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Inclusion at the Early Childhood Level:
Supports Contributing to its Success

Anna Barrafato

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in
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of
Education

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ABSTRACT

Inclusion at the Early Childhood Level: Supports Contributing to its Success

Anna Barrafato

This study examined the extent to which supports such as school funds and resources, parental and teacher attitude, in-service training, and planning contribute to the successful inclusion of children with disabilities at the early childhood level. Participants were five (5) children with developmental, emotional or behavioural disabilities attending pre-school and their parents. Eight (8) inclusive and non-inclusive regular classroom teachers from two schools also served as participants. Direct observations of the children in their school settings were used to assess the extent of the children's social and academic integration. In addition, participating parents and teachers were interviewed about their perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education. Participating teachers were also asked to complete two questionnaires, the Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES) and the Mainstreaming Questionnaire. Results demonstrated that overall the children were socially integrated and adjusted to their settings. All teachers and parents identified certain factors, which must be in place to successfully integrate children in regular classrooms. The importance of a teacher's aide, increased support services, appropriate in-service training for teachers and smaller class sizes were stressed. Implications for inclusive and non-inclusive settings are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The foundation for later academic achievement and learning is set at the early childhood level. The importance of early childhood education must be taken into consideration when investigating inclusive education. Social, emotional and academic skills are acquired at the early childhood level for both special needs and typically developing children. It is essential that children with special needs attain the same experiences as typically developing children do within inclusive settings. Opportunities for learning appropriate behaviours and skills are obtained at an early age.

“An inclusive school or classroom educates all students in the mainstream” (Stainback & Stainback, 1992, p.34). All students, regardless of their intellectual, developmental, physical, behavioural, or emotional disabilities, are included in integrated, general education classes.¹ The focus of an inclusive setting is on how to operate these schools and classrooms as supportive communities that include and meet everyone’s needs. It also focuses on providing all students in the mainstream with:

1. Appropriate educational experiences that are challenging yet geared to their capabilities and needs, and
2. Any support and assistance they or their teachers require (Stainback & Stainback, 1992, p.34).

History

In 1975, the United States Congress approved Public Law 94-142, *The Education for All Handicapped Children Act*. The intention of this legislation was “to assure the free,

¹ The following terms: disabilities, handicapped, and special needs have been used interchangeably throughout the literature. When referring to children with special needs, the original authors' choice of terminology was preserved, reflecting the time-period during which the article was written.

appropriate public education of all handicapped children” (Biehler & Snowman, 1993, p.188). A set of provisions was stipulated under PL 94-142. One of the key provisions was the development of an *Individualised Education Program* (IEP) for each child identified with a handicap. The IEP includes the following criteria: short and long-term educational objectives, services to be provided to the child and criteria for determining achievement (Biehler & Snowman, 1993). Another provision of PL 94-142 was that educational services must be provided to children in the least restrictive environment. This provision ensures that a child with disabilities is placed in the least restrictive educational setting that his or her disability will allow. The least restrictive environment provision is often referred to as mainstreaming, since children with disabilities enter the mainstream of education by attending regular classes with non-disabled students and receive special education support when necessary. Other provisions of PL 94-142 included due process--legal safeguards intended to protect the rights of the disabled student. Due process elements include: the rights of parents to examine all of their child’s school records, prior notice to parents of any change in identification or placement, and parental consent before a student is evaluated or placed (Biehler & Snowman, 1993).

Prior to PL 94-142 most children with disabilities were educated in special classes within regular schools on the assumption that they needed special forms of education provided by specially trained teachers. Following the enactment of PL 94-142 and the mainstreaming movement, more and more children with disabilities were being integrated into regular classrooms in Canada and the United States (Stainback, Stainback & Bunch, 1989a). Integration implies that the majority of the child’s time is spent in the ordinary

classroom except for certain activities (i.e., academic or therapeutic) during which the child might be pulled out to be given “special” instruction or extra assistance. Out of the mainstreaming movement, a vision of inclusion grew for all individuals with disabilities. Inclusion, is a process whereby general and special education initiatives are unified, where all children with and without disabilities are included within the same school community. Subtle but real differences exist between inclusion, and mainstreaming or educational integration. Advocates of inclusive schooling argue that the social-cultural realities of mainstreaming and integration are that one group is viewed as the “mainstream” and one group is not; hence one group must “push in” to the activities and settings occupied by the other. Rather, students within an inclusive setting need not “push in” to another group in order to be part of the mainstream, because all children are viewed as part of the mainstream. This conceptualisation of inclusive education views all students as equal (Winzer, 1995). The underlying belief of inclusion is that all students will attend the classrooms they would normally attend if they did not have a disability.

In Canada, legislation made public school systems responsible for the provision of educational services for students with special needs. In 1971 the province of Saskatchewan passed legislation mandating appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. Manitoba followed in 1976 with mandatory legislation, as did Newfoundland and Quebec in 1979, and Ontario in 1980. However, the interpretation of educational legislation and policies differ from school board to school board and provincially. These laws aimed to stimulate activity in integration and to encourage attempts to integrate children that were previously considered only for segregated placement

(Stainback et al., 1989a). Throughout the 1950s to the 1970s, Canada had not developed the mandating of services through court decisions to the same degree as the United States. However, the voices of advocates in the United States were heard in Canada as well. This led to the questioning of segregated placements by parents, educators and other professionals and to the increased demand for integrated settings (Stainback, et al., 1989a).

Integration into regular schools during the 1970s and 1980s consisted largely of children with learning disabilities or mild handicaps. Specifically, this type of integration involved the least change for the school. By the mid to late 1980s there also was greater attention and recognition of the need to educate all students, not just those labelled mildly or moderately handicapped, in the mainstream of regular education. During this time in both Canada and the United States, advocacy for and experimentation with actually integrating students with severe and profound disabilities into regular classrooms had begun. A number of school boards in Ontario and Quebec carried this practice past the experimental level and established it as board-wide policy (Stainback, et al., 1989a).

The context in which provincial education legislation operated underwent a dramatic shift when the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was entrenched in the Canadian constitution in 1982. “The *Charter* created a new environment in which the overriding principles of liberty, freedom from discrimination, and freedom of association set broad parameters within which educational systems operate” (Porter & Richler, 1991, p.12). While provincial legislation in Canada requires school boards to provide educational services to students with disabilities, how the service is delivered is generally left to the discretion of local school authorities (Porter & Richler, 1991). Hence the right of a student

with disabilities to placement in a regular classroom is not assured. In a recent Supreme Court decision, the court ruled that schools are not obliged to integrate children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Duffy, 1997). If school officials decide that disabled students are best served by special education, they do not have the “right” to attend regular classes (Duffy, 1997).

Despite the steady trend throughout North America toward including all students into the mainstream of regular education, there have also been attempts to slow, stop, and even reverse this trend (Stainback et al., 1989a). Regardless of the positive changes made in Canada over the years, most children with disabilities spend a large portion of their time in segregated classes with little opportunity to interact with their non-disabled peers (Porter & Richler, 1991). Porter and Richler explained it best: “In a sense the jury is still out, not on whether integration is a good idea, but on how the movement toward inclusionary education will proceed in Canada” (p.27).

The literature surrounding the movement toward inclusion is varied. Advocates of inclusion believe that this process provides many beneficial experiences to both the student with disabilities and the community (Forest & Pearpoint, 1991; Hanline, 1985; Odom et al., 1996; Roach, 1995; Widerstrom, 1982). It is believed that children with disabilities will display more age-appropriate behaviours and improved performance as a result of being integrated with typically developing peer models (Buysse & Bailey, 1993; Odom & McEvoy, 1990; Siegel, 1996). Proponents argue that educating all students with disabilities in regular education classrooms is both necessary and realistic (Salisbury & Vincent, 1990).

On the other hand, opponents claim that children with special needs will not benefit from being integrated into a regular classroom, but rather may suffer detrimental effects (Widerstrom, 1982). It has been argued that as a result of the inclusion movement, children will be grouped together in classrooms without sufficient teacher training, facilities, and curriculum restructuring, forming clusters of special needs students in regular classrooms. This in turn would negate any of the advantages of integration (Stainback & Stainback, 1988; 1992). Moreover, opponents have expressed the fear that the integration of students with and without disabilities may be harmful to one or both parties. They have contended that students with disabilities need the shelter and protection of a special school. When this is the case, typical students can proceed with their education in a separate system unencumbered by their less able peers (Donder & York, 1984). Opponents of full inclusion have also argued that sometimes separate education is better for some children, and that if special education placements were abolished, many students with disabilities would be deprived of appropriate education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994-95; Shanker, 1994-95).

RATIONALE FOR INCLUSION

The inclusion movement has gained momentum in Canada and the United States for a number of reasons. One reason often cited is the benefits to the typically developing student (Staub & Peck, 1994-95; Widerstrom, 1982). Given proper guidance, students can learn in integrated settings to understand, respect, be sensitive to and grow comfortable with the individual differences and similarities among their peers (Stainback et al., 1989a). A second reason for educating all students in regular classrooms is the ill effects of segregation and separation upon children with disabilities. A third reason frequently cited for educating

all students in regular classrooms is that it is simply the morally and ethically right thing to do (Stainback et al., 1989a).

In a review article, Buysse and Bailey (1993) outlined three reasons advocating pre-school integration. First, since young children have not yet formed biases about groups or individuals, the probability of overt teasing or rejection is minimised. Second, early interactions with and exposure to children with disabilities will increase the likelihood of acceptance by typically developing children. Third, early placement of children in community settings creates an expectation on the part of society that integration is the norm, allowing children with disabilities to succeed in typical settings. In their review of the literature, Jenkins et al. (1985) noted that the presence of normally developing children in the same classroom as handicapped children enriched the environment. It was suggested that the setting enhanced the development of the handicapped child through the availability of typically developing models during free play, through the opportunity to observe and participate in appropriate patterns of communication, and through social reinforcement of the handicapped child's appropriate behaviour.

A review of the PsycLit and ERIC databases from 1981 to the present, with respect to research on inclusion, mainstreaming, integration and young children revealed that a preponderance of the literature was in favour of integration. The benefits resulting from integrating children with disabilities in regular schools have been demonstrated in many studies (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994-95; Beaupré, 1990; Blacher-Dixon, Leonard & Turnbull, 1981; Griffin, Solit & Bodner-Johnson, 1991; Hunter, 1992; Jenkins, Speltz & Odom, 1985; Leister, Koonce & Nisbet, 1993; McDonald, Birnbrauer & Swerissen, 1987;

Odom, Deklyen & Jenkins, 1984; Rampaul & Freeze, 1991; Ross, 1992; Sainato & Lyon, 1989; Saint-Laurent & Lessard, 1990).

Benefits of Inclusion

There are many benefits stemming from integration when the process is properly planned (Hanline, 1985). That is, in order to successfully integrate children with disabilities in the regular classroom, certain conditions need to be met. Systematic planning, curriculum restructuring, sufficient resources, appropriate teacher training, and positive parental and teacher attitude ensure successful integration. In order to reap the potential benefits, these precursors must be in place.

Some of the benefits of integration cited in the literature include: the alleviation of the stigma of placement in a segregated special education program, the opportunity for social interactions between children with handicaps and their non-handicapped peers, an increased opportunity for friendship formation, an improvement in how children with developmental disabilities view themselves and an increase in both language acquisition and social skills (Leister et al., 1993; Sainato & Lyon, 1989).

Advocates of inclusion have stated that exposure in the classroom to normally developing peers may have a beneficial effect on the handicapped child's development (Odom et al., 1984). Odom et al., (1984) showed that the handicapped child often imitated developmentally appropriate behaviours exhibited by normally developing children attending inclusive schools. Hence, typically developing children inadvertently serve as models. Benefits are also exhibited when normally developing children are used as models to demonstrate specific target behaviours to handicapped children (Jenkins et al., 1985;

Stainback & Stainback, 1982; 1982a; Stainback, Stainback & Wilkinson, 1992). As a result of using normally developing peers as role models within the classroom, Beaupré (1990) noted that the integration process enhanced handicapped children's pro-social behaviours and simultaneously decreased their behaviour problems.

McDonald et al., (1987) also found that, children with mental handicaps make greater social and academic gains in integrated rather than segregated settings. Furthermore, Blacher-Dixon et al., (1981) outlined that pre-school mainstreaming has been advocated based on the fact that both handicapped and non-handicapped children displayed increased academic, behavioural, and social performance.

Role of Typically Developing Students

Jenkins et al. (1985) examined the overall effects of an integrated special education pre-school in which non-handicapped children were enrolled in the program (i.e., proximity model), but did not serve specific functions, such as role-models. The overall finding of this study indicated that a pre-school following the "proximity model" of integration, in which handicapped and non-handicapped children were simply placed together without a systematic plan or curriculum for integration, produced developmental changes that were no different from those resulting from a segregated pre-school.

Integrated pre-schools are beneficial when schools use a planned and systematic curriculum which structures co-operative goals for handicapped and non-handicapped youngsters (see also Templeman, Fredericks & Udell, 1989; Widerstrom, 1982). In a recent article, Conrod stated that, "inclusion is here to stay because it is fair, humane, and is in the best interest of all society. It does, however, require careful planning, professionalism on the

part of teachers and administrators, training and teamwork” (1996, p. B3). Simply placing children with and without disabilities in the same classroom does not ensure that they will play together and learn from one another (Hanline, 1985; Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Tari, Hancock & Brophy, 1989). The social integration of children with and without handicaps, in the regular classroom does not occur automatically, even in mainstreamed classes (Jenkins, Odom, & Speltz, 1989). Children with disabilities are socially integrated in a regular classroom when they participate in purposeful collaborative play and interactions of common tasks with normally developing children (Lindsay & Desforges, 1986).

It has been demonstrated, that physical integration alone does not guarantee social integration, nor does it meet the educational integration imperative (Cavallaro, Haney & Cabello, 1993; Shutz, Williams, Iverson & Duncan, 1984). Continual efforts promoting positive interaction between students with and without handicaps are needed to ensure the social integration of students with handicaps (Shutz et al., 1984).

Effects of Inclusion on Typically Developing Students

Benefits resulting from exposure to and interaction with normally developing children in mainstreamed programs have been well-documented (Odom et al., 1984). However, the effects upon normally developing children in these classes have received less attention. Odom et al. (1984) addressed reported scepticism toward the integration process based on the fact that handicapped children could create a linguistically impoverished environment for their non-handicapped peers. In order to investigate whether integrated classrooms lead to harmful effects on normally developing children, the effects of placement in integrated classes upon the developmental skills of non-handicapped children were

examined. The results of this study showed that normally developing children did not appear to be detrimentally affected by inclusion in integrated pre-school classrooms, nor by exposure to handicapped peers. Non-handicapped children did not imitate inappropriate behaviours, a concern often raised by parents and professionals.

Ross (1992), who found that normally developing children did not imitate inappropriate behaviours exhibited by children with special needs further substantiated these results. In an article examining the research on the integration of children with disabilities, Hanline (1985) claimed that if a typically developing child did imitate a disabled peer, it was the appropriate, not the inappropriate behaviour which was imitated. Staub and Peck (1994-95) examined this issue as well, and noted that non-disabled students rarely learned undesirable behaviours from students with disabilities. While probing the research on this aspect, Staub and Peck (1994-95) stated that parents and teachers both indicated that non-disabled children had not picked up undesirable behaviours from children with disabilities.

Furthermore, Odom et al. (1984) found that placement of non-handicapped children in integrated classes did not appear to interfere with normal development on measures of intelligence, language and social domains. Moreover, children without disabilities benefited by learning about persons with special needs at an early age and, in turn, by learning to be more accepting of others (see also Leister et al., 1993).

Rampaul and Freeze (1991) surveyed two hundred and twenty-one (221) normally developing students on their concerns regarding the integration of special needs children. They found that seventy-five percent of the students supported the idea of mainstreaming and they generally agreed that students with special needs were like typical students and that

they could learn from each other (Rampaul & Freeze, 1991). In addition, two hundred and fifty-eight (258) typically developing children were interviewed in order to assess whether mentally handicapped children should attend regular schools (McDonald et al., 1987). The results demonstrated that students with experience with integrated autistic children in their school had more positive and realistic attitudes about children with mental handicaps than those in schools where mentally handicapped children did not attend (McDonald et al., 1987).

Further benefits to typically developing children included reduced fear of human differences, growth in social cognition, improvements in self-concept, and the development of warm and caring friendships (Staub & Peck, 1994-95).

DRAWBACKS OF INCLUSION

Academic and Educational Concerns

Despite the vast array of literature supporting inclusion, opponents of the movement have raised drawbacks. One of the most significant shortcomings raised by opponents is the lack of research evidence documenting academic or cognitive advantages of inclusion over segregated special education (Siegel, 1996). In fact Siegel (1996) stated that it would be easier to support inclusion if it could be shown to have “measurable, substantial, and sustainable academic or cognitive benefits for students with moderate to severe developmental disabilities” (p.12). The research has not consistently shown this to be the case.

In a qualitative study examining the perspectives of educators, parents and students, York and Tundidor (1995) noted the emergence of perceived barriers to inclusion. These

barriers included rigid general education curricular expectations, insufficient resources for staffing and materials, lack of collaboration time, and negative attitudes with concern that regular students would lose out. Regular education teachers have been concerned with the possibility that they may compromise the instructional time they spend with the typical students in their classrooms (Siegel, 1996).

Parental Concerns

Other drawbacks include those raised by parents of typical children. Parents of typically developing children have questioned the issue of instructional effectiveness in inclusive settings (Green & Stoneman, 1989). Concerns about the possibility that inclusion may eventually reduce the academic progress of non-disabled children were also put forward (Staub & Peck, 1994-95). These natural concerns are often raised by parents of typically developing children on the assumption that an adapted curriculum may encumber their child's education within the integrated classroom.

Parents of children with special needs also raised concerns regarding inclusive education. Guralnick (1994) cited two general types of concerns regarding early childhood mainstreaming. First, the mothers of special needs children interviewed in his study were concerned about the quality of special help, special services and qualified personnel available. Parents of children with disabilities often raise this concern. The decision to integrate a child into a regular classroom is particularly difficult for parents because of the concern that their child may not receive sufficient or adequate services in a regular classroom. Many parents often lack confidence in their decisions to integrate based on this reason. Second, concerns about the possible rejection of children with special needs by their

normally developing peers have also been raised. Rejection is a common societal phenomenon, not exclusive to these children. However, if children are exposed to and systematically taught to be sensitive to their peers, rejection can be circumvented.

Stetson (1984) revealed three common parental concerns regarding inclusion: that their handicapped children would be ridiculed, that they would be harmed, and that the instructional and related services to be provided in the integrated setting would not be as comprehensive or as easily accessible as in a segregated school.

Individual Child Concerns

One other drawback of inclusion stated in the literature is the possibility that schools may become oblivious to the students' individual differences (Stainback, Stainback, East & Sapon-Shevin, 1994). For example, if a child with special needs is simply placed in a regular classroom without provisions and is expected to keep up with the rest of the class, the child's individual needs may be overlooked. That is, if an individualised educational program is not prepared for a child with a disability, their educational needs within the typical classroom may be ignored.

In an article examining the potential barriers to pre-school mainstreaming, five such barriers were identified: 1) philosophical and theoretical differences between Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), 2) personnel preparation, 3) staff attitudes, 4) monitoring of pre-school programs, and 5) provision of related services (Odom & McEvoy, 1990).

In summary, despite these concerns, the overall consensus in the literature appears to be that inclusion provides an optimal environment, not only for positive intervention, but

that opportunities to develop strengths and attributes alongside normally developing peers also exist (Blacher-Dixon et al., 1981; Buysse & Bailey, 1993; Ross, 1992). Chinapah (1989) argued that by integrating children with handicaps in ordinary schools, their chances of having a life as little different from that of other members of society are maximised. However, this depends in large part on the variables these programs incorporate, such as academic progress, parental perceptions, peer and teacher attitudes, and acceptance of handicapped children, all important indicators of successful integration (McDonald et al., 1987). Teacher attitudes and parental perceptions have been cited as two of the most critical factors influencing the integration process (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989; Hanline, 1985; Tari et al., 1989; Widerstrom, 1982).

Overall, these factors must be examined in more detail in order to determine if pre-school integration is successful. More specifically, teacher variables, such as commitment, competence and confidence in working with special needs children need to be further investigated. Furthermore, parental participation and attitude are also important elements of the integration process, as is the availability of financial resources and support personnel. The successful inclusion of handicapped students in educational environments with their non-handicapped peers depends, to a considerable degree, upon the extent to which students and school personnel have been prepared for the experience. The combined attitudes of principals, teachers and students will form a climate that either accepts or rejects handicapped students within the school (Stetson, 1984).

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

Beaupré (1990) surveyed twenty-four (24) teachers on their perceptions of integration. Teachers claimed that they had not received enough training with regard to integrating special needs children in their classrooms. Those who did receive training felt unsatisfied with the quality and quantity of information received. More than one half of the teachers surveyed claimed they were not consulted in the decision-making process of the integration. These data suggest that the integration process can be compromised when teachers are not involved in planning and when they perceive that they are not properly prepared to work with a child who presents difficulties.

Parent, Fortier and Boisvert (1993) surveyed one hundred and fifty-three (153) teachers in order to investigate their views concerning the integration of special needs children. They argued that teachers' attitudes and perceptions impact on the success of integration. First, they maintain that since teachers are involved to a large degree in the lives of their students they act as role models. Second, the authors believe that teacher attitudes and perceptions are transmitted to the students. Thus, a teacher with a positive attitude will transfer this to a child, who in turn will develop a positive self-image (see also Rule, Killoran, et al., 1985; Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989).

Parent et al. (1993) also demonstrated that most teachers favoured grouping children in a special classroom within a regular school rather than integrating them in a regular classroom. Teachers were unsatisfied with the degree to which they were informed of the integration process. They believed that integrating a special needs child involves extra work and stress, and that school boards do not attempt to relieve their heavy workload by

providing them with support. These results indicated that if teachers are to become willing, optimistic participants of the integration process, certain supports must be made available.

McDonald et al. (1987) investigated the effect of an integration program on teacher and student attitudes toward children with mental handicaps. The effects of contact with mentally handicapped children on teacher and peer attitudes were examined by comparing attitudes across three groups. The first group consisted of teachers and students who had regular contact with autistic children. The second group comprised of students and teachers in an integrated school who only had contact with autistic children outside of class time. The last group consisted of students and teachers in a matched non-integrated school who had no contact with mentally handicapped children. Results of this study indicated that teacher attitudes toward children with mental handicaps and their integration into regular classes were generally positive. Their main finding suggested that those teachers with greater experience in teaching handicapped children had more positive attitudes toward them (McDonald et al., 1987; see also Schmelkin, 1981).

DeHaas-Warner (1994) looked at the role of child-care professionals in placement and programming decisions for pre-schoolers with special needs in community-based settings. The author suggested that many important variables need to be considered during the programming and placement process of children with special needs. One of these factors is the extent to which the staff has been trained to work with young children with special needs. If educators are not properly trained to work with this population, they may feel incompetent, which in turn may hamper the children's development. A second component that must be considered is the degree to which the programming helps the staff facilitate the

adjustment of a child with a disability into the integration process.

Rampaul and Freeze (1991) investigated the extent to which special needs children were integrated in Manitoba schools. The authors examined the concerns of classroom teachers, special educators and children. One of the main teacher concerns was the lack of attention to regular students in a mainstreamed classroom (see also Lindsay & Desforges, 1986; Peck, Hayden, Wandschneider, Peterson & Richarz, 1989). Many of the teachers felt that their workload had increased as a result of mainstreaming, leaving them with insufficient time to prepare materials and plan educational programs for an integrated classroom (see also Peck et al., 1989). Moreover, ninety-two percent of the teachers felt that university training had not prepared them for integrating special needs children in their classrooms (Rampaul & Freeze, 1991).

Marchant (1995) examined pre-school teachers' views of integrated pre-school settings for young children with and without special needs. Three of the most frequently mentioned categories of concern were classroom-related (i.e., meeting individual needs of all children), time-related (i.e., not enough time for classroom responsibilities), and administration-related (i.e., problems within own organisation).

In general, these results highlight the importance of successful integration being contingent upon variables such as positive attitudes and perceptions, sufficient training and experience, and adequate support personnel (Stafford & Green, 1993). "The attitude of the professionals responsible for mainstreamed programs directly affects the potential for success of those programs" (Odom & McEvoy, 1990, p.54).

To reap educational benefits, teachers may need to structure experiences for social integration as well (Jenkins et al., 1989). The literature seems to underscore the importance of training teachers and supplying them with sufficient resources (Roach, 1995; Stainback & Stainback, 1982c), such as paraprofessional assistance and professional support (psychologists, speech pathologists or occupational therapists, etc.) (Rule et al., 1985).

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

Another major element of successful integration, according to the literature, is parental perception and attitude. Beaupré (1990) argued that parents and teachers rarely hold the same objectives concerning the integration process, reflecting a lack of communication between the two groups. This issue is important because if parents are led to believe that the school's policy is open and flexible to change, when in reality it is not, their expectations concerning their child's integration may not be met. It is important for parents to inform themselves of the school's policy prior to the integration. Parents may need to insist that an Individualised Educational Program (IEP) is prepared for their child, and they must ensure that the objectives outlined in the IEP are being met on an ongoing basis.

The full implementation of an integrated environment requires tremendous dedication from both the family and the school on behalf of the handicapped student and a willingness to work as partners to achieve common goals. Parents must be active participants in their child's education and must be encouraged to recognise the ultimate benefits of integration (Stetson, 1984). Parents play a significant role in the mainstreaming process and should learn to rely on their children's cues and ensure that their children are emotionally ready for mainstreaming (Blacher-Dixon et al., 1981).

Ross (1992) stated that education and support programs for parents are crucial to the overall success of any early childhood program. A number of elements must be taken into consideration when implementing a parent-support program. First, a parent-support program may take the form of group or individual meetings. Second, open communication between staff and parents about problems and concerns is essential. Third, parents must be involved in the decision-making concerning the overall program and they must participate in the program's activities. Last, group meetings with parents must be held regularly to discuss and resolve program issues related to mainstreaming.

Simpson and Myles (1989) surveyed parents of children with educable mental handicaps, behaviour disorders and learning disabilities, on the types and numbers of program modifications needed to persuade them to accept full-time mainstreaming for their disabled children. The most significant finding of this study was the overall willingness to support full-time mainstreaming contingent upon implementation of their recommendations. Parents revealed a preference for modifications yielding direct benefits to their mildly handicapped children, such as smaller classroom sizes and availability of support personnel. Parents ranked second the modifications related to teacher training and consultation. Simpson and Myles have suggested that parental support may be linked to parental opportunity to make recommendations regarding classroom conditions and specialised services.

DeHaas-Warner (1994) also stated that it is important to acknowledge parent considerations during the placement process for pre-schoolers with special needs in community-based settings. Issues to consider as important are whether parents are

comfortable with the proposed setting, and whether they are aware that adjustment in the setting may not occur immediately.

Furthermore, Lindsay and Desforges (1986) also stated that integration in its fullest sense must include involvement of parents in the education of their child. Parents must work collaboratively with teachers in order to fulfil this essential requirement. Parental involvement early in the planning process may facilitate the desired positive effects of integration of young children with and without handicaps (Reichart et al., 1989).

When parents were interviewed about their concerns regarding integrated programs at the pre-school level, some of the issues they raised focused on the ratio of handicapped to non-handicapped children, teacher training, negative teacher attitude, delivery of therapy services, parent-teacher communication, adequate facilities, adequacy of instruction and fears of social rejection (Peck et al., 1989; Odom et al., 1996).

In summary, the literature emphasises that parents play a significant role in the lives of their children's education and further reiterates the importance of parental role as specified in the due process provision stipulated under *The Education for All Handicapped Children Act*. Schools, teachers and professionals must recognise that they must work together with parents when considering what is in the child's best interest. Integrating a child with a disability into a regular classroom can induce anxiety. For this reason, it is necessary for parents to adopt a positive attitude with regard to the integration process and the choices they have made. The proportion of successfully-integrated children is greatest when parents communicate openly with teachers, when they share the same objectives as teachers, and when they adopt positive attitudes and perceptions (Stainback & Stainback, 1988).

SCHOOL RESOURCES

A third element affecting the successful integration of special needs children into the regular classroom are the financial resources school boards allocate to schools, the availability of support personnel and the policies adopted by school boards.

School boards which adopted long-term and clear policies provided the most resources for the purpose of inclusive education (Beaupré, 1990). These school boards in turn, provided better conditions for integration than those that did not adopt long-term policies. Furthermore, Beaupré found that teachers felt like they could manage the integration process better if they knew in advance what to expect based on the policies. This study also revealed that more resources are available at the primary level than at the pre-school level. The reason for this is that pre-school is viewed as a transitory level and rarely as an important stage in children's lives. Thus, integration is supported more at the primary level than at the younger ages (Beaupré, 1990). However, this belief appears to be counter-intuitive, considering the literature surrounding early intervention and its benefits (Rampaul & Freeze, 1991; Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow, 1992).

Early intervention not only provides support and information for parents of children with disabilities, but also raises parental expectations about their children's potential to learn and develop (Porter & Richler, 1991). When children with disabilities are integrated in regular settings early in life, they develop an increased ability to adapt and function in all settings and social situations, and their peers become accustomed to them. Early intervention is also strongly linked to later academic success (Berk, 1997).

Parent et al. (1993) surveyed 153 teachers with regard to their views concerning integration. This study demonstrated that school boards did not offer enough incentives for primary school teachers to accept children with disabilities in their classes. Once again, school boards must be willing to alleviate the teachers' already heavy workload, by offering support personnel and by decreasing the number of students in the class. Rampaul and Freeze (1991) cited several important supports as being necessary for effective mainstreaming. For instance, the availability of classroom learning materials, the availability of consultative services, paraprofessional assistance, provision of in-service programs for teachers, sufficient preparation time for teachers, reasonable class size and support from colleagues were seen as essential elements in the mainstreaming process.

In order to successfully integrate a child, school boards must allocate sufficient resources to fund paraprofessionals and support personnel. Furthermore, they must adopt long-term policies specifying their exact positions on integration, in order to aid teachers in preparation and planning. They must also provide in-service seminars and workshops for teachers who have not had enough training and experience working with special needs children. "School authorities and professionals must work to develop real partnerships with parents, drawing on their visions for their children's future, as well as including them in a meaningful way in actual program planning" (Porter & Richler, 1991, p.28). To alleviate extra weight on teachers' workload, schools must decrease classroom sizes (May et al., 1994).

The ideal ratio of typically developing to special needs students in an inclusive classroom has been suggested to be 15:1, reflecting the real world ratio (Stoddard, Pike &

Thomas, 1994). However, given that most classes consist of 30 students, if the number of students with disabilities assigned to a regular education setting becomes too large, their opportunities to interact with their peers in regular education may become limited and their school may become identified as a “special education” school. On the other hand, if the number of students with disabilities assigned to a regular education setting is too small, the students with disabilities may become insular and the likelihood of frequent and meaningful interaction between the two groups may be diminished (Stetson, 1984). In order for an inclusive classroom to function, the number of students per classroom should be reduced.

CHILD CHARACTERISTICS

Another variable that needs to be considered when attempting to integrate special needs children into a regular classroom is the child’s individual characteristics (DeHaas-Warner, 1994). The child’s developmental level must be examined when considering the possibility of inclusion (Siegel, 1996). Child care professionals and educators, must consider the child’s current level of thinking, interaction, language, and motor abilities, compared to the children already attending the proposed setting. Since children with different disabilities display unique behaviours, programs must be tailored to their individual attributes.

Stainback, Stainback and Bunch (1989b) stated that, “tailor-made instructional programs should be provided to all students, whether considered bright, handicapped, minority or average” (p.16). To ensure the child’s continued progress, reciprocity between a child’s current skills and program expectations must be closely monitored. As such, special needs children require an IEP and the objectives outlined in such a plan must be closely monitored.

In conclusion, despite the fact that inclusion has been explored in a number of studies in the United States (Jenkins, Odom & Speltz, 1989; Jenkins, Speltz & Odom, 1985; Odom, Deklyen, & Jenkins, 1984; Odom & McEvoy, 1990; Odom et al., 1996; Peck et al., 1989; Reichart et al., 1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1982; 1982a), the paucity of studies of this nature in Canada and specifically within the province of Quebec (Saint-Laurent, 1989), highlight the importance of examining how these variables fare within Quebec educational policy with regards to inclusion

Evidence of early intervention as one of the key factors to a successful integration motivated the focus of this thesis on pre-school integration. The research on the effectiveness of early intervention programs have indicated that early and appropriate intervention with pre-school children with special needs can substantially lessen the impact of a disability and subsequently improve academic achievement, resulting in a significant cost benefit to schools (May et al., 1994). If special needs children are successfully integrated in regular settings at an early age, their chances of being active participants in the community are maximised along with their sense of competence and improved quality of life.

If a child with special needs is to be successfully integrated into his/her setting, one important requirement must be met. The child must be socially integrated into his/her setting. That is, the child must participate in purposeful collaborative play and interactions, verbally and non-verbally, and in performance of common tasks with the normally developing children (Lindsay & Desforges, 1986).

Rampaul and Freeze (1991) noted that even though mainstreaming children with special needs is currently more expensive than placing them in special classes, (i.e., due to the need for individual monitoring and assistance) as the system matures and the necessary expertise is developed, it will become a less expensive, long-term alternative. In addition, Conrod (1996) stated that even though inclusion does require some

front-end spending to avoid more expensive models later on. It is cheaper to assign a \$25,000 per-year aide to a child for six months to help overcome a behavioural problem than to spend more than \$35,000 a year for either hospital care or a correctional institution for many years later on. (p. B3)

This study examined the factors that are necessary for successful inclusion to take place within a typical early childhood setting. More specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. Were children with disabilities socially integrated into the regular pre-school classroom?
That is, did the children participate in purposeful play and interactions, verbally and non-verbally, in performance of common tasks with their normally developing peers (Lindsay & Desforges, 1986)?
2. What support systems do parents and teachers emphasise as being most influential to successful integration of children with disabilities in the regular classroom?
3. What factors are critical to successful pre-school inclusion?
4. What factors might interfere with successful pre-school inclusion?
5. Do teachers of non-inclusive classrooms hold the same beliefs as teachers of inclusive classrooms with regards to which support systems are crucial to successful integration?

METHOD

The data for the following case study were collected through the use of in-depth observations, interviews and questionnaires.

Setting

Participants were recruited from the English sector of a Montreal Island School Board. Two elementary schools within this school board served as the setting. The special education consultant of the school board was contacted. The consultant was asked if any students with disabilities were presently being integrated in any of their pre-school classes. Two such schools were identified. The researcher contacted the principals of each of these schools and they consented to the study. One of the schools, a small school with only one class per grade level (i.e., one kindergarten class and one pre-kindergarten class) was presently integrating a child with developmental disabilities in the kindergarten class. The teacher was contacted and she readily accepted to participate. However, when the child's parents were contacted they refused consent. Since the parents refused to participate, child observations were not conducted. Data from this school's pre-school teachers will be presented in this report. The second school is a larger school, whereby there are more classes per grade level. For example, there are three English kindergarten teachers and two French kindergarten teachers. These educators each teach both morning and afternoon groups. There are also two pre-kindergarten teachers, each having morning and afternoon groups. Thus, the two schools differ substantially in size. However, they are comparable in policies, support services, curricula and structuring. All parents and teachers from this school consented to participate.

The aforementioned school board stated that an *educational plan* is essential for each and every student (pre-school to high school) attending their schools and identified as requiring additional educational support measures and/or special educational services due to their particular educational needs. *Integration* is defined as “a normalisation process wherein the particular educational and other related needs of students experiencing difficulties and handicaps are satisfactorily provided for in the least restrictive environment. Its intent is to provide all pupils access to quality public education in as normal a context as possible.” The school board’s policy also states that for handicapped students and students experiencing learning or adjustment difficulties, integration into the regular school is endorsed if it has been recommended in the *educational plan*, usually prepared by the child’s teacher, non-teaching professional and the principal. In addition, the following conditions must be met: 1) the appropriate level and the adequate type of service along with a timetable must be established when elaborating the *educational plan*. 2) The *educational plan* must state the type of support measures provided to the teacher and the student. 3) The physical facilities of the school must allow the integration of the student to the overall regular activities of the school (De Stefano, Kennedy-Mancini, Orsi, Perri, Prioletta, Rizzi, Verrillo & Waters, 1996).

The school board also identified certain support measures as necessary to maintain or integrate a student with a disability in a regular context. Two types of services or support measures are outlined. Complementary services are described as special education, guidance and counselling, psychology, speech and language therapy, social work, and health services. Particular services are described as teacher aides, itinerant, recuperation, and tutorial services.

The school board's written policy also stated that it favours an individualised approach to instruction, which allows the total development of the disabled students' potential. Additionally, it is stated that the school board allocates annually the resources to ensure quality services to these students (De Stefano et al., 1996).

Students may follow one of two different paths at this school board depending on the severity of their disability. Students with mild learning disabilities are serviced in Path A. Specifically, additional support measures are provided to the student by: a) the regular homeroom teacher during Science and/or recoupment periods, in consultation with the special education consultant, or b) the special education teacher; within the regular group or outside the regular group in a one-to-one or small group format. Students with severe learning disabilities or are mildly mentally handicapped are serviced in Path B. That is, in the case of difficulties in language arts, an individualised language arts program in a small group setting outside of class, is provided by a special education teacher. If the student experiences difficulties in mathematics, the regular teacher in a recuperation or recoupment model provides the additional instructional time in mathematics (De Stefano et al., 1996).

Most of the families of the children attending these schools were intact and largely middle-class. There is a strong ethnic culture in the school, where most of the children's families are Italian in origin. Moreover, many parents attended the same neighbourhood schools as their children when they were young. The community also plays a large role at these schools. For example, parents, neighbours and community members usually work together for events such as fundraisers.

Participants

Children

Five (5) children with developmental disabilities attending regular pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes between the ages of four and six years participated in the study. The participants (boys=3 and girls=2) displayed various weaknesses, including language deficits, behaviour and emotional problems, hyperactivity, as well as intellectual deficits. Two children (boy=1 and girl=1) attended the morning English pre-kindergarten class on a daily basis. Three children (boys=2 girls=1) attended the daily morning English kindergarten class. In addition, one of these boys also remained in the afternoon for the Extended French Kindergarten Program. It should also be noted that two participating children were adoptive siblings and not biologically related (pre-kindergarten girl and boy attending both French and English kindergarten). The participants were recruited by referrals from the special education consultant from the English sector of a Montreal Island school board.

Child #1—Sammy²

Sammy attended both a morning and an afternoon kindergarten class. In the morning, he and two other children with disabilities attended the English kindergarten class. In the afternoon he participated in the Extended French Kindergarten class. This was Sammy's second year at the school. The first year he was placed in kindergarten full day. However, as the year progressed he began to display many behaviour problems in class, such as difficulty attending and sitting still, in addition to some language deficits. As such,

² The children's names were changed in order to protect their identity.

the school's administration decided that he should attend kindergarten in the morning and pre-kindergarten in the afternoon. At the end of the first year, the school along with his parents agreed that he was not ready to attend grade one the following year. As such, the second year he was retained in kindergarten. In addition, to keep him challenged, he was placed in the Extended French kindergarten program in the afternoons.

Sammy was an intelligent, loving, expressive child. He was adopted at a young age by two caring and committed parents. Most of his early experiences as an infant came from a Russian orphanage where he lived until he was adopted. Some of the difficulties Sammy experienced were emotional, attentional and maturational. For example, Sammy had difficulty sitting still in class while the teacher explained a lesson; he would often interrupt her with an unrelated comment. According to his former teacher, his language had improved a great deal since last year. Sammy now spoke clearly and did not seem to have any language deficits, but he often would get lost in his thoughts and had difficulty staying on task. For example, if the teacher was reading a story about Christmas and she would ask the class a question pertaining to the story he would raise his hand to tell the class something he did on the weekend. Most often, his comments were completely unrelated to the topic being discussed. Sammy also had difficulty staying on task during transitional times. For example, if it was time to change for gym class, the rest of the class would be in line ready, while Sammy was still putting on his shorts. Sammy was quite disorganised and would get overwhelmed when the task was not broken down. Sammy was able to carry out a task, but needed assistance each step of the way. So rather than overwhelm him by explaining the whole task and leaving him on his own, the teacher or the aide made sure that he received verbal guidance while on task.

Child #2—Matthew

Matthew attended the same English kindergarten class as Sammy. He only attended the English kindergarten class that was offered mornings. This was also Matthew's second year at this school. The first year Matthew attended pre-kindergarten at the same school. Both his pre-kindergarten teacher and his parents reported that he had a difficult year. When Matthew first started pre-kindergarten he began to have seizures which were controlled through medication. But, as the year progressed the seizures became more frequent and were longer in duration. As a result, more weaknesses became apparent. Matthew displayed many deficits in language, behaviour, fine and gross motor ability. While attending pre-kindergarten, Matthew did not have an aide, so the school assigned him a volunteer two mornings a week. According to his teacher, this helped the situation a little, but Matthew was still disrupting the class. For example, he could not follow the class routine, an adult needed to be close by him at all times because he would lose his balance, and he became upset and frustrated when he could not perform a task.

The following year it was decided that Matthew would attend kindergarten under the recommendation that there be an aide in class to assist him. When Matthew first started the year he was having some difficulties in gross motor control, but he was not in any danger. He was walking and running like the rest of the class. He displayed more difficulty in his fine motor skills. For instance, Matthew could not use a scissor, write his name, or make any intelligible marks. Matthew had some difficulties sitting on the floor or chair and standing up on his own. By December however, these abilities had improved and he was able to do these things on his own. He still had some problems with fine motor, but he was having less

uncontrollable arm spasms. He was also interacting with his peers more often. Matthew would communicate using one-word sentences, and was still quite resistant to using language. Matthew did not attend school for the full year. By February, regression was noted and his seizures increased. His doctors changed his medication and this seemed to have brought on some side effects. Most prominently it affected his balance. He could not walk, stand up, or sit down unassisted. A pillow had to be placed behind him when he would sit on the floor during circle time, because he would “drop” uncontrollably. By the end of March, Matthew stopped attending school. His mother felt that due to his balance problems, it would not be safe for him to attend school.

Child #3—Alessia

Alessia attended the same English Kindergarten class as Matthew and Sammy. She also attended the morning program. This was Alessia’s first year at this school. Prior to this year, her mother mentioned that she did attend some daycares, but they were unsuccessful. Initially, Alessia’s mother did not want her child to attend kindergarten at this school. She hoped that her daughter would attend a specialised centre for children with language deficits. Following the interview process, the centre deemed that Alessia would be best served in a regular school.

Alessia, a twin, was born prematurely and experienced many medical problems at birth, which resulted in small stature and developmental delay. She spoke in one-word sentences and had difficulty retaining language. Most of her communication was through the use of gestures. She was quite compliant and had no behaviour problems, except for the occasional time when her curiosity took the better of her. Alessia enjoyed pleasing others

and sought the attention of her peers and teachers at all times. At the beginning of the school year, she had difficulty sitting still and would get up during circle time to play with the surrounding toys. As the year progressed she was able to follow the routine quite well and change activities without difficulties. However, her major weaknesses remained her inability to acquire language and cognitive deficits. Despite the efforts to elicit language both in and out of class, Alessia did not progress further than the one-word stage. But, she did make many gains in maturation. Alessia was able to control her impulses more and remained on-task longer. She did not have any difficulties in gross motor skills despite her small stature, but her difficulties in fine motor skills still persisted. With much practice she was printing the first three letters of her name by the end of the year.

Child #4—Lara

Lara, Sammy's younger sister, was also adopted from a Russian orphanage at a young age. Lara and Sammy are not biologically related. Lara attended the half-day pre-kindergarten program and this was her first year at this school. Prior to entering this group, she attended both private and public daycares for short duration. As such, Lara only began the program in January.

In her everyday activities, Lara displayed behaviours that may be explained by her early experiences in an orphanage (Verhulst & Versluis-Den Bieman, 1995). For example, Lara would always eat her snack in class before the rest of the class. During snack time, Lara would wander around the class searching for handouts from the other children. Most of the other children would readily comply and share their snack with her. On one occasion, a child gave her a cracker, which she took with her mouth. Rather than taking the cracker with

her hand and then putting it in her mouth, Lara would simply open her mouth and they would feed her.

Lara displayed many other deficits in attention, fine motor ability and self-regulation, but the area that she suffered the most in was social and emotional development. Lara seldom played with her peers. She often tried to engage them in play, but did not have the skills to do so. Often, her peers turned down these initiations, because she did not have the ability to approach them appropriately (i.e., would steal a toy away from a peer in order to initiate interaction). During circle time, while the rest of the class was listening to a story for example, Lara would often be playing alone with some toys in class, usually under a table or in a corner. She would frequently get upset when reprimanded, usually by tantruming. However, Lara did not have any difficulties in language and was able to carry out an activity when the instructions were clear and broken down into manageable components. Lara worked well when she was one-on-one with an adult. Lara however, was quite non-compliant. She would seldom participate in an activity if the teacher explicitly asked her to, but would watch the others attentively as they engaged in the activity.

Child #5—Alex

Alex attended the same pre-kindergarten class as Lara. They both attended this class, which consisted of 13 other children and one teacher. This was Alex's first year at this school. Prior to entry to this group, he did not attend any other settings. This was his first experience in a playgroup.

Alex was a very quiet, loving little boy. He had severe language deficits and was developmentally delayed. Most of his language consisted of one-word unintelligible

utterances. He also had comprehension difficulties. If his teacher would ask him something he would often repeat “Ahhh”. The teacher would then repeat the question. This would usually end up in a game. Alex was very compliant and enjoyed the attention of adults and peers. He often went unnoticed in class because the teacher was busy attending to the other children. His compliance and willingness to socialise with peers often masked his weaknesses (i.e., language and attentional deficits and weak fine motor skills). He often made an effort to engage his peers in play, but he too did not possess the skills, most importantly, language to do so. These attempts to socialise with other children frequently ended up in failures because he did not have the skills to communicate with the other children (i.e., he would tap a peer with a toy hammer in order to get their attention). Alex attempted to join the others during circle-time, but frequently ended up wandering around the class while the others listened to a story or engaged in an activity. Alex had a very short attention span, he would move from one activity to the next quite quickly without really engaging in any task for an extended period. Most of his play can be characterised as solitary and parallel play.

Parents

Four parents (all mothers) of the children with disabilities integrated into the regular classrooms served as participants. Three of the mothers interviewed were not working outside of the home because they had decided that they should take some time off work to attend to their children. The fourth mother runs a home day care and has worked consistently throughout the year. The highest level of education attained by all the parents was high school and college level. Parents ranged in age from their mid-twenties to early

thirties. Most of the parents had realised that their children had special needs when their children had not attained the developmental milestones at the appropriate ages. With the passage of time, their behaviours did not ameliorate and as such they sought the advice of professionals.

Teachers

Eight (8) pre-kindergarten (n=3) and kindergarten (n=5) teachers from inclusive (n=4) and non-inclusive (n=4) settings also served as participants. The teachers were recruited from two schools within the English sector of a Montreal Island School Board. All teachers varied in teaching experience, ranging from this being their first year to having taught for almost 30 years. The teachers' level of education varied, ranging from a college level degree to a Master's degree (One teacher had obtained a Master's degree in mathematics). Most of the teachers have taught all elementary grade levels, except for two teachers who have only taught pre-school. All of the interviews were conducted in English despite the fact that two of the teachers taught the Extended French kindergarten program. All teachers were fluent in English.

Measures

Teacher Questionnaires

To evaluate their perceptions and attitudes, teachers were asked to fill in the **Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES)**; see Appendix A), constructed by Felicia L. Wilczenski (1992). This instrument was designed to measure teachers' attitudes toward including children with various disabilities in regular classes. This scale consists of 16 items in which the respondent must indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree

with the statements. The items are concerned with issues such as the feasibility of a regular class placement for students requiring social, physical, academic or behavioural accommodations in the classroom (Wilczenski, 1995).

Cronbach's alpha performed on each of the four factors record a coefficient for the physical item of .83, an academic coefficient of .84, a behavioural coefficient of .87, a social coefficient of .82 and an alpha coefficient for all the items of .92. The factorial results support the construct validity of the scale. Factors show sufficiently high reliability coefficients to indicate adequate internal consistency. The moderate factor intercorrelations indicated that the four factors are reasonably independent (Wilczenski, 1992). The purpose of the ATIES is to measure teachers' general attitudes toward inclusion. A high score on the ATIES indicates a more favourable attitude toward inclusive education.

Educators also filled in the **Mainstreaming Questionnaire** (see Appendix B), constructed by Garvar-Pinhas and Schmelkin (1989). This questionnaire is a 41-item Likert-type scale consisting of four subscales: Academic, Socio-Emotional, Administrative and Teacher Concerns. The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the attitudes of teachers and administrators toward mainstreaming handicapped students.

The first factor (Academic Concerns) focuses primarily on the potential detrimental effects of mainstreaming on academic progress in the classroom, and the second (Socio-Emotional Concerns) concentrates on the negative effects of segregation on the social and emotional development of handicapped children. The third factor clearly deals with Administrative Concerns regarding mainstreaming. The fourth factor (Teacher Concerns) reflects teacher concerns with issues pertaining to support, positive contact and experience

with youngsters who are handicapped, and in-service training (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989). High scores on the Academic, Administrative and Teacher Concerns subscales reflect negative attitudes, while high scores on the Socio-Emotional Concerns subscale reflects more positive attitudes toward mainstreaming handicapped students (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989).

Teacher Interviews

The second part of the data collection consisted of an interview (see Appendix C). The format of the teacher interviews was semi-structured and constituted a combination of both open and closed-ended questions pertaining to their attitudes and perceptions with respect to the integration process. Teachers were asked about their satisfaction with the availability of resources (i.e., support measures) and about the factors they believed influenced successful integration the most. Integrated classroom teachers were also asked whether they were given the choice to integrate a child with a disability in their classroom.

Parent Interviews

Parents of children with disabilities were also interviewed (see Appendix D) with respect to their perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion. The format of the parent interviews was semi-structured and constituted a combination of both open and closed-ended questions. Parents were asked if they were satisfied with the integration process, the degree to which they participated in the decision-making process of their child's integration, and if they would make any recommendations to ensure the successful integration of children with disabilities.

Child Observations

Social integration involves the participation of children with disabilities in purposeful collaborative play and interactions in performance of common activities with normally developing children (Lindsay & Desforges, 1986). This was measured through the use of direct observations (see Appendix E). The categories used for analysis were based on an adapted version of Rubin's Pretend Observation Scale (Rubin, 1985). Direct observation of the children's behaviours focused on the appropriateness of their behaviour, their interactions with their normally developing peers, their teachers, and on their overall adjustment to the setting. Peer interaction, such as the frequency and quality of their relationships were observed. For example, were children playing together because the teachers placed them in specific groups or were they initiating these interactions on their own? In what type of play did the children engage in (i.e., parallel, solitary or co-operative play)?

Running records were used to observe the children in their settings. The children were observed on four different occasions by the researcher for approximately one hour each time. In order to account for variability in behaviour, the observations were scheduled at different time intervals. An independent rater also observed all five children for approximately 25% of the time in order to estimate the degree to which the observers agreed on the behaviour categories.

Procedure

Once consent was obtained from the school board, principals, parents of the special needs children, and teachers (see Appendix F & G), the data were collected during a period

of five months using the measures described above. The researcher acted as a participant-observer, that is the researcher was a teacher's aide in one of the inclusive kindergarten classes. The researcher scheduled interviews with both the parents of the children with disabilities and the inclusive and non-inclusive teachers. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and later coded. In addition, both teachers of the integrated and the non-integrated classrooms filled in two questionnaires. Lastly, the researcher observed the children in their regular classroom in order to establish how well they were socially integrated. Once the data was collected, the researcher grouped the responses gathered from the interviews into categories according to the interview questions. The categories for the parent and the teacher interviews are presented below.

RESULTS

Results were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The data from the teacher questionnaires were analysed quantitatively, according to the coding and analysis instructions given by the authors. Due to the semi-structured format of the teacher and parent interviews, the results were analysed qualitatively. After having transcribed the tape-recorded interviews, the information was categorised and then analysed. The results are presented as categories of information, each reflecting the participants' responses.

Teacher Questionnaires

Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES)

Both inclusive and non-inclusive teachers were asked to fill in the ATIES. Respondents' raw and mean scores are presented in Table 1. No significant group differences were found after T-tests were performed. This can possibly be explained by the small sample size (N=8). As such, it is suggested to look at these results qualitatively. Even though statistical tests found no significant differences between the groups, the raw scores suggest that overall inclusive teachers have more favourable attitudes toward inclusive education than non-inclusive teachers do. This may be explained by the fact that these teachers were presently integrating children with disabilities in their class. Inclusive teachers' responses to this questionnaire may have been a result of social desirability.

Mainstreaming Questionnaire

The Mainstreaming Questionnaire is separated into four subscales. The respondents, both inclusive and non-inclusive teachers, filled in the 41-item questionnaire, and the questionnaires were then scored according to the instructions by the author. Responses on

the Academic, Administrative and Teacher Concern subscales are scored the same way. That is, high scores reflect less positive attitudes toward mainstreaming. However, high scores on the Socio-emotional Concerns subscale reflect more positive attitudes. The results are presented in Table 2 and they suggest that overall inclusive teachers had more positive attitudes toward mainstreaming on the Academic, Administrative and Socio-emotional subscales, whereas non-inclusive teachers had slightly more positive attitudes on the Teachers Concerns subscale. This may be explained by the fact that inclusive teachers were presently integrating children with disabilities in their classrooms, so their concerns regarding integration were more realistic and were occurring right “then and there”. On the other hand, because non-inclusive teachers did not have any children with disabilities in their classrooms, their concerns may not have been as prominent as that of their colleagues, reflecting a more positive attitude. Once again, T-tests did not reach statistical significance when looking for differences between groups. Given the small sample size (N=8), a qualitative approach becomes more informative.

Table 1**Mean Teacher Scores on the ATIES**

ATIES ^a					
Inclusive Teachers			Non-Inclusive Teachers		
	Raw Score	Mean Score		Raw Score	Mean Score
Teacher 1	54	3.37	Teacher 5	71	4.43
Teacher 2	82	5.12	Teacher 6	63	3.94
Teacher 3	77	4.81	Teacher 7	57	3.56
Teacher 4	76	4.75	Teacher 8	62	3.87
Mean	72.25	4.51	Mean	63.25	3.95

^a High scores on the Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES) indicate more favourable attitudes toward inclusive education. Possible raw scores range from 16 (least favourable attitude) to 96 (most favourable attitude). Responses were given on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 6, where 1 was strongly disagree to 6 strongly agree.

Table 2**Mean Teacher Scores on the Mainstreaming Questionnaire**

Mainstreaming Questionnaire^b				
	Academic Concerns	Admin. Concerns	Socio- emotional Concerns	Teacher Concerns
Inclusive Teachers				
Teacher 1	4.67	4.12	4.89	6.00
Teacher 2	3.11	3.25	5.11	7.00
Teacher 3	3.16	3.25	4.78	5.50
Teacher 4	3.28	3.60	4.11	6.17
Mean	3.55	3.55	4.72	6.17
Non-Inclusive Teachers				
Teacher 5	3.27	3.50	4.22	6.33
Teacher 6	5.39	3.87	3.22	6.00
Teacher 7	4.56	4.00	4.11	5.67
Teacher 8	3.77	3.87	4.89	6.17
Mean	4.24	3.81	4.11	6.04

^b Subscale scoring for the Mainstreaming Questionnaire consists of expressing each item on a scale of 1 to 7. A subscale score could range from 1 to 7, with high scores on Academic, Administrative, and Teacher Concerns subscales reflecting less positive attitudes, while high scores on Socio-emotional Concerns subscale reflecting more positive attitudes.

Teacher Interviews

Inclusive Teachers

Participants were asked a number of questions regarding their experiences during the integration process. Their perceptions and attitudes concerning these issues were asked during a formal interview. The results of the interviews are described below.

1. Steps involved in the planning process.

Inclusive teachers were first asked to describe how they were informed on the decision to integrate the children with disabilities in their classes, the steps that were involved in the planning process and the amount of input they were asked to make concerning the integration.

Most of the teachers (3 out of 4) were informed only prior to the first week of school that they were to integrate a child with disabilities into their classroom. That is, they either found out on their own, through interactions and observations with the child, or through the schools' administration informing them during the first week of school, that one of the students did have some "problems". The only teacher informed ahead of time taught the kindergarten class that integrated the three children. This teacher stated that at the end of the year preceding this study, she had heard that one of the kindergarten teachers would be asked to integrate children with disabilities in their class. At the beginning of the school year, she was informed that she was the teacher chosen to have the children in her class and that she would be getting a teacher's aide to assist her. This occurred during the first week of the school year, about a week prior to the children's entrance. She then met with the aide and the consultant. Each of the parents and children were met individually. This was the first

time that the teacher met the children, and she was not aware of their disabilities or case histories prior to this date.

All of the teachers mentioned that they would have liked to learn about the integration ahead of time in order to allow them to prepare the curriculum (i.e., activities, materials etc.) for the children. The teachers stated that they would have liked to learn more about the types of problems the children had, their histories and the areas in which they needed the most help. None of the teachers were asked to give any input or suggestions prior to the integration. One of the teachers was taken aback when she realised that one of her students had severe behavioural and language deficits and that the school did not inform her of the extent of these problems. This teacher then called a meeting with the consultant and the principal describing the child's problems. The school then decided that she also needed an aide in the class.

2. School resources and funds.

The second question teachers were asked was if they were aware of the types of resources or funds that were allocated to their schools for the purpose of integrating children with disabilities in the classroom. If so, the teachers were asked if they were sufficient. This question was geared more toward the teachers' knowledge of administrative issues such as the availability of funds to buy specialised materials or the ability to confer with specialists.

None of the teachers were aware of any special funds available for the purpose of pre-school integration. That is, they were not aware that funds existed so that specialised materials for the children with disabilities could be purchased. However, most of them knew that there were specialists at their schools, such as a psychologist and a speech therapist with

whom they could consult with. One of the teachers mentioned that children with special needs are usually coded by the school board, according to the Ministry of Education guidelines, and based on these codes, a certain amount of money is allocated to the school in order to pay for the services of the in-class aide.

3. Teacher training and in-service seminars/workshops.

The next question teachers were asked related to whether they received specialised training to work with children with disabilities and if so, how this training was acquired. This question was asked in order to obtain information on whether teachers felt adequately trained to teach children with disabilities in their classrooms, whether workshops or in-service training seminars were available in their schools.

All of the teachers stated that they had not received any special training to work with children with disabilities. They also indicated their willingness to take part in an extended training or in-service seminar offered by the school board, as long as it was at a minimal cost to them and didn't interfere with their personal time. The teachers also stated that they had participated in a one-day workshop this year, offered by the school board during a pedagogical day. This occurred in response to teachers' concerns expressed to the Special Education Consultant for more information on developmental disabilities. While happy with the contents of the workshop the teachers indicated the need for more seminars or workshops to focus on practical, "hands-on" issues, such as management techniques, and examples of adapted curricula. Teachers also felt that it was the school board's responsibility to provide them with the extra training.

Three of the teachers interviewed deemed their training to be insufficient and did not feel confident enough to work with children with disabilities. One of the teachers claimed to feel “nervous and inadequate.” On the other hand, another teacher felt confident and comfortable with her training and experience as a teacher in general. She had not received any special training to work with children with disabilities, but her training as a teacher in general and experience was well balanced. This particular teacher had the most teaching experience compared to the other inclusive teachers and was the only teacher who had obtained a Master’s degree. She also believed that teachers need to be well prepared for all types of children. Perhaps her confidence lies in the fact that she had a lot of experience teaching children in general. Interestingly, this teacher also indicated that she received a lot of support in class due to a co-operative and solid relationship with the aide.

In general, the teachers stated that they would like to see the school board offer them more workshops and seminars especially if they are going to integrate more children with disabilities in their classrooms. However, these teachers did not indicate that they would seek more training on their own time.

4. Integration policies and school support.

The next question that the teachers were asked was whether they were aware of the type of support their school provided for integration in the form of policies. For example, if their schools provided professional support. Once again, this question attempted to understand if teachers had any knowledge concerning the schools’ policies or philosophy.

None of the teachers were aware that their schools had specific policies concerning integration. One of the teachers responded that, based on her experience with the school

staff, her school was not in support of integration and they did not offer any support to teachers. She came to this conclusion because she was presently integrating a child with disabilities in her class and she felt like she did not have enough support. Furthermore, she stated that most teachers are left to their own devices under these circumstances.

One of the teachers stated that she believed that her school was supportive of integration but that sometimes, “what the school has to offer is not in the best interest of the child.” That is, the schools’ limited resources do not allow them to obtain all the support measures needed for inclusive education.

Most of the teachers sought support from the professionals when they were in need of assistance or suggestions for some children. However, none of the teachers mentioned if they worked in collaboration with the specialists to design specific programs for the children. All of the teachers stated that the professional support services available at the schools were not frequent enough. That is, the support professionals visited different schools daily and they shared their time among a large group of students and teachers. None of the teachers mentioned seeking support from the schools’ principals.

Teachers were also asked about the quality of their relationship with the support staff at their school. That is, did they have a good rapport with them, did they feel comfortable enough to approach them in times of need.

All of the teachers reported having a good rapport with the support staff, that is, the psychologist, the speech therapist, and the special education consultant. They all stated having met with them, one time or another, some more frequently than others. The pre-kindergarten teacher said that she did have a good relationship with the support staff but did

not see them frequently. She stated that this might be a result of the fact that the school board does not view the pre-kindergarten program as mandatory. However, the school does take the responsibility of hiring the pre-kindergarten teachers and they do notify administration if any children are experiencing difficulties in their classes.

All of the teachers felt comfortable about meeting with the professionals, especially when they offer practical rather than theoretical advice. One of the teachers mentioned that she enjoyed speaking to the psychologist because her advice was more practical than that of the others, and her suggestions were easy to implement. Once again, teachers complained of the infrequent visits of the support professionals. Furthermore, even with the professionals' advice, the lack of teaching materials hinders the implementing of their suggestions.

Teachers are often left to their own means.

5. Preparation time.

In order to ascertain whether teachers felt that integrating children with disabilities in the regular classroom was time consuming, teachers were asked if integrating children with disabilities involved extra preparation time. If so, they were asked how much more time it took and why it did so.

Two of the teachers responded that integrating children with disabilities did involve extra preparation time. One of these teachers mentioned that the children with special needs took up more of her time in class because she had to work more with them on a one-to-one basis than the rest of the children in the class. She explained that she had difficulty sharing her time evenly among all the children in class, especially when one of the children with disabilities needed her help. The other teacher said that she spent a lot of time preparing

activities geared to the child's level and setting up an evaluation system. She also suggested that perhaps she would not have spent so much time preparing during the year had she known before that she was going to integrate a child with disabilities in her class. This teacher stated that she would have prepared these activities during the summer if she had known ahead of time.

The other two teachers felt that it did not involve extra preparation time. One of these teachers mentioned that she easily adapted the program as the year went along, adjusting the activities to the child's level. She stated that the child integrated in her class did seek more of her attention compared to the rest of the children however, this did not interfere with her preparation time.

The other teacher stated that at this level (kindergarten) it did not involve more preparation time. She said that most of the year's objectives focused on socialisation and less on academics. If the children were unable to handle an activity she or her aide would adapt it on-line. She suggested that if their disabilities had been more severe, then perhaps an adapted program would have been required. But, other than attending too many meetings at the beginning of the year which required a lot of her time, the integration of these children in her class did not require extra preparation time as compared to the usual preparation required for the rest of the class. Teachers were also asked what they thought an ideal student-teacher ratio within an inclusive classroom was and if they had any comments on class size.

All of the teachers agreed that "less is better" and that they would rather have had a smaller class, especially for an inclusive classroom. The teachers deemed 15:1 to be a

good ratio. However, if there were an aide in the class, increasing the ratio to 19 or 20:2 would be acceptable. One of the teachers mentioned that it really depends on the type of students one has. A smaller class may be necessary when there is a child who requires a great deal of the aide's time. Also, if more than one child with a disability is being integrated in the same class, then a smaller classroom might be easier to handle. Since, class lists are settled prior to the first day of classes, it is difficult to assess the make-up of the typically developing students.

Two of the teachers mentioned that they felt that the type of disability children have is of no consequence and that all children should be included into regular classrooms. These teachers stated that every child is unique and they need to be considered individually. One of the teachers noted that it is important that all of the services be provided from the first day the children enter the classroom, especially for children who are severely disabled and require increased assistance.

Only one of the teachers indicated that the level of the child's disability did matter and that it may have an effect on the integration process. This teacher stated that the level of the child's disability should inversely effect class size and alter the class atmosphere. This teacher also noted that the child's behaviour toward other children bears importance, as for example, she claimed that an uncontrollable, aggressive child is probably not best served in a regular class.

6. Parental Role.

In order to assess whether teachers believed that parental role was an important factor to the integration process, teachers were asked if parents should take on a more active

role in the education of their children with disabilities. The teachers were also asked if they would be willing to have parents volunteer in their classrooms.

All of the teachers agreed that parents should take on a more active role in their children's education. Teachers stressed the importance of communication, whereby parents feel that there is an "open-door" policy with their child's teacher. They wished to see parents become more involved in their children's education for example, by following through on in-class activities at home. One of the teachers stated that it is very discouraging when parents are not interested. They agreed that parents should inform the teachers of any changes at home, as this may have an effect on their children at school. The teachers stressed that overall, it is very important to have a good rapport with parents if children are to be successfully integrated.

Two of the teachers indicated that they would be willing to have parents volunteer in class, as long as this was planned ahead of time. These teachers believe that having parents volunteer in the class is helpful especially when no other help is available and the teacher is responsible for a large group.

The other two teachers stated that they would rather have an aide in the class than a parent. They argued that parent volunteers are not as objective as they would like them to be especially when their children are in the same class. For example, they stated that some children are quite dependent on their parents, and having a parent in class with their child may actually impede their child's social development rather than encourage it.

7. Attitudes of the typically developing students in class—Do they suffer academically/socially?

Teachers were asked if they felt that the typically developing students in their classes suffered from being in an inclusive classroom. That is, do the typical students suffer academically due to a potentially impoverished classroom atmosphere?

Three of the teachers stated that they felt that ordinary children do not suffer academically or socially from being in an inclusive classroom. Even though children with disabilities do need an adapted program, this does not seem to affect the rest of the class. At worst, with keeping the program simple, one might run the risk that the other children in the class get bored. Some of the drawbacks mentioned were that children with disabilities seek more attention from teachers than do the typically developing children and that more time is spent explaining instructions and keeping the children with the disabilities on task. This however, does not suggest that the children are suffering academically. Rather, one of the kindergarten teachers suggested that the typical students notice that things are different in an inclusive classroom, and this makes them more sensitive toward people with disabilities. All of the teachers stressed that it is important to share their time evenly among all the children, and that teachers need to make this clear to all the children in the class. That is, they felt like they would be singling a child out if they spent more time with him/her than with the rest of the class.

8. Factors influencing successful pre-school integration.

Teachers were asked which factors they thought influenced successful pre-school integration the most?

Most of the teachers identified having an aide in class from the onset of the school year as the most important factor influencing successful integration. The next factors that the teachers mentioned were class size, increased support services, teacher training, more workshops/in-service seminars, and increased funds to buy specialised materials. They also argued that in order for teachers to plan for the integration of a child with a disability, it is necessary that they are notified ahead of time, preferably at the end of the preceding year, so they could use the summer to plan accordingly. A common theme among teachers related to their own attitudes and perceptions. Teachers stated that a teacher's attitude could influence the degree to which the children are socially integrated. For example, a teacher who plans activities so that the children with disabilities are interacting together with the other children, is more likely to have a class atmosphere that is accepting of individual differences. The acceptance of the child in the class, treating the child as an important member of the class and the desire to see them succeed are necessary elements of an inclusive classroom.

9. Ideal factors necessary for pre-school inclusion.

Ideally, the types of factors that teachers mentioned as essential to successful inclusion were increased parental involvement; increased communication between parents, school administrators, teachers and support staff. Teachers felt like they needed an increased support system at their schools, consisting not only of materials, but also of moral support and encouragement from the parents and the school's staff; including teachers, support personnel, and the principal.

One of the teachers also suggested that they should discuss disabilities as a theme, inviting members from the school, such as the psychologist to speak to all the children about disabilities and individual differences. This would hopefully enlighten children about individual differences and encourage the acceptance of all children.

10. Other comments.

At the end of the interview, teachers were asked if they had any comments about the integration process. Most of the teachers commented on inclusive education. One of the teachers stated that she had a difficult year and that it was probably due to a combination of factors, such as it being her first year teaching and the type of children that made up her class. This teacher suggested that perhaps it would be better if children with disabilities received special services in separate classes. Specifically, she alluded to the fact that these children should attend special closed classrooms for Math or Language arts as they enter grade one.

All other teachers stated their agreement with inclusion and deemed it beneficial for both the children with the disabilities and the rest of the class. However, they mentioned that it was important to weigh the needs of one to those of the majority. That is, each individual child needs to be looked at separately and the decision to integrate a child in a regular classroom needs to be based on the fact that it is the best possible place for that child and that it does not impede the other children's education. One of the teachers observed that while the kindergarten year went quite smoothly, she foresees difficulties in the upcoming years when the children enter the elementary grades. That is, since academics are not stressed in kindergarten as much as they are in the older grades,

the curriculum did not need to be adapted as much as it will later on. This teacher believes that inclusive education will not only be a challenge for the teachers but for the students as well.

Non-inclusive Teachers

Four non-inclusive classroom teachers were also interviewed concerning their attitudes and perceptions toward the integration of children with disabilities in the regular classroom. The responses from the interviews are described below.

1. School resources and funds.

Non-inclusive teachers were asked whether they were aware of the types of resources or funds that were allocated to their school for the purposes of integration of children with disabilities in regular classrooms. That is, were they aware if funds existed to purchase specialised teaching materials?

Most of the teachers were not aware of any special funds available at their school for the purposes of integration. Only one teacher stated that she was aware that some funds existed to buy special apparatus for children who require it. One of the teachers also mentioned that a certain amount of money is allocated for a special fund, but she was not aware of the amount. However, the teachers were aware that the schools offered the services of specialised professionals, that is a psychologist, a speech therapist and a social worker.

2. Teacher training and in-service seminars/workshops.

Non-inclusive teachers were also asked if they had specialised training to work with children with disabilities, and if so, how they obtained it. In addition, these teachers

were asked if they would be willing to attend in-service training seminars or workshops.

All of the teachers stated that they did not have any specialised training to work with children with disabilities. Two of the four teachers judged that they would be unable to teach children with disabilities due to lack of training. These teachers stated that they had not had enough experience with children with disabilities and felt like they would not be able to work with them in a regular classroom. These teachers suggested that lack of confidence in their abilities also plays a role.

The two other teachers stated that, even though they did not have any special training to work with children with disabilities, they felt comfortable with their experience and skills as teachers in general to teach an inclusive class. These teachers also expressed their willingness to get extra training, especially if more children with disabilities are going to be integrated in regular classrooms.

When asked if they would be willing to attend an extended training seminar or program, all of the teachers agreed except one teacher. This teacher stated that at this point in her life she would not be willing to attend an extended seminar or training program, because she does not foresee herself teaching for many more years to come. This teacher also mentioned that she has not gone back to school or taken any courses since she attended teachers' college thirty years ago. She stated that her family-life was too busy to spare any time for any extra training.

However, all of the teachers stated that they were willing to attend one-day workshops during pedagogical days. This unobtrusive method of attaining more information on certain areas was seen as a good way of learning about different

disabilities and behaviour management methods that teachers could easily implement. These teachers also suggested that any and all training programs should be subsidised by the school board. Teachers are not willing to seek additional training at their own cost. In general, they stated that increased teacher training is necessary if more children with disabilities are going to be integrated into regular classrooms, because they did not feel adequately trained to work with children with physical or intellectual disabilities.

3. Integration policies and school support.

Non-inclusive teachers were asked whether they were aware of their schools' integration policies or whether the school provided some other form of support, such as professional services. None of the teachers interviewed were aware of their schools' policy or philosophy on inclusive education.

All of the non-inclusive teachers mentioned that they had the opportunity to speak with the specialists at one time or another. However, they also stated that the specialists did not visit the schools often enough and that one visit per week is insufficient. Teachers would like the specialists to come to the schools more frequently; three times a week would be optimal.

The teachers also stated that they had a good rapport with the specialists and that they were comfortable approaching them if they had problems. One of the pre-kindergarten teachers mentioned that administration often told her to "wait and see" when she would inform them that one of her pupils was demonstrating difficulties. Since the children are pre-kindergarten aged, administration often minimises the seriousness of observed problems and claim that maturation will rectify them. This type of response

only served to further increase this teacher's frustration when she believes she can determine when one of her students is in need of immediate attention. This once again, might be tied into the fact that the pre-kindergarten program is not considered mandatory by the school board.

4. Preparation time.

Teachers were also asked whether they thought integration would involve extra preparation time. Even though these teachers were not integrating children with special needs in their classes, and they had little or no contact with children with disabilities in their teaching careers, it is important to understand their preconceptions.

All but one of the teachers stated that integration would involve extra preparation time. That is, above and beyond the time that is required to prepare a lesson for a regular class. Most of these teachers indicated that they would spend more time reading up on the child's disabilities, preparing activities, involving the child with the group, and preparing an adapted program.

However, only one teacher stated that even though it may involve some extra time, a teacher needs to prepare the lesson for the rest of the class anyway. So, a few extra minutes per day would not be burdensome, in fact, stating that "it's part of my job."

In general, teachers agreed that smaller classes are better. The average ratio teachers recommended for a kindergarten class was 18:1. On the other hand, the pre-kindergarten teacher suggested a smaller ratio of 12:1. Nevertheless, the teachers did not change their recommendation when asked what the ratio would be if there were an aide in the classroom. The teachers all agreed that adding an aide to the class should not change

the size of the class. Optimally, they would still favour a smaller classroom size.

Throughout the interview, teachers commented on the severity level of the child's disability. That is, they discussed the types of disabilities they felt comfortable with and those with which they did not.

One major issue teachers raised related to integrating children with behaviour problems. Two teachers indicated that they did not have the proper management skills for children with behavioural problems and they felt that these children were quite disruptive to the class. One of the teachers stated that "it's not fair to have a child with a behaviour problem in the class, because it's too disruptive." Moreover, this teacher suggested that children with severe disabilities would not be able to cope in a regular class even if an aide were present to assist the child. This teacher also felt that it is probably easier to integrate children with physical disabilities who are functioning at a normal level of intelligence. One of the teachers also suggested that children with certain disabilities, such as autism, should probably attend special schools, because teachers working within specialised schools are trained to teach these children properly.

The other two teachers stated that depending on the child's disability, integration must be planned for ahead of time. For example, a child with a physical disability may need specialised equipment such as a ramp, which must be prepared before the child attends school. Some of the teachers also mentioned that depending on the severity of the disability, an aide would be required to ensure that the teacher works with all the children. However, they agreed that inclusive education is beneficial for the typically developing children in the class, so they "don't grow up to be prejudiced."

5. Parental Role.

When teachers were asked if parents should take on a more active role in their children's education, they agreed and stated that it would be beneficial for all parents to be aware of what is happening in their children's life, especially their education. One of the teachers suggested that parents should attend workshops or seminars to learn different methods of managing their children. The teachers further stated that there should be more communication and co-operation among the teachers and parents and that parents should confide with teachers if their children are having difficulties.

The teachers were also asked if they would be willing to have a parent volunteer in their classroom. Two of the teachers would welcome parents as volunteers in their classrooms. They thought that the children would look upon the parent as another member of the class if they volunteered on a regular and consistent basis. Teachers that would not be willing to have parents volunteer in their classes worried that the children would become too dependent on their parent. They also argued that parents view their children subjectively and their presence may frustrate rather than ameliorate the classroom situation for some children.

6. Attitudes of the typically developing students in the class—Do they suffer academically/socially?

Non-inclusive teachers were asked if they thought the typically developing children would suffer academically or socially from being in an inclusive classroom. Teachers stated that normally developing children would not suffer academically from being in an inclusive classroom. However, socially, some of the teachers felt that the

typical children would suffer. They suggested that time would be misspent because the children would have to wait around as the teacher re-explained the instructions to the children with special needs. The teachers believed that an aide would be helpful in situations such as these, which require one-to-one assistance.

The other teachers held that the typical children would adapt to classroom dynamics as time went on and that while it might be difficult in the beginning, the typical children would not suffer socially or academically. Moreover, since the curriculum would only be adapted for that child in particular and not the rest of the class, then they did not see how the typical children could suffer academically. Some teachers did not believe that more attention would be given to the children with disabilities and assured that attention would not be taken away from the others. Some also suggested that the typically developing children in the class could serve as helpers to the children with disabilities.

7. Factors influencing successful pre-school integration

Teachers were asked which factors they thought influenced the successful integration of pre-school children with disabilities in the regular classroom.

All teachers stated that an in-class aide is essential when children with disabilities are being integrated in regular classrooms. They also all stated that more professionals, such as resource personnel, psychologists and speech therapists are needed to provide the teacher with support. Specialised materials and manipulatives geared for children with disabilities was also seen as necessary by all the teachers. These teachers all mentioned that they lack resources within the classroom and that they do not foresee themselves being able to cope in

a class without the proper materials. Teacher training was another theme all teachers raised as being important. Teachers stated that they need to be prepared before they can include children with disabilities in their classrooms, and that unless they receive additional training, they do not feel comfortable integrating children with disabilities.

8. Ideal factors necessary for pre-school inclusion.

In addition, non-inclusive teachers were asked which factors would be necessary for pre-school inclusion in an ideal situation.

Ideally, other factors teachers mentioned included co-operation and communication among administrators, parents, and teachers, decreased student-teacher ratio and adaptive curricula. Teachers' feelings and perceptions were also thought as necessary for successful pre-school integration. It was suggested that teachers who are not willing to integrate children with disabilities in their classrooms or who are not open-minded, or do not feel competent enough for the responsibility would probably not experience a successful integration process. In addition, teachers who are not given the option to integrate children with special needs in their class may not be as receptive to the process as those teachers who are given the choice.

Parent Interviews

Parents were asked a number of questions regarding their experiences during the integration of their children in regular classes. Their perceptions and attitudes concerning a number of issues were asked. The results of the interviews are presented below.

1. Decision-making process.

The first question that the parents were asked was how the decision was made to

integrate their child into a regular classroom. This question was asked in order to ascertain whether parents made this choice on their own or if other circumstances led them to make this decision.

All but one of the parents, stated that they always believed that their children would attend a regular neighbourhood school. The possibility of sending their children elsewhere never entered their mind. The most natural reaction was to send their children to their neighbourhood school.

Only one of the parents indicated that she did not originally want her child to attend a regular school. This parent stated that the only reason her daughter attended the regular setting was because her application to a specialised centre was rejected. When the child was interviewed at the centre, she performed better than the Centre's target clientele. As such, mother was told that her child would be better served at a regular school. Despite her efforts, the parent settled on sending her daughter to a regular kindergarten class.

2. Steps involved in achieving the process.

The next question parents were asked related to how the integration process was achieved. That is, did the parents initially contact the school and inform them of their children's difficulties, or did the children begin classes without informing the school?

The parents of Sammy and Lara, the adopted siblings, first contacted the school about their children's history before they began school. In Sammy's case, the school was contacted before he started his first year. Prior to entry to pre-kindergarten, Lara's parents met with the school's vice-principal, who suggested that Lara attend the half-day program in order to prepare herself for the following year when she would be attending kindergarten at

the same school. The parents were pleased with this decision because the other pre-school programs she had attended were unsuccessful. Lara began the pre-kindergarten program in January.

Matthew started pre-kindergarten (first year) without his parents notifying the school of his condition, because at that point in time he was not displaying any gross motor or balance problems. His seizures were under control through medication. However, as the year progressed the teacher noticed that he was having many problems in class. Concurrently, his seizures were increasing in frequency and duration. However, his parents were encouraged by the principal to keep him in school in hopes that he would improve. The school then decided that he would attend kindergarten the following year, with the assistance of an aide.

Alessia's parents did not want her to attend the regular kindergarten class. They had originally intended that she attend a specialised centre, however this did not work out because the centre decided that she would be served best at her neighbourhood school. Prior to the beginning of class, Alessia's parents met with the school board's Special Education Consultant, whom in conjunction with the school's administration decided that she would attend the half-day English kindergarten class with an aide.

During the first week of school, Sammy, Matthew and Alessia's parents met with the Special Education Consultant, the aide and the teacher. Each parent along with their child met these professionals separately. Sammy, Matthew and Alessia attended the same kindergarten class. There was one aide present in the class to assist the three children.

Alex's parents first contacted the school's principal. They were interested in Alex attending the same school as their older daughter, and disclosed that he did have some speech problems. The principal suggested that they fill out an application to pre-kindergarten for September. His teacher was not aware of the severity of his problems until he began school. The parents never met with the school's psychologist or the Special Education Consultant until the middle of the year. The meeting was only set up to discuss Alex's placement for the following year.

In general, most of the parents stated that at one point or another they met with either the school's principal or the Special Education Consultant. The school was aware of all the children's difficulties, but they only met officially beforehand with the parents of the three children attending the same kindergarten class.

3. Parental input/participation.

The third question parents were asked was how much they were involved in the planning process of their children's integration into regular classrooms. That is, did the school ask the parents to provide any input or to help with the decision making?

All parents stated that they were not asked to give any input into the decision making process of their children's integration into regular school. Most of the decisions were already made before the parents met with the school's administration.

As the year progressed the Consultant scheduled more meetings where parents were given the opportunity to voice any concerns. Most of the parents appeared satisfied with the process as a whole.

4. Relationships with school's staff.

Parents were next asked to describe the quality of their relationship with their children's teacher, aide, principal and support staff.

All except for one of the parents stated that they had a very good relationship with their children's teacher and that there was a lot of communication between them. One parent said that she felt, "very lucky to have a teacher that went that extra step for her child".

The other parent stated that she did not have a relationship with her child's teacher at all and that it was mostly superficial. This parent, Alessia's mother, did not have the opportunity to speak with her child's teacher as much as the other parents did because the child took the school bus to school and home after school, and was not picked up by the parent.

All parents also indicated that a relationship with the school's principal barely existed as they hardly ever had the opportunity to speak with him. The parents reported dealing with the school's Special Education Consultant on administrative matters.

The parents did have a good rapport with the aide. Matthew's parent stated that she had an excellent relationship with the aide because they communicated with each other on a daily basis and she was always aware of what went on at school. It was difficult for the parents to discuss this issue considering the interviewer was also the aide.

With respect to the professional support persons, that is the speech therapist and the psychologist, most parents mentioned that they didn't know the specialists very well, that they just met with them briefly on a few occasions. However, they did not suggest that their interactions were not positive. Sammy and Lara's parent pointed out that the psychologist

was very kind with her and that she offered a lot of practical advice and took time out of her schedule to speak with the lunch monitors about her children. Alessia's parent also mentioned that she had a very close relationship with the school's speech therapist and that her daughter also saw her privately outside of school. This parent stated that she spoke with the speech therapist regularly and that she was able to call her if problems arose.

5. Parent-teacher meetings and School Board policies.

Parents were then asked if regular meetings were scheduled with their children's teachers and if they communicated with them on a regular basis. *Did the parents feel that they had a good rapport with their child's teacher?*

Two of the parents stated that regular meetings were scheduled at the beginning of the year, but they became less frequent as the year progressed. Meetings were then scheduled if and when there were problems at school. However, these parents also mentioned that they spoke daily with either their child's aide or the teacher. A communication booklet was also set up with one of these children (Matthew), so the parent was always aware of the child's daily activities and progression.

The other two parents stated that regular meetings were not scheduled. They did attend parent-teacher conferences as the other children in the class did, but they did not attend any meetings with the teacher or the professional support. For one of these children (Alessia), a daily communication booklet was also set up so parents were up to date on her progress. Alessia's mother stated that she did not communicate with the teacher at all and that most of her communication was with the aide. This parent appeared quite upset by this situation. She said that at the beginning of the year she was told that regular meetings were

going to be held, but she was not made aware of any such meetings.

Parents were also asked if they were aware of the school's policy concerning inclusive education. All of the parents stated that they were not aware of any policies regarding integration at their children's school. Only one of the parents mentioned that she attended a school board meeting for parents of children in Special Education. This parent was not allowed to participate at the meeting because her children were pre-school aged. This parent was quite upset about this situation because she was told that only parents of elementary aged children were allowed to participate. At these meetings parents are given the opportunity to press for services for their children. This, coupled with the fact that the English sector was underrepresented at the meeting, led this parent to feel quite helpless and bewildered that more parents were not present at these meetings.

6. Teacher training and workshops.

In order to determine if parents were aware of their children's teachers' professional development or training, they were asked if the teachers had any prior experience with children disabilities and if they had received specialised training. The parents were also asked if the school board should allocate funds to train teachers of inclusive classrooms.

None of the parents were aware of the kind of training or professional development their children's teachers had. In addition, they did not know if their children's teachers had any previous experience with children with disabilities.

When asked if the school board should allocate funds for teacher training, or if they should provide them with more seminars or workshops, all parents agreed there should be. One of the parents stated that "the world is changing, there are more problem children than

before.” This parent suggested that teachers should get more training because the “make-up” of the classroom is not the same as it once was.

However, two of the parents initially answered quite differently when they were asked the same question. One of these parents suggested that they should have more schools for children with special needs. She mentioned that nothing would be accomplished anyway if teachers received extra training because the children would still remain in a regular classroom. The other parent suggested that the school should have a smaller class just for these types of children, implying that a closed special education class would perhaps be better.

7. Class size and student-teacher ratio.

Parents were then asked if any changes should be made to their children’s classes. That is, if they thought the student-teacher ratio in their children’s class was acceptable.

The parents stated that they would rather have had a smaller class size. But, since three of the children were in a class where an aide was present, the parents tended to worry less. However, they stated that if an aide were not present, they would probably not feel as comfortable with a group as large as 17 children. One of the parents of the pre-kindergarten children stated that 13 was probably a good number because a teacher would have too much difficulty looking after a group that was much larger.

Only one of the parents stated that this was an issue for her next year, when her child will be entering grade one. This parent responded that she was more worried for the following year, because the groups are usually larger in the upper grades.

8. School's resources or funds.

Parents were then asked if they knew what types of resources or funds were allocated to their children's school for the purposes of integrating children with disabilities in the regular classroom. For example, were they aware of a fund to buy specialised material?

All parents responded that they were not aware if their children's school allocated a certain amount of money for integration of children with disabilities in the regular classroom. These parents did not know if a fund existed so that the teachers could buy specialised materials. However, one of the parents mentioned that they were aware that the school board did employ specialists and that the school was presently using the services of a teacher's aide.

9. Special therapeutic services.

The next question parents were asked was if their children were receiving any therapeutic services either within or outside the school. This question was geared to generate whether parents believed that the schools offered enough services to their children and if not, what other solutions did they take.

The parents of the two children attending pre-kindergarten stated that their children were not receiving any services from within the school. However, one of these parents mentioned that her son was receiving speech therapy from the services of the city's children's hospital, one hour once every two weeks.

The parents of the three children attending kindergarten were all receiving some sort of services from the school. That is, Sammy was assessed by the school psychologist at the

beginning of the year and the parent communicated with the psychologist regarding her child on a regular basis.

Matthew's parent stated that the only school services received were language sessions the aide carried out with her son, twice a week for 30 minutes each time. At the beginning of the year, the aide met with the school's speech therapist to discuss a language program appropriate for this student. The aide then carried out the program according to the speech therapist's instructions and to her own knowledge and experience of children with disabilities. Matthew also received occupational therapy once a week for one hour outside of school and he also had a tutor come to the home.

Alessia's parent stated that her child only received services out of school, that is, she received both speech and occupational therapy once a week for one hour each. The parent did not mention that the aide also took her daughter out of class for language sessions. All of these parents did mention that the school provided the services of an in class aide for their children.

10. Factors influencing their decision to integrate and parental satisfaction.

The next question tapped into parental satisfaction of their children's integration into regular classrooms. That is, parents were asked if the decision to integrate their children into regular classrooms was difficult to make and which factors influenced their decision the most. They were also asked if they were worried that their children would be rejected by their peers.

Three of the four parents responded that the decision to integrate their children into a regular classroom was easy to make and that they never thought of placing their children in

another setting. Only one of the parents stated that she was not satisfied and that she had wanted her daughter to attend a specialised centre for a few years and then perhaps integrate her into a regular school at a later time.

The parents stated that there was no one factor or reason that led them to place their children in a regular classroom, they just never thought of any other setting. One parent however, mentioned that knowing there would be an aide in the classroom helped her make her decision.

Some of the parents did say that they were worried that their children may be teased or rejected by their peers, but this did not change their decision. These parents were quickly reassured after they saw that their children were quite happy being in school.

11. Factors influencing integration.

Parents were asked to list which factors they thought influenced the successful integration of pre-school children with disabilities the most.

Increased professional services such as speech therapy, the use of an in class aide, experienced teachers, smaller classes and increased communication among the parents and teachers were the factors that the parents listed as most essential to the integration of children with disabilities in the regular classroom. Parents also emphasised group effort, that is, they would like to work more closely with teachers and support personnel in order to be consistent with their children at home.

12. Recommendations.

Parents were also asked what recommendations they would make in order to ensure the successful integration of children with disabilities. They recommended many of the

same issues highlighted as most important in the previous question. In addition, one of the parents mentioned that she would recommend that parents get more involved in their children's education and that schools should embrace this and work together with parents to ensure the successful integration of children with disabilities.

Child Observations

Overall, the children appeared to be adjusted to the settings. According to the observations, children interacted with their peers, teachers and the aide. Children seemed to be comfortable in their classrooms and were well adapted to the routines. Interestingly, pre-kindergarten children spent most of their time interacting and conversing with the teacher or the aide than with their peers. Whereas, the kindergarten-aged children shared their time more evenly, they interacted with the adults as well as their peers. This demonstrates that older children engage in more sophisticated types of interactions, seeking relationships with peers as well as adults. This may also suggest that maturation and experience play a role in the types of interactions children engage in.

In addition, pre-kindergarten-aged children spent most of their playtime in solitary or parallel play, whereas the older children engaged more in co-operative/group play. Perhaps this was a reflection of the classroom's organisation. The kindergarten class was more traditional, that is, the children spent most of their time in directed-activities, such as circle-time or art activities, organised by the teacher. These children were not given the opportunity to engage in free-play as often as the pre-kindergarten children were.

The younger children also engaged in more wandering and onlooker activity than their older-aged peers did. It seemed as though the kindergarten children spent less of their

time wandering or looking at others, because their activities were structured, leaving no room for unoccupied time. The older children also displayed more affection toward their peers and received more signs of affection than the younger children. Furthermore, the pre-kindergarten-aged children were more often objects of abuse, that is they were teased and shunned away more often than the kindergarten-aged children were. Perhaps, younger children have more difficulty accepting children's individual differences than older children do. One interesting dynamic observed in the pre-kindergarten class, was that the children often wandered from one activity to the next, attempting to engage or interact with as many children as possible. Often, these attempts were turned down. The younger children seemed to have shorter attention spans than the kindergarten-aged children. For example, when one activity did not interest them, they quickly switched to the next one, whereas older children persisted longer on tasks.

These results seem to highlight the importance of classroom dynamics and maturation. Older children, despite their disabilities tend to seek out and interact more with their peers than younger children do. Furthermore, children with disabilities appear to thrive and succeed in classrooms that are more structured and directive (Winzer, 1996). However, these children were not given the opportunity to engage in free-play as often as the younger children were. Lastly, it seems as though younger children have lower tolerance levels for children's idiosyncrasies. According to Piagetian theory, developmentally, young children tend to view the world in very rigid, egocentric ways, ignoring things that appear different (Vasta, Haith & Miller, 1992).

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrate that the children were successfully integrated in their regular pre-school classrooms. They participated in purposeful collaborative play and interactions, in addition to common tasks with the typically developing children. According to Lindsay and Desforges (1986), these children were socially integrated into their settings. Many factors have contributed to these results however, and according to parental and teacher responses, schools can still benefit special needs children by providing support resources.

Based on the results of the *Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale* (ATIES), inclusive teachers had more favourable attitudes toward inclusive education than non-inclusive teachers did. It appears as though inclusive teachers may have responded more favourably toward inclusive education than non-inclusive teachers because they were in the process of integrating children with disabilities in their classrooms.

In addition, inclusive teachers responded more positively on the Academic, Administrative and Socio-emotional subscales of the *Mainstreaming Questionnaire*. Non-inclusive teachers had slightly more positive attitudes on the Teacher Concerns subscale than their colleagues. For example, non-inclusive teachers responded more favourably on item 29, "Regular class teachers are sufficiently trained to deal with the integration of children who are handicapped in a regular class." While they were not in the process of integrating children with disabilities in their classes, non-inclusive teachers may have a more idealised perception than teachers currently integrating children with disabilities. Feelings of inadequacy reported by inclusive teachers may have led them to agree less with such items.

Furthermore, inclusive teachers were not satisfied with the method in which the integration process was achieved. Most of these teachers were not informed ahead of time that children with disabilities would be integrated in their classrooms. In accordance with the literature (see Beaupré, 1990), teachers stated that this did not give them enough time to prepare for the integration process. They emphasised that if inclusive education is to become the norm, then teachers must be notified ahead of time in order to adequately prepare.

Both inclusive and non-inclusive teachers were unaware of the school's policies on inclusive education and the availability of resources or funds for the purposes of integration in the regular class. However, they were aware of the specialised services offered by the support staff at their schools. Many of the teachers did confer with the specialists at some point during the year and they all stated that they did have a good relationship with these individuals. However, they all agreed that the services of the support staff were required more often than was available. They suggested that the school board should provide more resources for teachers integrating children with disabilities in their classes.

None of the teachers had received any specialised training to work with children with disabilities. Many of the inclusive teachers stated that they felt inadequately prepared to teach an inclusive classroom and non-inclusive teachers disclosed that they did not have enough practical or theoretical experience with children with disabilities. If educators are not properly trained to work with this population, they may feel incompetent, which in turn may hamper the children's development (DeHaas-Warner, 1994). When asked if they would be willing to attend an extended training seminar or program, many of the teachers agreed with the concept but were unwilling to make the commitment. Teachers were more

interested in workshops conducted during professional or pedagogical days. They did not appear interested in receiving extra training that may impede on their personal time or be at a cost to them.

Many individuals think that integrating children with disabilities in the regular classroom is burdensome and requires extra preparation time and effort on the part of the teacher (Rampaul & Freeze, 1991). More non-inclusive than inclusive teachers stated that integrating children in regular classes would require extra preparation time. It is possible that non-inclusive teachers or teachers with less experience with children with disabilities have unrealistic preconceptions of inclusive education. As such, they envision inclusive education as complex and time consuming.

Teachers agreed that parents should be more involved and active in their children's education. They emphasised communication and teamwork as keys to successful integration. Teachers believe that parents should work in conjunction with the classroom teacher and the support staff, and that they must be consistent with the school's approach when working with their children at home. However, most of these teachers were not willing to have a parent volunteer in their classroom because they consider parents as too subjective.

The literature has often raised the issue that typically developing children may suffer academically or socially in an inclusive classroom. That is, a classroom that includes children with disabilities may be detrimental for the typical student due to an impoverished classroom atmosphere (Green & Stoneman, 1989; Staub & Peck, 1994-95). Most of the teachers responded that the typical students were not suffering academically or socially in an

inclusive classroom because the curriculum was only adapted for that child in particular and not the rest of the class. None of the children in this study seemed to be detrimentally affected by being in an inclusive classroom. However, teachers indicated that they did have difficulty sharing their time among the children in their class because some children with disabilities required extra assistance. Teacher aides were seen as solutions to this problem. This is reminiscent of Rampaul and Freeze's (1991) investigation, where they found that one of the main teacher concerns was the lack of attention to regular students in a mainstreamed classroom.

Often in the literature, teachers have commented on the fact that classroom sizes are too large and that the student-teacher ratio is inadequate (Rampaul & Freeze, 1991). That is, in public schools, the student-teacher ratio within a pre-school classroom ranges from 17:1 to 20:1. All teachers agreed that the student-teacher ratio should be smaller in an inclusive classroom. However, inclusive classroom teachers stated that if a teacher's aide was present full time in class, then the class size could remain untouched. On the other hand, non-inclusive teachers suggested that an aide would not change their desire for a smaller class.

An issue that most teachers commented on was that the severity of a child's disability might influence their decision to integrate a child with a disability in a regular classroom. Many non-inclusive teachers thought that it would be more difficult to integrate a child with a behaviour problem than a child with a physical disability. Children with behaviour problems are seen as disruptive because they are more difficult to work with than are children with physical or mild intellectual handicaps. On the other hand, inclusive teachers mentioned that the type of disability is not related to whether or not children should

be included in a regular classroom. This impartiality is probably a direct result of their experience with children with disabilities. This finding is in accordance with McDonald et al. (1987), who suggested that those teachers with greater experience in teaching handicapped children had more positive attitudes toward them.

As the literature suggests, children with disabilities are more successfully integrated in a regular classroom when planning for certain factors occurs (Winzer, 1996). One such factor indicated by all teachers was that a teacher's aide is essential from the onset of the school year when integrating children with disabilities in the regular classroom. Typically unable to meet with the schools' specialists as often as they like, teachers need to have support established within the classroom itself. The sense of "perceived competence" is important for teachers because they must feel like they are in control of situations they have never before experienced. This will enable them to have successful outcomes. Support within the classroom itself, in the form of an aide can replace confidence in teachers who are weary over inclusion.

Other factors inclusive and non-inclusive teachers suggested as elements of successful inclusion were increased support services such as teacher training, in the form of workshops/in-service seminars, funds for specialised materials and decreased class size. Inclusive teachers also highlighted that they need to plan for the integration of a child with a disability ahead of time. As such, schools should inform teachers prior to the beginning of the year if a student with a disability will be included in the regular classroom.

In summary, teachers were positive about integration at the early childhood level. However, without the continued support from parents, administrators and support personnel,

teachers cannot successfully integrate children with disabilities in a regular classroom. There are many factors that contribute to successful inclusion. One cannot simply place a child in a regular class without considering the variables that may enhance or undermine the situation.

All but one of the parents stated that they had wanted their children to attend a regular neighbourhood school. Most of these parents never considered that their child would have to attend a specialised school or centre. However, one parent had wanted her daughter to attend a specialised centre. This parent suggested that her daughter would not receive the same specialised services at a regular school that she would receive if she attended a specialised school. The decision to integrate a child into a regular classroom is particularly difficult for parents for fear that their children may not receive sufficient or specialised services as needed in the regular classroom (Guralnick, 1994).

Despite the fact that parents were not given the opportunity to work together with the school concerning the decision-making process, overall they were satisfied with the process itself. Most of the parents met with the school at the beginning of the year, but meetings were not scheduled on a regular basis. However, if problems did arise, parents were contacted and meetings were held at that time. That is, rather than scheduling meetings on a regular basis as a preventative measure, the schools only held meetings when there was a crisis in the classroom that had to be dealt with immediately. This did not appear to frustrate parents or bring them to re-consider their decisions.

It seems as though parents were not aware of their children's school's policy concerning inclusive education nor were the parents aware if specialised funds or resources existed for the same purposes. In order for parents to become their children's advocates in

the years to come, they must become aware of the school's policies. Seeing that inclusive education is a relatively young concept at this school board, parents may have to advocate for more services in the years to come and as new needs arise.

Parents were aware that the school provided specialised support services, such as the services of a speech and language therapist and a school psychologist. They suggested that these services were not available and that they obtained extra services for their children externally. They also indicated that they had a good rapport with the support staff, teachers, and the principal. However, they dealt less often with the school's principal than they did with the special education consultant. Interestingly, the school's principal did not play a major role in the planning process. The school board's special education consultant and the vice-principal made most of the decisions. Perhaps the principals' role within this school board does not include inclusion? However, the school board's written policy states that the principal, in conjunction with the teachers and the specialists must prepare the children's IEP (De Stefano et al., 1996).

Parents were not aware of their children's teachers training or professional development or if they had any prior experience with children with disabilities. Most parents agreed that the school board should allocate funds for teacher training. They viewed professional development as an important aspect of inclusive education.

The factors parents underscored as essential for inclusive education were, the use of a teacher's aide, increased support services, teacher training, smaller class sizes and increased communication among teachers, parents and administrators (Saint-Laurent & Fournier, 1993). Consistent with findings from the literature, parents revealed a preference

for modifications yielding direct benefits to their children such as smaller classroom sizes and the availability of support personnel (Simpson & Myles, 1989).

Overall, the results of the present study are consistent with the findings from the literature (Winzer, 1996). It is important to note that these schools have just begun integrating children with disabilities in their regular classrooms and until recently most of these children were served in special classes within the regular school. Children with severe behavioural problems or disabilities were served elsewhere. For example, “extra-territorial” agreements with neighbouring specialised schools or centres allowed them to place these children elsewhere. Despite the fact that integration is a board-wide policy, these schools have just begun putting policy into practise.

The teachers and parents interviewed in this study agreed that improvements must be made to their schools if children with disabilities will continue to be included in regular classrooms. Ferguson (1995) defined inclusion as:

[Inclusion is] a process of meshing general and special education reform initiatives and strategies in order to achieve a unified system of public education that incorporates all children and youths as active, fully participating members of the school community; that views diversity as the norm; and that ensures a high- quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching and necessary supports for each student (p.286).

However, if inclusion is to be achieved, as defined by Ferguson, then inherent changes within school boards and communities must be achieved. School boards must consider intensive reform to education in the form of policies, support services and curricula.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the fact that public schools in Quebec considering inclusive education must be made aware of the many supports needed to achieve this goal. Simply placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms, without providing them with the proper supports such as experienced teachers, smaller class sizes, planning, support services and resources, may not lead to successful inclusion. In this study, the children were socially integrated and adjusted to the regular classroom despite the fact that both teachers and parents underscored the importance of providing children and teachers with the tools necessary for inclusive education. This implies that the quality of the integration must also be considered.

Parental and teacher perception of inclusive education also influences the way the children are integrated into the regular classroom. This study has shown that teachers who feel inadequately prepared or incompetent may have less favourable attitudes toward inclusive education. Research has clearly shown that teachers' attitudes determine whether inclusion can occur or not (Bunch & Vales, 1997).

Despite the exploratory basis of this study, it has shed light on the fact that inclusive education within public schools still needs to be planned for accordingly. Children with disabilities cannot simply be placed in regular classrooms without the necessary support from the school board. Changes to policies at the school board level must be considered, that is, class sizes must be reduced, the number of professional support must be increased, teacher aides must be provided and there must be an accepting overall attitude toward inclusive education. This study has demonstrated that even in small suburban schools as

described above, inclusion can occur. However, the quality of the inclusion is dependent on the ability of the school to provide the appropriate measures (Downing, Morrison, & Berecin-Rascon, 1996). Many schools attempt to integrate children in their regular classrooms, but overlook essential factors like providing experienced teachers, decreasing class size, adapting the curriculum, and including parents in the decision-making process. It is essential that members of the school board, schools, and communities work together to achieve this process.

The importance of successful inclusion at the early childhood level has implications for later social and academic achievement. The acceptance of children with disabilities by their peers, teachers and academic community begins at an early age. The earlier these children are socially integrated into the school system, the sooner they will be accepted into the community. This implies that the foundation for social integration of individuals with disabilities is set at the early childhood level.

This study also has implications for teacher training programs, for the development of pre-service and in-service courses, and other activities dealing with the development of teacher effectiveness for inclusive education. Perhaps more teacher training programs at the university level must include skills that inclusive teachers need. Future research assessing the quality of university level teacher training programs must be conducted. In addition, collaborative research projects between universities and public pre-school and elementary schools must be carried on.

It is important to underscore that the basis of this case study was for exploratory research. The small sample size and the lack of extensive empirical data contributed to the

limitations in generalisability. The need for parental and teacher questionnaires assessing attitude toward inclusive education, with appropriate socio-metric properties must be considered in future studies. In addition, a combination of direct observational methods must be considered when conducting future studies on inclusive education.

Furthermore, future research on inclusive education within public schools in Quebec needs to be conducted on a larger scale. That is, longitudinal studies following a number of children with disabilities, randomly chosen from different schools, and followed throughout the elementary level is recommended. This will determine which factors contribute to children's academic achievement and social integration. In addition, teachers' perceptions and attitudes throughout the pre-school and elementary level must be assessed. It stands to reason, that if teacher concerns are addressed in adequate fashion and if they feel like they have a say about the decision to integrate children with disabilities in their classes, then their attitude toward the process as a whole will be more positive. Since parental attitude also influences the integration process, parents of both children with and without disabilities must be evaluated. That is, parental perception and attitude of typically developing children must be considered in future studies because it also plays a role in the schools' overall attitude toward inclusion (Giangreco, Edelman, Cloninger, & Dennis, 1993).

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APPENDIX A

Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale

This scale concerns “inclusive education” as one method of meeting the legal requirements for placing students with disabilities in the “Least Restrictive” educational environment. Inclusive education means that all students with disabilities are mainstreamed and become the responsibility of the regular class teacher who is supported by specialists.

Instructions

On the blank line, please place the number indicating your reaction to every item according to how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Please provide an answer for every item.

- | Strongly
Agree
6 | Agree
5 | Agree
Somewhat
4 | Disagree
Somewhat
3 | Disagree
2 | Strongly
Disagree
1 |
|------------------------|--|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| _____ 1. | Students whose academic achievement is 2 or more years below the other students in the grade should be in regular classes. | | | | |
| _____ 2. | Students who are physically aggressive toward their peers should be in regular classes. | | | | |
| _____ 3. | Students who cannot move without help from others should be in regular classes. | | | | |
| _____ 4. | Students who are shy and withdrawn should be in regular classes. | | | | |
| _____ 5. | Students whose academic achievement is 1 year below the other students in the grade should be in regular classes. | | | | |
| _____ 6. | Students whose speech is difficult to understand should be in regular classes. | | | | |
| _____ 7. | Students who cannot read standard print and need to use Braille should be in regular classes. | | | | |
| _____ 8. | Students who are verbally aggressive toward their peers should be in regular classes. | | | | |

- _____ 9. Students who have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally should be in regular classes.
- _____ 10. Students who need training in self-help skills and activities of daily living should be in regular classes.
- _____ 11. Students who use sign language or communication boards should be in regular classes.
- _____ 12. Students who cannot control their behaviour and disrupt activities should be in regular classes.
- _____ 13. Students who need an individualised functional academic program in everyday reading and math skills should be in regular classes.
- _____ 14. Students who cannot hear conversational speech should be in regular classes.
- _____ 15. Students who do not follow school rules for conduct should be in regular classes.
- _____ 16. Students who are frequently absent from school should be in regular classes.

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APPENDIX B

Mainstreaming Questionnaire

The placement of handicapped children into regular classes has been a source of continuing concern to all educators. The attached questionnaire is an attempt to address some of these concerns and needs of educators regarding various disabilities and mainstreaming. A number of conflicting and opposing points of view are included. Your opinion will help to provide information regarding those areas of mainstreaming that contribute to successful experiences for handicapped students as well as those areas that impede progress in the regular classroom.

Since there is no universal agreement about the meaning of the term handicapped, in the present context, the term handicapped would refer to the type of child who is most typically found in public schools (i.e., learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded). Please use this frame of reference when responding to the items in the questionnaire.

Please try to respond to all the statements as honestly and frankly as you can. Please do not omit any. Do not sign your name.

Instructions: Respond to each of the items as follows:

Agree very strongly:	+3	Disagree very strongly:	-3
Agree strongly:	+2	Disagree Strongly:	-2
Agree:	+1	Disagree:	-1

For example, if you agree very strongly with a statement, write a +3 on the short line preceding the statement, but if you should happen to disagree with it, write a -1 in front of it.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

- _____ 1. Children with handicaps are more likely to be perceived as different when placed in a special class as opposed to when they are placed in regular classes.
- _____ 2. Principals believe that special class placement has a negative effect on the social and emotional development of a child who is handicapped.
- _____ 3. Integrating children who are handicapped with normal children provides the handicapped child with appropriate role models.
- _____ 4. A child with a handicap will be disruptive in a regular classroom.
- _____ 5. The responsibility of educating a child who is handicapped in regular classes has an adverse effect on non-handicapped children's education.
- _____ 6. The child who is handicapped in the regular classroom consumes too much of the teacher's time and attention.
- _____ 7. Principals believe that regular class placement for a child who is handicapped will contribute to a more normalises environment for the youngster.
- _____ 8. Most principals believe that a child who is handicapped will be more successful in a self-contained class than in a regular class.
- _____ 9. As a result of placement in a regular classroom, a youngster with a handicap will develop a more positive attitude toward school.
- _____ 10. Special class pupils fail to make appropriate academic progress when they are integrated into the regular classroom.
- _____ 11. It is unnecessary to have administrative support in order to ensure successful mainstreaming programs for children with handicaps.
- _____ 12. The child with a handicapping condition in the regular classroom cannot learn as effectively as compared to handicapped students in self-contained classes.
- _____ 13. The extra attention students with handicaps require will be to the detriment of the other students.
- _____ 14. Principals believe that youngsters who are handicapped will have detrimental effects on non-handicapped children in a regular class.
- _____ 15. Most principals are not familiar with current legislation, regulations, and procedures governing the rights of students with handicapping conditions.

- _____ 16. In general, principals feel that a child who has a handicap cannot develop positive social relationships with non-handicapped children.
- _____ 17. The shorter attention span of students with handicaps makes them unable to benefit from placement in a regular classroom.
- _____ 18. A child with a handicap will be more motivated to learn in a regular classroom.
- _____ 19. Positive contacts and experience with children who are handicapped will lead to increased positive attitudes towards these children.
- _____ 20. While theoretically mainstreaming may seem like a good idea, in reality, mainstreamed students have great difficulty adjusting to the regular classroom.
- _____ 21. Alternatives to special class placements should be utilised to help children who are handicapped interact with non-handicapped children.
- _____ 22. Principals believe that a youngster with a handicap cannot make appropriate academic progress when they are integrated into the regular classroom.
- _____ 23. Children who are handicapped in a regular classroom will be considered different by other non-handicapped peers.
- _____ 24. In general, principals do not believe that a youngster who is handicapped can succeed in a regular classroom.
- _____ 25. The inclusion of students who are handicapped in regular classrooms leads to disruption of regular routines.
- _____ 26. Integration of students with handicapping conditions into the regular classroom will not harm the educational achievement of regular class students.
- _____ 27. Children with handicaps placed in special classes hold more negative attitudes toward school when compared with those placed in regular classes.
- _____ 28. The responsibility of educating children who are handicapped in regular classes is too costly and creates a tremendous financial burden on the public school system.
- _____ 29. Regular class teachers are sufficiently trained to deal with the integration of children who are handicapped in a regular class.
- _____ 30. The expectation of success on the part of the teacher working with a youngster who is handicapped is an important variable contributing to positive mainstreaming outcomes.

- _____ 31. Segregating children who are handicapped in special classes contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy that operates when children are labelled.
- _____ 32. Teachers are more likely to accept children who are handicapped if they understand their capabilities and limitations.
- _____ 33. Regular classroom teachers need additional training if they are to be successful in teaching youngsters who are handicapped.
- _____ 34. Principals are well-prepared and trained to deal with educating children with handicapping conditions in public schools.
- _____ 35. Integration of children who are handicapped will require significant changes in regular classroom procedures.
- _____ 36. Principals are overburdened by the requirements for educating children who are handicapped in regular classes.
- _____ 37. The presence of a child with a handicap in the regular classroom will not inhibit the progress of his/her non-handicapped peers.
- _____ 38. The presence of a child with a handicap in the regular classroom reduces teaching efficiency.
- _____ 39. Special class placement has a negative effect on the social and emotional development of a student who is handicapped.
- _____ 40. Due to their lack of self-control, it is inadvisable to integrate children with handicapping conditions into regular classes.
- _____ 41. Regular classes help prepare the person who is handicapped to obtain jobs and attain a more productive and independent place in society.

APPENDIX C

Teacher Interviews-- Questions

1. How were you informed on the decision to integrate this child with disabilities in your classroom? What kind of input were you asked to make? How was the planning process achieved (Integrated classroom teachers only)?
2. What types of resources and funds (i.e. to buy specialised teaching material, ability to confer with specialists, frequency of in-service seminars) have been allocated to your school for the integration of children with disabilities in the regular pre-school classroom? Are they sufficient?
3. Have you received specialised training to work with children with disabilities? If so, how did you obtain this training? Did the School Board provide you with in-service seminars or workshops?
4. What type of support does your school provide for pre-school integration policies (i.e., support personnel, support from school's principal)?
5. Does pre-school integration involve extra preparation time? How much time is needed to prepare for an adapted curriculum?
6. Should parents take on a more active role in their disabled children's education?
7. Will typically developing students suffer from being in an inclusive classroom?
8. Which factors do you think influence successful pre-school integration the most?
9. In an ideal situation, which factors would be necessary for pre-school inclusion?

APPENDIX D

Parent Interviews-- Questions

1. How was the decision to integrate your child into a regular pre-school classroom made?
2. How was the integration process achieved?
3. What kind of input were you asked to make in the planning process of your child's integration?
4. Describe the quality of your relationship with your child's teacher, principal and support persons.
5. Were regular meetings scheduled with your child's teacher while he/she attended pre-school? What types of policies did the School Board generate with regard to pre-school integration?
6. What kind of training or professional development has your child's teacher obtained? Should the School Board allocate funds to train or consult with inclusive teachers?
7. Should any changes be made with the number of children in your child's classroom?
8. What types of resources and funds (i.e. to buy specialised teaching material, ability to confer with specialists, frequency of in-service seminars) have been allocated to your school for the integration of children with disabilities in the regular pre-school classroom? Are they sufficient?
9. Is your child receiving any therapeutic services? If so, please describe the frequency and quality of the services?
10. Was this decision to integrate your child into a regular classroom a difficult one? Which factors influenced your decision the most? Were you afraid that your child would be rejected by his/her peers?
11. Which factors do you think influence successful pre-school integration the most?
12. What recommendations would you make in order to ensure the successful integration of children with disabilities?

APPENDIX E

Child Observations-- Behaviour Categories

1. Social Play:

- a) **Solitary Play:** The child plays apart from other children at a distance greater than two feet (depending classroom area). The child usually plays with toys that are different from those other children are using. The child concentrates on his/her own activity and pays little or no attention to those around him/her.
- b) **Parallel Play:** The child plays independently but is very attentive to those around him. The child often plays with toys that are similar to those that the children around him/her are using. The child plays beside or in the company of other children but does not play with his/her peers.
- c) **Co-operative/Group Play:** The child plays with other children and there is a common goal or purpose to the activity (Must specify who initiated this interaction i.e., child, peer, and teacher).

2. Non-Play Behaviours:

- a) **Wandering:** The child is wandering aimlessly around the room with no specific purpose and without interest in those around him/her.
- b) **Onlooker:** The child watches the activities of others but does not enter into an activity.
- c) **Conversation with adult:** Child is engaged in a conversation with the teacher or an aide (verbal or non-verbal).
- d) **Conversation with peer:** Child is engaged in a conversation with a peer (verbal or non-verbal).
- e) **Aggression:** Non-playful physical contact with another child. For example: hitting, kicking, slapping, grabbing, etc.
- f) **Abused:** The child is the object of verbal or physical aggression by his/her peers.
- g) **Asks Help:** Child asks for direct physical assistance-- verbal or non-verbal. For example: "help me", or "give me."

- h) **Shows Affection:** Child shows physical and/or verbal affection. For example: hugs, kisses, and caresses another child or teacher.
- i) **Receives Affection:** Child receives physical and/or verbal affection from teacher or peer.

APPENDIX F

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONSENT FORM

INCLUSION AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEVEL: SUPPORTS CONTRIBUTING TO ITS SUCCESS

Anna Barrafato, B.A.

Dear Parents,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at Concordia University. I am presently conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Miranda D'Amico, in order to fulfil the requirements for a Master's Degree in Child Study.

This project will examine the supports contributing to successful inclusion of pre-school children with disabilities in the regular classroom. Integrating children with disabilities at the pre-school level increases the likelihood of future academic success in regular education classes. In order to investigate this issue, parents of children with disabilities, and teachers, will be interviewed and will be asked to fill in a questionnaire.

Your permission is required to include your child in this study. I will be observing your child in their classroom during the course of the day in order to assess social integration. Each of the four visits will last approximately one hour. You will also be given a short interview.

For further information concerning this study, please feel free to contact me (#322-0016) or Dr. Miranda D'Amico (#848-2040) at the Department of Education, Concordia University.

Sincerely,

Anna Barrafato

Statement of Informed Consent: I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. I understand that my participation in this study is confidential. I understand that anonymous group findings from this study may be published. I understand the purpose of this study.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____
(please print)

Signed: _____
(parent)

Signed: _____
(investigator)

Thank-you for having taken the time to fill in this form.

APPENDIX G

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONSENT FORM

INCLUSION AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEVEL: SUPPORTS CONTRIBUTING TO ITS SUCCESS

Anna Barrafato, B.A.

Dear Teachers,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at Concordia University. I am presently conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Miranda D'Amico, in order to fulfil the requirements for a Master's Degree in Child Study.

This project will examine factors which contribute to successful inclusion of pre-school children with disabilities in the regular classroom. Integrating children with disabilities at the pre-school level increases the likelihood of future academic success in regular education classes. In order to investigate this issue, parents of children with disabilities, and regular education teachers, will be interviewed and will be asked to fill in a questionnaire.

Your consent is required to participate in this study. You will be given a short interview and asked to fill in a questionnaire. In order to assess the child's social integration, I will observe the disabled student in your classroom during the course of the day. Each of the four visits will last approximately one hour.

For further information concerning this study, please feel free to contact me (#322-0016) or Dr. Miranda D'Amico (#848-2040) at the Department of Education, Concordia University.

Sincerely,

Anna Barrafato

Statement of Informed Consent: I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. I understand that my participation in this study is confidential. I understand that anonymous group findings from this study may be published. I understand the purpose of this study.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Date: _____

Name: _____
(please print)

Signed: _____
(teacher)

Signed: _____
(investigator)

Thank-you for having taken the time to fill in this form.