs and

Services, Regulation No. 31, regulating maximum ratios in cases of high needs students, are representative of efforts to control the proportions of students of multiple ability levels and programming needs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007).

### 2.3.2 *Resource Teachers*

In recent years, throughout Canada and internationally, educational models are adhering to designs in which the resource teachers are no longer providing direct instruction to students on a regular basis, but instead, are in place to collaborate with classroom teachers in curriculum planning and support for students with special learning needs (Kavale & Forness, 2000; York-Barr et al., 2005). York- Barr et al. (2005) designed a study to explore the supports and constraints of the work of special education teachers in inclusive settings. Concerns emerging from this study included ambiguous responsibilities, overwhelming paper work, and significant teacher isolation as impacting on the professional lives of these individuals. Added to that are the many instances in which special education teachers are assigned additional roles within the school, placing further demands on their time. Coordination of a collaborative resource service is a large part of the special education teacher's role and adds to an overlapping of responsibilities as identified by York-Barr et al. (2005). They summarize the main roles of the resource teacher as including:

1. Developing individual student programs
2. Coordinating program implementation
3. Designing and providing instruction to students
4. Directing the work and developing the skills of the paraprofessionals (p. 197).

It was found that resource and special education teachers are performing full-time roles as teachers in addition to that of teacher leaders, often in the face of resistance from other staff members and outside stakeholders who feel it adds unmanageable expectations of them. Given this role it is not surprising that "Special educators are more likely to depart from the profession of teaching than any other teaching group" (York-Barr et al., 2005).

### 2.3.3 *Regular Classroom Teachers*

The demands that class composition places on teachers and the skills they require are constantly increasing, and the traditional teacher training based primarily on standard curriculum delivery is no longer adequate. In Edmunds' 1998 Nova Scotia-based survey, regular classroom teachers cited a lack of time for individualized instruction and professional meetings, limited financial and human resources, and concerns regarding their own professional competency as affecting the success of inclusion (Edmunds, 1998). Horne (2001) presented a Prince Edward Island teacher perspective in which participants responded in both survey and interview formats regarding their feelings about inclusion in Island schools. Horne found 65% of research participants reported concern over their ability to effectively individualize instruction for the variety of learning needs in their inclusive classrooms, with 100% identifying the need for training in this area as key to effectively teaching in an inclusive classroom (Horne, 2001). Lindsay (2007) and Kavale and Forness (2000) express similar concerns about appropriate classroom support and training in the inclusion debate in the US and the UK.

Consistently, throughout the literature, educators are expressing increased frustration regarding their ability to adequately deliver curriculum modifications necessary to provide

meaningful individualized learning for all students. Croll and Moses (2000), in their findings from a study investigating the attitudes regarding inclusive schooling versus segregated settings, share comments from educators emphasizing support for well-resourced inclusive systems as the best option for meeting the needs of children with moderate learning difficulties. Well-supported inclusive programs are collaborative and incorporate within their provision a commitment to funding that supports, "curriculum instruction, assessment and any additional supportive services that are necessary for the student to be successful in heterogeneous learning environments" (Frattura & Capper, p. 356). Woven strongly into these comments and others promoting inclusive school communities is the conditional understanding that teachers should not be expected to do so without adequate training and ongoing collaborative support. Research has shown that many teachers are opting to leave the profession due to the stress, the constant feeling of inadequacy and the feeling they are being asked to do the impossible (York-Barr et al, 2005).

### 2.4 *Training for Teachers*

In response to these concerns many universities are making concerted efforts to provide courses in inclusive education, assessment and classroom management to pre-service teachers. Dr. Vianne Timmons from the University of Prince Edward Island shepherded the incorporation of compulsory inclusive education courses as part of the 2 year post-degree Bachelor of Education program as well as the addition of a ten course diploma in Inclusive Education (Timmons, 2006). In 2005, a five course certificate in Inclusive Education replaced the ten course diploma and was targeted primarily to teachers in the field who want to improve their skills as the needs of their classrooms increased. In 2008, a Master of Education cohort of educators will undertake a Master of Education with a focus on Inclusive Education. These

programs have been developed with input gathered during collaborative planning meetings involving representatives from the three PEI school boards and the University of PEI.

Similar responses across Canada have stemmed from requests by teachers to be provided the training and resources needed to meet the diverse needs in their classrooms. The Nova Scotia Minister's Review of Services for Students with Special Needs outlines several efforts that the province has taken toward addressing teacher concerns regarding levels of specialized training and securing ongoing professional development opportunities for classroom teachers required to manage diverse learning needs within an inclusive structure (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2007). Teachers do not want to abandon the inclusive approach but feel ill-equipped to carry out the current model.

## 2.5 *Funding*

Broadening the pool of resources to include specialist services is largely dependent on the funding models by which services are provided and the divisions that identify which sector is responsible to provide that support. Manset and Semmel (1997) report that the efforts of schools toward inclusively restructuring their general education settings is resulting in unacceptable outcomes given the "significant investment of resources necessary to provide these enhanced educational opportunities" (p. 286). Their findings include resources such as teachers, teacher assistants, curriculum and programming materials, and expert auxiliary personnel such as speech language and physiotherapy specialists as among those groups inherent to quality education structures.

One approach to overcoming the financial obstacles in service provision is the use of diagnostic-based funding formulas. Within this practice, individual students' needs are assessed and rated on a funding scale from which schools are allotted monies to broker services as needed (Ainscow et al., 1999). Perhaps such a model creates its own demons and becomes in itself exclusionary regarding who is and is not deemed fundable and to what extent (Pirrie & Head, 2007). Such formula-based systems are accused of suggesting one individual's needs to be 'more special' than another's needs. A child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder may qualify as warranting a full-time assistant and additional programming support while a student with cognitive impairments and behavioral challenges, depending on the funding grid, may not. Often a structure such as this will see only the most disabled students receiving support and those less affected but of equal need, receiving very little.

There are provinces in Canada (such as Alberta), as well as in the UK, where such a funding formula is used and students obtain 'statements' of eligibility to secure supports and placement options (Baker, 2007; Warnock, 2007; MacKay, 2006). These models rely on similar versions of students receiving an assessment based diagnosis by district-based teams of qualified professionals which are then factored into the school's enrolment and applied to a funding index. However, jurisdictions using this method of funding allocation continue to report concerns regarding lack of adequate access to professional services from outside agencies (*Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs: A Review of Special Education in Alberta*, 2000; MacKay, 2006). This continued shortage of support can be attributed both to the severity, quantity, and specificity of services that such high needs students require as well as the drain

which the needs of students not recognized by the various funding indexes place on the schools' supports as schools struggle to manage all the needs in their buildings.

Coordinated interagency support teams are critical to the success of many students' curricula and the goals necessary for them to excel in a school environment. When supports such as speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy are not available due to lack of funding or shortage of service providers, it falls once again to the classroom teacher and resource teacher to provide make-shift services. In many cases these efforts may or may not be based on consultative advice, or in many instances the student's needs are not addressed at all. Relying on teachers for this support adds to the demands of their role and albeit with good intentions the lack of training in these areas can prove counterproductive for the student.

In their evaluation of fourteen Local Educational Authorities' (LEAs) policies and processes surrounding inclusive practices in the UK, Ainscow, Farrell, Tweddle and Malki (1999) identify a joint responsibility for the provision of services by professional stakeholders such as LEAs, health authorities and social justice departments as imperative for successful inclusion, and cite the separate management systems of these services as detrimental to its progress. Ainscow and Booth (2002) went on to develop an 'Index for Inclusion', an instrument intended for review and development of inclusion which focuses on practices, policies and cultures within schools. Relying both on school improvement research and studies reflecting effective inclusive strategies, the Index for Inclusion guides schools in addressing and adapting how they manage students' needs.

## 2.6 *Alternatives to Full Inclusion*

There are those, including front line teachers, administrators, parental advocates and bureaucratic managers, who believe the time has come to explore other options to a fully inclusive system which they view as lacking. Ainscow (2007), Armstrong & Moore (2004), Cigman (2007) and Low (2007) are among the many who are challenging the current movement, not with the intent to jeopardize the advancements made in the movement toward inclusive opportunities but to evaluate the current practice and explore additional options. They aim to review the effectiveness of the model and reframe it within an organizational as well as humanistic lens so as not to compromise quality in order to be politically correct. There is significant discourse between those believing all students should be educated in the regular classroom only and those advocating for a variety of placement options. Their arguments may be framed within three areas; a) political correctness, b) feasibility of funding, and c) efficacy.

*a) Political correctness*

There is claim that the preference for fully inclusive settings has emerged more as a response to the issue of equal access for all individuals than as a result of what is actually in the student's best interest. In his argument that inclusion is a right rather than a duty, Colin Low (2007) advocates for the return of choice of placement and the value of parental input with respect to the placement of their children. Armstrong and Moore (2000) attempt to distinguish between inclusion and integration, claiming the latter to be a practice of merely physically transplanting students into ordinary schools, as a "device concerned with fitting children into existing systems and focusing on where pupils are educated rather than how" (p. 37). The rights

agenda has perhaps overshadowed the more pertinent issue of what best serves the students. The focus has been on what children are not being provided rather than what they may need.

*b) Funding*

Funding and financial feasibility, as with any government sector, is often at the heart of many structural changes within education systems. Studies finding special education placement costs as being considerably more than that of inclusive designs have helped to welcome the shift to more diverse classrooms. Frattura and Capper (2006) quote a difference of up to 130% of operational costs for segregated placements over those of inclusive formats and challenge the ethics in continuing to justify segregated settings. However, it should be noted that many comprehensive inclusive systems are often structured around integrative support models that measure the costs to educational authorities separately from that of the interagency support on which the collaboration depends (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Simply placing children in integrated settings within regular schools is far cheaper, but the savings are offset by the significant supports required to move beyond integration to a model of well supported inclusion. Figures regarding the costs of inclusive education often misrepresent the complete costs of the models by highlighting those billed only to educational sectors. Although integration on its own may appear to be cheaper, proper inclusion costs money, and sustainable provision of that funding is a hindrance to its further development. Providing so called 'inclusive' environments may seem politically correct, but unless resources are provided to support such placements, what may look like human rights on the surface actually short changes the students in the education they are receiving. The public may be starting to notice.

*c) Efficacy*

A third factor contributing to the discourse between those for and against segregated settings is efficacy. There are concerns regarding the lack of quality studies that specifically assess the effectiveness of inclusive models, claiming that political correctness has overruled the onus to provide concrete data supporting the removal of alternative settings for educating students with disabilities (Hunt & Goetz, 1997). The variance in definition of what determines effectiveness is demonstrated by Nugent (2007) in her review of parental satisfaction of special educational services in Ireland. Nugent reports survey findings in which measurements of satisfaction relied primarily on the child's emotional happiness, rather than academic achievements and learning outcomes.

There are other concerns regarding a lack of consistency in determining what constitutes a successful placement. Studies have included variables such as acceptance, confidence and, more frequently, social skills as the determining factors, but less often include advances in cognitive functioning and learning outcomes (Lindsay, 2007). The broad spectrum of inclusive interpretations also complicates attempts to apply findings about effectiveness from one jurisdiction to another. Practices that may have been found to be effective in one area may not measure the same results within another area's interpretation of inclusive service delivery. Each jurisdiction's interpretation of inclusive education may reflect its own geographic, political, and cultural characteristics. Lupart, in her 1999 PCERA Symposium address, suggests that many Canadian educators in looking nationally or to the neighboring US, will find the differences in circumstance so vast as to question the value of such comparisons if done in isolation of the variables which make each unique (Lupart, 1999).

Ainscow (2007) qualifies his advocacy for the movement toward inclusion by emphasizing its need to be flexible and adapt rather than strive to 'reach a perfect state'. This perspective of inclusion as a process rather than a product is at the heart of much of the literature. It is argued that it is time for a review of sorts to explore opportunities for improvement and within that improvement, adopt a realistic approach. The benefits of educating students alongside their peers in inclusive settings are overwhelmingly applauded in the literature (Croll & Moses, 2000). Those seen as challenging this movement do so with the belief that this least restrictive placement needs to be individually determined and based less on physically transplanting students into the regular classroom environment (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Inclusion should not and was never intended to simply be the opposite of segregation. Segregation categorically removes students based on differences as compared to the norm. Inclusion places students in meaningful and highly integrative settings based on individual needs rather than group differences (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Yet it may be possible to respond to individual needs while providing the most inclusive and the least restrictive environment for all children.

## 2.7 *Specialty Schools*

Baroness Warnock, lead author of the 1978 *Warnock Report* advocating for the inclusion of students with special needs in the UK education system, has since retracted her 1978 statement advocating for full inclusion, feeling now is a time to rethink and temper the all or none philosophy she once touted. In her foreward for *Included or Excluded* (Warnock, 2007), she writes of the impact of the 2005 government published White Paper in the UK, *Higher Standards, Better Schools For All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils*. She describes it as ludicrous that the application process to schools in the UK would limit the parents of students

with special needs to choices of the lowest available quality of education. She insists the answer lies in encouraging the dozen or so 'trail blazing' schools or specialist schools which, much to the distaste of the anti-segregation advocates, continue to exist. These schools concentrate on a particular disability or group of disabilities, cognitive, behavioral, autistic, and so on. They not only educate children with these disabilities but also send their teachers out to neighboring mainstream schools to share their expertise with the mainstream teachers and classroom assistants. Ainscow supports Warnock's reconsideration by conceding that "there are those who believe that small specialist units located in the standard school environment can provide the specialist knowledge, equipment, and support for which the mainstream classroom and teachers can never provide a full substitute" (Ainscow, 2006, p. 235).

Baker (2007) supports this belief advocating that inclusion should be the first option unless parental preference is for a more specialized service or it is determined the student's inclusion compromises the effective education of other children. In a review of UK Government policies on Special Educational Needs (SEN) and other related literature, Baker (2007) suggests there are a number of students who cannot cope in inclusive classrooms and placement within such an environment not only further disables those students, but often compromises the human rights of other students and of staff. Baker's findings suggest there is a growing awareness of the need for special schools designed to meet highly complex needs of children with special needs and to have these schools working in partnership rather than in opposition to mainstream schools (Baker, 2007).

Psychiatrist and parent advocate for the National Autism Society, Lorna Wing suggests that due to the complex social implications associated with very severe autism, students immersed in mainstream settings are negatively impacted by such an environment (Wing, 2007). Based on her three year study of 173 students with autism, Wing insists the highly specialized instruction and controlled environment these students require is not conducive to the level of activity that is typical of inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, she claims in cases of severe autism, the social indifference and anxiety felt by the individual is exacerbated by the highly social environment of mainstream schooling (Wing, 2007). For this select few who require services best offered in a more specialized setting, removing that option can be equated with a form of 'reverse exclusionism', failing to account for individual needs and hence, grossly impeding their chances of success (Baker, 2007; Low, 2007; Wing, 2007).

Baker's 2007 review highlights two distinct themes as emerging with respect to the status of special schools. "Special schools should be centers of expertise, providing education and support for pupils with the most severe and complex special educational needs; and special schools should also share their expertise in outreach support into mainstream schools in order to further greater inclusion" (Baker, 2007, p. 76). This emphasis on student needs rather than a united effort to abolish all but a mainstream environment supports conclusions made by Kauffman in 1993 in his review of special education in which he suggests the following:

Change in special education should be predicated on three assumptions:

1. The necessity of keeping *place* in perspective, because setting per se has limited impact on outcomes for students with disabilities.

2. Choosing ideas over image; for example, equating special education with segregation and apartheid was a gross oversimplification that distorted debate because image may become the measure of truth.
3. Avoiding fanaticism, a passion that has become dangerous because it can result in moral certainty with predetermined answers. (Kauffman, 1993, p.7)

The devout advocate for full inclusion could argue Warnock has come full circle and is attempting to reverse the progress made. Ainscow (2007) describes alternative design considerations for a new type of special school acting as support centers and ultimately enhancing the success of inclusive placements as a long term goal. Low (2007) asserts that if the "emotionally loaded language" (p. 4) can be avoided, so could the stigma and negative connotations associated with what may actually be viable and supportive for students who have special needs and are looking for a more effective option. Effective placements must consider advancement in relevant student learning outcomes, contentment and happiness of the student, and sustainability of a supported structure of individual service needs (Kavale & Forness, 2000). This returns us to Lindsay's (2003) point that it is the emotional, ethical and political association with the concept of inclusion as a social movement that prevents greater amounts of study challenging the efficacy of the movement.

There are students within education systems whose needs are so complex that the level of expertise required is beyond that of the classroom teacher and even that of the broad range of training afforded to special education teachers (Frattura & Capper, 2006). Teachers may be inserviced or trained to reinforce the programming of health specialists but should not be

expected to assume the primary role and nor should they be a replacement to a student's contact with external professionals (Frattura & Capper, 2006). In cases where significant additional supports are required, students may be best served in specialized centers. But always the goal should be placement within the highest level of inclusivity appropriate for all involved (Allan & Brown, 2001; Baker, 2007). Low (2007) advocates that it is unrealistic to imply that higher level specialist services will be available in all inclusive settings as deemed necessary by the students it serves. He suggests that students forced to attend inclusive settings may be missing out on services they need by spending all of their time in the regular classroom.

The belief that all individuals may learn and that all individuals have a rightful and equal place in society is not debated within the literature. What is being challenged internationally is that all students are best prepared for society under one educational design and that choice for something different jeopardizes this tenet. Removing the element of exclusivity and considering options that allow for some of the more complex and fragile learners to more readily reach their potential is espoused by some of the major researchers in the field of special education (Ainscow, 2007, Cigman, 2007; Low, 2007; Baker, 2007). As stated by Baker, "there are no simple definitions of 'inclusion' and special schools can be 'inclusive' in the same way that mainstream schools can be 'inclusive'" (Baker, 2007, p. 73). He emphasizes the continuation of special schools and special placements within schools as meeting needs of the most severe students and also providing support to mainstream settings in providing ongoing sharing of expertise and specialist skills to students within the regular settings. Baker suggests the two settings need not be exclusive of each other and can integrate their knowledge and in doing so expand options to all students regardless of setting.

## 2.8 *Conclusion*

The literature in the field of special education and specifically in inclusive environments appears to share the recognition that while the intent of current practices are honorable, they are lacking in efficiency, expertise and sustainability. Researchers are finding some of the biggest challenges to inclusion to be the lack of consistent terminology and language that is used, the pragmatics of teacher responsibilities and the divisiveness of collaborative service provision and responsibility.

The literature has shown that while there is an abundance of interest in the field of inclusive education, the lack of definitive clarity around language and structural differences has complicated efforts made to compare and examine program effectiveness. Research is revealing educators' commitment to the fundamental beliefs driving inclusive education as coupled with a frustration regarding the overwhelming workload and expectations it places on teachers.

Throughout the literature is a common focus on the need for well-funded collaborative service provision as an integral part of the inclusive model. The need for multi-sector collaboration continues to challenge effective inclusion and calls for sustainable structural changes to current policies. Studies continue to show that teachers, while needing to be appropriately trained to meet the diverse needs of students, must not be relied upon as the sole source of professional expertise. No teacher should be considered fully and singly responsible for the highly specific needs of students with special needs. Professionals such as speech language pathologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists are highly trained and bring

specialized skill sets that are as crucial to many students with special needs as core curriculum subjects.

Finally, there is an emerging trend to step back and evaluate the path that the inclusive movement has taken. Many educational researchers are noting efforts to shift the focus from an act of universal integration to one of individually appropriate learning placements. The return of an option for special schools that are closely linked to mainstream systems is being explored as a complement to the inclusive movement for those who need it.

Still unanswered is the question of how best to move from the declarative knowledge of what inclusion is and can be to the procedural knowledge of how best to make it work. Obstacles such as funding and expertise remain as significant challenges to be resolved. This study will seek to compare the trends identified in the literature to the practices and challenges faced locally. By comparing and contrasting these findings, this study will identify improvements worthy of consideration for the ESD's inclusive service delivery model.

# Chapter Three – Methodology

## 3.1 *Research Design*

This study evolved from a wish to explore the issues surrounding inclusive delivery of special services in the Eastern School District. My distinct interest in the Eastern School District is that of an employee and in particular, a special education consultant. Although the issues faced by the ESD are universal and cited in many studies in the literature, it is difficult to offer solutions that will apply to each site, each with its own history, politics, and personnel. This study approached the ESD with the aim to identify, address, and pose possible solutions to consider for the future. My involvement with the ESD for the last twenty years provided me the knowledge and access to information, as well as providing my own observations from the 'inside'. I have acknowledged my own bias in this chapter, and recognize its appropriateness in understanding the processes and historical paths that have led to this moment in ESD's history.

The research orientation I employed for this study included case study and responsive evaluation. Stake (Stake, 2004) defines evaluation as a "search for and documentation of program quality. The essential intellectual process here is a responsiveness to key issues or problems, especially the ones experiences by stakeholders on site…Issues are regularly taken to be the 'conceptual organizers' for the investigation, more so than needs, objectives, hypotheses, group comparisons, and cost-benefit ratios " (p. 209). In this case, the issues revolve around the delivery of special services for students with special needs in inclusive environments. As Stake also states, "the evaluators describe the program's activity, the issues, and make summary interpretations of worth, but first they observe and inquire" (p. 210). Stake defines responsive evaluation as:

> an approach, an orientation, a predisposition, as part of any formal evaluation of education and social service programs. It leans heavily on personal experience. It draws upon and refines the ordinary ways people perceive quality and worth. More than most formal evaluation methods, it draws attention to program activity, to program uniqueness, and to cultural pluralities. (p. 209)

Stake also recognizes that "to understand the quality of a program, you have to understand how it deals with its problems in a political context" (p. 215). Stake, as the initial proponent of responsive evaluation, uses case study as his preferred way of conceptualizing the "activity, the issues, and the personal relationships that reveal program quality" (p. 211). From my original goal of understanding and presenting the practices and policies of the ESD in their historical and local context, I felt that Stake's responsive evaluation method through case study was appropriate for this study as it addresses the macropolitical and micropolitical bases for policy and practice while also allowing me to provide my own insight as an insider collaborator within the system.

Case study allows one to explore the "how" and/or "why" behind an identified entity (Yin, 1989). It involves "systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions" (Berg, 2004, p. 1). As a research strategy, case study is used in settings such as policy research, organizational studies to add to our knowledge of "individual, social, and political phenomena" (p. 14). Case studies can be intrinsic or instrumental, depending on their use. According to Stake (1994), an intrinsic case study:

> is undertaken because one wants better understanding of this particular case. It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest. (p. 237)

This case study is intrinsic in that it pertains to the Eastern School District and its recommendations refer to the specific needs and observations made of the local board. However, it is also hoped that the case will be useful for other jurisdictions and scholars to apply the questions regarding inclusion's implementation to their own sites, and address the issues of inclusion implementation that are universal and have challenged many researchers and practitioners around the world (see for example Mamlin, 1999; Avramidas, Bayliss & Burden, 2002).

Evaluation-based research regarding special education services within an inclusive system, provides an opportunity to focus not simply on the ethical questions regarding inclusion, and nor does it limit itself to the effectiveness of inclusive placements. In employing a program evaluation-based design one can delve into the integral workings of the system and provide feedback that is key to future development. Combining the program evaluation method with that of a case study provides the collection of data, the concrete results and the singularity of focus which will allow for strengths to be identified, barriers to be critiqued, and research-grounded recommendations to be made. Stake (2004) describes the responsive evaluation as "a search for and documentation of program quality. The essential intellectual process here is responsiveness to key issues or problems, especially the ones experienced by stakeholders on-site" (p. 209).

Although Stake (2004) offers that responsive evaluation "was not conceived as an instrument of reform, but as an orientation to inquiry" (p. 213), it is this inquiry that has the most potential to guide future changes to policy. My involvement in the ESD enables me to verify and acknowledge truths about the ESD while aiming to improve the system for the future. Green (1994) states that the usefulness of evaluation is that it informs future policy. In keeping with the Prince Edward Island Minister's Directive NO. MD 2007-08, the ESD's program outcomes and measure of efficiency lie in providing quality learning experiences to all students in the public school system under the following mission statement:

> The ESD is committed to excellence in education. In partnership with the community, we will provide a safe and caring learning environment in which all students have the opportunity to reach their potential and to face the future with confidence. (Eastern School District, 1996b)

It is hoped that this study will inform future development of policy and practice. The willingness of the ESD to provide documentation for study and to receive the results of this study point to a willingness to improve their practice and policy.

## 3.2 *Identifying the Case*

Stake's (1994) description of the case as a functioning specific, describes the singleness of the phenomenon being studied as a bounded system. Creswell (2005) expands on the meaning of bounded in that it is "separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries" (p. 439).

For the context of this study, the case is the Eastern School District of Prince Edward Island and its special education service delivery model which, as described in Department of Education documents, is based on an inclusive philosophy providing support for students with special educational needs within the public schools. The Eastern School District is one of three boards of education in a province of 138,800 people (Statistics Canada, 2007). All three boards, while governed by a common Provincial School Act, operate independently of one another.

The Eastern School District is the largest of the three boards and recorded for the 2007-2008 school year an instructional staff of 1043 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers, serving 43 schools with a total of 13,290 students. Within the 43 schools are six senior high schools, five intermediate schools, twelve elementary schools, and a remaining twenty schools are comprised of various consolidated formations consisting of grades 1-9.

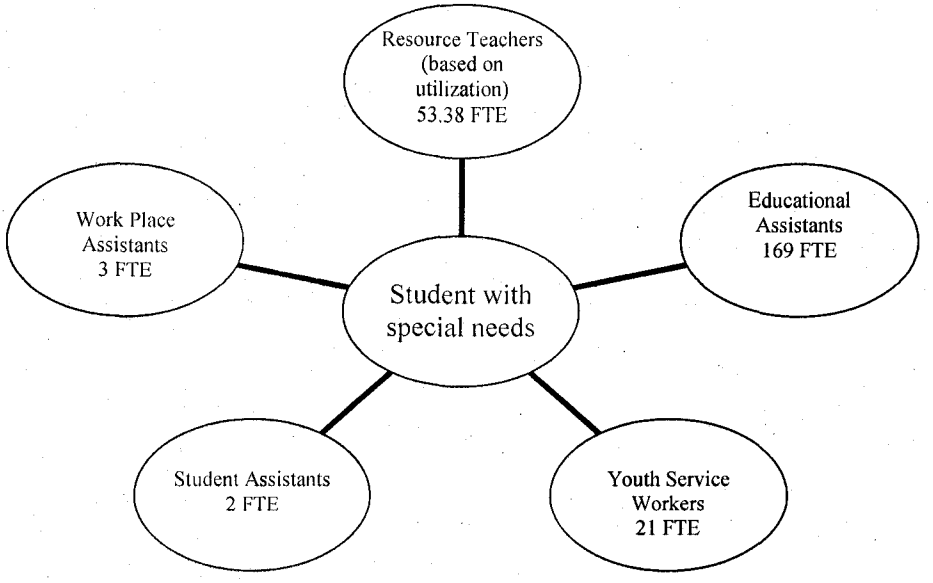
The province is composed of only two major cities and a plethora of smaller communities spread throughout the rural landscape. As a result, ten of the 43 schools, almost 25%, have populations of fewer than 150 students. These schools offer students the chance to be educated without having to travel to neighboring areas but they often do so to the detriment of facility upgrades and specially-trained staff. In many such instances, programming for the student with special needs is significantly impacted by the need for shared or partial resource positions within these smaller schools. The opportunity for specialized programming can also be affected in that access to off-site learning and community services are far less accessible. Depending on the specific circumstances, inclusion for some students attending small schools becomes more focused on physical integration rather than quality programming.

The Eastern School District administration has four departments, including Corporate Services, Curriculum Delivery, School Development, and Student Services, all governed by a Superintendent. The Student Services Department, responsible for meeting the needs of students with special needs, offers a range of program planning and support, from the significantly and/or multiply challenged students to isolated incidences of crisis response. The ESD student services department, reporting to the superintendent, consists of a Director, three school psychologists, three counseling consultants, two special education consultants, three autism and behavior consultants and two administrative assistants. While each department within the Eastern School District's head office functions as a unit, collaboration in meeting the needs of the more than 13,000 students of the board relies on communication between this department and human resources, curriculum, transportation and facilities.

Within those 13,000 students are approximately 260, the equivalent of approximately 2%, who without support, would be unable to be in school. This profile includes students with significant challenges and disabilities affecting cognitive, physical and medical needs and may or may not be formally diagnosed. These students are identified as Priority One and Priority Two students and share access to resource support services typically assigned in the form of educational assistants (see Figure 1). The approximately 160 full time equivalent (FTE) of educational assistants are the most common of the ESD's human resource supports available to assist school staffs in meeting the special educational needs. The role of educational assistants is defined by Prince Edward Island's Department of Education as "working under the supervision of principals and the direction of certified teachers to assist in the implementation of individual educational plan goals and objectives" (Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 2005b,

p. 14). Also included in this complement of support personnel are 21 FTE Youth Service Workers, assigned as per the Department of Education's guidelines for alternative programs to work collaboratively with school, home and community for students experiencing behavioral issues (PEI, Department of Education, *Teachers and Support Staff working Together, Standards and Guidelines*, 2005). Most recently, in 2006, the Eastern District has added 2 FTE Student Assistants to administer solely to the physical and medical needs of individual students and, in 2007, 3 FTE Work Place Assistants to provide job placement support to students with special needs at the high school level. In addition to this are the more than 3,000 students, approximately 23% of the total population, accessing some support within this constellation of available services due to moderate academic or behavioral needs.

Figure 1 ESD School-based Resource Support (2007-2008)



In each of the 43 schools are school-based student services teams designed to assess and address the needs of the students within that school. Ideally the team consists of an administrator, a classroom teacher, a resource teacher, and a counselor. However, some of the smaller schools require that staff assume dual roles and in those instances the composition of the team may be adapted to include a smaller core group but always there is teacher and administrative representation.

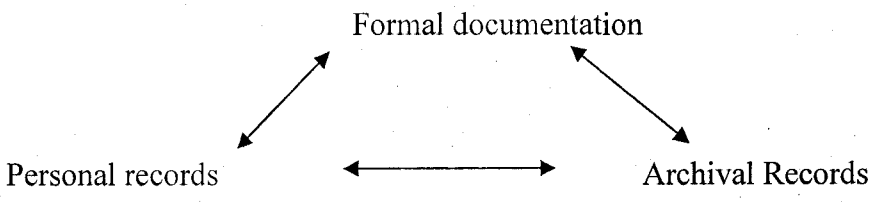
So, using the ESD special services model as a case, I analyzed the history, workings and issues regarding inclusive teaching of students with special needs within the entire board, in order to determine its strengths, as well as areas of challenge. The study culminated in recommendations for future consideration by the Board and the province. The time boundaries of the case extended from 1986 to the present, 2008. The geography encompassed all of the ESD, comprising roughly half of Prince Edward Island. Data was included from the District regarding all 43 schools.

### 3.3 *Data and Data Collection*

Yin (1989) suggests several potential sources of data for case study. The sources of information for this study were documentation, archival records, and participant observations (Figure2). Documentation consisted of public documents relating to special services in the Eastern District, as well as unpublished district and, particularly, student services specific data. Archival records included historical data of the Eastern School District and the provincial policies which have informed our practice. Participant Observation refers to my own records of

involvement in decision making and practice as part of the special services administrative team for the District.

Figure 2 Data Sources




Yin (1989) specifies documents that can be used as sources of information for the case and these were used for this study:

- Letters, memoranda, and other communiqués
- Agendas, announcements, and minutes of meetings, and other written reports of events
- Administrative documents- proposals, progress reports, and other internal documents

2. Formal documentation

For the purpose of this study, documents related directly to the ESD and Prince Edward Island's Department of Education's statistics, policies and procedures. I conducted a thorough search of available documents, including formal public documents (Table 1).

Table 1 Public Documents Used for Study

| Document Type and Title | Date |
|---|---|
| Non departmental-based Reviews | |
| • *APSEA, Sixteenth Annual* Report | 2004-05 |
| • *Advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities,* Government of Canada | 2004 |
| • *Inclusive policy and practice in Education: best practices for students with disabilities*, Roeher Institute | 2004 |
| Department Commissioned Reviews | |
| • *Minister's Review of Services for Students with Special Needs, Review Committee Report & Recommendations,* NS | 2007 |
| • *Connecting care and challenge: tapping our human potential. Inclusive education: A review of programming and services in New Brunswick,* NB | 2006 |
| • *Excellence in Education: A Challenge for Prince Edward Island,* PEI | 2005 |
| • *Review of specific requests relating to inclusive education in New Brunswick* | 2005 |
| • *Staffing and Funding Program Review,* PEI | 2003 |
| • *Summary report: Review of Special Education,* PEI | 2002 |
| • *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee,* NS | 2001 |
| • *Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs: A Review of Special Education in Alberta,* ALTA | 2000 |
| Teachers Federation Reports | |
| • PEITF Economic Welfare Report | 2007 |
| • *Educators' Perceptions of the IPP Process*, executive summary report | 1998 |
| Department of Education Documents | |
| • *Education Handbook for School Administrators*, PEI | 2007-08 |
| • *IEP Standards and Guidelines*, PEI | 2005 |
| • Department of Education Ministers' Reports PEI, NS, NB, NFLD, ONT, ALTA, BC | 2001-08 |
| • *Teachers and Support Staff Working Together*, PEI | 2005 |

2. Archival records:

Yin (1989) suggests that archival records also provide useful information for understanding an organization's activity. In the case of this study, there were many documents that were not public but which were provided to me by my employer or which I collected over time and was able to use for this study. Yin suggests archival records can include service records,

organizational records, maps and charts, lists of names, survey data, and personal records. For the purpose of this study, the ESD and Departmental records were analyzed (Table 2). Some of these records cannot be included in the appendices due to the confidentiality of their contents. However, I have included many in the text of the findings chapter without names. Analysis of these records included simple statistics and organization using charts and schematics. However, the lack of exactitude with which some of the numbers were gathered is part of my analysis and these will be addressed further in the findings chapter.

Table 2 Archival Records

| ESD Specific Documents and Memos | Date |
|---|---|
| • Resource Allocation and Utilization Data | 2007 |
| • Principals Executive Meeting Notes | 2006-07 |
| • Resource Teacher Meeting Notes | 2001-07 |
| • Intermediate Administrator's Meeting Notes | 2005 |
| • Administrative Proposal Responses | 2001-2008 |
| • Annual Needs Profile Data | 2001-2005 |
| • Student Services Correspondence | |
| Department of Education Information | |
| • Annual Needs Profile Data | 2001-08 |
| • Correspondence Regarding Staffing | 2003-2007 |

3. Personal records

Personal records span the work that I have done as Special Education consultant for the Eastern School district (Table 3). Based on my own interpretations of my work, I have analyzed my various notes and other correspondence, and included my personal observations of my work to provide insight into the ways that decisions have been made at the School Board. These records and observations are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect or try to reflect those of my colleagues. My own personal experience with these processes was tapped to provide a

human perspective on the other documents and archival records that were collected and analyzed. Green (1994) encourages the acknowledgement of self in research and acknowledges the worth that the insider point of view provides for access and analysis of significant issues related to the case. However, in doing so, I have been open to acknowledging and including the bias that I brought to the analysis because of my personal involvement with it.

Table 3 Personal records

| Personal Records | Sources of Data |
|---|---|
| Notes<br>Journals<br>Memos<br>Correspondence | • Meeting Discussions – District and School Levels<br>• Meeting Minutes – School, District, Department and Outside Agencies<br>• Professional Development Notes<br>• Day Planner<br>• Auxiliary Support Allocation and Planning<br>• Internal transitional tracking notes<br>• Student Services Discussions |

The use of multiple sources of data is helpful in creating a full case study and evaluation that is reliable and valid (Yin, 1989). In this study, the triangulation of documents, archival records, and personal records allowed for checking across sources to ensure that each source was referring to the actual policies or practices reported. In creating my data base of information, I used case study notes, documents, counts of data, and other methods of organizing data into a reliable 'chain of evidence' that could be traced by an external reader (Yin, 1989). This also allowed data to be organized according to dates, places, and people so that it could be analyzed in a valid manner.

In summary, the data collection for this study provided for a descriptive and evaluative assessment of the policies and practices of the ESD over a period of twenty years, so that future recommendations could be made based on as much actual data about the board as possible. Stake (1994) suggests that in qualitative case work, "to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, we will employ various procedures, including redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanations" (p. 241).

Background and historical information was recorded in the form of a comprehensive presentation of the past and current practices in the Eastern School District and the factors connecting the two. These data were generated from my personal involvement with the district from the perspective of a teacher for more than 15 years and as special education consultant for the past 6 years. Written approval for use of the documentation was sought from the superintendent (see Appendix B). A search was completed for any relevant personal and/or professional documentation that would assist in illustrating the developments and changes within the district over the years. These documents were reviewed to ensure the absence of any identifiable characteristics and judged to be acceptable on that basis. Data collection continued throughout the time of analysis as required. Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently at times as each process informed the other.

### 3.4 *Researcher Role and Trustworthiness of Data*

My role as principal researcher was to collect data from the schools regarding the teachers and students served by the Student Services Department. I analyzed this data and other data that are currently available on the special service delivery model at the ESD. I also included my own observations based on my work in the system over many years.

My experience in the capacity of classroom teacher, resource teacher and board-based consultant with the District allowed me to draw upon my familiarity of practices and concerns as well as being privy to board history and documentation, sanctioned for use in this study by the ESD (see Appendix B). The value of drawing upon my own personal recollections and involvement with the workings of the board is supported by Spiro, Vispoel, Schmitz, Samarapungavan and Boerger (1987), and reiterated by Stake (1994) in noting that "qualitative case study is characterized by the researcher spending substantial time on-site, personally in contact with activities operations of the case, reflecting, revising meaning of what is going on" (p. 242). Much of the historical data regarding the District was an accumulation of my involvement over the years as a teacher and consultant and has been woven into the textual and literature research during this year of study to formulate the basis for my findings.

My role as a consultant involves continuous dialogue with administrators, school-based student services teams, resource teachers, classroom teachers, students and parents. My objective was to review the information and input I had gathered over the years through my work and to reframe that within the larger picture of the district's model as a whole and in comparison to other practices and jurisdictions. I made a conscious decision from the start to rely on textual and contextual data for this intrinsic study. In doing so, my awareness of possible bias became even more important and perhaps an advantage to revealing findings instrumental to encouraging improvements in the ESD. Maxwell (2005) stresses the value of experiential data and the limitation to insights and realities that may occur when research is bound too tightly to traditional research practices.

With this dual role comes the responsibility to approach the data collection and interpretation with honesty and integrity. As Stake (1994) points out, "the bulk of case study work, however, is done by people who have an intrinsic interest in the case" (p. 242) and with this interest comes a responsibility on the part of the researcher to identify any possible subjectivity that may impact the results. This possibility for subjectivity is balanced with the benefit of the 'personal factor' defined as:

> an identifiable individual or group of people who care personally about the evaluation and the findings it generates. Where such a person or group was present, evaluations were used; where the personal factor was absent, there was a correspondingly marked absence of evaluation impact. (Stake, 2004, p. 282)

My intention to return to the Eastern School District following the completion of my studies gives credence to this personal factor and my desire to have the findings of the study represent accurate and practical information. It is my hope that upon completion, this study will be a catalyst in providing a clearer direction for the ESD to move forward with organized data, analysis, recommendations, and suggestions from the literature.

While I was not completely separate from the board during my study leave in 2007/08, I was able to step back and think about how the board worked without me and how my involvement with it over the last many years influenced how things were done. The value inherent in both insider and outsider perspectives is supported by House (as cited by Greene, 1994): "Because our work can affect who gets what, we must be actively engaged with the consequences of our work" (p. 538). It is imperative that I see the prospective changes and their implications in terms of how they affect the whole, rather than only my part of the structure. This includes stakeholders other than myself and ESD departments and settings other than those

involved directly with special education. Although this study did not involve direct interviews with stakeholders, various documents and my own observations have provided sufficient information regarding staff and parent experiences and this is included in the analysis.

My role is supported by the District with the commitment that findings will be reviewed and considered in future district planning. However, this study is of my own instigation and findings are independent of any prior agenda submitted by the Eastern School District. Greene (1994) notes the effect of the "acknowledged self" in inquiry in that "human knowledge is literally constructed during inquiry and hence inevitably entwined with the perceptual frames, histories and values of the inquirer" (p. 539). Therefore a connection between my perspective and the welfare of the district is unavoidable. My work experiences allow me to vicariously witness the perspectives of parent, teacher, administrator as well as my direct connection as consultant. It is these perspectives that influence my effort to complete the study and that will, in turn, influence knowledge I garner from its completion.

As an insider I am able to bring attention to the realities of the operations and challenges faced by the case being studied. I bring to this study not only essential historical knowledge and operational insights but also experiences that have the potential to influence my interpretation of the data being analyzed. There are many people with whom I work across the district and those closely associated with the children it serves who may be affected by the recommendations generated from this study. I am cognizant of the potential for my personal opinions and inside knowledge of the district's operations and my connection with those it serves to color my receptivity to new concepts. I have tried my utmost to keep an open mind throughout the course

of the study to maximize options for consideration and to acknowledge any preconceptions or assumptions that have come from my years in this field.

### *3.5 Data Analysis*

Yin (1989) suggests that a case study protocol include means of analysis before the study begins. Of course, in this case, some of the data was collected before the study began, and the purpose of the study was for it to be organized and structured in a way that would relay as comprehensive a description as possible of the case from twenty years ago to this point in time. Yin (1989) suggests such methods for organizing data:

- Putting information into arrays
- Making a matrix of categories and placing the evidence within such categories
- Creating data displays- flow charts and other devise- for examining the data
- Tabulating the frequency of different events
- Examining the complexity of such tabulations and their relationships by calculating second-order numbers such as means and variances
- Putting information in chronological order or using some other temporal scheme (p. 106)

These methods were used in this study to ensure the maximum objectivity in handling the data. They were also helpful in providing structure to previously unstructured data and allowing analysis and comparison to take within the ESD case. The original research questions were used to structure the data analysis, in terms of: 1. describing the current and past policies and practices of the ESD with regard to inclusive services for students with special needs; 2. discussing challenges and strengths of the program; 3. researching the literature for relevant studies that could inform practice and policy at the ESD, and; 4. providing the basis for analysis and evaluation in order to suggest recommendations for future practice and policy. The analysis of

data once the organization and further comparison of data from schools and grade levels was completed, was based on cross-checking between sources of data, coding data according to recurrent themes, and building a description of the case that was comprehensive and noted differences and similarities within the case board and with other sites studied in the literature. As such, the study did not follow from original propositions, except that the concepts of inclusive education, least restrictive environment, and individual service were used as a basis for evaluation of the district's practices and policies and comparison of the district to sites in other studies (Yin, 1989).

The questions "how" and "why" were applied to the case in order to explore the reasons for practices and the ways in which the formal and informal policies resulted in practices. In this way, an "explanation" of the case is possible, following Yin's (1989) analytic strategy of studying public policies in order to lead to "recommendations for future policy actions" (p. 113). As this process of analysis required me to go back to the original questions to ensure that they were being answered, there was an 'iterative' process in which I moved from questions to data to analysis and back and forth to maximize the validity of the analysis. Other data analysis strategies used to enhance the validity and reliability of data analysis included using chronologies to trace events over time and making repeated observations of similar events/decisions (Yin, 1989).

Theory was not conceived from the data. Categories emerged from the analytic process and directed the evaluation and recommendations. These categories of special services included modifying curriculum, support structures and alternative options, and within each of these appeared repetitive themes guiding further exploration and organization of findings. These processes were not linear in format but blended into one another by means of the issues they

generated. Stake (1994) describes the identification of themes as the act of choosing issues to organize a study according to the question, "which issues help reveal merit and shortcomings?" (p. 239). In this study there were opportunities for many themes and issues to surface, along with the temptation to address all of them:

> The case study researcher faces a strategic choice in deciding how much and how long the complexities of the case should be studied. Not everything about the case can be understood – how much needs to be? Each researcher will make up his or her own mind. (Stake, 1994 p. 238)

In this study, as much data regarding inclusive services for students that could be found within the time frame of a year of organization and analysis was used, and the data collection and analysis ended when I felt that I had found as much information as was available within the ESD.

*In depth analysis*

Through the constant comparison method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) I coded the data several ways including according to ESD, provincial, Canadian and global trends. I also looked for common challenges from various stakeholder perspectives, such as student, classroom teacher, resource teacher, administrators and district representatives, as well as patterns in grade levels from elementary, intermediate and senior high. In doing so I was able to draw out themes and seek development of common threads with respect to efficacy and challenges of inclusive special education delivery models as they surfaced throughout the analysis. It is from this comparison and interplay that I identified themes from which to describe the case and then to make recommendations.

I examined policies and directives from educational organizations and stakeholders affected by inclusive practices, as well as examining the literature. From this interplay I then analyzed the information and attempted to draw out themes from which I made connections, comparisons and ultimately recommendations. These themes included increased demands on teachers, lack of consistency and the need for collaborative planning. An extensive literature review was undertaken to seek out relevant, current data supporting practices elsewhere from which to compare approaches and evaluate their applicability to the Eastern School District. An ongoing search of databases provided access to literary articles, archival materials, reviews of programs, and public documents pertaining to other areas as well as those directly related to the Eastern District.

As Greene (1994) points out, qualitative program evaluation, "is integrally intertwined with political decision making about societal priorities, resource allocation, and power" (p. 531). In keeping with this theory, as a product of the data analysis and the themes that arose from the process, I attempted to formulate recommendations for amendments to the current special educational service delivery model of the Eastern School District. In doing so, it is my hope that future decisions will be transparent and based on the most accurate data possible.

## 3.6 *Limitations*

This case study presents limitations in that while the data collected will come from a global perspective, its application is being made to a single province and a single district from which generalizations cannot be drawn. Each geographic area is gifted and challenged by its own

dynamics, cultures, and philosophies, and what is appropriate for one is not necessarily transferable to others without accommodating for those differences (Lupart, 1999). However, the narrowness of focus will enrich the depth of this study and will provide much-needed analysis of the debate within the implementation of inclusion (Kavale & Forness, 2000). While the specifics of the case may not be duplicated exactly, the findings may be used for comparison of elements in common with other cases (Ainscow & Cèsar, 2006).

Stake (1994) notes that "case study can usefully be seen as a small step toward grand generalization but should not be emphasized in all research" (p. 238). My own personal and professional biases and "personal factor'" (Stake, 2004, p.282) pose limitations in that the data is interpreted and recommendations are formed as I have perceived them. Effort has been made to remain aware of these influences; however, there remains an ethical imperative to recognize the existence of these internal influences. Balancing this is the triangulation of data including that contributed by my historical involvement in the case and the vicariously heard voices of stakeholders such as parents, administrators, teachers and board-based consultants through observation, documentation and archives as having helped to form that knowledge.

An additional, unanticipated limitation directly impacting my findings arose in the lack of documentation detailing many of the events that have influenced the development of inclusive education in the District. Prince Edward Island is a close knit community and its relaxed and familiar atmosphere was often reflected in the casual nature in which events occurred without formal documentation accompanying them.

Further challenging the findings of this study is the lack of congruence between the reported practices with respect to some schools' resource models and those known to exist. Many of the documents informing this study relied on self reporting by each administrator and recognizes there may have been protective factors influencing the information provided. Schools may have been reluctant to be identified as less current in their practices or of having redirected resource supports to unrelated initiatives within the building. This will be further addressed in the findings.

# Chapter Four - Findings

## 4.1 *Introduction*

This chapter describes the special service delivery model currently in place within the Eastern School District and explores some of the history contributing to its design. I will identify the challenges this model presents and how those challenges affect the day-to-day operations within the schools locally and as represented in the literature as happening elsewhere. Addressed within these findings is the impact such demands have placed on those who work to meet the needs of the students as well as the students themselves in terms of the quality of education they are offered. Finally, options are examined from the literature that may be applicable for use in the Eastern School District's efforts to provide an effective and sustainable inclusive service to its students. I have chosen to structure these findings in order as they emerged naturally and allowed the research questions to evolve and be addressed within that format rather than answering each question in a sequential manner.

York-Barr et al. (2005) summarized the US Council for Exceptional Children report as indicating:

> The most pressing issues faced by educators and special education systems were: ambiguous and competing responsibilities, overwhelming paper work, inadequate district and administrative support, significant teacher isolation, increased demand for well qualified special education teachers, and fragmented state and provincial licensing systems (p. 194).

The Eastern School District reflects many of these same concerns around special education service design, implementation and the ensuing gaps in inclusive education. The District's service model encompasses all students and is one intended to reflect the needs of all students, not simply those with special educational needs. In keeping with the global movement toward the abolishment of special schools and many special classes within schools, the Eastern School District operates within a mainstreamed approach in which there are students of multiple learning levels and challenges in all classes. This, in combination with growing class sizes and higher expectations for technology, programming and facility offerings, has made it even more difficult for education authorities to channel the necessary supports that are inherent to successful management of diverse classrooms. The public's concept of inclusive special education models tends to focus primarily on the needs of the significantly challenged or multiply affected students who, years ago, may have been served in segregated settings but for whom an entitlement to an inclusive environment is now recognized. It is therefore the planning and support of these students that epitomizes special education needs and services and for whom the funding and planning is primary.

There is however, within the District, a large group of students whose needs, while less visible and typically not diagnosed, present a major challenge for teachers. Many times these students are awaiting assessment or, once assessed, have been found to have a cognitive delay or difficulties not formally identified that slow or impair their learning processes. These students are functioning at levels often three or four grades below their peers, require considerable support in order to meet with success, and are often in need of an individual educational plan. This chapter will examine not only how the District's current model of special education meets

the needs of students commonly recognized as having special needs, but will explore the service implications for this less public yet equally demanding group of diverse learners.

### *4.2 Delivering Modified Levels of Curriculum in the Inclusive Classroom*

The Eastern School District is currently faced with increasingly diverse classrooms and class compositions that often include high student/teacher ratios and broad levels of functioning within those ratios. In September of 2006, the PEITF circulated a written survey to its members in preparation for negotiations of the new Memorandum of Agreement slated for spring of 2007. The survey addressed issues of salary, benefits and class composition. The Class Composition segment of the PEITF Economic Welfare Committee Survey (2007) reported an average 17% of students in the 440 respondents' classes who were not supported by formal Individual Educational Plans but required some form of intervention or modification to experience success. Only 16% of respondents noted that the number of students requiring this support had lessened in recent years. Approximately 66% of those indicated they received inadequate support to address the needs of these students. These figures are further reflected by the identified needs as reported in the District's Annual Needs Profile statistics that see upwards of 3000 students receiving individual planning support and services within the district's 43 schools (Eastern School District, Annual Needs Profile, 2006-2007). The 20% of all District students identified in these figures present a broad range of needs but typically, the large majority requires modified programming reflecting changes in the prescribed curriculum content, teaching strategies and evaluation techniques. This claim is supported further by the Department of Education's (2006) Student Services Annual School Profile Data for 2006-2007, in which provincially an estimated 15.9% of students are supported by special education/resource programs and a similar figure of

16% in their Eastern District data. Additional to these numbers are the students within boards who may not be receiving special education/ resource support but for whom behavior plans and medical and physical support plans may be in place.

The strain of providing quality educational services to students of diverse needs is of equal concern to our neighboring provinces. In June of 2001, Nova Scotia's Special Education Implementation Review Committee (SEIRC) released a report in which 34 recommendations were made to improve programs and services for students with special needs. Considerable funding was allocated to address the recommendations and in July, 2007, the Minister's Review of Services for Students with Special Needs was released as a recap of progress to date. Among actions taken within that time were an additional 8.4 million dollars provided from 2003-2006 addressing concern for the lack of qualified professionals delivering services to students. Additional monies were allocated to address teacher concerns regarding the lack of time for program planning and the need for resource materials and assistive technology to support resource programming initiatives and professional development. Advances were also made in response to calls for monitoring systems to ensure the appropriate utilization of allocated staff and effective implementation of resource programs and services, as well as competency guidelines for hiring core special education professionals. The SEIRC review identified many areas of growth but acknowledged a continued need to build on their capacity to meet all students' needs (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2007).

Students functioning significantly below grade level have been inadvertently affected by the inclusion of students with higher needs into the classrooms and also the increase of social

promotion. In keeping with literature that suggests little is gained by retention and that even small gains are quickly eradicated (Nagaoka & Roderick, 2004), students are being 'placed' in age appropriate grades regardless of their academic levels. Teachers are faced with demands that exceed their supply of time and expertise, and often find it is this group of students who, ultimately, are missing out on quality individualized programming (Edmunds, 1998; French, 1998).

### 4.2.1 *Identification of Needs*

The current practice within the Eastern District involves board-based consultants meeting with each school's student services representatives each spring (see Appendices C1 and C2). At this time the students' special educational needs within that school are reviewed as documented on the school's Annual Needs Profile. Resource teachers draw from formal and informal assessment results as well as input from those involved including IEP team members, classroom teachers, counselors, and involved professionals to identify the needs of the students. Rather than relying on a formula's index or a diagnostic-based categorical approach in which support is available only to those students who have received formal diagnosis and then weighted accordingly, support is allocated to schools based on the individual needs at that school as represented by the profile data and in consideration of that school's dynamics such as size, population and staffing.

This information is then used in combination with ongoing involvement in case meetings to aid the District's special education consultants in the annual allotment and assignment process during which educational assistant support is allocated to schools. Information shared during the

Annual Needs Profile meetings concerning the nature and severity of needs, as well as the individualized program planning for students, contributed to decisions regarding the level of EA support allotted to each school and the skill set required within that support person.

The process is labor intensive, requiring the full attention of the District's two special education consultants as well as collaboration with other student services consultants and human resources staff for the better part of six weeks. All three of the province's school boards utilize similar processes to allot this support to schools and have, to no avail, attempted several times to improve the process. Yet, adhering to an allotment process that relies on student specific information and school specific variables rather than a formula-based approach, has been thus far and remains a priority. Under this model, children who struggle, present risks, and require support, are considered eligible for support regardless of an absence of a formal diagnosis, even when that support is not necessarily available.

Once the total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of Educational Assistants (EA) required is established, it is formally requested by a submission of need to the Department of Education. The Department must view all three boards' requests and allocate the available resources as fairly as possible. While there is no documented, formal process in place, traditionally the decision has been made with consideration given to the number and nature of needs, the size of the school board, and the human resource budget to which the Department must adhere. A specific budget addressing the yearly EA staffing needs is not accessible; however, concern has been noted by the Department of Education's Director of Student Support Services regarding the growth from 1996-97 total FTE amounts of 112 to the current 2007-08 allotment of more than

290 FTE across the province. In circumstances where available funding is less than that requested, the original request is revisited and boards may be required to lessen the support they had originally hoped to provide to schools, an example of which follows in the next section.

### 4.2.2 *Allocation of Auxiliary Support*

In recognition of the changing needs of students and in encouraging the practice of fading support to build independence, hours of EA support are allotted to schools but not typically tagged in hourly increments to specific students. However, it is expected that the students' needs will be covered within those allocated hours. While school administrators are encouraged to vary the levels of support provided to any one student throughout the year as the needs dictate, the level of support provided to identified students is monitored by consultants through their involvement in case meetings.

Students are grouped as priority one or two on a needs-based listing completed for each school (see Appendixes D1 and D2). The criteria define a priority one student as one who, for reasons of personal care, mobility, communication or safety needs, without support would not otherwise be able to physically attend school. A Priority Two student is one who may not have the same limitations but who would not be successful at school without occasional or shared EA support. Both types of students are recognized as needing significant individual planning and consideration. Students' status on this list of needs are re-evaluated yearly at the Annual Needs Profile meetings and may or may not be altered due to changes in individual needs or, in some cases, changes in funding.

The task of allocating support to schools and making decisions about which students will and will not be identified as warranting support is not a pleasant task and in my experience is one that involves a degree of relativity, depending on the number of needs in a given year and the available funding. Historically, the practice had been to directly attach hours of support to students. Barring any significant changes in the students' status, that support remained in place, often provided by the same educational assistant over a period of several years. Since 2003 the Department of Education, in partnership with working committees from the Eastern, Western and French Boards, have published several documents that emphasize the importance of considering all support as belonging to the school with specific students in mind. The *Individual Educational Planning(IEP) Standards and Guidelines, (2005a)* and the *Teachers and Support Staff Working Together Standards and Guidelines(2005b)* both encourage the gradual phasing out of EA support as well as introducing frequent changes in support persons to avoid an overly dependent bond forming between the student and EA (PEI Department of Education, 2005). The school is encouraged to complete frequent reviews of the students' IEP goals and to capitalize on any opportunities to increase levels of independent functioning where possible.

Refraining from attaching time directly to students also helps to ease the loss during times of reductions in available support to schools. Allowing the schools to have freedom in how they utilize EA support within the building means support to students is not cut on an individual level but absorbed by all of the students' needs in the building. This approach presents advantages and disadvantages in that while it avoids some students experiencing a complete loss of service, it may potentially impact a very necessary service to many others. This practice is a by-product of

the freedom provided schools in avoiding attaching time to specific students rather than a reason to do so.

An example of decreased support as a result of fiscal restraint occurred in the spring of 2002. Due to a high number of incoming grade one needs, in addition to needs already in the system, the EA request submitted to the Department was significantly higher than in the previous year and exceeded the Department's resources. The District was left with no choice but to remove approximately 80 students from the priority listings. Funding had to be spread thinly and the result was the removal of the strongest of the weakest students from the list of intended service provision. While the exact figures are no longer available, the notice of reduction is evident as indicated in correspondence from District personnel to Department officials, and concern over the rising needs and diminishing resources are clear (see Appendices D2 and D3).

Students' needs were still planned for and individualized programming expectations remained in place but the delivery of that service changed significantly. Students who had previously received EA support for weaknesses of a purely academic nature were no longer able to be considered in EA time allocated to that school. This practice has remained in place since that time. Teachers were expected to meet the needs of those students through classroom modifications but without the aid of educational assistants. This increased expectation of teachers relied heavily on the support of resource teachers, yet funding allowed for no additional training or consultative support measures to classroom teachers beyond what had traditionally been available to them through regular professional development and consultation with their school's resource teachers. The result of this reduction meant either students went without the

support they needed or students who remained identified as priorities shared the available support.

### 4.2.3 *Implications of Changes in Auxiliary Support*

Teachers in Island schools continue to be challenged by the demands placed on them by the diverse needs and exceptionalities of their students. Phyllis Horne, in her Master of Education thesis, found teachers emphasizing the need for additional support both in terms of paraprofessional support for students and instructional support for teachers. Teachers in Horne's study identified the need for time to effectively collaborate and implement individualized planning as critical for effective inclusion in our Island schools (Horne, 2001). These concerns were again echoed in the PEITF Economic Welfare Review findings (2007) in which teachers identified the following as the top four suggestions to address the claim of inadequate supports in meeting the needs of these students:

- More resource teachers and educational assistants
- Teacher training and support
- Time needed to prepare for all students
- More resources to support programs being adapted and modified. (p.2)

Frustration and feelings of being overwhelmed by the demands of diverse classrooms are clear from comments collected as part of the economic review report, in which the following statements by teachers were included:

> "Students with an IEP or a need for an IEP seem to be more and more common each year. This puts a lot of extra work on the classroom teacher in terms of planning and programming."
>
> "This is impossible… to serve those with needs and the rest of the class as well. I'm over taxed and neither is getting what they need. HELP!"
>
> "Too many (students requiring modification). Its overwhelming! Chaos! Crazy! Help Stressful!" (p. 6)

These comments echo sentiments frequently expressed to me during my visits to schools and consultations with teachers. Many have communicated the same frustration and despair and resigning themselves to feelings of inefficacy.

Nova Scotia's SEIRC report of 2001 and the July, 2007, follow up review include teacher input, representative of grades 1 – 12 as identifying similar areas of concern. Participants in the survey generated as part of the 2001 report identified teacher training, opportunity for collaboration among colleagues and professionals, provision of materials and resources and class composition as priority concerns (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2005).

In 2001 the Eastern School District, in response to increasing demands on teachers to meet diverse classroom needs, implemented a new one year position known as an Adaptation and Modification Consultant with hopes of extending it to a permanent position. The role of this consultant was intended to be two fold: 1) to in-service teachers and administrative teams with respect to what adaptation and modification of curriculum and programming involved, and 2) to support the practice in our schools. I was fortunate to have that assignment for the 2001-2002 school year. This role allowed me to witness both the need for clarity and understanding in terms

of what was being asked of teachers and also the ongoing support they were seeking to complete these measures for their students. The initial phase of the strategy went as planned, as each and every school was provided opportunity to be educated about the expectations around individualizing instruction for students and the processes involved, but fell short of offering follow up support for the teachers.

Due to unanticipated increased financial demands on the overall operational costs affecting the District as a whole and subsequent restructuring within the District, the position was not extended beyond the first year. Guiding teachers in providing adaptations and modifications to students' programs fell then to the resource teachers in schools and to board-based special education consultants to provide ongoing professional development and classroom support. Teachers had been asked to spend additional time tailoring programs to meet individual needs but when the position designed to support them in this area was terminated after one year, it implied this practice was not a priority and any headway that had been made was lost. A focus on the need for continued and committed funding on behalf of educational authorities to implement and sustain the required support services is repeatedly stressed throughout the literature (Ainscow et al., 1999; Croll & Moses, 2000; Manset & Semmel, 1997). This particular instance is indicative of the ESD acting in response to needs in the schools without a long term, cohesive plan to sustain its efforts.

### 4.3 *Resource Teachers, Support Structures, and Available Expertise*

Horne (2001) found teachers feeling in need of additional support given the wide variety of exceptionalities with which our students with special needs are affected and also the broad

spectrum of specific skills and training required to develop meaningful and comprehensive programming. As identified in Prince Edward Island Department of Education's (2005a) *Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) Standards and Guidelines*, no teacher is expected to have the skills sets required to meet the individual learning needs of all students single handedly. This commitment is made on the premise that student services teams within schools will collaborate to meet the diverse needs and also the recommendation that schools collaborate with outside agencies and service providers to complement the service models for individual students.

However, limited staffing, over extended resource teachers, insufficient time to meet and plan, and a lack of training and access to outside agencies have led to a reality in schools that is not reflective of the supportive model outlined above. My experience in visiting with schools and speaking with administrators on a regular basis regarding their efforts to meet the needs in their buildings is that this level of support is often not available to teachers. In most cases where students are on in-depth individual educational plans, an operative support team is in place to support the teacher. However, in cases where students are requiring modifications to meet learning levels two and three grades below their peers, this support system is not so readily available to teachers. Teachers in these circumstances are attempting to single-handedly meet needs which may be beyond their level of training and expertise. Much discussion and problem solving has focused on alleviating this occurrence, however the culmination of the demands on teachers, resource teachers and administrators, and the limited resources and the additional needs within schools, has impeded any real change in response to the issue.

### 4.3.1 *School-based* Support *Structures*

The ESD operates on a continuum of supports and services within each school and at the District level (see Figure 3). As mentioned in the introduction, each school has a student services team consisting of staff from that school as well as access to the consultative services of the student services team at the District office. As defined in the Minister's Directive NO. MD 2001 -08, Special Education,

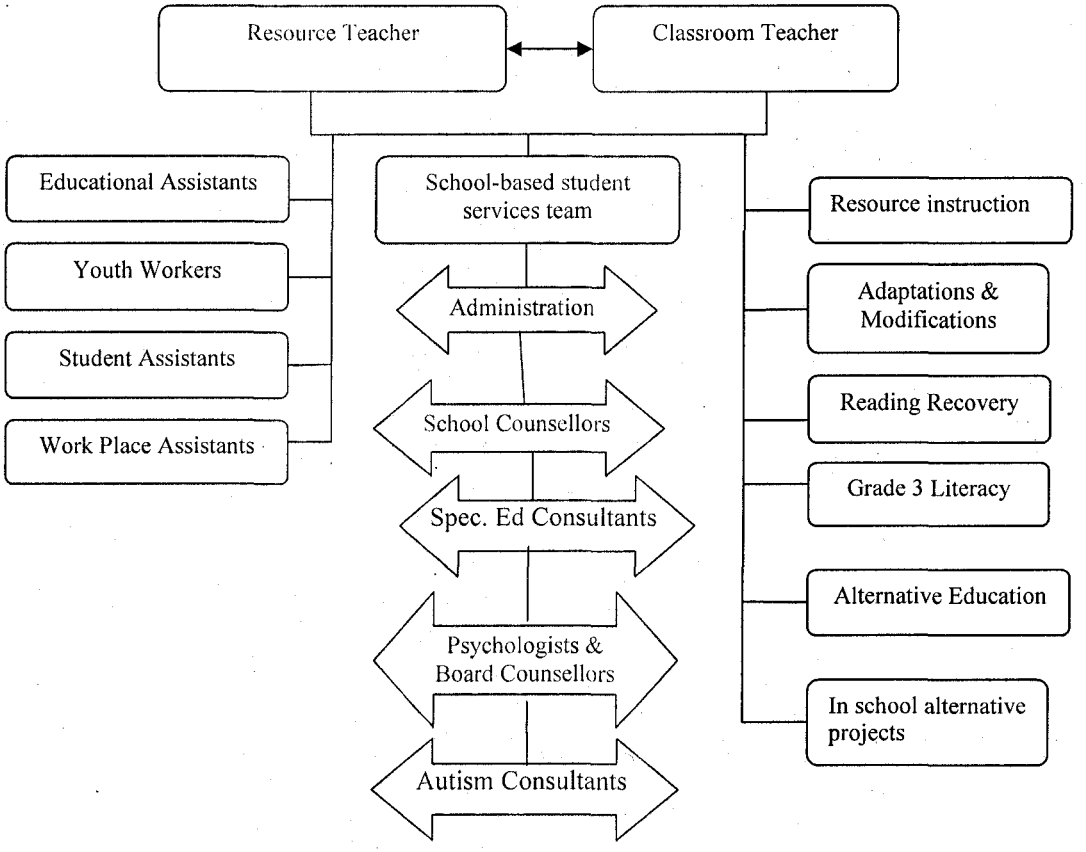
> the school based student services team is an ongoing collaborative team that has a specific role to pay in assisting classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies to coordinate support resources for students with special needs within the school. (p. 2)

The number of players comprising the school-based student services team is at the discretion of the school and often reflective of the student population and the complement of staff within the school, but typically includes as advised in the Department of Education's (2005) *Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) Standards and Guidelines*, administrative, counseling and teacher representation.

In many of the schools, this team is instrumental in providing and supporting the collaboration of special education services to the students with special educational needs and in doing so the resource/ special education teacher assumes a primary role in leading the team. My experience in attending such meetings and through discussion in my daily work with administrators and resource teachers indicates there remains a lack of consistency between schools as to the manner in which these teams operate. Some schools meet regularly and within the school day, others meet less often and or hold meetings outside of the school day. Prioritizing

planning time within the school day has been reflected in the literature review as both a teacher priority and exemplary of the leadership commitment recommended for improved student planning and management of teacher workloads (Horne, 2001; Mackay, 2006; York-Barr et al. 2005). When, how and about whom the team should meet is identified in the Department of Education's (2005a) *Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) Standards and Guidelines* (2005). These protocols regarding the functioning and makeup of the school-based teams are guidelines rather than policy, further identifying the emerging theme of the absence of a comprehensive plan on which inclusive education in the District might be anchored.

Figure 3 ESD Continuum of Support Services



#### 4.3.1.1 *Role of the resource teacher*

The role of the resource teacher is to support students and staff in the identification, development and delivery of individualized instruction to students. This design is based on a three pronged role including assessment, direct instruction, and consultation as defined in the *Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) Standards and Guidelines* (2005a), and play-out differently depending on the size, scheduling and expertise in each particular school.

- *Assessment* includes the resource teacher gathering and processing various forms of information regarding a student's learning strengths and needs to facilitate in individual educational planning for that student. This may include observations, formal assessments or referrals to higher level assessment professionals.
- *Consultation* refers to the resource teacher's ongoing sharing, planning and consulting with teachers based on the results of such assessments to provide appropriate learning opportunities for the student.
- *Direct Instruction* refers to the individual or small group instruction provided to students by the resource teacher to strengthen specific learning needs or remediate skills and may occur within a pull-out or an in-class model.

In the ESD there is no formal distinction made between the titles or roles of resource teachers and special education teachers and for the purpose of this discussion the position will be referred to as that of a resource teacher. The title *special education teacher* had been in place in Prince Edward Island schools in the 1970s when schools had a teacher specifically designated for a population of students with special needs for whom they were solely responsible in segregated classes and settings. In the 1980s, positions of resource/special education teacher became more

popular as students began to be more actively integrated within schools to support this mainstreaming. The role included creating individual educational plans that would support learning goals and objectives for students with special needs and allow teachers to integrate students into their classrooms when it was deemed appropriate. Resource teachers, along with auxiliary support, assumed responsibility for these students at times when they were away from the regular classrooms. In addition to this, resource teachers provided direct instructional support, typically in a pull-out design, to struggling students working below grade level in various subject areas. Since the early 1990s, the title 'resource teacher' has been predominately adopted by most schools yet is still considered interchangeable with special education teacher. As a district, we have explored the possibility of using a universal language when referring to these instructional positions, but due to the diversity of our school sizes, cultures, and staffing complements, have yet to impose a single label for the position.

The current practice in PEI, and particularly the Eastern District, sees some schools naming both a special education teacher and a resource teacher and making a distinction between the two based on the students whose needs they support. Schools with a large number of students having significant special educational needs involving IEPs, EA support and outside agency planning will often designate a special education teacher in addition to a resource teacher who may be intended to oversee the support of students with less involved learning needs and challenges. To date, suggestions made regarding efforts to unify the language surrounding inclusive services in Prince Edward Island schools (MacKey, 2002) have not been formally acted upon. Discussions within the ESD Student Services Department to do so have led to concerns regarding aligning such a distinction with the non-categorical system within which it operates. Staffing does not

allow for every school to obtain one teacher to administer the needs of low needs and one to high needs students and nor does each school's population warrant this. Thoughts of creating partial positions reflecting the needs within each school have generated further concerns regarding the splintering of roles and less, rather than more, clarity and consistency.

#### 4.3.1.2 *Funding and allocation of resource teachers and resources*

Historically, resource teacher positions in Prince Edward Island were assigned outside the ratio of staffing allotment, meaning they were allocated above and beyond the instructional staffing allotment given each school. There is no formal documentation of events that led to the shift of resource teachers from having once been allocated outside the ratio, to the current within-ratio practice. In my discussions regarding the history of staffing within the district, reference has been made by longstanding board personnel as to the changes this process has endured, specifically with respect to resource teachers whose numbers increased significantly in the early 1980s when students with special needs were placed in regular classrooms. There was a period of time up to the late 1980s when any additional resource staffing, having been assigned to schools as determined by each school's individual needs, was tracked with yearly reports on the manner in which it was being used. According to those involved at the time, as needs changed and schools tailored the services to meet the demands in their schools, the staffing eventually fell into the ratio and any ensuing counts became muddied by the passing of time and changing of circumstances. There is no written documentation of this trend or the factors motivating it, however those involved attribute the expanding focus of additional programming as playing a part.

The emergence of Reading Recovery™, a literacy intervention targeted specifically at grade one students, exemplifies a situation that saw a new initiative absorbing portions of staffing that had been originally designated to resource programs. This program offers intensive literacy instruction for grade one students with reading and writing difficulties. In response to the favorable results in the eleven schools in which Reading Recovery™ was piloted on a half day basis in the previous year, the decision was made to extend the program throughout the District to the remaining twenty five schools with grade one populations. As noted in the 2003-2004 budget approval letter dated June 25, 2002, addressed to trustee chairperson, Robert Clow and sent by then Minister of Education, Jeff Lantz, the Department of Education provided 0.25 FTE of the required 0.5 FTE position needed for each of the newly included schools (see Appendix E). The additional funding was conditional on each school matching the remaining .25 FTE to complete the half time teaching position required. With discretion left to administrators as to where the additional 0.25 FTE would come from, the common response for those schools where the needs warranted offering the entire half time program, was to borrow from existing resource teacher time to fulfill the 0.5 staffing requirement. Some of the smaller schools with fewer students chose to operate the program on a less than half day basis. In many cases the resource teacher was the staff member identified for the training for the program and hence, it was his/her role that was fragmented.

Over the years similar effects have occurred with the introduction of various school-based alternative education projects and extensions to curriculum offerings and have further strained an already inadequate resource teacher allotment. The Department, the District and the schools are continually rotating limited funding to offer new and valuable programming to its students in

hopes of increasing learning outcomes and better serving the students. Frequently, as with the implementation of Reading Recovery™ and its early intervention, these initiatives, while highly effective, target small and specific populations of students but draw from the limited resources intended for the whole.

While the District's allotment to schools is reviewed annually, funding for resource teachers falls within the instructional staffing allocation process and does so based on enrollment figures rather than individual student needs. The current funding adheres to recommendations put forth in the *Staffing and Funding Program Review,* in which it is reported that 7% of the student population represents high needs students and a further estimated 25 – 30 % of the student population is thought to have more moderate special needs (Andrew, 2003).

The funding ratio as outlined in the Prince Edward Island Minister's Directive No. MD 2007-08, under Instructional Non-Supervisory Personnel, section3 (5), dictates allocation of special education and /or resource staff to boards as follows:

- To address core (high) needs:

  Incidence rate of 7.0 % of enrollment: 1 instructional position shall be assigned to boards for every 14 students as determined by the incidence rate.
- To address general (lower) needs: 1 instructional position shall be assigned to boards for every 500 students.

This category shall include consultant, coordinator and psychologist positions as are approved by the Minister, including all applicable allowances under section 6(1) (c). (Minister's Directive, 2007-08, p. 4)

The interpretation of the above directive identifies the enrollment based ratio by which boards are allocated staffing for resource positions from the Department of Education; however, when distributing these resources to schools, boards consider population, as well as the number and severity of needs. When funding permits, the boards have allocated additional support to a school with exceptionally high needs or removed support from a small school without significant needs. The inclusion of psychologist and consultant positions within this ratio, of which there are currently thirteen positions within the District's student services team within these categories, further lessens the actual number of resource teachers in schools.

There is little flexibility to adjust this ratio from year to year except in cases of extreme fluctuation of student needs. Some provinces such as neighboring New Brunswick make use of funding formulas that apply a specific dollar amount based on the age of the student, specific programming needs and the severity of needs (N. B. Department of Education, 2005). Under this model, schools are provided funding for exceptional students within five categories: special education per-pupil amount; special equipment amount; high needs amount; special incidence portion; and facilities amount. In doing so, schools are financed and subsequently staffed to accommodate the precise needs in each building rather than having a predetermined ratio applied which may or may not meet the specific needs in a building in any given year, as is done in Prince Edward Island.

#### 4.3.1.3 *Use of resource teacher allocation in schools*

Currently, the total of FTE resource positions within the Eastern School District for 2007-2008 is 53.38 (see Appendix F). This total refers to the actual FTE of instructional staffing

devoted to resource teachers, performing resource teacher duties within the schools, rather than that which may have been allocated to the Board by the Department of Education. In 2007 an attempt by the District's Student Services team was made to clarify inconsistency surrounding the actual number of resource teachers allocated and the number of teachers fulfilling the roles of resource within schools. Administrators were asked to submit statistics regarding the number of FTE positions and the number of teachers sharing those positions within their building. Only those teachers providing direct resource instruction to individuals or small groups of students, consultative support to staff in adapting and modifying, and/or assessment were included. The comparisons for each school of the actual numbers of instructional staff and the FTE devoted to the role of resource can be viewed in Table 4. This table shows that only 42% of schools (indicated by asterisks) devote staffing equal to or more than the advised ratio recommendation. All schools names have been replaced by labels reflecting grade levels and are referenced consistently as such throughout the study.

Table 4 Use and Allocation of Resource Staffing in ESD Schools

| School | Recommended FTE | Actual FTE | Difference | School | Recommended FTE | Actual FTE | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1CONS | .89 | .75 | .14 | 23CONS | 1.11 | 1.2 | *.09 |
| 2INT | 2.5 | 2.1 | .4 | 24SEN | 1.37 | 1 | .37 |
| 3SEN | 2.43 | 1.34 | 1.09 | 25CONS. | .26 | .5 | *.24 |
| 4CONS | .96 | .5 | .46 | 26ELEM | .93 | 1 | *.07 |
| 5ELEM | .5 | 1.0 | *.5 | 27ELEM | 1.77 | 1 | .77 |
| 6SEN | 3.91 | 2.34 | 1.57 | 28INT | 2.4 | 1.9 | .5 |
| 7SEN | 3.63 | 2.17 | 1.46 | 29INT | .75 | .75 | 0 |
| 8CONS | .78 | .5 | .28 | 30ELEM | 1.04 | 1 | .04 |
| 9CONS | .36 | .7 | *.34 | 31CONS | .43 | .65 | *.22 |
| 10INT | 2.8 | .92 | 1.88 | 32CONS | .39 | .38 | .01 |
| 11CONS | .71 | .35 | .36 | 33ELEM | 1.93 | 1.75 | .18 |
| 12ELEM | 1.87 | 1.7 | .17 | 34CONS | 1.17 | 1.28 | *.11 |
| 13CONS | .97 | .9 | .7 | 35SEN | 1.24 | 1.5 | *.26 |
| 14ELEM | .5 | .45 | .05 | 36CONS | 1.19 | 1.6 | *.41 |
| 15CONS | .31 | 1.15 | *.84 | 37ELEM | 1.18 | 2.55 | *1.37 |
| 16ELEM | 2.57 | 3.84 | 1.27* | 38INT | 3.6 | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| 17CONS | .5 | 0 | .5 | 39CONS | 1.09 | .7 | .39 |
| 18CONS | 1.07 | 1 | .07 | 40CONS | .74 | .85 | *.11 |
| 19ELEM | 1.06 | .45 | .61 | 41ELEM | .56 | .6 | *.04 |
| 20ELEM | 1.79 | 3 | *1.21 | 42ELEM. | 1.54 | 1.61 | *.07 |
| 21SEN | 1.95 | 1 | .95 | 43ELEM | 2.3 | 2.6 | *.3 |
| 22INT | 1.81 | 1 | .81 | | | | |

The District's current total of 53.38 FTE resource teachers is considerably less than what was suggested by Gar Andrew in his Department of Education commissioned Instructional Staffing Proposal of 2003 upon which the ratio in the Ministers Directive No. MD 2007-08 is based. This figure falls alarmingly short of the recommended 93.03 based on Andrew's formula as per 13,290 students (see Table 5). This inconsistency is in part attributed to the discretion awarded administrators in utilizing staff to meet the needs of the school as they see most appropriate and the inclusion of board-based consultants within this ratio.

Table 5 Discrepancy in Resource Teacher Ratios in ESD Schools

| | High Needs (7% incidence rate) | Low Needs | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recommended | 1 : 14 | 1:500 | _ |
| Based on ESD 13,290 enrollment | 66.45 FTE | 26.58 FTE | 93.03 FTE |
| Currently allocated within schools | Calculated as a total combined high and low needs | | 53.38 FTE |
| Discrepancy | Calculated as a total combined high and low needs | | 39.65 FTE |

*Note.* As per Recommendations Included in the Instructional Staffing Proposal (Andrew, 2003) applied to 2006-2007 enrollments of 13,290 students.

The manner in which a particular school's administrative team chooses to use their resource allotment is often in contrast to expectations the board may have when assessing that school's challenges with respect to meeting the special educational needs of the students in the building. To date however, there is no policy in place that prohibits this practice. The absence of accountability structures in the implementation and utilization of staff with respect to special education services in the ESD continues to emerge as a significant theme in which a lack of a cohesive plan fails to provide the necessary foundation. When the Annual Needs Profile (Appendix G) is reviewed and decisions are made regarding the auxiliary staffing required at a school, it is done so with an understanding of the resource support available to teachers at that school. When changes are then made to the FTE devoted to the role of resource teacher in that school, either to address scheduling issues or to reduce large class sizes, it diminishes the original designation to the point where the EA support put in place and the expectations on

teachers are no longer reasonable. Schools that may have had an original allotment of 2.5 resource teachers from which to provide support to teachers, and assess, program for and instruct students, will not have that if they have borrowed from that number to alleviate congestion in the regular class sizes or extended other programming by adding additional sections of other courses. In turn the EA support placed in that building, based on the original allotment, will be considerably less than the school feels it needs.

Some of our high schools have chosen to allocate less instructional time to resource services in the traditional sense and have instead, created additional sections of lower level courses in which students can receive group instruction in practical classes. The result of such actions is a gradual diminishing of individualized student remediation and consultative support to teachers. The flexibility given to school administrative teams to meet the needs in their building as they best see fit cannot work if the structure upon which allocation decisions are made is not an accurate reflection of how the resources are employed. There continues to be an apparent absence of a common, comprehensive plan that is well documented and monitored to support a vision in which students are educated and teachers are supported.

This tailoring of resource allocation and design within each school is a measure of desperation and administrators make such decisions in response to what they see as a lack of options. Pleas are continually made to the District's Student Services and Human Resources departments to increase resource allocations after they have been piece-mealed by other needs in the building and this has been echoed in reports reflecting educators' priorities (Andrew, 2003; MacKay, 2006; Mackey, 2002). Additional resources for students with special needs ranked in

the top four of the most frequently mentioned points in written submissions included in the Staffing and Funding Program Review completed for the PEI Department of Education. This concern was preceded by the need for additional funding, the need for additional staff and calls for class sizes to be reduced (Andrew, 2003). My experience has been that administrators are keenly aware of the residual effects of reducing the resource support within their schools and do so with great hesitation and only when feeling no other options are available to them. This practice will be further explored in the next section, with respect to current resource designs at the elementary, intermediate and senior high schools.

#### 4.3.1.4 *Current resource designs*

The various resource programs and services offered in the schools within the Eastern School District exist both by design and default. The District advocates the three pronged role for resource teachers that provides students with direct instruction in individual and small group settings, assessment where appropriate, and consultative support for teachers, parents and outside professionals in adapting and modifying for their students (PEI Department of Education, 2005a). There is an overall governance of the programs by the District's student services teams and the special education consultants whose roles are further explained under Board-based Supports, but ultimately, the decision rests in the hands of the schools as to the design of their resource programs. Each school has unique characteristics in terms of location, size, staff, and needs guiding them in the design they choose, but there is a tendency for schools of particular grade levels to share commonalities. My ongoing contact with schools throughout each year and our more in-depth communication as part of the annual staffing processes has allowed me to

have an understanding and awareness of each school's resource model and has formed the basis for my comments regarding the practices common to the particular grade levels. In each division of the District's schools there appear to be trends in the way this imbalance of needs and resources is realized and the manner in which the schools are attempting to cope with the challenge of meeting the needs of all students with the resource support they have available.

Data reflected in Table 6 represents the diversity throughout the Eastern School District schools as collected in 2007 by the District's Student Services team and reported by the administrator of each school. Included in this chart is the student population of each school, number of positions and staff members devoted to the role of resource teacher duties, as well as the types of Priority One and Two needs in each school and the means by which they report meeting these needs with personnel. While every attempt was made to accurately reflect the numbers and practices in each school, the District recognizes inaccuracies in the reporting of pull-out, in-class instruction and consultative services reported.

Table 6 Resource Teacher Utilization and Recommended Allotments in ESD Schools

| Name of school | Grades | Enrollments | FTE resource duties | # of persons Sharing FTE | Priority 1 | Priority 2 | Identified High Needs | Recommended (1:14)Support | Recommended (1:500) | Recommended combined FTE | Under / Over* Recommended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1CONS | 1-9 | 163 | .75 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 8 | .57 | .32 | .89 | .14 |
| 2INT | 7-9 | 355 | 2.1 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 25 | 1.79 | .71 | 2.5 | .4 |
| 3SEN | 10-12 | 820 | 1.34 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 11 | .79 | 1.64 | 2.43 | 1.09 |
| 4CONS | 1-8 | 127 | .5 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 10 | .71 | .25 | .96 | .46 |
| 5ELEM | 1-6 | 182 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | .14 | .36 | .5 | .5 * |
| 6SEN | 10-12 | 1102 | 2.34 | 3 | 8 | 16 | 24 | 1.71 | 2.2 | 3.91 | 1.57 |
| 7SEN | 10-12 | 960 | 2.17 | 4 | 7 | 17 | 24 | 1.71 | 1.92 | 3.63 | 1.46 |
| 8CONS | 1-9 | 140 | .5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 7 | .5 | .28 | .78 | .28 |
| 9CONS | 1-8 | 75 | .7 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | .21 | .15 | .36 | .34 * |
| 10INT | 7-9 | 578 | .92 | 3 | 7 | 16 | 23 | 1.64 | 1.16 | 2.8 | 1.88 |
| 11CONS. | 1-8 | 70 | .35 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | .57 | .14 | .71 | .36 |
| 12ELEM | 4-6 | 435 | 1.7 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 14 | 1.0 | .87 | 1.87 | .17 |
| 13ELEM | 1-9 | 198 | .9 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 8 | .57 | .4 | .97 | .7 |
| 14ELEM | 1-4 | 69 | .45 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | .36 | .14 | .5 | .05 |
| 15CONS | 1-8 | 85 | 1.15 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 2 | .14 | .17 | .31 | .84 * |
| 16ELEM | 1-6 | 639 | 3.84 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 18 | 1.29 | 1.28 | 2.57 | 1.27 |
| 17CONS | 1-9 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6 | .43 | .07 | .5 | .5 |
| 18CONS | 1-9 | 249 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 8 | .57 | .50 | 1.07 | .07 |
| 19ELEM | 1-6 | 243 | .45 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | .57 | .49 | 1.06 | .61 |
| 20ELEM | 1-6 | 360 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 1.07 | .72 | 1.79 | 1.21 * |
| 21SEN | 10-12 | 655 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 9 | .64 | 1.31 | 1.95 | .95 |
| 22INT | 7-9 | 335 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 16 | 1.14 | .67 | 1.81 | .81 |
| 23CONS | 1-8 | 161 | 1.2 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 11 | .79 | .32 | 1.11 | .09 * |
| 24SEN | 9-12 | 330 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 10 | .71 | .66 | 1.37 | .37 |
| 25CONS | 1-8 | 59 | .5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | .14 | .12 | .26 | .24 * |
| 26ELEM | 1-6 | 111 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 10 | .71 | .22 | .93 | .07 * |
| 27ELEM | 1-6 | 240 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 18 | 1.29 | .48 | 1.77 | .77 |
| 28INT | 7-9 | 555 | 1.9 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 18 | 1.29 | 1.11 | 2.4 | .5 |
| 29INT | 5-8 | 89 | .75 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 | .57 | .18 | .75 | Even |
| 30ELEM | 1-6 | 127 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 11 | .79 | .25 | 1.04 | .04 |
| 31CONS | 1-8 | 70 | .65 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | .29 | .14 | .43 | .22 * |
| 32CONS | 1-8 | 50 | .38 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | .29 | .1 | .39 | .01 |
| 33ELEM | 1-6 | 500 | 1.75 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 13 | .93 | 1 | 1.93 | .18 |
| 34CONS | 1-8 | 189 | 1.28 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 11 | .79 | .38 | 1.17 | .11 * |
| 35SEN | 9-12 | 267 | 1.5 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 10 | .71 | .53 | 1.24 | .26 * |
| 36CONS | 1-8 | 276 | 1.6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 9 | .64 | .55 | 1.19 | .41 * |
| 37ELEM | 1-6 | 342 | 2.55 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | .5 | .68 | 1.18 | 1.37 * |
| 38INT | 7-9 | 874 | 1.8 | 2 | 6 | 20 | 26 | 1.86 | 1.75 | 3.6 | 1.8 |
| 39CONS | 1-8 | 79 | .7 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 13 | .93 | .16 | 1.09 | .39 |
| 40CONS | 1-9 | 153 | .85 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 6 | .43 | .31 | .74 | .11 * |
| 41ELEM | 1-6 | 173 | .6 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | .21 | .35 | .56 | .04 * |
| 42ELEM | 1-6 | 374 | 1.61 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 11 | .79 | .75 | 1.54 | .07 * |
| 43ELEM | 1-3 | 398 | 2.6 | 4 | 14 | 7 | 21 | 1.5 | .8 | 2.3 | .3 * |
| undetermined placements | 1-12 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 8 | 0 | 8 | .57 | N/A | .57 | .57 |

This data was examined for patterns within elementary, intermediate, senior high, consolidated and small school populations of less than 150 students and is represented in Tables 6 to12. I will begin by looking at the split of schools where the amount of staffing allocated to the role of resource is equal to or above the recommended ratio as per the *Staffing and Funding Program Review* (Andrew, 2003) and those for whom it falls short. Trends with respect to, in particular, the levels and sizes and location of schools shall follow.

Based on an overall report of grades 1 to 12, only 18 of the 43 schools, representative of 41.9%, are operating with resource teacher positions within or above the recommended ratio (see Table 7). Of those schools, 17of the 18 schools are rurally located, 94% of which are either elementary or consolidated schools with students between grades 1 to 9. None of these schools are intermediate only populations and only one services high school students. The remaining 25 schools represent 58.1% of the District as operating at an average of 0.622 FTE below the recommended resource teacher ratio and only 4% of those are rurally located. Of these schools with less than the recommended resource teacher positions, 60% are elementary or consolidated schools and all but one of the high schools and intermediate schools in the District fall short of the recommended ratios of resource teacher staffing (see Table 8).

This data illustrates the majority of schools that have either redirected staffing in the building away from resource services or extended the role to include duties beyond the intended role of resource such as in the case of modified classes. The data further illustrates this occurrence as particularly prominent at the secondary levels as is discussed in the next section. There also appears to be a far greater number of the rural schools who are operating within or

equal to the recommended ratio as compared to schools in more highly populated areas. Traditionally, rural schools in PEI often have a higher incidence of split classes in which multiple grades are taught. While this study does not explore the correlation, it would be interesting in the future to investigate a connection between this trend and the possible multilevel instruction that is inherent in split-level classes and the subsequently reduced call for modified classes that could redirect staffing intended for resource.

Table 7 ESD Schools Using Resource Staffing Equal to or Above the Recommended Ratios Cited in the Staffing and Funding Program Review (Andrew, 2003).

| Name of school with resource staffing equal to or above the recommended ratio | Enrolment | Rural (R) | Recommended FTE | Actual FTE | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5ELEM | 182 | R | .5 | 1.0 | .5 |
| 9CONS | 75 | R | .36 | .7 | .34 |
| 15CONS | 85 | R | .31 | 1.15 | .84 |
| 16ELEM | 639 | | 2.57 | 3.84 | 1.27 |
| 20ELEM | 360 | | 1.79 | 3 | 1.21 |
| 23CONS | 161 | R | 1.11 | 1.2 | .09 |
| 25CONS | 59 | R | .26 | .5 | .24 |
| 26ELEM | 111 | | .93 | 1 | .07 |
| 29INT | 89 | R | .75 | .75 | 0 |
| 31CONS | 70 | R | .43 | .65 | .22 |
| 34CONS | 189 | | 1.17 | 1.28 | .11 |
| 35SEN | 267 | | 1.24 | 1.5 | .26 |
| 36CONS | 276 | R | 1.19 | 1.6 | .41 |
| 37ELEM | 342 | | 1.18 | 2.55 | 1.37 |
| 40CONS | 153 | R | .74 | .85 | .11 |
| 41ELEM | 173 | | .56 | .6 | .04 |
| 42ELEM | 374 | | 1.54 | 1.61 | .07 |
| 43ELEM | 398 | | 2.3 | 2.6 | .3 |

Table 8 ESD Schools Using Resource Staffing Less Than the Recommended Ratios Cited in the Staffing and Funding Program Review (Andrew, 2003).

| Name of school with Resource staffing less Than the recommended ratio | Enrolment | Rural (R) | Recommended FTE | Actual FTE | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1CONS | 163 | R | .89 | .75 | .14 |
| 2INT | 355 | | 2.5 | 2.1 | .4 |
| 3SEN | 820 | R | 2.43 | 1.34 | 1.09 |
| 4CONS | 127 | R | .96 | .5 | .46 |
| 6SEN | 1102 | | 3.91 | 2.34 | 1.57 |
| 7SEN | 960 | | 3.63 | 2.17 | 1.46 |
| 8CONS | 140 | R | .78 | .5 | .28 |
| 10INT | 578 | | 2.8 | .92 | 1.88 |
| 11CONS | 70 | R | .71 | .35 | .36 |
| 12ELEM | 435 | | 1.87 | 1.7 | .17 |
| 13CONS | 198 | R | .97 | .9 | .7 |
| 14ELEM | 69 | R | .5 | .45 | .05 |
| 17CONS | 33 | R | .5 | 0 | .5 |
| 18CONS | 249 | R | 1.07 | 1 | .07 |
| 19ELEM | 243 | | 1.06 | .45 | .61 |
| 21SEN | 655 | | 1.95 | 1 | .95 |
| 22INT | 335 | | 1.81 | 1 | .81 |
| 24SEN | 330 | R | 1.37 | 1 | .37 |
| 27ELEM | 240 | | 1.77 | 1 | .77 |
| 28INT | 555 | | 2.4 | 1.9 | .5 |
| 30ELEM | 127 | | 1.04 | 1 | .04 |
| 32CONS | 50 | R | .39 | .38 | .01 |
| 33ELEM | 500 | | 1.93 | 1.75 | .18 |
| 38INT | 874 | | 3.6 | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| 39CONS | 79 | R | 1.09 | .7 | .39 |

Looking at the data representative of small schools in the ESD with populations of less than 150 students (see Table 9) reveals no specific trends other than the role of resource being shared between fewer staff members than in schools with greater numbers of students. The smallest school in the District, 17CON, which houses only 33 students in grades 1 to 8, is also the only school to have no staffing devoted to the position of resource teacher. Only 15% of the

small schools share the role of resource teacher between more than two staff members and 62% of the schools have only one person in this role. This, as well as only an average 0.26 FTE difference between the recommended ratios of resource staffing (Andrews, 2003) as compared to the actual staff devoted to resource in the schools, may be reflective of the fact that smaller schools have fewer staff and a smaller resource allotment need.

Table 9 Resource Teacher Utilization and Recommended Allotments in Small Schools (less than150 students)

| Name of school | Grades | Enrollments | FTE – resource duties | # of persons Sharing FTE | Priority 1 | Priority 2 | Total Identified High Needs | Recommended (1:14)Support | Recommended (1:500) | Recommended combined FTE | Under Over* Recommended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4CONS | 1-8 | 127 | .5 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 10 | .71 | .25 | .96 | .46 |
| 8CONS | 1-9 | 140 | .5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 7 | .5 | .28 | .78 | .28 |
| 9CONS | 1-8 | 75 | .7 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | .21 | .15 | .36 | .34 * |
| 14ELEM | 1-4 | 69 | .45 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | .36 | .14 | .5 | .05 |
| 15CONS | 1-8 | 85 | 1.15 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 2 | .14 | .17 | .31 | .84 * |
| 17CONS | 1-9 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6 | .43 | .07 | .5 | .5 |
| 25CONS | 1-8 | 59 | .5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | .14 | .12 | .26 | .24 * |
| 26ELEM | 1-6 | 111 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 10 | .71 | .22 | .93 | .07 * |
| 29INT | 5-8 | 89 | .75 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 | .57 | .18 | .75 | Even |
| 30ELEM | 1-6 | 127 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 11 | .79 | .25 | 1.04 | .04 |
| 31CONS | 1-8 | 70 | .65 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | .29 | .14 | .43 | .22 * |
| 32CONS | 1-8 | 50 | .38 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | .29 | .1 | .39 | .01 |
| 39CONS | 1-8 | 79 | .7 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 13 | .93 | .16 | 1.09 | .39 |

The breakdown of resource teacher staffing in the District's consolidated schools is shown in Table 10. There is very little difference between the findings in this group of schools to those of the small schools. The average difference in the recommended number of resource positions as

compared to the actual number of such positions in the consolidated schools is 0.31 FTE and is only slightly higher than for the small schools. In 76% of consolidated schools the role of resource teacher is shared by no more than two staff members. The remaining 34% distributes the role between as many as 5 teachers.

Table 10 Resource Teacher Utilization and Recommended Allotments in Consolidated Schools

| Name of School | Grades | Enrollments | FTE – resource duties | # of persons Sharing FTE | Priority 1 | Priority 2 | Total Identified High Needs | Recommended (1:14)Support | Recommended (1:500) | Recommended combined FTE | Under / Over* Recommended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1CONS | 1-9 | 163 | .75 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 8 | .57 | .32 | .89 | .14 |
| 4CONS | 1-8 | 127 | .5 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 10 | .71 | .25 | .96 | .46 |
| 8CONS | 1-9 | 140 | .5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 7 | .5 | .28 | .78 | .28 |
| 9CONS | 1-8 | 75 | .7 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | .21 | .15 | .36 | .34 * |
| 11CONS | 1-8 | 70 | .35 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | .57 | .14 | .71 | .36 |
| 13CONS | 1-9 | 198 | .9 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 8 | .57 | .4 | .97 | .7 |
| 15CONS | 1-8 | 85 | 1.15 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 2 | .14 | .17 | .31 | .84 * |
| 17CONS | 1-9 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6 | .43 | .07 | .5 | .5 |
| 18CONS | 1-9 | 249 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 8 | .57 | .50 | 1.07 | .07 |
| 23CONS | 1-8 | 161 | 1.2 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 11 | .79 | .32 | 1.11 | .09 * |
| 25CONS | 1-8 | 59 | .5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | .14 | .12 | .26 | .24 * |
| 31CONS | 1-8 | 70 | .65 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | .29 | .14 | .43 | .22 * |
| 32CONS | 1-8 | 50 | .38 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | .29 | .1 | .39 | .01 |
| 34CONS | 1-8 | 189 | 1.28 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 11 | .79 | .38 | 1.17 | .11 * |
| 36CONS | 1-8 | 276 | 1.6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 9 | .64 | .55 | 1.19 | .41 * |
| 39CONS | 1-8 | 79 | .7 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 13 | .93 | .16 | 1.09 | .39 |
| 40CONS | 1-9 | 153 | .85 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 6 | .43 | .31 | .74 | .11 * |

*Elementary* – Thirty-one of the total forty-three schools in the Eastern School District house students in the elementary level. The service models assumed in these schools vary depending on the student population, specific populations, and skill level of instructional staff within each school, but typically the role of the resource teacher is based on the recommended three prong

descriptor: 1/3 assessment, 1/3 consultative and 1/3 direct instruction as described in section 4.2.1.1, *Role of the resource teacher.* As explained, within each school and level of schools there is flexibility allowing for individual interpretation of the design of resource that is invited by the existence of guidelines rather than policy to direct it. The assessment and instruction is scheduled throughout the day but often, as is consistent with much of the literature both locally and globally, time restraints lead to consultation being left until the end of the day and perhaps being overlooked entirely (York-Barr et al., 2005). Reviews consistently cite time to prepare, consult, plan and meet as among the biggest challenges and most influential on the success of inclusive practices (French, 1998; Horne, 2001; & York-Barr et al., 2005).

In my discussions with many elementary schools regarding staffing and programming it has become apparent that in many cases there has been a shift away from small group or individual pull-out programs as the core of the school's resource model. Many administrators and student services teams are recognizing the value in extending the reach of resource services by making use of resource supports within the regular classroom setting. It is thought that in the regular classroom a greater number of students may benefit and collaboration between classroom teachers and resource teachers may occur more readily (York-Barr et al., 2005). While it remains an integral part of resource, schools in the District have expanded to include resource teachers providing direct instruction within classrooms, in a team approach with teachers. In having lessened the demand for the pull-out model, many elementary schools have experienced the advantages of freeing the resource teacher during the day to support classroom teachers as they program for students and to provide assessment of student needs.

The role of the resource teacher at the elementary level is in many instances, challenged by the tendency for the role to be shared by a number of teachers within one school. In some situations resource positions may be divided by one person being responsible for specific grades and in others it is divided according to periods of time throughout the day. A teacher may be assigned to a regular classroom for a portion of the day and to the role of resource for blocks of time when his or her class are attending specialty classes. Based on data gathered in the District regarding the utilization of resource time, elementary level schools, at an average of 3.15 people, have the highest average of staff positions sharing in the role of resource teacher (see Table 11). This data also shows that 54% of the elementary schools allocate resource staffing time equal to or above that which is recommended in the *Staffing and Funding Program Review* (Andrew, 2003) with an average 0.58 FTE above the recommended ratio. These figures illustrate the value that elementary schools are placing on resource services and their efforts to make it a priority. It is perhaps due to the splintering of resource assignments that these schools are able to commit to such a level of service. The elementary schools operating above recommended ratios average 4.14 persons sharing the role within their schools. However, it has been my experience when working with the schools and their resource staff that when this splintering occurs it is difficult to maintain the three pronged model and also difficult to support focused, ongoing training for the resource teacher. The data shows a greater amount of support being available in these instances but the quality and cohesiveness of the service may be compromised.

Table 11 Resource Teacher Utilization and Recommended Allotments in Elementary Schools

| Name of School | Grades | Enrolments | FTE – resource Duties | # of persons Sharing FTE | Priority 1 | Priority 2 | Total Identified High Needs | Recommended (1:14)Support | Recommended (1:500) | Recommended combined FTE | Under Over* Recommended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5ELEM | 1-6 | 182 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | .14 | .36 | .5 | .5 8 |
| 14ELEM | 1-4 | 69 | .45 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | .36 | .14 | .5 | .05 |
| 16ELEM | 1-6 | 639 | 3.84 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 18 | 1.29 | 1.28 | 2.57 | 1.27 * |
| 19ELEM | 1-6 | 243 | .45 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | .57 | .49 | 1.06 | .61 |
| 20ELEM | 1-6 | 360 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 1.07 | .72 | 1.79 | 1.21 * |
| 26ELEM | 1-6 | 111 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 10 | .71 | .22 | .93 | .07 * |
| 27ELEM | 1-6 | 240 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 18 | 1.29 | .48 | 1.77 | .77 |
| 30ELEM | 1-6 | 127 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 11 | .79 | .25 | 1.04 | .04 |
| 33ELEM | 1-6 | 500 | 1.75 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 13 | .93 | 1 | 1.93 | .18 |
| 37ELEM | 1-6 | 342 | 2.55 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | .5 | .68 | 1.18 | 1.37 * |
| 41ELEM | 1-6 | 173 | .6 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | .21 | .35 | .56 | .04 * |
| 42ELEM | 1-6 | 374 | 1.61 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 11 | .79 | .75 | 1.54 | .07 * |
| 43ELEM | 1-3 | 398 | 2.6 | 4 | 14 | 7 | 21 | 1.5 | .8 | 2.3 | .3* |

*Intermediate* - The intermediate level schools, of which the District includes five, varying in size from three to eight hundred students, experience their own struggles with resource models and the challenges of meeting individual learning needs of students. Factors such as complex scheduling to meet the average seven periods per day and escalating social concerns and potential for disengagement, coupled with the increasingly apparent learning gaps caused by low reading levels, are particularly challenging to middle or intermediate level schools (Frattura & Capper, 2006). Evident within the Student Services notes dated February 9, 2007, are concerns regarding challenges at the intermediate schools as voiced by administrators of the District's middle schools (see Appendix H). Some intermediate schools have turned to creating modified classes when they have been unsuccessful in meeting the needs in large, diverse classes of learners. There has been the challenge in that intermediate school student in inclusive classrooms shun assistance that may make them stand out from their peers.

Table 12 illustrates the utilization and allocation trends within the District's intermediate schools. All five of the intermediate schools are currently devoting less than the *Staffing and Funding Program Review* (Andrew, 2003) recommends for resource services within their schools with an average of 1.08 FTE less than the suggested amounts. One school is significantly below recommended levels with 1.88 FTE fewer positions than advised. This practice of redirecting resource teacher time to teach lower level classes further limits the direct instruction and assessment for students and consultative support to staff that should be the framework of the resource service within a school. This phenomenon is mirrored in findings of Frattura and Capper (2006) in which they identify this practice of intermediate schools forming lower level, sub-skill groupings as contrary to a preventative model of integrated comprehensive service. Frattura and Capper assert that greater and longer lasting systemic efficacy comes from resource teachers providing in class support to heterogeneous groupings so that student needs are met, and more importantly, teacher capacity is enhanced.

Table 12 Resource Teacher Utilization and Recommended Allotments in Intermediate Schools

| Name of school | Grades | Enrollments | FTE – resource duties | # of persons Sharing FTE | Priority 1 | Priority 2 | Total Identified High Needs | Recommended (1:14)Support | Recommended (1:500) | Recommended combined FTE | Under / Over Recommended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2INT | 7-9 | 355 | 2.1 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 25 | 1.79 | .71 | 2.5 | .4 |
| 10INT | 7-9 | 578 | .92 | 3 | 7 | 16 | 23 | 1.64 | 1.16 | 2.8 | 1.88 |
| 22INT | 7-9 | 335 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 16 | 1.14 | .67 | 1.81 | .81 |
| 28INT | 7-9 | 555 | 1.9 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 18 | 1.29 | 1.11 | 2.4 | .5 |
| 38INT | 7-9 | 874 | 1.8 | 2 | 6 | 20 | 26 | 1.86 | 1.75 | 3.6 | 1.8 |

In some instances within the Eastern School District these schools have grouped students to provide lower level materials with little attention to prior identification of instructional levels, little to no documentation of curriculum planning and only minimal individual instructional support. Some students, following extensive assessment both at the school and District level, are placed in modified classes. However, others are grouped into the modified classrooms based solely on their level of achievement or level of disengagement with very little assessment of learning needs having been done prior to the change in class placement. Because modifications are intended to be done on an individual basis as directed from the findings of formal or informal assessment, there is no approved modified curriculum available to teachers that is appropriate for entire classes. In most instances these classes are smaller in number but offer a teacher-made watered down version of the curriculum in a generic one size fits all approach rather than being tailored to the individual strengths and challenges of the students. This approach may, by offering less demanding content and a less pressing pace, offer students more success in work completion but it does not address the needs of students with respect to advancing their levels and strengthening their areas of weakness. Frequently these are students who, once in high school, will register for practical and general level programming and should experience success at that level but who, in the interim years, are significantly below the prescribed grade level curriculum.

The schools in these cases are recognizing the importance of student success and the formative time frame of the adolescent learner's years, and wanting to create successful environments, less threatening to students, who in turn, will be more likely to remain engaged in school. In doing so, however, they are abandoning assessment and planning per individual needs,

and grouping students as a whole. In other situations the schools have, following pre-assessment, temporarily grouped struggling students for specific subject areas until improvements have been made. Periodic grouping of students for skill specific learning experiences with attention to a governing ethos of individual student value may be useful in some circumstances and not in direct conflict to inclusive philosophies (Wedell, 2005). However, the groupings of these students typically last into high school, where it impacts the academic stream available to them.

*Senior High* - The role of the resource teacher at the high school level is impacted by variables unique to secondary level schools and the programming offered. The most evident difference is the shift in focus toward the accumulation of credits. Social promotion and individualizing curriculum within age appropriate groupings is no longer the practice. Teachers at this level are more likely to be trained in subject areas and are commonly thought to be more focused on teaching the content than the students and therefore, less inclined to individually tailor the content without strong encouragement and support. My experience in working within a District high school setting as a resource teacher, a classroom teacher, and in consultation with schools at the senior high level, has been that with appropriate support in planning, collaboration and gathering of materials from an available resource teacher, most high school teachers are open to the idea of modifying courses but unlikely to do so without continual prompting from administration and from resource staff. In all Prince Edward Island high schools, resource is a course credit offered to all students requiring additional support to address learning barriers. The label of resource teacher is often associated with the teacher delivering that curriculum and may include blanket units on social skills, time management organizational skills and study skills. Other schools offer this credit based on students wishing to address individual skill weaknesses

and/or deliver the course using small group instruction delivered by the resource teacher. The term special education teacher is most often reserved for the teacher coordinating the programming and support for more significantly challenged students. There is a considerable range of resource models within the high schools that again is attributable to the lack of policy mandating a consistent approach and the subsequent interpretation of guidelines as they fit within each school's dynamics.

In the high schools in the ESD, programming of core subjects is offered within a leveled system based on ability and career paths. Students who may have struggled with the prescribed curriculum and pace are afforded options in high school through practical, general and academic level programs. The practical and general levels, while not formally defined, are intended to offer alternatives to the university preparatory stream upon which the academic level is based (PEI Department of Education, 2006a). Many students who may have required modifications in particular subject areas in their earlier years are then capable of meeting the less advanced outcomes identified for the general and practical courses. As a result, teachers are less frequently called upon to modify for individual students. Courses however, for which there is only one stream offered, such as native studies, grade eleven writing courses or grade ten internet technology and communications class, do more individualized planning. It is assumed a student who may be unable to handle the content of a grade eleven academic math class will instead be enrolled in a grade ten general or perhaps practical level math class.

The decision of how to allocate resource staff within a school is at the discretion of that school's administrative team and is influenced by all the needs of the school as a whole. In many

of the District's high schools where a high number of significant special educational needs are present, there may be a special education teacher position designated for the planning and programming of these students and if available staffing allows, a second individual charged with a more traditional resource teacher role. This role includes supporting students and staff in modifying course work, completing assessments, providing remediative instruction and assisting with adaptations.

The impact of class composition and course scheduling at the high school level often interferes with resource service when administrators find themselves needing to borrow portions of the allotted resource teaching time to offer additional sections of other courses to lessen class sizes. As shown in Table 13, representing the allocation and utilization of resource staffing at the senior high level, all but one of the high schools are operating with significantly less than the *Staffing and Funding Program Review* (Andrew, 2003) recommends, averaging 1.09 FTE short of what is advised for resource services in schools. These figures reflect the above mentioned trend of redirecting resource services which result in teachers, who may be willing to modify programs, being left to do so without the support they need.

Table 13 Resource Teacher Utilization and Recommended Allotments in Senior High Schools

| Name of school | Grades | Enrollments | FTE – resource duties | # of persons Sharing FTE | Priority 1 | Priority 2 | Total Identified High Needs | Recommended (1:14)Support | Recommended (1:500) | Recommended combined FTE | Under / Over* Recommended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3SEN | 10-12 | 820 | 1.34 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 11 | .79 | 1.64 | 2.43 | 1.09 |
| 6SEN | 10-12 | 1102 | 2.34 | 3 | 8 | 16 | 24 | 1.71 | 2.2 | 3.91 | 1.57 |
| 7SEN | 10-12 | 960 | 2.17 | 4 | 7 | 17 | 24 | 1.71 | 1.92 | 3.63 | 1.46 |
| 21SEN | 10-12 | 655 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 9 | .64 | 1.31 | 1.95 | .95 |
| 24SEN | 9-12 | 330 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 10 | .71 | .66 | 1.37 | .37 |
| 35SEN | 9-12 | 267 | 1.5 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 10 | .71 | .53 | 1.24 | *.26 |

#### 4.3.1.5 *Qualifications of resource teachers*

Up until the past year, qualifications of resource teachers had been left to the discretion of administrators, the result of which saw a range from skilled, highly trained teachers in the area of resource to those without official training but a distinct interest in the needs of struggling students. The lack of policy dictating a level of specialist training for staff in resource teacher positions is consistent with the absence of an overall lack of guiding policy surrounding special education within the District. A frequent inability to find trained resource teachers and a desire to keep regular classroom teachers on staff during times of declining enrollments and reductions in total staff numbers by moving them into available resource positions, has contributed to this phenomenon. At times resource positions have been splintered to include teachers looking for a lighter or less demanding role with which to end their careers and the duties have fallen to those inadequately trained.

In 2006 the District initiated a guideline for skills that specified any newly hired resource teachers would have a degree in Special Education or a B. Ed. and the equivalent in resource training such as an Inclusive Education Certificate or a Diploma in Special Education (see Appendix H). The guidelines included an expectation that existing resource teachers would work toward accumulating the required expertise. As yet there has been no financial assistance provided by either the ESD or the PEI Department of Education to support teachers in this endeavor.

With no policy in place to govern against it, a common occurrence has been for administrators to divide a resource position(s) among several staff members or to shave portions

from the original allotment to meet other programming needs in the building. A school may have a trained resource teacher but also have several teachers who are not appropriately skilled sharing portions of that role.

The number of resource teachers for each school can be seen in Appendix F and demonstrates the vast number of teachers and students they support in each school, often times doing so while balancing additional subject or course work that has been added to their role in the building. The resource teacher position in any given school includes consultative support to teachers, assessment, and direct instruction. Within each of these roles are many duties as outlined in Table 14. Situations exist in which resource teacher staffing has been redirected elsewhere in the building, and/or additional duties such as teaching low level classes or additional sections of classes for which there is a heavy demand, have been added to the resource teacher's schedule. This has resulted in many of the duties identified here being neglected or falling to staff who are less trained in this area. Similarly if resource staff are expected to spend the majority of their time delivering direct instruction to students, a large portion of the duties may be unmet. In Table 14, direct instruction represents the smallest percentage of the duties falling within the ideal position of resource support. However, my experience in working with the resource teachers and in visiting the schools find it to be the most dominating as an expected duty for most resource teachers.

Table 14 Roles and Responsibilities of Resource Teachers (*Individual educational planning (IEP) standards and guidelines,* 2005; *Minister's Directive no. MD 2007-08: Special Education,* 2001; *Teachers and support staff working together standards and* guidelines, 2005

| |
|---|
| Consultation<br>• Providing support to classroom teachers in the development, implementation and review of adaptations and modifications for students<br>• Assisting in the development, writing, implementation and review of individual educational plans(IEP)<br>• Initiating and maintaining communication with parents/guardians regarding individualized planning implementation and review<br>• Coordinating and chairing IEP meetings<br>• Contacting and acting as a liaison between outside agencies and service providers<br>• Lead role and often chair position on school based student services team<br>• Providing direction to and collaborating with auxiliary support persons such as EAs, YSWs, SAs, and WPAs.<br>• Along with the classroom teacher, monitoring written communication between auxiliary personnel and parent/guardians<br>• Direct involvement in the referral and implementation of tutor services within the school<br>• Developing and monitoring schedules for auxiliary personnel<br>• Coordinating transitional planning in preparation for students moving schools or exiting the system<br>• Overseeing the administration of medications and medical monitoring or procedures provided to students<br>• Coordinating additional transportation arrangements for students with mobility concerns or travel assistance needs.<br>• Assisting the school's Annual Needs Assessment Profile |
| Assessment<br>• Performing informal, curriculum-based and where training permits, approved standardized assessments on students<br>• Making referrals for Board-based or outside agency assessments stemming from preliminary informal diagnostic assessments<br>• Coordinating, attending and or chairing meetings with parents and IEP team members regarding the results of formal assessments<br>• Supporting teachers in the development of strategies to support assessment findings |
| Direct Instruction<br>• Providing direct instruction to individual students or groups of students for periods of time throughout the day through either in class or pull out support to assist in addressing identified individual learning goals and objectives |

### 4.3.2 *Board-based Support Structures*

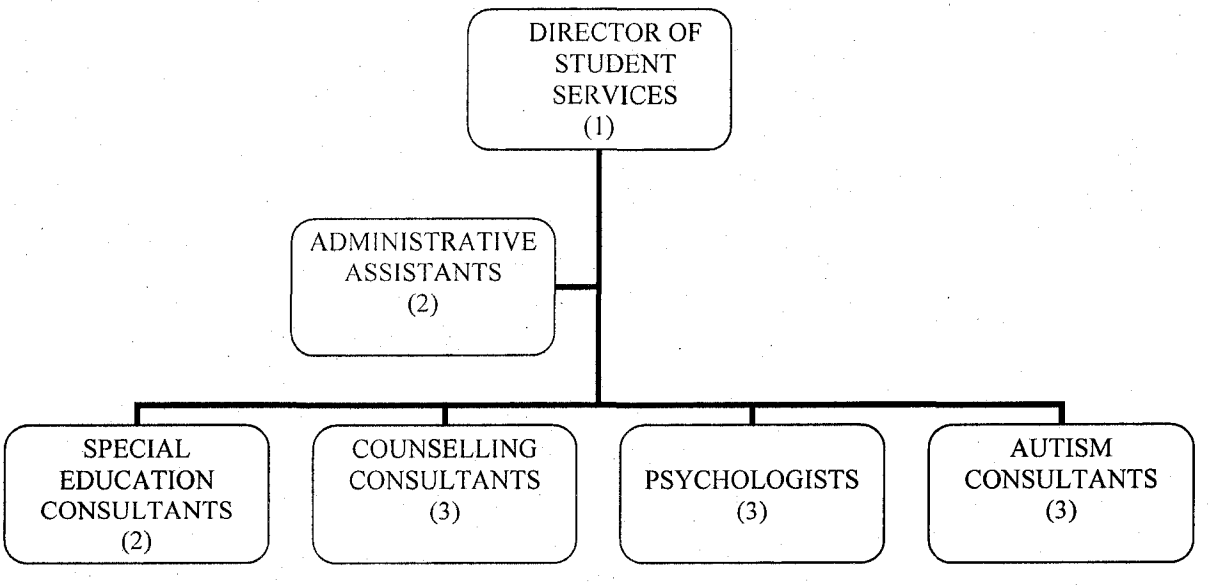
The coordination of the District's Student Services Team is managed by a single director, who is responsible for all special education and psychological services and consultants (see Figure 4). The director provides supervision and leadership to district consultants as well as providing support to school administrators and teachers. The director is also responsible for the student services budgets, program initiatives and professional development.

The consultants that comprise the District's Student Services Team act as contributing members of that team and are directly involved in many of student cases. The two special education consultants include among their duties, their direct involvement in case meetings for the more than 200 students of high needs in the district. In 2002, as part of the Provincial Autism Strategy, two positions of Autism Consultants were introduced to the board and later increased to three highly-trained behavior specialists. These individuals support teachers in the design and implementation of programs for students with Autism. There are 60 autistic students in the District whose programs are highly specific and require close monitoring and frequent adjustment. The growing number of identified cases of Autism, coupled with the complexity of programming, has quickly proven to be beyond what can be responsibly delivered by only three consultants. The current practice sees the programming and materials designed by consultants for the teachers and followed closely with direct and consultative support. Ideally consultants would develop and introduce the programs with teachers. Then gradually they reduce the support as the teachers become more familiar with the programming for that student. However, fading District support so that consultants continue to play an advisory role and participate in case conferences and planning, but remove themselves as program coordinator and provider, has been

a challenge. Families and teaching staff have quickly become dependent on the high level of District involvement.

The assessment component of an intervention model upon which inclusive programming is based is critical to its success. An increase in recent years of two full time positions has resulted in a total of three registered psychologists for the District's Student Services Team. These psychologists are available to perform educational/psychological assessments on students; provide feedback to parents and teachers in best meeting the learning needs of these students; and lead in crisis response by conducting threat assessments and counseling to staff and students.

Figure 4 Eastern School District Student Services Team



The sheer number of students requiring and receiving resource support makes it unreasonable to assess all students on the profile. Ideally, students are first assessed at the school level with a battery of informal assessments and when deemed necessary, referred on for more formal assessment by Board-based psychologists. The informal assessments done by resource teachers at the schools prior to referrals are key to expediting the process. Much of the preliminary data compiled by the resource teacher is relevant and time saving for the psychologist when a formal assessment begins. Many times resource teachers are able to identify strengths and weaknesses at the school level and apply intervention that alleviates the concerns and minimizes or eliminates the need for a Board-based referral. It is imperative that a resource teacher in the school be available to devote time to student assessment. Schools who divert time away from resource staffing or allow direct instruction to monopolize a resource teacher's time often find themselves unable to fulfill this role.

Currently, the wait for new referrals for formal assessment by board-based psychologists is approximately 2.25 years based on an average 52 completed assessments per year. This wait is a direct result of too few staff doing the assessments and continues to be a challenge with new referrals being made each year. There have on occasion been times when assessments have been contracted out to private psychologists in efforts to reduce the accumulation of referrals. Such instances are rare given the economic strains, as additional funding within the Student Services budget to do so is rarely available. The recommended ratio of school psychologists per students is 1: 1000 (Andrew, 2003); a ratio the district is no where close to with its 3 psychologists servicing 13290 students at a ratio of 1: 4430. According to this ratio the Eastern School

Districts is currently operating with approximately 9.29 fewer psychologists than the recommended ratio for the 13, 290 students it serves.

Counseling consultants are also available from the District to support school-based counselors and figure prominently in many of the support teams of students with special needs within our schools. They, along with the psychologists, are assigned to schools to assist with crisis response support, threat assessment and ongoing management of behavioral referrals, and are key to the supports provided to schools by the District.

### 4.3.3 *Interagency Collaboration*

Interagency collaboration and services delivery for students with special needs is an integral component to effective inclusive education (Frattura & Capper, 2006). Such collaboration, when in place, serves as the equalizer for required levels of expertise, communication, and fundability. Without it, teachers are finding themselves borrowing expertise and being expected to perform beyond their professional training and doing so within an already full schedule. The provision of professional support services available to Prince Edward Island students within the school day is a critical issue amongst educators in terms of the funding responsibilities of the government sectors involved (Frattura & Capper, 2006; Kavale& Forness, 2000; Kurial, 2005). Over the past few years there has been a reduction in integrated service practices available to Island students within their school day and in some cases, supports have been eliminated entirely. This trend is particularly evident with respect to Speech Pathology services for students in our schools. Figures reflected in the 2006-2007 *Department of*

*Education's Student Services Annual School Profile* show that more than 42% of students identified as needing SLP service are not receiving it (PEI Department of Education, 2006b).

#### 4.3.3.1 *Speech pathology services*

Prior to 2003, students in Prince Edward Island in need of speech language pathology (SLP) services were able to access support services within their school day. Specialists would provide direct support to students as well as consultation for teachers on a regular basis depending on the severity of the student's need.

In 2003, the Eastern School District was informed by Speech Pathology Services of a reduction of services available to children in the Eastern School District. The amended mandate was limited to grades one and two for consult and assessment and grades 3 to 6 for annual assessment and program recommendations only. The recommendations and ongoing support was to be the responsibility of the parent or teachers as case determined.

In September, 2005, Queens Region Speech Pathology Services issued notice to principals that extensive caseloads had proven beyond their capacity and that service would be further adjusted to provide a more comprehensive service but to fewer students for the 2005-2006 year (see Appendix J). The Department of Education was not supportive of this decision and several meetings were held to identify and further protect the needs of the students from disruption of speech support. As of 2007, the service available to students has been limited to grades 1 to 6 with priority given to grades 1 and 2 and consultative services available for grades 3 to 6 if students have high needs and time allows. Students beyond grade six are ineligible for any in

school service at all with the exception of students in grades 7 to12 who are using Assistive Augmentative Communication and who are flagged as priority cases. These students, who may be referred by parents or teachers, are typically those who were supported by SLPs in their earlier grades.

This exclusion of students with significant and severe speech language needs from the mandate caused great upset among parents, educators and SLPs, as reflected in the discussion forums conducted by the *PEI Task Force on Student Achievement Students*, 2005. In accordance with Recommendation 9: Integrated Services for Children and Youth, under which the need for improved access to SLP services was noted, the Department has filled three of a planned four SLP position addition to its student service continuum (Kurial, 2005). According to discussions between Departments and Board-based consultants, delivery of the service will support a Language and Literacy model linked closely to a three tier Response to Intervention design. Class-based, small group and individual intervention will be approached in phases during which the classroom teachers and resource teachers will partner with the SLPs to provide language development support to students identified as not meeting literacy benchmarks. It has yet to be determined whether the SLPs from the Department of Health will continue to provide the traditional speech based programming to students in schools as before.

For those who are ineligible to receive support or qualifying for consultative services only, there will remain concern. For some students the development of communication skills is critical to independent functioning and success. Without trained professional involvement, less qualified albeit well meaning professionals may employ practices that are counter productive and

potentially further impede the communication development for students. This consultative model is further challenged by the limited time available to classroom and resource teachers to meet regarding students and their programming plans and goals (French, 1999; Horne, 2001; York-Barr et al., 2005).

#### 4.3.3.2 *Physiotherapy and occupational therapy services*

Equally critical to the programming needs of many students within the district who have special needs are the services of both physiotherapists (PT) and occupational therapists (OT). Twenty years ago, as was my experience as a special education teacher, when students with complex physical needs were being introduced to the public school system, OT and PT services were available to support the students' success within the new environment. As more and more students have come to be educated in inclusive settings within the public schools, the demand for OT and PT consultation has also risen (BC Physiotherapists, 2006). It is however, no longer common practice to have these professionals working directly with the schools and contributing first hand in case conferences and collaborating within the schools.

In 2002, a review of OT/PT services revealing increased demand for service, subsequent lengthy and unmanageable wait lists and limited staffing, led to a reallocation of service to Island youth (History of Occupational Therapy, 2003). Department policy did not require a public document to detail this change. Instead, following discussions with OT/PT management and associated risk directors, a notice of revision to service was sent to affected service recipients including then ESD Director of Student Services, Mary Lou Morrison (see Appendix K). In some regions of Prince Edward Island there are OT services available within schools under the

umbrella of community services. For example, in Kings County, which falls within the Eastern School District, a 0.6 OT position includes students of school age. Queens County, which encompasses the bulk of the ESD schools, has only one full time OT, and due to the volume of needs is not able to provide service to school age students under this community support provision. While the Department of Health supports OT and PT services to those who need it in PEI, it is now considered beyond their mandate to do so in the school system as part of the school day. Referrals to the Department of Health continue to be made by parents and resource teachers to identify the need for school age services and are encouraged by the service providers to do this as a means of highlighting the need for increased collaborative services.

As is the case with speech services, OT and PT professionals are constantly advocating for increased service for PEI students and are gravely aware of the diminishing skills and risks associated with an absence of service for Island youth. In many cases information regarding specific movement training and or limitations and muscular and strength development and therapy reaches school professionals via communication through parents and guardians of the students. There are opportunities in some cases for resource teachers to attend medical case conferences hosted out of the building but the information chain in such instances is lengthened further by relying on the teacher to communicate the information to the educational assistant who is frequently the immediate care giver. A 2006 survey conducted in British Columbia involving 117 physiotherapists working in pediatrics highlighted significant concerns regarding similar changes in service provision implemented in that province in 1996. Concerns included 67% of respondents citing an increase in the number of complex and fragile clients and 66% noting a reduction in frequency of treatment (BC Physiotherapists, 2006).

#### 4.3.3.3 *APSEA & HEAR – support to blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing students*

The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) continues to offer significant levels of support to students in the district who are blind and visually impaired as well as those who are deaf and hard of hearing. Itinerant teachers providing a range of support from yearly consults to daily specialized teaching, equipment provision and maintenance, work closely with teachers and administrators to ensure these students are receiving appropriate adaptations, modifications and supplementary programming to meet their learning needs. Based out of Halifax, Nova Scotia, students are afforded the opportunity to attend short term programs varying in length for specific curriculum learning needs. The collaborative planning that is afforded to students via these highly trained professionals is reflective of a multidisciplinary team effectively meeting student needs. A more in-depth exploration of this model will follow in the next section in which alternatives to full inclusion are discussed.

Prince Edward Island's representation of APSEA falls under the student support services within the Department of Education, as do services to students who are deaf and hard of hearing and are supported through Hearing Education Auditory Resource (HEAR). HEAR is not inter-provincial, but does follow a service provision model similar to APSEA and accesses some of the same programs. Provincially HEAR provides four full time itinerant teachers funded by the PEI Department of Education who work closely with teachers, students and their families to assist in ensuring students with hearing loss and impairments receive the necessary adaptations, programming and technical aids to meet their individual learning needs.

### 4.4 *Alternatives to Full Inclusion*

For some students within the Eastern School District who experience periods of difficulty in school, there is the opportunity to attend out of school alternative education sites. Typically these students are functioning below grade level and present behaviors including school avoidance, drug and alcohol dependency and emotional factors that have been unsuccessfully resolved within the regular school. Such programs offer students time away from their peers and the classroom environment where the difficulties have occurred. The opportunity to attend an alternative education placement is conditional on continued base school involvement and a planned return to a placement within the regular classroom. The programming is adjusted to be more success-focused and introspective and includes experiential based learning curriculum as well as continued focus on the regular curriculum subject areas. There are currently only four such sites that are out of school sites, each housing between six and ten students at a given time; three of those serve students in intermediate and senior high school and one meets the needs of students ranging in age from grade three to six.

At present the above alternative education sites within the Eastern District are not designed to meet the needs of students with special needs. The nature of the auxiliary programming is geared toward socially mature students and dependent on an ability to interact within a group experiencing similar challenges. There is, however, a critical need for those students who do have special needs and who are experiencing a lack of success in their inclusive in-school placement to be offered a similar option. Within the ESD there are several cases each year involving students whose behavior or programming needs are so extreme they may have

exceeded the expertise and offerings of the regular school and who require a more secure and specialized setting.

The issue of placement options for students with special needs in the Eastern School District is one that has been closely protected by its commitment to inclusion for all students. At present in Prince Edward Island, there are no alternatives to integrated public school settings for students with special educational needs. There are varying levels of mainstreaming within integrated schools but there are no separate and distinct sites designed specifically to meet the needs of identified groups of students. Ideally, students are expected to attend the school to which they are geographically zoned and a program that suits that student is designed as his/ her needs dictate. As reflected in the literature, support for an inclusive philosophy can at times override the specific learning and environmental needs of some students. The adherence to integrative placement based solely on the argument of human rights can be counter productive when the recommendations of parents and professionals are ignored in favor of inclusion for all (Croll & Moses, 2000). The reality of that situation in the Eastern District is that the right of the student to receive schooling in the same school as their neighborhood peers has usurped any exploration into schooling options that may be less community based but perhaps better geared to meet specific programming needs.

There are some of our smaller schools with only a few students with significant needs and challenges for whom the sheer numbers do not allow for the level for facility and programming options that may be made available to them in a school where there are higher numbers of needs. Approximately 54% (see Tables 7 and 8) of the schools located in remote areas of the ESD have

less feasible access to supplementary programming options such as swimming in community facilities or visits to stimulatory centers such as the Snoezelen Room. However, many community facilities are located in Charlottetown and able to be accessed by students attending in those zones. Availability of funding plays a large role in this, with access and transportation costs being left to schools' individual operational budgets without supplement to support specific services for students with special needs. Schools that are geographically remote from facilities such as community pools and stimulatory centers are further impacted by the additional travel costs and travel time required. The District has simply been unable to fund equal specialized programming in all of its 43 schools and has, in many situations, had to settle for make-do arrangements such as improvised sensory activities within the school and costly, if any, access to supplementary programming offered in another region.

The facility requirements, skilled professionals and supplementary programming that are called for in many of the more complex cases are beyond what the province is able to provide in schools and beyond what schools can manage on the budget provided, regardless of the centrality of the school. As a result there are times when goals and objectives identified as critical to developing the necessary skills go unaddressed and little to no progress is made. In other provinces there are assessment and treatment centers that offer assessment and program consultation to individuals with special needs and liaise with schools regarding programming and student needs. The JaneWay Center in Newfoundland has in the past accommodated some Island students and corresponded with our teaching professionals regarding the recommendations and follow-up planning but this luxury has lessened as the demand for the service has increased to allow fewer out of province consults. Current access to this service is now based on a combined

severity of need, available funding for the individual within the province's Disability Support criteria and at times, the tenacity of those supporting the individual.

Students who in the past may have received such support and consultation, remain included in the public system but may not be receiving the learning supports they need. Board-based consultants, administrative and school-based student services teams meet regularly regarding these cases where required specialized programming is unavailable. Often, the student is simply unable to cope given his or her circumstances and inclusion is not proving advantageous. The student, while integrated with his or her peers, is not progressing and in fact begins to regress and in some instances has prolonged disruptions in attendance.

The understanding that inclusion will mean all students are educated within the public school to which they are zoned has in several instances failed to recognize that for some highly unique students this can result in a reverse exclusion when the mainstream setting proves unsuccessful for them (Allen, 2006; Zigmond, 2003). There are several cases when students are simply unable to meet with success within an inclusive design and their period of attendance at school is suspended, either at the request of the parent, the school, the district or the team as a whole. When this occurs it is always with the hope that the student will return to school when it is deemed safe and appropriate. At times adjustments can be made for a relatively quick return. Other times, students have been out of school for lengthy periods of up to one or more years. In these instances the full inclusion model upon which the Eastern School District and PEI's Department of Education is based fails to serve its students. At present there is no distinct policy in place regarding the continued placement of special needs students. Each case is reviewed on

an individual basis in conjunction with the *Caring Places to Learn/Safe School Environment Policy*, as developed in 1999 by the District (1999a). This policy identifies risks and categorizes them within a grid of possible behaviors. Appropriate responses, intended to protect the victim and the accused, are laid out for professionals to use as a guide for their response in each case. The policy acknowledges the "use of professional judgment whereby staff members recognize a variety of student abilities and needs, and provide programs, teaching strategies and the use of prevention and intervention methods appropriate to the varying circumstances and individual student needs" (Eastern School District, 1999a, p.2). It does not, however, elaborate on response options or provide direction in cases involving students with complicating variables such as significant cognitive limitations or lack of speech. Recognition of these variables and amendments within the policy to accommodate extenuating circumstances would greatly assist administrators in determining appropriate courses of action when dealing with questions of safe inclusion, but are dependent on the existence of other placement options being available as temporary alternatives.

For students who exhibit behaviors and needs exceeding the present capacities of the current educational system, the effect is far greater reaching than the school placement issue from which it begins. These families are often faced with care giving dilemmas that cause enormous strain to an already stressful family circumstance. My involvement in such cases has seen parents who have been forced to leave their employment and family relations being taxed to the point of break down. Financial demands associated with having a child with extensive special needs are not able to withstand the additional burden of full day supervision providers even if there were such a service within the area.

Prince Edward Island's Provincial Disability Support Program funds such amenities as supervisory care, transportation, respite and social programming for individuals meeting disability criteria for the hours outside of the school day. When school ceases to be an option for these people, the criteria do not change. Families are left with funding the care arrangements for the hours the student would have been attending school. IEP teams and, specifically, district special education consultants lobby in conjunction with parents for review of these cases and a reconsideration of their circumstances. These letters and acts of support lead to compassionate dialogue but sharing or overlapping of funding parameters are extremely rare across government sectors. The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA, 2004) services provided students in the Atlantic Provinces was born out of a shared funding arrangement between Departments of Education in four provinces and exemplifies what can be done in a partnered arrangement in which collaboration extends beyond philosophy and into financial commitment. This program shall be further explored under section 4.3.1 later in this chapter. Similar arrangements within or between provinces in which the sharing transcends into multiple government sectors such as health and education are yet to come. Many regions within Canada and beyond are pursuing workable shared funding models but as yet, the most common models remain those in which the Department of Education allocates funding to schools to purchase services from other sectors (Baker, 2007; Frattura & Capper, 2006; MacKay, 2006).

One such recent case in which a child and his family have been greatly compromised by the lack of placement options available in the ESD involved an intermediate-aged student diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome. This student was affected by extreme raging and inappropriate sexual behaviors resulting in unsafe and demeaning circumstances for him,

students and staff. The team, including the parents, agreed it would be in his best interest not to attend school for a period of time and the family was left with seeking out and funding a care giving arrangement for that student for a period of three months and following that, afternoons for the three months that followed. That student has returned to school but only due to the collaborative work that was done by Health and Education representatives and under careful reminder by Health that such efforts were beyond their boundaries of service provision which prohibits services during the school day. It was stressed that funding support during the hours of the typical school day would not be a pattern to be repeated but rather an exception to the rule to be avoided in the future and viewed as a one time intervention. Should that student experience another period of upset where it is decided he is unable to be attending school, there remains no alternative for him and his family.

Students left without placement options for periods of time, and schools presented with meeting the needs of students at the risk of compromising the safety and dignity of their students and staff, are not satisfactory alternatives. The recent New Brunswick review of inclusive education mentions several cases in which the rights and responsibilities of students and educators have come before the courts following incidents that have challenged the parameters of safe schools (MacKay, 2006). Several cases cited within this report address the issue of students with exceptionalities who may act out and/or present behaviors that risk their own and others' safety. Students' violent and aggressive behaviors, found to stem from disabilities, particularly those involving communication deficits, are often recognized as attempting to convey a need or escape discomfort. The protection of freedom of expression in Canada includes acts of extreme aggression but not at the expense of the safety of teachers, staff and other

students for whom proactive measures to avoid risk have been taken (MacKay, 2006). The question remains whether in some extreme cases, the proactive measures of utilizing a quiet room and training staff in de-escalation and restraint techniques is enough.

In the case of Bonnah (Litigation Guardian of) v. Ottawa-Carelton District School Board, a student was removed from an inclusive setting and returned to a special class environment following concerns regarding the student's tendency to demonstrate violent and aggressive outbursts. In this case the judge supported the principal's right to exclude a student based on a determined risk to the safety and well-being of those sharing the environment. This ruling was found to be applicable regardless of the student's exceptionality (Nolan, Trepanier & Ellerker, 2005). If this measure is to be considered proactive rather than punitive, a call for a well-planned alternative placement is needed. Students seen as posing extreme risk must not be held in a holding status within remote parts of schools or worse, left without any option at all.

The 2005 Task Force on Student Achievement Report, generated as part of the Excellence in Education initiative spearheaded by the Department of Education, includes a recommendation specifically addressing the need for "a joint effort by various provincial government branches to act as a unified body to identify the supplementary needs required to serve children, youth and their families, and to co-ordinate the delivery of those services" (Kurial, 2005, p. 31). An interagency committee including ministerial representation from each sector was struck in response to this recommendation and has been exploring possible initiatives. As yet, no changes are in place that would provide options to the students requiring alternate placements and no public reports have been issued detailing their plans.

### 4.4.1 *Short Term Placement Options*

An exception to this lack of alternative placement options for Prince Edward Island students with significant special needs are the short term placement programs offered by the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) to students who are blind or visually impaired and/or deaf and hard of hearing. This inter-provincial agency, in operation since 1975, was born out of a joint funding agreement from Departments of Education from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland (APSEA, 2003). Operational costs are supported by the member provinces in addition to private contributions. Students serviced by APSEA have the same inclusive rights and needs as all students and therefore are educated primarily within the mainstreamed philosophy on which our district operates. In addition to this, they are recognized as having "unique learning needs associated with skills required to accommodate or compensate for the effect of vision loss on learning and development" (APSEA, 2003, p. 5).

In addition to direct instructional support, consultative services, library and transcription services for students using Braille and assessment and prescriptive programming, APSEA provides a variety of short term programs designed to offer 'expanded core curriculum' to these students. The Short Term Programs are intended to complement rather than replace public school placement and include orientation and mobility training, life skills, and transitional planning programs. Programs are offered both as 1 to 5 month placements and 1 to 2 week placements depending on the skills being taught. Students' regular curriculum is maintained and the itinerant teacher works as the liaison between the classroom teachers and the short term placement teachers.

This model is very focused and effective in developing skills that students will require to function independently in future learning environments and in life in general. Comments gathered as part of forums for concerns and best practices as part of the New Brunswick inclusive education review included only applause for the APSEA and suggested it as a model worth considering elsewhere and in response to other areas of need (MacKay, 2006). The APSEA model is extremely expensive and in Prince Edward Island, currently operates with 3.0 full time itinerants servicing 48 students, a ratio much lower than the approximate 54 FTE resource teachers currently servicing over 260 high level and an additional unidentified number of low level needs estimated to be in the ESD. APSEA's operational costs are shared by the Departments of Education representing the four provinces it serves, as well as significant trust fund donations and on going fund raising efforts.

A less skill specific placement option available to students in the province of Ontario is based on an advisory process made by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). This committee responds to referrals made by parents, guardians and/or administration and determines the student's eligibility as exceptional, his/her learning needs and appropriate program recommendations. Students whose needs cannot be entirely met in the regular classroom are advised placement based on a continuum of placement options. Within this practice the level of optimal integration is maintained to the highest, mutually beneficial degree possible but allowances range to include alternatives for students requiring a removed placement. These options include:

- A regular class with indirect support where the student is placed in the regular class for the entire day, and the teacher receives specialized consultative services.

- A regular class with resource assistance where the student is placed in a regular class for most or all of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from a qualified special education teacher.
- A regular class with withdrawal assistance where the student is placed in a regular class and receives instruction outside the classroom, for less than 50 percent of the school day, from a qualified special education teacher.
- A special education class with partial integration where the student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class but integrated with the regular class for at least one instructional period daily.
- A full time special education class where the student teacher ratio conforms to regulation 298, for the entire school day. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004, p.21)

Ratios in regulation 298 are based on the nature of exceptionalities of the students in the class and range from maximum 6 to 16 students in a special education class (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008). Under these guidelines Ontario has been able to continue to provide placement for students unable to meet with success in the regular classroom.

This process in which referral and criterion-based assessment guide decisions regarding the needs and services for the 290,756 students, or 13.7% identified as having special needs, is supported by a provincial total of 189.1 FTE psychologists and 11,472.4 FTE resource/ special needs teachers (Ontario Ministry of Education, October Board Report, 2005). Prince Edward Island's enrolment of 20,367, and 15.9% of students receiving special needs services, shares similar features of this process but is far less categorically based (PEI Department of Education.

2006b). As previously discussed, many ESD students are waiting for assessments and referrals are continually being made to support improved learning circumstances for students. Typically, however, the needs, programming and placement decisions are made by the collaboration of administration and resource-based representatives and Board-based consultants during the Annual Needs meetings as described in section 4.1.1. Consultation and determination happen in a far less structured and formal manner than in Ontario and decisions are non-categorically-based. There are advantages to this in that philosophically, students are equally entitled to services but realistically there are limited resources and an informal ranking of needs does occur. In contrast to Ontario, placement options are rarely discussed due to the district's commitment to educating students within their zoned schools and an absence of other available options.

Special schools within Ontario are referred to as Provincial and Demonstration Schools and cater to a variety of student needs through day and residential design. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education, provincial schools are intended for students with severe learning disabilities, whose conditions may include but are not primarily the result of other disorders. There are currently schools meeting the needs of students diagnosed as blind and/or deaf, severely learning disabled and/or severely affected with ADHD, and or severe social/emotional conditions. No provincial special school's enrollment exceeds forty students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000). Although there is not a reason given for imposing maximum enrolments, much of the research on the continued value of special schools suggests that keeping enrolments small enhances both the sense of focused, quality , individualized instruction as well as reducing the stigma of a 'come one, come all' depository (Ainscow, 2007; Low, 2007; Wing, 2007). This alternative has allowed all students a publicly funded placement option with individualized

programming, trained staff and realistic class sizes. The focus is on a provision of a service rather than the removal of an option. There is an identified process by which parents can appeal an IPRC advised placement and reconsideration of the recommendation will ensue. The aforementioned cases in PEI's Eastern District where students are in need of alternative placement options may fall outside of this group of individuals but such placements represent the acknowledgement of Ontario's education system to maintain an interpretation of inclusive education that is not tied to regular school integration.

Most of the country has ended the practice of maintaining special schools. However, as noted in the UK literature, similar schools, many referred to as trail blazing schools, are emerging to meet the needs of students with severe cognitive, emotional and behavioral challenges (Warnock, 2007). Much like the Ontario practice, students are assessed and issued a statement, entitling them to an option to attend a special school placement. Warnock suggests there is a lack of consistency around the criteria determining a statement and significant variation in the number of statements issued by the various educational authorities. Such fluctuations result in many parents who desire special school placements being denied this opportunity. Warnock applauds the efforts and the educational opportunities being offered in trail blazing schools. According to Warnock, each of the 12 existing schools is designed to accommodate students with a particular nature of disability such as cognitive, behavioral or Autism, and incorporate an outward education practice to extend the knowledge base of teachers in the regular, neighboring schools. The trailblazing schools often send their teachers out to the regular schools to assist in planning and professional development and invite exchanges with regular school teachers to broaden their hands-on practice, implementation and observation of these

approaches. Warnock proposes that within education there will be a surge in the number of trailblazing schools in Britain supporting the many students whose needs she feels are undeniably best met in focused, specialized settings (Warnock, 2007).

This acknowledgement that educational systems offer many students a rich and quality education in diverse formats and levels of inclusivity has caused these jurisdictions to expand their options and to return to student needs rather than student rights as the building platform for their systems.

### 4.5 *Conclusion*

The model upon which the Eastern School District delivers services to its students with special needs is one firmly based on an inclusive philosophy. Supported in this belief by the Prince Edward Island Department of Education, the District strives to operate within a system reflective of that philosophy. Staff at the District and school levels have embraced the belief that all students have a right to a meaningful learning placement and that a diverse school culture is potentially beneficial to all (PEI Department of Education, 2007-08). The flaws in the District's delivery model are due not to a lack of philosophical support for the concept of inclusion and the rights of students to be educated in peer-based settings, but to the lack of resource and policy support for the model itself. The absence of a comprehensive, organizational framework to guide the District in finding the financial resources to respond adequately to the escalating needs and monies to support its implementation have emerged as ever-present themes throughout this study.

Teachers and administrators have indicated frustration and exhaustion with the demands placed on them in what they view as ill-supported and overly demanding class compositions for which they feel inadequately prepared (Horne, 2001; PEITF, 2007). These concerns have fostered a number of trends further hindering the success of the model and placing compounding stress on the current design. Leading these trends are: 1. resource teachers who are extended beyond what they can responsibly manage in their role of supporting students and staff; 2. administrators who juggle the challenges within their buildings by borrowing staffing from resource and further depleting an already scant allotment and; 3. teachers who are expressing doubts in their ability in competently addressing the needs of their students and hence, doubting the practicality of inclusion. At the root of these concerns are the lack of accountability and consistency that exist in a system absent of an appropriately supported foundation.

The inconsistency between schools in how resources are used and how students' needs are met are in part due to the diversity in the schools themselves. Schools within the Eastern School District range in populations from 33 to 1102 students and therefore, staffing and programming options are respectively diverse. The tendency to tailor practices to meet the individual characteristics of the schools is further challenged by the lack of governing district policies.

There are several guidelines in place regarding special education practices to which administrators are encouraged to refer but there are very few actual policies to which they are held accountable. Administrators are given freedom within their buildings to allot support where they see it best meeting the needs of the whole school and in some cases they redirect resource support to other areas in the building. In other cases, administrators have grouped students into

lower level classes in efforts to maximize the services available to students. Also occurring is the splintering of resource assignments within schools where up to nine teachers of varying levels of expertise share the role of resource teacher. These efforts, while well intended, have resulted in jeopardizing the available resource services to students and teachers.

The District is in most cases aware of these practices and strongly discourages them when addressing staffing issues with administrators and when meeting with school based teams at the annual profile meetings. Efforts are made to encourage alternate ways to problem solve in schools and ways of increasing support to students and staff by protecting the role and design of resource. Schools are advised to adhere to the intended role of the resource teacher in allowing sufficient time for student and staff to be supported in direct instruction, consultation and assessment. Without policy to mandate against this practice however, there are only district and Department guidelines to support this message (PEI Department of Education, 2007-08; PEI Department of Education, 2005a; PEI Department of Education, 2005b).

Ultimately, the model even when implemented within the guidelines, requires significant support and collaboration to be effective. The investment of additional resources that are integral to an effective inclusive environment are lacking within the province of Prince Edward Island and the result is a less than adequate model of service. Short term solutions that merely shuffle existing resources are not enough to resolve the issues. The high level needs of students in areas such as speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy are necessary yet they often occur separately, if at all, from the educational system. The current situation in which teachers are relying on yearly consultation, if at all, to provide program direction in areas in which they

have no skills or training, is far from collaborative, nor does it offer students the individualized programming to which they are entitled. For teachers, this means additional expectations for them beyond what they have time or skill to deliver. The result challenges their faith in the inclusive process as a whole, as can be heard in the following quote gathered as part of the PEITF Economic Review (2007) on special educational services in response to class composition demands: "There is a feeling that I am left to my own resources to handle the wide range of challenges. I wonder if we should rethink inclusion" (p. 8).

Mainstreaming in the 198's brought with it welcomed savings but effective inclusive systems have been shown to be more than a mere integration of students, and are highly dependent on available, sustainable funding (Frattura & Capper, 2006). Prince Edward Island, and specifically the Eastern School District, must not for want of appropriate funding be driven to abandoning inclusion, or reverting to a traditional model of segregation. We must support inclusive education with the resources and training it needs to be successful in order to best represent the philosophy to which our educators adhere.

## Chapter Five - Discussion & Recommendations

In the previous chapter, data was analyzed and responded to within three categories of special services: modifying curriculum, support structures and alternative options. In this chapter, to synthesize the findings from this study I have focused on three central themes as they have appeared within all three categories and their effects on the operations of the Eastern School District: 1.increased demands placed on teachers, 2. Lack of consistency, and 3. Lack of collaboration among professionals and departments. Findings within this study include those regarding practices of inclusive education both on a global level as well as those specific to identified cases and geographical areas. No one school population, nor one locale will mirror the dynamics of another and no one practice, deemed effective in one area, can be assumed to be transferable to another with any assurance of similar results. There is neither a package nor a prescriptive design available to apply to the ESD; instead an analytical look at the practices, the gaps and comparison to other jurisdictions and research, is a meaningful way to determine the challenges and strengths we experience.

In response to the original research questions of this study, the current model of special education delivery of the Eastern School District is found to be embedded within an acceptance of its inclusive philosophy and the rights of children to be educated in a placement of meaningful equality. Teachers have been shown to believe in the concepts of inclusion and the rights of students to be placed in educational settings that allow them to belong to and participate in their communities (Horne, 2001). The tenets upon which the province of Prince Edward Island bases its decisions to place all students in integrated learning environments are harmonious with those voiced elsewhere and are a result of the gradual recognition of both the human rights of all persons, disabled and otherwise, as well as an acknowledgement of research asserting superior

academic outcomes and social benefits stemming from heterogeneous placements (Kennedy 2001; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walter-Thomas, 2002).

Similar to virtually all educational authorities, Prince Edward Island's Eastern School District struggles to meet the ever increasing learning needs of all our children. Expanding curricula, increased technology expenses and operational costs for schools, boards and their governing departments place ongoing strain on government budgets that are struggling to maintain high quality educational programs. Further impacting this are the increased demands placed on teachers due to complex class compositions and also the severity of the needs of individual students that has come with an inclusive design.

*Theme 1. Increased demands placed on teachers*

As noted, teachers claim there simply are not enough operational or instructional hours to do justice to the inclusive education expectation that all children will be programmed for according to their levels of learning. Many teachers have voiced concerns regarding the diversity of needs within the classrooms they teach. The reality of meeting these needs given their own limited training and the lack of ongoing support are suggested to impact teacher stress levels and the success of the class as a whole (Horne, 2001; MacKay, 2006; Mackey, 2002). As a result, there are groups of students who are falling through the cracks in our system and for whom changes must be made if they are to experience success in public schooling. The Eastern School District continues, five years following Gar Andrew's Report on the Proposed Instructional Staffing Model, to operate on student/teacher ratios in the area of resource support that are 39.65 FTE or 42.6% (see Appendix I) less than the recommended ratios.

*Theme 2. Lack of consistency*

There is a strong belief among researchers that effective and sustainable inclusion is based on a clearly defined vision, a commitment to its cause, and the support structure that surrounds it (West, Ainscow& Stanford, 2005). The Eastern School District has been found to possess pieces of that puzzle but lacks the consistency within its schools and accountability surrounding implemented resources to see it to operational success. When administrators make decisions leading to resource positions being shared or compromised to alleviate other strains within the building, teachers are consequently lacking in the support they need to meet the diverse classroom needs. Key to the success of an inclusive model is the commitment to a collaborative foundation. This commitment must ensure inclusive practices and resources are protected from other issues and pressures within schools. Alleviating large class sizes by redirecting resource support for other duties within buildings, minimizing the amount of resource teacher time devoted to supporting classroom teachers' efforts individualize programming, and leaving the teaching of the most challenging students to staff who lack the necessary expertise, exemplify practices within schools that are counter productive in their efforts to meet the needs of the students they serve. One cannot add more hours to the day and we cannot level the playing field of the students in our classes but we can ensure that the support intended for teachers and students is not compromised in the name of solving other organizational dilemmas. Redirecting resources to alleviate large class sizes or to teach low level classes may be viewed as having a more immediate impact on a school's operation but in the long term dramatically diminishes its ability to provide valuable resource support to its students and staff.

*Theme 3. Lack of collaboration among professionals and departments*

A traditional degree in education may not provide one with all of the expertise needed to plan and support this trend alone; nor might a graduate degree in exceptionalities. To offer students the individually-based programming to which they are entitled, the design of a successful inclusive delivery system must be collaborative and must incorporate skill and expertise from a team of trained professionals. Speech language pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, interpreters, mental health and medical professionals all must collaborate, sharing knowledge and services for students whose needs require a high degree of individualized planning.

Frattura and Capper (2006) look at Integrated Comprehensive Service Delivery as an approach placing the collaborative provision of whatever service and expertise is deemed necessary for an individual student's success in school as being the key to successful inclusion and the separating factor that frees students from the need for segregated schooling models. This service is effective only when done in a proactive and preventative manner that is embraced by a truly collaborative team of educators and professionals. Long lasting and impacting changes in structural design are called for and must include a merging of funding sources and policies that are congruent with reallocation of resources and implementation practices within schools (Frattura and Capper, 2006).

There is no magic solution that can be applied to solve this District's or any other school board's dilemma regarding inclusive education services. There are, however, efforts to learn from models of best practice elsewhere and to try alternative approaches to achieve a system that

is more accountable, collaborative and sustainable. The answer is not simply increasing the number of EAs (Andrew, 2003; MacKay, 2006; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2001). Instead, research shows the answer is in developing highly qualified, well supported classroom teachers to work along side available resource teachers and trained professionals, including EAs, to support students in meeting meaningful programming goals in a meaningful and mutually beneficial placement (Croll & Moses, 2000; Frattura & Capper, 2006; Lindsay, 2007). Researchers agree that a systemic reform is in order to manage the strains that impact the success of inclusive systems (Wedell, 2005). The funding, staffing, allocation and utilization of resources needs to stem from a unified commitment by all involved to provide high quality, meaningful programming for all students. This commitment must be woven as the central thread throughout a comprehensive policy documenting realistic expectations for teachers, administrators, and Board-based support persons.

*Recommendations*

It was never my intention to provide a prescriptive program that would resolve the issues of the District, but to explore what the issues are and what direction the District might take to resolve them. In keeping with the findings, and upon review of the District's current practices, the following recommendations are suggested and grouped into the categories pertaining to 1) individualized instruction in the classroom, 2) support structures and available expertise to support teachers and students, and 3) alternative placement options within the continuum of supports available to students. In keeping with the district's focus, the majority of these recommendations identify actions directed at the district level but recognize the need for support from the Department of Education, as well as other governmental departments.

### 5.1 *Delivering Modified Curriculum in the Inclusive Classroom*

Throughout the literature, teachers are continually expressing a frustration with the lack of expertise they feel in their ability to adequately meet their students' diverse learning needs (Edmunds, 1998; French, 1998; Horne, 2001; Wedell, 2005; York-Barr et al., 2005). This lack of self-efficacy, reported by teachers as stemming from a lack of time, an over-abundance of preparation involved in creating and delivering individualized curricula, and a lack of training, is threatening the longevity of inclusion within schools. Teachers are reporting having doubts that an inclusive system is manageable and report feeling that trying to spread themselves too thinly is impacting the quality of their teaching (York-Barr et al., 2005; Horne, 2001; Wedell, 2005). Resources for teachers are equally as important as resource for students and must be planned for at the Department and District level.

**Recommendation #1**

**Establish positions of modification mentors at the elementary, intermediate, and senior high school levels to support teachers in the design and implementation of modifications for students functioning below grade level in their classrooms.**

Modification mentors would assist teachers in the development and implementation of modifications for those students working considerably below grade level. Adding to the support personnel available to assist classroom teachers would alleviate the pressures on resource teachers and the significant role they play in schools (Frattura & Capper, 2006; York-Barr et al., 2005). Teachers, having identified this as a time consuming process for which they feel unprepared (Horne, 2001; PEITF, 2007), would have access to increased support through the addition of such positions. Working with mentors to create student centered modifications and assisting teachers in improving their skills in this area would strengthen teacher capacity to do so

in an efficient and continued manner. Adaptations, which refer to "measures taken to support students who, with changes in instructional processes, assessment and strategies are able to meet the prescribed grade level curriculum" (PEI Department of Education, 2005a, p. 9), would not be the primary focus of this support. However, such strategies are often included in modification plans and such strategies may be included when applicable. Mentor positions would be board-based and fulfill a teacher leader role in which they would maintain ongoing contact with several schools and follow students who function below grade level, throughout their elementary and senior years as needed. Included within this role would be the continued education and advocacy for instructional staff and administration regarding the need for proper implementation, documentation and review of modifications for students functioning considerably below grade level who may not receive direct planning support as a prioritized student.

**Recommendation #2**

**Identify a percentage of discretionary days allotted to schools to facilitate teachers meeting with modification mentors to plan for and review individualized programming efforts for students in their classrooms.**

In response to the shortage of time that is continually noted by teachers as being one of the main challenges they face in attempting to meet the individual needs of students (Edmunds, 1998; French, 1998; Horne, 2001; Wedell, 2005; York-Barr et al., 2005), time must be allotted for this collaboration to happen. Modification mentors require direct consultation time with teachers as well as observation of classroom settings and this time must be spread throughout the school days to make optimal use of mentors as well as to allow the teachers to do the planning required. In too many cases this planning is reserved for the end of the day, resulting in a lack of focus and completion (Frattura & Capper, 2006; York-Barr et al., 2005). There must be

recognition of the value of this planning time and an allocation of substitute funding provided to schools to allow for it to happen regularly and within the school day.

**Recommendation #3**

**Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers in the area of individualized planning for students.**

Training opportunities must be made available to classroom teachers to increase the skills and confidence with which they approach individualizing instruction for their students. The district promotes the classroom teacher as the primary contact person for students as outlined in the PEI Department of Education, *Individual Educational Planning (IEP) Standards and Guidelines* (2005a) and therefore must assist in efforts to educate teachers regarding the exceptionalities, programming and curriculum required to meet student needs. Training opportunities must extend beyond an introduction to exceptionalities. They must include addressing concrete strategies and follow-up implementation support as well as opportunities to be kept abreast of current trends relevant to inclusive teaching practices. Such training must include: continued collaboration with post secondary institutions to ensure pre-service teachers are appropriately prepared; ongoing professional development by District-based and Department- based support persons; access to conferences; and opportunities to share best practices.

**Recommendation #4**

**Establish the following criteria to govern the implementation of like-group classes within intermediate and senior high schools.**

- **individual goals and objectives must be established for each student**
- **students must be integrated with the mainstream for an appropriate portion of their instructional day**

- **pre and post assessment must be completed and placement must be reviewed throughout the year**
- **a re-entry plan must be in place for gradual return to the mainstream classroom.**

Research has demonstrated that a greater benefit is gained from focusing efforts on increasing teacher capacity for meeting diverse needs rather than grouping students to accommodate lower learning levels (Frattura & Capper, 2006). Periodic grouping of students for skill-specific learning experiences with attention to a governing philosophy emphasizing individual student value may be useful in some circumstances and not in direct conflict to inclusive philosophies (Wedell, 2005). However, mainstreaming must continue to be the preferred placement method and cases where class composition is based on like-skill groupings, above or below grade or course level, must adhere to guidelines ensuring individual needs.

### 5.2 *Support Structures and Available Expertise*

**Recommendation #5**

**Establish clear descriptions of the role of the resource teacher and the expectation of how that role will be implemented in schools. Description must include areas of assessment, consultation and direct instruction and must specifically exclude the teaching of entire classes unrelated to small group remediation and/or individualized support.**

Calls for clarity in terminology regarding inclusive education extend to the need for the concise identification of roles and responsibilities of resource teachers (Bunch et al., 2005). Resource teachers have become overextended with additional duties beyond the scope of resource and have in some cases been dominated by a single focus such as pull out instruction. The result of this practice has led to a high turn over of resource teachers citing burn out as the driving factor for their leaving (York-Barr et al., 2005). Ensuring resource roles are balanced and representative of the teacher/student support they are intended to provide will strengthen the

student services within schools and enrich the inclusive culture and skill base of those with whom they work. Resource roles must reflect a) time devoted to direct instruction of individuals and small groups of students, b) assessment of students and c) follow up program planning as well as d) consultative support to teachers in meeting the diverse needs of their students.

**Recommendation #6**

**Implement a Department of Education supported resource teacher FTE allotment ratio reflecting that which is recommended in the Proposed Instructional Staffing Model submitted by Gar Andrew in March, 2003.**

In this report it is recommended that staffing reflect an allotment of one special education teacher for every 14 students with high needs, as well as an additional one resource teacher for every 500 students to reflect support for the lower needs students. While the Prince Edward Island Department of Education Minister's Directive No. MD 07-08 supports this recommendation; it is not an accurate reflection of the current use of staffing within many of the schools. According to the recommended ratios, a minimum FTE of 93.03 resource/special education teachers would be in place within the Eastern School District, an increase of 39.65 FTE over the current positions dedicated to resource. This would not include teacher allotment to support EAL needs or Reading Recovery programs in the schools. It is recommended that this discrepancy be addressed both at the district level and at the department level, identifying within schools what can realistically be redirected toward resource programming, and what remaining gaps need to be realigned with additional supports.

**Recommendation #7**

**Implement a monitoring and accountability process as recommended in the 2002 Mackey Report to ensure that all special education/resource positions are utilized by administrators in the manner in which they were intended and in keeping with the three strand role indicated in the Department of Education's Teachers and Support Staff Working Together Standards and Guidelines.**

The practice of borrowing resources intended for one area of curriculum to alleviate strain on another area is a common administrative response to the current strains under which schools operate (Wedell, 2005). Use of resource staff to assist in overloads in regular programming and/or extending resource supports to create entire classes of lower level students are practices leading to the absorption of staffing intended for resource into the pool of general programming. Staffing that is originally designated for resource must be protected at the District level within a comprehensive policy that includes an accountability structure monitoring the discretion exercised by administrators when allocating staff within their school and preventing the redirection of resource supports. In doing so, schools will be better able to meet the diverse needs of the students in the classroom with strong, present and appropriately staffed resource programs.

**Recommendation #8**

**Adjust policy to reflect that resource positions be held only by those with specialized training in the areas of assessment, individual educational planning and remediation, and collaborate with the Department of Education in offering financial assistance to support current, untrained teachers in upgrading their skills.**

The role of resource teacher is integral to an effective inclusive school and the skills required are those requiring specific training (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Lindsay, 2003; York-Barr et al., 2005). Specific educational training that ensures a level of expertise must overrule the practice of splintering resource positions to include a number of teachers, many of whom lack formal training. The Eastern School District has implemented guidelines regarding the training

required of newly hired resource teachers and the expectation that they will hold a Degree in Special Education or a Bachelor of Education degree and the equivalent of an Inclusive Education Diploma or Special Education Certificate (See Appendix G) and efforts must be made to formalize these expectations, incorporating them within a comprehensive policy guiding special education services.

Those resource teachers who may lack formal training but have a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field must be supported in their efforts to become formally qualified. It is recommended that the Department of Education work with the Eastern School District to support a financial assistance program encouraging current resource teachers to attain the necessary upgrading needed to competently fulfill resource teacher duties and that any new hired staff meet identified skills training levels. Such efforts should also support additional, specialized training in areas of interest within resource-related services such as appropriate levels of assessment, learning disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Recommendation #9**

**Continue to work as a District and in conjunction with the Department of Education to encourage collaborative service and support structures for students that includes professionals for Education, Health and Justice.**

In response to the recommendations in the *PEI Task Force on Student Achievement* report (Kurial, 2005) an interagency working committee has been established involving Departments of Education, Health and Justice. There must be continued focus in this area and a District voice regarding the specific needs required to appropriately support students. There must be recognition at the government level of the need for services such as speech language,

occupational therapy, and physiotherapy. These are not additional supports provided to students with special needs; rather they are compulsory supports for an inclusive service delivery model and ones that must come with a clearly stated provisional plan. Doing so requires interagency partnering between the various government sectors and identifying the required financing and from where the dollars will come. A collaborative service plan must be established that reflects a response to student needs that is not limited by interagency barriers and funding obstacles and as well is clearly reflected within a policy-based comprehensive inclusive education model.

### 5.3 *Alternative Placement Options*

Much of the research regarding inclusive education refers to a firm commitment to full inclusion for all as being Utopian and unrealistic within the practical realities of schools (Baker, 2007). Many jurisdictions are recognizing trends supporting the value of special schools and focus centers as playing a role within an inclusive system for some students (Baker, 2007; Warnock, 2007; Zigmond, 2003). Establishing alternative placement options is not intended to remove students from inclusive educational settings but rather to provide an option for students with special needs who experience great difficulty within inclusive settings, or for those for whom a highly specialized curriculum is found to be needed and temporarily best offered outside the regular school setting. The creation of focus centers will also meet the needs of students who, after lengthy consideration of programming and review of the *Caring Places to Learn/ Safe School Environment Policy* of the Eastern School District (1999a), are deemed best served outside of the regular school environment. The 'Least Restrictive Environment' must be recognized as determined by individual needs and a guiding principle of an inclusive system that provides multiple environmental options. Learning communities must be equated with

environments in which programming and curriculum best reflect goals supportive of the greatest amount of inclusive learning and living that is mutually beneficial for all students, rather than determined solely by neighborhood integration.

Whereas recommendations #10 and #11 involve the creation of new programs emphasizing skill development and interagency access, consideration should be given to a shared location.

**Recommendation #10**

**Establish short term placement programs to facilitate focused learning for students in specific skill development areas under the direction of specially trained professionals. In keeping with a non-categorical approach, eligibility should be considered based on level of need for particular skill development rather than a particular diagnosis.**

**Examples of program content areas may include:**

- **Attentional skills - extending time on task, following directions**
- **Pre employment skills – activity schedules, specific skill instruction**
- **Communication skills – initiating requests, conversational turn taking**
- **Social skills – personal care and hygiene, social cues, appropriate play**
- **Behavior skills - self regulation, replacement behaviors, de-escalation and anxiety management**
- **Life skills – community orientation, public transit use**

There are several students in the Eastern School District whose learning needs and individual educational plans include development of particular skills not taught as concentrated units of study within the regular classroom. This proposed model would allow students of similar learning needs to have programming in a focused and removed setting for two to four week blocks of time during which they would receive intensive teaching in that area. APSEA recognizes value in the participation based programming offered to students in short term placements in which like-skill groupings are taught, skills are practiced and students are transitioned back into the regular classroom (APSEA, 2004). Such placements provide valuable intensive learning opportunities for student as well as training opportunities for teachers as they

collaborate to support transitional planning and present a model worthy of duplicating. APSEA recognizes the improved future learning and socialization as well as the potential for building independence offered by short term removal from the mainstream. Research has recognized the value of withdrawal when it is viewed as flexible grouping and not exclusion (Wedell, 2005) and when the goal is a timely return to the regular stream. Students attending the placements would receive integrated support services and transitional follow up to assist teachers in skill maintenance.

**Recommendation #11**

**Establish an alternate placement program for students unable to attend the regular system but who may excel in a removed setting.**

The basic premise of inclusion is that of sharing a learning environment with peers in welcoming and diverse settings (Bunch et al., 2005) and is based on appropriate individualizing of curriculum and instruction. Operating under a design in which no alternative is provided to an integrated setting challenges the commitment to individualization (Zigmond, 2003). Students must be afforded opportunity to learn in educational settings that are least restrictive and most successful for them. "The right to be included must not be confused with the duty to include" (Low, 2007, p. 5) and nor should it usurp the rights of all student and staff to learn in a safe and valuing environment (Eastern School District, 1999a).

This center would be purposefully designed to cater to students with special needs who experience extreme difficulty in inclusive settings as the result of high risk behaviors considered unsafe for that individual and other students and staff, and/or require complex specialized

programming beyond what can be made available within regular school placements. This placement option would be offered to those students otherwise unable to be educated in an inclusive environment for extended periods of time and would provide a stepping stone for the student's return to a more inclusive school environment. The option to access an alternative placement site would decrease risk to all involved and provide a safe environment.

Emphasis would be placed on individualized skill development to address the necessary learning each student may require to participate in a shared community to his or her individual potential and to return to an integrated setting. A core team of specially trained teachers, consultants and service providers would work collaboratively with school administrators, resource teachers and classroom teachers to develop individual goals and objectives to support the student's transition to a higher degree of inclusion. Alternative placements would provide low ratio staffing and specialized programming options and curricula such as appropriately initiating a request for a time away from others, appropriately indicating frustration or upset, and/or toileting, beyond what is feasible for that particular student in a regular school setting. Students' learning outcomes would be reviewed regularly and reflected in current IEPs including relevant curricula which the student may have been following at his/her base school.

No student would be 'sent' to an alternative placement center. It would instead be an option made available to students based on school-based referrals resulting from collaborative IEP planning that includes parents/guardians and other IEP team members. Placement options would be intended for students unable to have their needs met within the base school but may also

explore the requests of parents/guardians whose preference it is to access a more specialized setting.

## 5.4 *Conclusion*

*My goal*

The goal of this study was to review the special education services under which the Eastern School District currently operates by exploring its history and comparing the development and practices to those experienced elsewhere. My hope was that by identifying the challenges of inclusive education facing this district as well as other areas, insight would be gained as to how the ESD may improve its current model. It is my belief that this research study has done that and that its contents provide direction for the district in question and other areas seeking to make comparisons.

*Findings*

There is no ideal prescription for inclusive education that any one school board may employ. Each region brings with it unique variables and circumstances. The findings of my study on the Eastern School District reveal three central and emergent themes: increasing demand on teachers; a lack of consistency; and a need for improved collaboration. Each theme interconnects within an overall need for a documented, comprehensive and collaborative policy to guide teachers, administrators and governing personnel in meeting the needs of students with special needs.

Prince Edward Island teachers should be proud of their commitment to educate students with special needs in inclusive settings, but if this practice is to continue, and if the students are

to be afforded a quality inclusive experience, changes must be made. The teachers' concerns regarding lack of time, skills and support to meet the needs in their classrooms echoes loudly throughout my findings and are further compounded by inconsistency in the manner in which administrators attempt to manage the increasing demands in their schools. Teachers and students must be permitted access to the supports they require and funding provisions must be made to secure those supports both within the Department of Education and across other service sectors.

My motivation for this study was to establish a path to facilitate improvements within the Eastern School District. Rarely is there time to step away from my role and examine the issues as a whole. I began this study with a keen awareness of the many concerns and challenges that our District faces, while noting that the root of these concerns had not been explored. This study provided me with that opportunity and allowed me to research the successes and the struggles we experience and compare them with those experienced in other areas. It offers others who may be considering similar reflection, a measure of comparison for their own case studies.

It is my hope that those who read this study will be do so in its entirety and within the context in which it was intended. Educators in PEI should be commended in their acceptance of inclusive philosophies and their continual efforts to create inclusive classrooms. The gaps and challenges are in spite of, not due to a lack of, their efforts. I have suggested within my recommendations that we should expand our continuum of inclusion to reflect a broader range of placements based on what is least restrictive for each individual student. Initially and/or out of context, this may sound contradictory to inclusive practices as we in the District have come to recognize them. I sincerely hope that my belief in the rightful and most integrative placement of

all students is not lost within this one recommendation and that all stakeholders join me in recognizing the value in continued commitment to inclusion.

*Outcomes of the study: What is next?*

I believe this study validates the concerns and frustrations many educators feel regarding the complexities and pragmatics of teaching within inclusive systems. This study revealed several opportunities for further research within the ESD, particularly in the area of school-specific practices regarding existing resource models and student outcomes, as well as those stemming from the possible implementation of focus centers and alternative placement options. Much of the literature alludes to focus centers and the return of skill-based training units but there remains little in the way of specific program review of such centers. I suspect that with the development of such sites more research attention will be given to best practices and outcomes as they emerge.

*Closing remarks*

This experience has been one which has been extremely frustrating and rewarding for me. This process has allowed me to see a complete picture which at times was not pleasant, exposing the flaws within a system in which I play a part. I do feel it has afforded me the first step in the right direction toward acknowledging the gains, the triumphs, and the remaining obstacles to be addressed. I am proud to be a part of the Eastern School District and I feel honored to be working with the teachers and administrators who meet the many needs of our students.

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# Appendix A

## Administrators and Resource Teacher Concerns

Student Services Meeting Notes
April, 2007
Re: Concerns expressed by Principals Executive and Resource Teacher Meetings.

Discussion amongst team regarding the concerns shared with management and also with working group from resource teacher meetings. Including;

- Numbers of students needing individual planning is beyond what the schools are staffed for. Many teachers saying they have four or five students below grade level as well as one or two high level special needs students in their classes.

- Resource teachers are way too busy. In most schools they are doing all the coordination and writing of all IEPs. Only a rare situation where that is being done by classroom teachers. Is it realistic to expect resource teachers have the time or to expect that classroom teachers have the skills?

- Teachers having to sign off on communication books adding to the list of duties.

- Getting harder to find trained resource teachers and to keep them. They are overwhelmed by the amount of work and the number of needs.

- There is no time for assessment at the schools. Resource teachers are swamped with students to see and IEP meeting duties. No time to assess all the students who are being referred for testing and no time to assess all the needs teachers are seeing in their classes.

- Modifying programs is too time consuming. Teachers are looking for materials and finding they are told they do not exist. Students are often put off by a lower grade text book being stigmatizing.

- Many parents resist modifications, what do they do then? Should teachers be ignoring children's needs because parents resist?

- Lots of concerns around what to put on report cards of modified students. Directive to put placed is seen as unfair. Some teachers reluctant to modify because of this. It is a yearly concern and lots of calls coming in

about questions about this. Must put placed even if IEP or modifications are indicated elsewhere on the report card.

- What about situations where there are subject specific modifications? Some students need it for Math only. Should they receive a placed designation? What about the spread of reading levels at the elementary schools?

- There needs to be additional money for materials for students with program binders and activity schedules, etc. Very costly for the schools as are supplementary programming outings such as trips to pools and job training outings. There needs to be recognition of this and a budget allocated to schools for this.

Discussion:
Hearing the same concerns in the schools from teachers. Everyone is feeling the needs are higher than the resources.

Seeing many of the schools managing the number of modifications by doing low level classes but not including any assessment or individual planning with this. Have worked with them to encourage individualizing the curriculum in these cases. Questions regarding the documentation for modifications - is there any?

Most of team has been doing regular presentations at conferences, PD days and after school sessions on individualized instruction, goal writing, modifying, adapting, etc. Does not seem to be transferring to the classroom. This does not address the time issue.

The concerns around placed/promoted are yearly issues. Had been advised to write 'promoted based on modified pgm' no longer an option. Must write placed. Julie and Steve spoke to Mgm Coucil and legally we must write 'placed'. No one happy with this but we have no choice. Calls will continue to come in and we need to give a consistent and clear message.

Terri and Julie willing to meet with Principals Exec. to discuss report cards and how to better address the directive regarding placed and also what to do about single subject situations. Western Board currently dealing with this as well.

Concerns regarding what will happen if some of the schools lose their resource teachers due to the increasing demands of the role. Rumors of a number of the more highly trained ones leaving.

We have brought the issue of funding for supplementary programming expenses to the Special Education Standing Committee every year for the last several. Never supported. Must come from the schools' budgets same as any other extra they offer.

## Appendix B

Letter of Permission

**Civic:** 234 Shakespeare Drive
Stratford, PE C1B 2V8
**Mailing:** PO Box 8600, Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
Canada C1A 8V7

Tel: (902)368-6990
Fax: (902)368-6960

**Eastern School District**

October 1, 2007

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to advise that for the purposes of Julie Gaudet's Masters thesis, I give permission for the use of non-identifiable, personal and professional documentation pertaining to the Eastern School District.

[redacted] Sincerely,

Alex (Sandy) MacDonald, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Education

# Appendix C1

## Outline of Annual Allotment Process

### ANNUAL ALLOTMENT PROCESS

Identifying the needs of each school - includes priority listings and total hours.

Meet with each Family of Schools

- Meet with each school separately and in combination with receiving schools = 82 meetings.
- Discussions include:
  - (1) Incoming grade one students
    Students exiting the system or zone
    Students who are priority students
    Students whose circumstances have changed significantly.
  - (2) Input regarding satisfaction with current teacher assistants.

Identification of Students/Needs

(1) Begin with previous year's priority listings and remove students who have exited a particular school and add to receiving school's list.
(2) Add incoming grade one students to respective listings. Add any new or reduced needs identified at meetings.
(3) Attach rough time calculations based on last year's allotments for current students and grade one entry meeting recommendations for new students. - working copies for us.
(4) Keep a list of students in "limbo" with zone yet to be determined and include in numbers.
(5) Do initial totals for:
- each school
- entire district
- # incoming system
- # exiting system
(hours and FTE)
(6) Compare with available FTE allowance and start to trim where possible using:
- YSW, resource teacher information
- sheets on resource set up
- discussion with Student Services Teams.
(7)(a) Consult with schools regarding altering delivery models to better meet proposed needs, i.e. resource teacher assignments, classroom assignments / split grade levels, cooperative work and alternative programs, shared delivery of TA support.
(b) Revisiting the students who are eligible to exit the system but are scheduled to return for an additional year and for whom a second transitional meeting may present possibilities outside the system.
© Revisiting kindergarten entries to further clarify and review information and updates from assessments, reports and case conferences regarding changes in current status and to discuss a possible hold-out. In three situations a second complete case conference was held.
(8) Teacher assistant allotment sheets typed listing names of priority one and priority two students as well as the combined resource teacher FTE, Teacher Assistant FTE and YSW FTE.

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# Appendix C2

## Outline of Annual Assignment Process

### ANNUAL ASSIGNMENT PROCESS

*Identifying who will be assigned hours at each school.*

* Using each school's assignment list from previous September and the new rough totals for each school, we look at who will be assigned to each school.

  Factors:
  - Who has requested to move
  - Input from administrators re: suitability
  - Seniority at the school
  - Original hours assigned in September of previous year.

* Identify teacher assistants and assigned hours. Include those on leave and relief persons.
* Create list of needs for specific skill sets/training, teacher assistants requesting leave or resigning.
* Record vacancy in any unassigned hours on each school's assignment page.
* In schools where the totals have decreased, we make a list of permanent employees needing to be placed elsewhere and the residential area.
* Create ongoing list of relief people we would like to see assigned.
* Check each list for seniority conflicts within a school and on overall lists - best to record start dates beside each name.
* Letters typed with assignments.
* Check each school's assignment page with principals - send on Wednesday - received on Friday - feedback by Wednesday - released to teacher assistants on Friday.
* All assignments given at **specific date and time** - special page with directions.

Need:
- Updated teacher assignment list
- September 2003 assignment list
- Current seniority list by school and also by employment date
- List of relief people
- List of dually qualified teacher assistants and youth service workers

## Appendix D1

Guideline for the Assignment, Allocation and Utilization of Educational Assistants

### Guidelines for the Assignment, Allocation and Utilization of Educational Assistants

Educational Assistants are one of the supports in a wide continuum of support services available to students with special educational needs.

Educational assistants are assigned annually based upon clear criteria for severe special needs - physical, behaviour, medical, developmental. (see below)

Educational assistants are not assigned based upon academic needs.

To help the student become as independent as possible is our goal - therefore, the teacher and educational assistant strive to foster that independence in every way possible.

To encourage growth in the student, we strongly advise against having a student receive all their educational assistant support from one educational assistant. Unhealthy dependance may develop when the one educational assistant remains for a full day and/or an extended period.

The teacher is also the primary communicator regarding the child and his/her program when sharing information with parents and other professionals.

The teacher is the person responsible for the student's program and IEP, not the educational assistant. The educational assistant helps in the delivery of the program/IEP.

Educational assistant hours are assigned to the school based upon the most pressing needs of the students who qualify for support. It is the school's job to assign the time to the priority students, recognizing that even with their priority status, there are certain times of the day/week/year that the student may require more or less support than others. This requires on-going re-evaluation and monitoring throughout the year.

There is an ebb, flow and flexibility to the educational assistant support for a child.

- it is not carved in stone
- be creative where and when the support is required.

Occasionally, time may be utilized with a student not on the priority list.

Be careful of the language you use when speaking to parents and staff about educational assistants,

i.e. - "Johnny's" educational assistant
- "Mary's" time has been cut

11. If a priority student is absent from school for more than one week, District Student Services should be notified by the principal.

12. The roles of Educational Assistants and tutors are separate and distinct and the two roles should not be performed by the same person.

Educational Assistants are assigned to schools where students with assessed special educational needs have IEP's that demonstrate that they are Priority One (A/B) or Priority Two (C) students based on the following criteria.

Priority One A

First priority will be given to students who require educational assistant support in order to attend school. Priority One A students have one or more of the following needs:

- severe disorders which necessitate continuous supervision
- provision of support for toileting, feeding, mobility and/or medical procedures
- personal health and safety issues as the result of a:
  - medical/health condition
  - profound developmental delay

Priority One B

Second priority will be given to students who display chronic and severe aggression and/or dangerous behaviours as evidenced by:

- endangering the safety of self and others
- an identified medical or psychological condition
- documentation of interventions, such as an implementation of a behaviour plan as well as outside agencies involvement

Priority Two

Third priority will be given to students who have IEP goals and objectives, which are substantially different from the regular provincial curriculum. Any educational assistant support for Priority Two C students should be considered temporary and/or intermittent. In most cases the support for this group of students will not be directly assigned, but wil come about as a result of the school's capacity to creatively schedule in order to 'borrow' or 'share' the time of Priority One students. Please note that any decisions made to 'piggyback' support for Priority Two students must no jeopardize the learning or safety of Priority One students.

# Appendix D2

Criteria for Determining Priority Status in 2001-02

## Criteria for Determining Priority Status in 2001-02

Priority One:

- Moderate to severe communication needs
- Behavioral concerns (flight risks, sexual concerns, etc.)
- Physical/verbal aggressive behavior
- Verbally inappropriate behaviors
- Specific diagnosis - Tourette Syndrome, Down Syndrome, ADHD, Autism, Tramatic Brain Injury
- Medical concerns
- Social and emotional concerns
- Personal care and physical mobility needs
- Visual and hearing impairments
- Global developmental delays

Priority Two:

- Academic weakness
- Reinforcement and review of skills
- Moderate speech concerns
- Organizational weakness
- Attentional difficulties
- Social skills/skills training and personal hygiene support
- Playground support

# Appendix D3

## Qualifying for Teacher Assistant Support 2004-05

**Students Qualifying for Teacher Assistant Support - 2004-05**

Priority One:

Students requiring significant support to manage.....
- Extreme communication needs:
  - unintelligible
  - non-verbal
- Autism students with individual program needs
- Extreme high risk behaviors:
  - physical aggression
  - flight risks
  - personal safety
- Extreme mobility and personal care needs
- Sexually inappropriate behaviors
- Extreme mental health concerns
- Significant visual and hearing impairments
- Extreme medical care needs

Priority Two:

Students requiring some support to manage.....
- Monitoring medical care needs
- Personal care assistance
- Significant behavioral needs
- On-the-job supervision
- Periodic and/or emergency mobility assistance
- Support for transition times
- Intellectual disabilities (not learning disabilities)
- Significant expressive and receptive communication needs
- Moderate visual and hearing impairments

Students previously identified as Priority Two students due solely to a diagnosed intellectual delay or ADHD or LD, etc. are now highlighted as students to be Monitored and are not on either priority list.

# Appendix D4

## Notice of Reduced Support May 2004

Mailing: PO Box 8600, Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
Canada C1A 8V7

Tel: (902)368-6990
Fax: (902)368-6960

**Eastern School District**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Winnie MacInnis, Department of Education

FROM: Student Services, E.S.D.

DATE: May 12, 2004

RE: Information for Department and Board

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- 49 incoming grade one students with priority needs will require 153 hours teacher assistant time = 21.86 F.T.E. (full time equivalent people)

- 10 students exiting high school (Priority One & Two students) with combined teacher assistant hours of 22 hrs. = 3.14 F.T.E.

- Incoming numbers minus numbers exiting:
  21.86 F.T.E. - 3.14 F.T.E. = 18.72 F.T.E.

Important to Note

This does not reflect the escalating needs of a number of students presently in the system (see attached information). Nor does it reflect an allowance for any new students who may come to the area in the summer.

- We have removed from the Priority One & Priority Two lists any students with strictly academic needs. (In 2001-2002 we removed 80 students from the list). A number of these have escalated to such an extent that they have been put back on the list.

- 358 Priority One & Two Students
  204 - Priority One
  154 - Priority Two

- approved time from the Department of Education: 144.95 F.T.E. teacher assistants, 14.0 F.T.E. Youth Service Workers - which is what we now have in the system to cover students.

# Appendix E

Excerpt from June 2003 budget letter

FM: TRANS&PUB WORKS PEI FAX NO.: 19023685395 25-06-02 01:52P P.

Prince Edward Island
CANADA

Department of Education

Office of the Minister
PO Box 2000
Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
Canada C1A 7N8

Tel 902 368 4610
Fax 902 368 4699

Île-du-Prince-Édouard
CANADA

25 JUN 2002

Ministère de l'Éducation

Bureau du ministre
C.P. 2000
Charlottetown
Île du-Prince-Édouard
Canada C1A 7N8

Tél : 902 368 4610
Téléc : 902 368 4699

June 25, 2002

Mr. Robert Clow, Chairperson
Eastern School District
P.O. Box 8600
Charlottetown, PE C1A 8V7

Dear Mr. Clow:

The attached schedules provide the budget approvals for the operation of the Eastern School District for the school year 2002 - 2003.

[redacted]

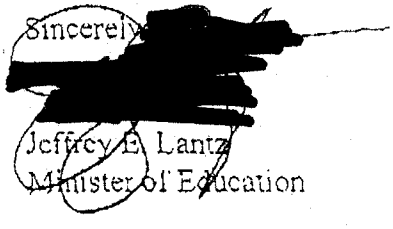
Appendix A reflects a freeze of the number of approved instructional positions at the 2000 - 2001 school year level.

[redacted]

requested.

I hope to be able to provide a supplementary budget approval letter in the near future to deal with the outstanding issues noted above. In the meantime I trust that this letter will allow your board to complete its budget deliberations.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey E. Lantz
Minister of Education

Enclosure(s)

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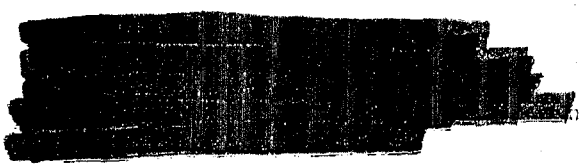
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES

A sum sufficient to cover the following items:

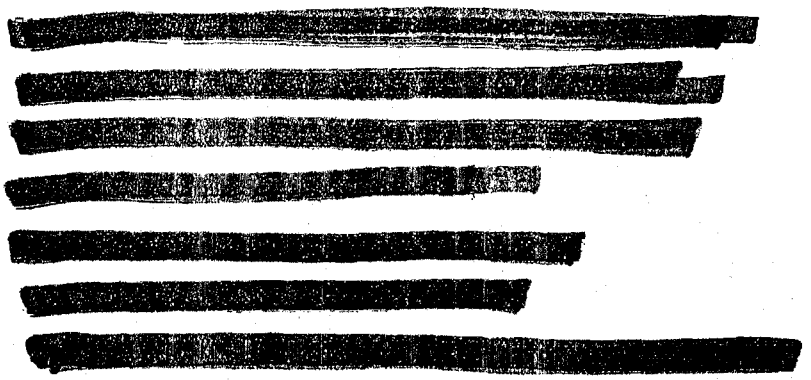
a) Salaries for:



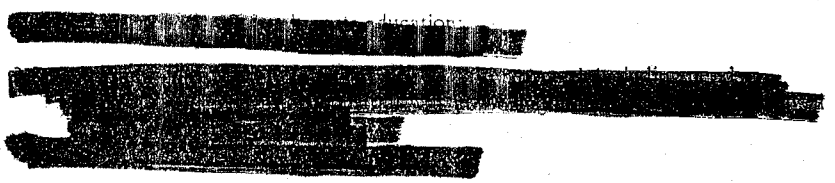
In accordance with salaries contained in the Document Terms and Conditions of Employment for Excluded Supervisory Employees of School Boards approved by the Minister.

In accordance with salary scales contained in the Teachers' Memorandum of Agreement.

b) Salaries for:



8.75 instructional staff for the Reading Recovery™ Program - conditional on the assignment of a matching 7.25 FTE positions by the Board;



# Appendix F

Table 6 Resource Teacher Utilization and Recommended Allotments in ESD Schools

| Name of school | Grades | Enrollments | FTE resource duties | # of persons Sharing FTE | Priority 1 | Priority 2 | Identified High Needs | Recommended (1:14)Support | Recommended (1:500) | Recommended combined FTE | Under / Over* Recommended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1CONS | 1-9 | 163 | .75 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 8 | .57 | .32 | .89 | .14 |
| 2INT | 7-9 | 355 | 2.1 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 25 | 1.79 | .71 | 2.5 | .4 |
| 3SEN | 10-12 | 820 | 1.34 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 11 | .79 | 1.64 | 2.43 | 1.09 |
| 4CONS | 1-8 | 127 | .5 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 10 | .71 | .25 | .96 | .46 |
| 5ELEM | 1-6 | 182 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | .14 | .36 | .5 | .5 * |
| 6SEN | 10-12 | 1102 | 2.34 | 3 | 8 | 16 | 24 | 1.71 | 2.2 | 3.91 | 1.57 |
| 7SEN | 10-12 | 960 | 2.17 | 4 | 7 | 17 | 24 | 1.71 | 1.92 | 3.63 | 1.46 |
| 8CONS | 1-9 | 140 | .5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 7 | .5 | .28 | .78 | .28 |
| 9CONS | 1-8 | 75 | .7 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | .21 | .15 | .36 | .34 * |
| 10INT | 7-9 | 578 | .92 | 3 | 7 | 16 | 23 | 1.64 | 1.16 | 2.8 | 1.88 |
| 11CONS. | 1-8 | 70 | .35 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | .57 | .14 | .71 | .36 |
| 12ELEM | 4-6 | 435 | 1.7 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 14 | 1.0 | .87 | 1.87 | .17 |
| 13ELEM | 1-9 | 198 | .9 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 8 | .57 | .4 | .97 | .7 |
| 14ELEM | 1-4 | 69 | .45 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | .36 | .14 | .5 | .05 |
| 15CONS | 1-8 | 85 | 1.15 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 2 | .14 | .17 | .31 | .84 * |
| 16ELEM | 1-6 | 639 | 3.84 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 18 | 1.29 | 1.28 | 2.57 | 1.27 |
| 17CONS | 1-9 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6 | .43 | .07 | .5 | .5 |
| 18CONS | 1-9 | 249 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 8 | .57 | .50 | 1.07 | .07 |
| 19ELEM | 1-6 | 243 | .45 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | .57 | .49 | 1.06 | .61 |
| 20ELEM | 1-6 | 360 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 1.07 | .72 | 1.79 | 1.21 * |
| 21SEN | 10-12 | 655 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 9 | .64 | 1.31 | 1.95 | .95 |
| 22INT | 7-9 | 335 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 16 | 1.14 | .67 | 1.81 | .81 |
| 23CONS | 1-8 | 161 | 1.2 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 11 | .79 | .32 | 1.11 | .09 * |
| 24SEN | 9-12 | 330 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 10 | .71 | .66 | 1.37 | .37 |
| 25CONS | 1-8 | 59 | .5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | .14 | .12 | .26 | .24 * |
| 26ELEM | 1-6 | 111 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 10 | .71 | .22 | .93 | .07 * |
| 27ELEM | 1-6 | 240 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 18 | 1.29 | .48 | 1.77 | .77 |
| 28INT | 7-9 | 555 | 1.9 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 18 | 1.29 | 1.11 | 2.4 | .5 |
| 29INT | 5-8 | 89 | .75 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 | .57 | .18 | .75 | Even |
| 30ELEM | 1-6 | 127 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 11 | .79 | .25 | 1.04 | .04 |
| 31CONS | 1-8 | 70 | .65 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | .29 | .14 | .43 | .22 * |
| 32CONS | 1-8 | 50 | .38 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | .29 | .1 | .39 | .01 |
| 33ELEM | 1-6 | 500 | 1.75 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 13 | .93 | 1 | 1.93 | .18 |
| 34CONS | 1-8 | 189 | 1.28 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 11 | .79 | .38 | 1.17 | .11 * |
| 35SEN | 9-12 | 267 | 1.5 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 10 | .71 | .53 | 1.24 | .26 * |
| 36CONS | 1-8 | 276 | 1.6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 9 | .64 | .55 | 1.19 | .41 * |
| 37ELEM | 1-6 | 342 | 2.55 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | .5 | .68 | 1.18 | 1.37 * |
| 38INT | 7-9 | 874 | 1.8 | 2 | 6 | 20 | 26 | 1.86 | 1.75 | 3.6 | 1.8 |
| 39CONS | 1-8 | 79 | .7 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 13 | .93 | .16 | 1.09 | .39 |
| 40CONS | 1-9 | 153 | .85 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 6 | .43 | .31 | .74 | .11 * |
| 41ELEM | 1-6 | 173 | .6 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | .21 | .35 | .56 | .04 * |
| 42ELEM | 1-6 | 374 | 1.61 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 11 | .79 | .75 | 1.54 | .07 * |
| 43ELEM | 1-3 | 398 | 2.6 | 4 | 14 | 7 | 21 | 1.5 | .8 | 2.3 | .3 * |
| undetermined placements | 1-12 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 8 | 0 | 8 | .57 | N/A | .57 | .57 |

**Appendix G**

ESD Annual Needs Profile Template

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

### A SCHOOL PROFILE - STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

SCHOOL _____ TOTAL ENROLLMENT _____ PRINCIPAL _____ YEAR _____ PAGE _____

FTE of Resource/Special Ed. Teachers _____ Number of Teacher Assistant Hours _____ Signature of Contact Person _____

| STUDENT NAME | DOB | GRADE | IEP YES/ NO | NATURE OF DIFFICULTIES ACAD, BEHAV, PHYS, MED, OTHER MILD, MOD, SEV | ABILITY LEVEL (Assessments) Above Average/ Average/ Below Average | PRESENT INTERVENTIONS eg TA hrs, modifications/adaptations/resource (specify) | Actual Grades Repeated | Other Agencies Involved | Bys Res/ Spec Ed | Recommended Grade Placement | PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS/ RECEIVING SCHOOL/ COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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# Appendix H

## Intermediate Administrators Concerns - February 2007 meeting notes

Meeting Notes
February, 2007
re: intermediate level concerns regarding disengaged/ underachieving students
Attending: Intermediate Alt Ed and intermediate school admin reps, ESD student Services

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- Students disengaged (*intermediate and senior)
- Seems strong correlation between the behavior issues and the students working below grade levels.
- Literacy levels are really low
- Teachers claiming they have too many to modify for, way too time consuming
- What to do with the growing number of students who are needing modified programs. Many of them won't agree to do work that is obviously lower levels than peers.
- Need more resource staffing in the schools
- Would be good to have exact strengths and needs identified. Resource teacher not available to do assessment on the students, definitely not pre-testing, mid way and post testing.
- Money not there to support programs that would engage the unmotivated kids and to provide supplementary programming for sp. needs students – to give them the transitional opportunities and hands on time throughout the day. Most of the kids shine when they have a chance to actively participate in a project of some kind. Craig's projects and ropes projects are really successful for them.
- Parent piece is very much an issue – not much support from home at times, home is frustrated too.
- Projects need to be small in number to be manageable and successful. Doing projects means tying up staffing for a few students and taking from the rest of the students to do it.
- Some schools have resource staff tied up doing all the IEPs and others paperwork. Too much paper work for the teachers to manage, reason often given for not modifying.
- No modified programs available for teachers – making own too time consuming
- Teachers wanting more direction on placement – vs. - promotion for students who are modified. Reluctant to modify if getting placed.
- Wanting more direction regarding students at the intermediate and senior level, single subject modification impact on placement and graduation. (What if just Math?)

Many comments regarding reluctance of teachers to modify and the fact that time does not allow for it. Concerns expressed regarding the one size fits all

# Appendix I

Requirements for Resource/Special Education Teachers

## Requirements for Resource/Special Education Teachers

Currently more than 50% of our resource/special education teachers are lacking formal training in areas outlined in their role description. A commitment must be made to hire trained professionals for these positions as it is the expectation they will be providing *assessment and consultation* as well as *direct instruction* to students. Teaching assignments and hiring practices must support this expectation if schools are to meet the needs of their students in an effective manner and without draining board based supports.

* Qualifications for newly hired resource/special education teachers:

Degree in Special Education - or - B Ed & the Equivalent (Inclusive Ed. Certificate or Special Education Diploma)

* Upgrading expectations:

Courses in adapting & modifying curriculum IEP writing and management
Assessment
Behavior Management
Literacy instruction and support
Leadership

* Assessment courses should include training in the following:

KTEA - Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement PIAT - Peabody Individual Achievement Test PPVT - Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
EVT - Expressive Vocabulary Test
Woodcock Achievement Test
Key Math Diagnostic Test
Running Records

# Appendix J

## Letter Outlining Changes in SLP Services, September, 2005

**Speech and Audiology**

161 St. Peters Road
PO Box 2000
Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
C1A 7N8

*Telephone*
**902 368 5807**
*Facsimile*
**902 368 6186**



September 7, 2005

Dear Principal:

Speech-Language Pathology Services will resume in your school district in September. Extensive caseloads in 2004-05 prevented staff from providing a complete speech and language program to the students assessed. As a result, the program in 2005-06 will include a more comprehensive program to a lesser number of students. Again this year, students will be prioritized using the Manitoba Outcome Measures with priorities considered on a district wide basis.

Services will be consultative and will include components of the following depending on individual student needs:

- assessment
- teacher consult
- programming
- demonstration
- referral to other agencies
- parent contact
- classroom observation
- IEP planning
- material preparation
- teaming
- follow-up
- home programming

Given the known caseload which encompasses both returning students and those in transition, only priority referrals will be considered before January 2006. Our Speech-Language Pathology Team will continue to strive to provide quality services to your students.

We look forward to working with you this year.

Sincerely,

[redacted] Eleanor Anderson, SLP(C)

[redacted] Linda Keel-Hale, SLP(C)

[redacted] Linda Brehaut-Chisholm, SLP(C)

[redacted] Melissa Spidel, SLP(C)

# Appendix K

## Notice of Reduced OT Services - February, 2002

**Queen Elizabeth Hospital**

Riverside Drive
PO Box 6600
Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
Canada
C1A 8T5

*Telephone*
**902 894 2111**
*Facsimile*
**902 894 2416**

**Queens Region**
Health and
Community
Services

February 7, 2002

Dear _____

This letter is to inform you that occupational therapy services out of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for school age children are currently not accepting new patient referrals. Children who are already on the caseload and have high needs (i.e. children with Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome or Autism) will continue to be followed on a consultant basis.

The decision to limit this service is a result of increased demand on the limited occupational therapy service resources. We are currently in the process of doing a review of all pediatric occupational therapy services to determine how we can better provide service with our limited resources.

We can provide you with the name of an occupational therapist who will see children on a private basis if families are interested. You can contact our Manager, Heather Cutcliffe at 894-2066 if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Thompson, O.T. Reg. (P.E.I.)

## Appendix L

Summary of Applied Resource/Special Education Formula

- Recommended resource /special education ratios:

High Level Needs - based on 7% incidence rate

14:1 (student: teacher ratio)

Low Level Needs - 500:1 (student: teacher ratio)

- Current Figures :

2007-2008 enrolment totals: 13,290 students

Resource /special education positions as utilized in the schools: 53.38 FTE

- Recommended Level of Support:

7% high level needs = 66.45FTE plus and additional 26.58 FTE for low level needs

= 93.03FTE per 13,290 students

- Discrepancy of 39.65 FTE

Note. Ratios from the Andrew (2003). *Staffing and funding program review. Proposed instructional staffing model.* Prince Edward Island Department of Education. Charlottetown, PE.