WHEN "PATHWAYS" CROSS

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The mainstreaming of students with special needs in the regular classroom became a focus of debate in the Canadian school system during the 1980s, when the Regular Education Initiative was implemented (Winzer, 1999). This initiative focussed on combining general and special education to provide a diverse education system for all learners. Special education teachers were expected to adopt a consulting role, and classroom teachers were expected take a greater responsibility for the teaching of all students, including those with special needs (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1991; Winzer, 1999). As a result, the proportion of students remaining in segregated educational environments was at its lowest by 1991 (Winzer, 1999).

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the roles of special education teachers and classroom teachers have been changing with this shift toward inclusion. One notable trend is a new emphasis on a collaborative interagency team approach, as evidenced by the development of student support teams at the school level and provincial guidelines which emphasize team collaboration (Pathways to Programming and Graduation [Pathways], Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 1998; Individual Support Services Plan [ISSP], Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 1997; Special Education Policy Manual, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 1987; Special Education Policy Manual [Draft Version], Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 1999).

Collaboration
Two essential members of student support teams at the school level are the special education teacher and the classroom teacher. However, provincial guidelines provide little in the way of practical support for their effective daily collaboration. At the same time, there is an abundance of literature about collaboration within inclusive environments which provides a range of models and descriptions of collaborative practices and perceptions.

In one model, the focus is on collaborative consultation. This term goes beyond both collaboration and consultation to emphasize Amutual trust and respect and open communication@ and the Abelief that all educators can learn better ways to teach all

students@(Robinson, 1991, 446-447). Similarly, collaborative consultation can be seen as a scientific art distinct from simple cooperation in its emphasis on notions of shared responsibility, authority and mutual empowerment (West & Idol, 1990). Other views of collaborative consultation are more flexible about role equality. Carr & Peavy (1986), for example, describe a collaborative consultation model in which the special education teacher works as an expert consultant, acting as both an instructor and a consultant participating in a model that begins with establishing relationships and ends with an action plan. As well, collaborative consultation can be seen as both a way to deliver services within schools, and a process based on discussion (West & Idol, 1990). Another approach to collaborative consultation centres on the communication between teachers through the use of open-ended questions (Vargo, 1998). Vargo states, AThe ultimate goal is for general educators to feel comfortable and open to involving the special educator with more active instructional planning for a given student, which may lead to team planning for the entire class@ (55).

The trans-disciplinary interactive teaming model goes beyond collaborative consultation to emphasize a team approach guided by the principles of participation and leadership, goal development, communication, decision making and conflict resolution (Coben, Chase Thomas, Sattler & Voelker Morsink, 1997). Co-teaching (Ripley, 1997) and the enrichment remediation team-teaching model (Angle, 1996) are variations on the team approach. These models are based on the idea that all students benefit when special education teachers and classroom teachers work together to provide direct service within the regular classroom environment, permitting a full sharing of goals, decisions, responsibility, assessment and classroom management. In general, teaming models are based on the idea that teachers should commit to using what Phillips & McCullough (1990) term a locally defined collaborative ethic. A school-wide collaborative ethic is defined by developing a consensus collaboration in terms of shared responsibility and accountability, confidence in mutual benefits and a valuing of its worth and benefits.

The claim that service delivery involving collaboration and consultation is both practical and realistic is supported by a number of recent studies (Howells, 2000; Bradley, King-Sears and Tessier-Switlick, 1997, cited in Carey, 1997; Karge, McClure & Patton, 1995; British Columbia Department of Education, 1997); yet concerns about collaboration have arisen in several jurisdictions. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Younghusband (1999), found that Pathways has provided little in the way of information about implementation and that support systems have not been set up effectively. Similarly, Philpott (2001) concluded that while Ainclusion is an ideal that both parents and teachers aspire to@ (9), it is still necessary to offer a full continuum of flexible student placements.

Support for inclusive practices often appear in the form of calls for further teacher training at both the preservice and inservice levels (Monahan, Marino & Miller, 1996; Din,1996). In one design, a curriculum with dual certification in both general classroom and special education is

proposed (Ludlow et al., 1996). Another example is the development of a field-based program, with cooperation between the involved university and school district (Carey, 1997). Cooperative professional development (Glatthorn, 1990) is another suggestion aimed at the establishment of special education-classroom teacher teams, with both parties having role parity, using a flexible approach and professional dialogue as possible options. Hollingsworth (2001) focuses on improving collaboration with a communication network. She believes collaborating teachers need to discuss their challenges and successes by carrying out a local needs assessment and professional development suited to these needs.

How teachers feel about their collaboration is essential to its success: AThe relationship between the general education teacher and the special education teacher is the most crucial one in terms of effective collaboration for delivery of service to exceptional students who are mainstreamed or integrated in general education classrooms@ (Stanovich, 1996, 40). Too often, teachers indicate that they are satisfied with the quality of their collaborative roles but not with the quantity. As well, while teaching together is considered less than ideal, classroom teachers tend to think highly of instruction done by the special education teacher in the special education classroom, and prefer collaborative support in the form of verbal exchange (Voltz, Elliott & Cobb, 1994). Still, perceptions of collaboration vary. Favourable attitudes towards collaboration may be tempered, for example, by the expectation of a greater work load (Bedi , 1996), by the lack of appropriate materials and support (Minke, Bear, Deemer & Griffin, 1996; Din, 1996), by concerns about role definition (Din,1996), and by issues of scheduling, time and training (Minke et al., 1996; Din, 1996). Studies of collaborative practice reflect some of these concerns. Issues of control, roles, styles, professional territory, differences and feelings of not belonging seem to predominate in the early stages of collaboration. Often, these difficulties are resolved over time as classroom teachers and special education teachers learn to share and blend their skills, while developing respect for one another and finding renewed joy in teaching (Salend, Johansen, Mumper, Chase, Pike and Dorney, 1997; Wood, 1998).

Although even the need to collaborate itself can be a barrier to inclusion (Monahan, Marino & Miller, 1996), and while practices vary widely between regions and within schools (Howells, 2000), most collaboration models and studies of the perceptions and practices of teachers suggest that teachers should collaborate. The special education teachers in this study are no exception. In fact, every participant indicated that collaboration is a necessity under Pathways and the inclusion model. Special education teachers seem to be caught in a struggle, though, between their desire to collaborate, and the reality of putting their wishes into practice without much support in the school environment.

To gather information about how special education teachers in Newfoundland collaborate when working with Pathways, seven special educators working in one region of the province were interviewed and asked to describe their involvement in day-to-day collaboration with classroom

teachers. This information is presented here through a description of the participants, the study and the resulting themes that emerged from their opinions and reflections.

Special Education Teacher Collaboration

The seven participants were all full-time teachers, either working in full-time special education positions or, more commonly, working as both regular classroom and special education teachers. They included two males and five female teachers, ranging in experience from that of Elizabeth, Faith and Samuel, all in their first year of teaching special education, through Rose, Olivia and William, each with less than five years as special educators, to Leah, a special education teacher with more than twenty years of teaching experience, almost all within the special education field. Only Olivia, Leah and Faith were fully qualified in special education, but both Rose and William were working on their qualifications at the time of their interviews. All of them had training in Pathways, through their academic work or in-service training, but none reported completing a course or in-service devoted to collaboration. They were first interviewed by phone to share their views and practices on inclusion, Pathways and collaboration. Each participant then completed a week-long journal to outline their actual day-to-day collaboration with classroom teachers, along with their reflections and suggestions.

Typically, the participants= conversations and reflections seemed to centre on areas of concern about collaboration, especially issues with time, isolation, and even power. Overall, they supported the idea of collaboration with classroom teachers as it is presented in provincial policy and did practice collaboration to a limited extent. As a result of barriers created by a lack of practical supports in the schools, though, they did not practise collaboration in ways typically recommended in the literature, or even to the extent that they desired.

In or out?

Reflecting their faith in inclusion, these special education teachers typically approved of their students remaining in the regular classroom for most of the school day. At the same time, though, most seemed to have no difficulty with the idea or the practice of pulling students out to an alternate classroom for a limited part of the day; in fact, they preferred this practice over teaching in the regular classroom. Faith described it this way: AI do think they need some time in a self-contained classroom where they can get the instruction they need. The direct instruction.@

Only a few teachers mentioned that they teach their special education students in the regular classroom from time to time, and only Leah confirmed actually more commonly teaching side by side in collaboration with classroom teachers. In her opinion, there are definite advantages to working in this way: AThey [the children] don=t only see me as their teacher, I=m everybody=s teacher.@ Perhaps, in choosing not to teach together regularly, these teachers are attempting to bypass the difficulties associated with shared teaching, particularly the practical challenge of trying to schedule groups of students together.

Even when these special education teachers did collaborate at times by teaching together with classroom teachers in the regular classroom environment, it was more likely to end up as simply just being together in the same room, or what one research team terms as parallel teaching (West & Idol, 1990), rather than truly teaching collaboratively. As Olivia reflected in her journal, AI think some teachers fear having another teacher in the class with them. I suppose they find it a bit intimidating.@ Further elaborating, she went on to say: AUsually the special education teacher is just the special education teacher and that=s that. And he or she is just for slow students and that=s her domain, and the regular teacher has her domain or his domain, and a lot of people assume that it=s two separate things.@

Pulling students out for instruction was carried out for a number of reasons beyond that of teacher preference and student need. For example, William was directed to use a pull-out model by local school administration: AI didn=t make the choice, I didn=t ask for the choice, that=s what I was given. That was my assignment when I came: the principal said, >Your job is special ed.... this is how we do it in the school. These students are being pulled out and they=re going to come to your classroom.=@ Faith asserted the sheer logistical impossibility of working the regular classes of all the students on her caseload: AI just can=t go into all their classes.@ Leah, Olivia and Samuel all noted that classroom teachers seem not yet prepared for full collaboration in the form of teaching together. Leah said, ASome people ... I don=t think you can do anything to make them comfortable with it. And I don=t think we can force it.@ Olivia wrote: AI think some teachers fear having another teacher in the class with them. I suppose they find it a bit intimidating,@ and Samuel reflected that some teachers give the impression that they feel the need to have control in their own classrooms. Perhaps this is why special education teachers working in the regular classroom are informally referred to Apushing in@ to classrooms when they are not Apulling out@ students (for example, United Federation of Teachers, 2002).

For members of the educational community who are satisfied with using partial pull-out to supplement inclusion, the withdrawal of students seems to be a non-issue. But for those who do wish to participate in collaborative teaching, supports need to be provided to remove barriers such as those indicated by special education teachers. According to these special education teachers and others, this can happen through the encouragement of instructional innovations and changes to existing organizational arrangements (Robinson, 1991). Such changes, though, are not always possible at an individual level: they must be supported by school administration and district policy, in both theory and practice.

Fortunately, as West & Idol (1990) suggest, in addition to teaching together, collaboration is also considered to be a process that focuses on shared decision-making and problem-solving. In other words, collaboration is also talking together. This talking together is how teachers in this study preferred to collaborate B although it also came with its own challenges. One of these problems was time.

Where does the time go?

An examination of how teachers spend their time together also provides insight into what they believe is important. The special education teachers in this study typically talked together during meetings which they usually described as spontaneous or informal. For example, William said, ASo I just consult with the teacher then, just outside her door about what they were doing.@ Likewise, Olivia noted that, AIt just comes out of the blue .... Somebody could say something and then somebody will say something else. Before you know it, you=re in a deep conversation about a certain child.@ You might Apop into a teacher=s classroom@ reflected Rose, or simply Amention back and forth to each other@ to collaborate, said Faith.

Clearly, these teachers preferred spending their time focussed on discussing their special education students and their program needs. Rose recounts such everyday conversations as going something like this: AHow was >Joe= today? I did this with Joe today; what do you think about it?@ and AWhy do you think that is?@ AWe discuss the students in her class quite a bit and generally try to work together on solving problems that arise,@ is how Elizabeth described a common focus of her chats with classroom teachers.

During conversations, the main priority of the special education teachers seems to be about trying to create some continuity for students who are switching back and forth between different classrooms for instruction. Rose emphasized that these informal conversations are essential: AIt=s actually impossible to do justice to a child=s education without understanding how that child is performing and behaving in all other aspects of his education as well. And to do that you need to be constantly in collaboration with the regular classroom teacher.@ William agreed that, AWhat one teacher=s doing certainly leads into what another should be doing, and it=s also... more beneficial.@

These meetings generally take place in the staffroom or in the regular classroom. With limited or no formal preparation time, what might seem a natural time to collaborate becomes virtually impossible. As William laughingly considered, AWhen you get a prep period ... somebody else is working.@ Elizabeth echoed the consensus when she summarized that, AThere=s really no time during the day.@ Instead, teachers seem to find some time to meet either during instructional time or after school.

Like many teachers, special educators are always busy carrying out the usual duties of their teaching role (Younghusband, 2000), including the assessment demands and paperwork that come with Pathways,\; yet the teachers in this study did manage to find limited time to collaborate at least by talking with classroom teachers. However, what is conveyed here is that they have to create time to collaborate by taking the time previously allocated to other aspects

their work, or by adding the collaboration time to their workday. Time for collaboration appears simply not to exist in the typical school, although finding time to collaborate is both an expectation and a necessity with the current practice of special education. Although Dettmer et al. (1993) assert that constraints of time should not hold back collaboration planning, the lack of time for these teachers and others (Voltz et al., 1994, Kauffman & Trent, 1991) is clearly a key inconsistency between the theory and reality of collaboration under Pathways. Rose summarized this discrepancy well when she wrote, AAs for the collaboration itself, it would be nice to sit down for a while and discuss further what to do about this particular student. But the question I keep asking myself constantly is: >Where do I get the time to do all the things that need to be done?=@ Indeed, finding any time to talk together is a frustrating and unwelcome challenge for many special educators.

If special education teachers believe that talking together is an essential type of collaboration, and policy stands behind this belief, schools need to support its practice. Rather than expecting individual teachers or pairs of collaborating teachers to create collaboration time, schools need to find a creative way to provide such necessary time. As Rose again reflected, AWell, again, that=s always a big problem I=ve sort of had with Pathways and all those types of things is that fact that ... I believe it is a good system, but the problem is when you=re not provided the resources to carry it out as successfully as it can be carried out. And I always find that very frustrating. Like for example they talk about how important it is to collaborate with teachers.... but if you don=t give me the time to do that, how do you expect me to do it?@ Finding time, though, is not the only area where special educators are in need of practical supports: challenging isolation is another.

Alone in a crowd

Dettmer, et al. (1993) noted that often a teacher might feel Astranded on a crowded island that is devoid of adult interaction and stimulation@ (4). Special education teachers seem even more vulnerable than classroom teachers to these feelings of isolation since they are often separated from normal school routines. This certainly appeared to be the case for Olivia, who mused that, ASpecial education can be isolating at times.@ Others were able to point out numerous instances of dealing with some form of isolation, either physically or psychologically. In part, this seems to be the inevitable result of withdrawing students to a special education classroom for instruction. Although withdrawal does not inherently have a negative effect on the quality of instruction and learning (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1991), it can have a negative effect on teachers (Hollingsworth, 2001). Any adverse effects of this physical isolation, though, are obviously not so negative that teachers are willing to discontinue its voluntary practice. As well, even in situations where special education teachers choose to teach alongside classroom teachers in the regular class setting, they were often still isolated to the extent that they generally limit most of their attention to the special education students in order to, as Leah noted, Ameet the needs of the students that I

have ISSPs for, or my students, I call them.@

It is of course impossible to avoid the irony here: although special education teachers express their great desire to collaborate, they are making a choice that contradicts this desire and leads, instead, to isolation. Indeed the idea that collaborative, inclusive classrooms have been a factor in preventing the isolation that occurs when teachers typically work alone (Salend et al., 1997) is not being fulfilled. Perhaps, then, it is not that isolation is inherently negative enough to avoid, but rather that there is not enough motivation to lean towards collaboration (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 1993).

When participants reflected on talking together with classroom teachers, a recurrent theme was the noticeable lack of direct feedback to special education teachers from the classroom teachers with whom they were working. Leah, for example, noted that classroom teachers have not said anything directly to her, such as, AThis collaboration bit is great.@ She wonders instead if Amaybe we don=t praise each other enough.@ When writing about her collaboration, Elizabeth reflected positively on one experience of talking together with a classroom teacher, but obviously felt this was outside of the norm when she wrote, AMaybe others need to be more like her [the classroom teacher]?@ The important point is that this lack of feedback may lead to a feeling of isolation, in addition to the reality of physical isolation.

These feelings, though, seemed to be somewhat mediated by other kinds of positive feedback. These favourable impressions usually centred on the development of positive relationships between collaborating teachers. Rose, for example, cited a classroom teacher as being Avery respectful@ of her opinions and having Aopen and honest@ interactions, Elizabeth noted that another was Avery easy to talk to,@ and William discussed his positive feelings about a Agood rapport.@ As well, these teachers seemed to rely on their own intuition when no direct feedback was made available to them, and determined most relationships to be positive.

Overall then, feelings of isolation arose when these teachers were not provided with direct feedback about their efficacy, but their isolation appeared to be mediated by indirect feedback. The special education teachers in this study usually purposefully chose physical isolation over in-class collaboration with classroom teachers against the typical recommendations of educational researchers. To improve the likelihood of special education teacher isolation, teachers need to be given motivation to teach together through the provision of practical supports, encouragement and feedback. Although collaborative teaching is one way to support both inclusion and the provision of direct special education services, it seems obvious that schools do not expect their teachers to use this method. Perhaps schools could provide modelling and practice in teaching collaboratively, and emphasize the importance of positive feedback from all involved members, including school administration. Individual school staffs may need to consider a group consensus to begin to implement collaborative teaching. If special education

teacher and classroom teachers do in fact attempt teaching together, though, further issues do continue to arise, such as negotiating authority between these teacher pairs.

A struggle for command

Although Dwyer & Patterson (2000) assert that it is now time to view the classroom as a shared space including all key members of the educational community, the teachers in this study indicate that the sharing of space and roles does not come without a struggle. For example, as William described it, AThe homeroom teacher may not mind you coming in and suggesting things ... [but then] there=s someone else who doesn=t want you to tell them how to do their job. And you don=t want to do that anyway .... it took me a while to figure out who I could say what to.@ Similarly, Rose wrote that, ATeachers working together is much more effective than teachers dictating to one another. I feel it=s very important to establish a good rapport with each teacher and to make one another feel comfortable in expressing [our] beliefs and their concerns.@ Faith lamented: ASometimes I wonder if what I have to say is as important or whatever? So I sort of keep my mouth shut a lot more than perhaps I should.@

Clearly, some special education teachers avoid similar struggles by withdrawing students for instruction rather than teaching together with classroom teachers, as the teachers in this study typically did. These choices seemed to give the special education teachers greater independence and eliminate the difficulties associated with resolving day-to-day boundary struggles. For example, William noted, AI think that both of us would be more comfortable working on our own that way [because then] they=re mostly out and they=re my students on my course,@ And Rose stated, AI find it hard sometimes when people say you should do this, this and this with kids, but I always feel very strongly that what you should do depends on the individual student and the individual situation.@ Similarly, Samuel noted a common attitude among classroom teachers when he said, ASome totally whole-heartedly, yes, collaborate. More others are just sort of, >Well, okay, that=s a good idea, but you take the student outside of my class=@ or that, AShe=s got her students in her class, and she teaches the way she ... wants to teach, and I=m there and I=m working with that student.@ William acknowledged that difficulties in working out role boundaries can come from the special education teacher as well as the classroom teacher when he maintained that, AIt could be me too. I mean, it can, it can go both ways right? .... It could be just something that I=m not comfortable with, and would not rather approach it.@

Thus, although these teachers supported the ideals of collaboration, they simultaneously withdrew from the challenge of developing appropriate role boundaries in their teaching relationships. Once again, these special education teachers seemed to be voicing their willingness to fulfil the demands of collaboration B in theory B but they appeared to be unwilling, on their own, to take the personal risks needed to put these ideals fully into practice. Clearly, school administrators will need to consider that teachers need to be supported in attempting new initiatives in an environment that supports risk-taking. More importantly, it will be necessary to

create an environment where teaching together and negotiating new relationships is not seen as a risk, but rather understood as a worthwhile challenge in the fulfilment of best teaching practices.

Three wishes

The teachers in this study described a number of serious barriers to their collaboration with classroom teachers, but none of them reacted to these barriers by suggesting discontinuing or even minimizing their attempts to collaborate. Just the opposite attitude existed: these teachers consistently confirmed Howell=s (2000) idea that collaboration helps to solve problems, improve situations and meet challenges and needs that would not be otherwise met individually. When asked to provide their thoughts on what would be needed to support collaboration, the teachers were quick to point out three areas: formal, planned time to talk together with classroom teachers preferably during the instructional day, in-service education on collaboration, and additional training in the interpersonal skills necessary to carry it out successfully.

The ideal of planned collaboration time was summarized by Olivia who suggested that it �would be beneficial to set a particular time aside once a week to discuss student progress with teachers. Even once a week or every couple of weeks would be great.@ She had heard of times when the special education teacher Awill actually slot in a certain amount of time, probably after school, to talk to specific teachers, probably once a week.@ Apparently skeptical about whether this in fact was a real possibility, she added, AOr is that too much I wonder? .... Is that asking too much?@ When considering an ideal school in an ideal world, Rose mused that she would have, Athree periods a week where I could sit down with a teacher and we could discuss the students= progress and where we feel we could go on from here.@ She imagined that ideally schools would provide Atime allotted to actually sit down and discuss those things.@ William, on the other hand, imagined ideal time for collaboration unfolding this way: AFirst thing in the morning ... after the good mornings are said, we can sit down .... do you have anything pressing that that kid needs to be doing right now? If not, this is what I=m doing. Any suggestions as to anything I should be doing more or extra or am I doing too much that that kid can=t handle.@ Leah envisioned that, ideally, Awe=d have time in the evening before.@ Samuel believed that an ideal model would be to Ameet with the other teachers ...before we actually have the student .... that the two teachers can have off, and we can discuss and talk about different ideas.@

Like Olivia, though, Elizabeth thinks that being provided with time to collaborate during the instructional day is unlikely. In fact, she responded with: AI think that=s funny! [laughter] Because I don=t think we=ll ever get it .... pardon me for being so sarcastic [laughter continuing] but I don=t think, I really don=t think that=s going to happen.@ Clearly, time is a critical issue, for these teachers and others (Phillips & McCullough, 1990; Robinson, 1991).

As a number of researchers agree, special education teachers who choose to collaborate also need a venue to develop the skills that area necessary for collaboration (Bedi,1996; Dettmer,

Thurston & Dyck, 1993; Robinson, 1991). The majority of those in this study agreed, indicating that they would benefit from some type of professional in-service training in collaboration. Olivia suggested that this could be accomplished by using Aa moderator, or someone, like I said, that could give us even an hour, or a couple of classes in how they use it [collaboration] , or a couple of classes in how they use it, or what it=s used for, or how it can be used.@ Faith reflected, Aeven if it was just on Pathway Two, just to stress the importance of it. And the importance of documentation and collaboration with the classroom teachers, to help this child.@

Some indicated that even time to talk with other special education teachers would be welcomed in the form of William=s suggestion of Aperiodic get-togethers@ or Leah=s wish to be able to Asit down sometime, and say, >Look, this is how we collaborate.=@ Others emphasized the necessity of including training in collaboration at a preservice level; for example, as Elizabeth pointed out, AI don=t think special education should be like a separate thing that you go in and like a degree that you go in and get. I think that there should be some parts of it included in your program ....because you deal with things like that every day in your classroom.@

Finally, teachers in this study seemed to be in agreement with Robinson=s (1991) view that effective collaboration needs Aknowledge and skills in the process of collaboration and knowledge and skills in effective teaching practices@ (448). The most common focus of knowledge and skills for collaboration training suggested by these special education teachers fell within the bounds of training in interpersonal skills. This wish was summarized by William who reflected, AYou=re learning people skills. And a lot of us, even though we are supposed to be teaching people, we lack that.@ In addition, Rose noted that, AIt=s always nice to get some ideas about how to get along better with other people, because there may come a time when my collaboration with the regular classroom teachers may not run so smoothly as it is right now.@ She observed that it is Aimportant to learn to respect other people=s ideas even if you don=t agree with them sometimes,@ a feeling echoed by William who indicated that he wanted to know how to Aapproach someone when you=re sure that what you could suggest is going to benefit this kid, but you know that a certain teacher is just going on a different wavelength altogether.@

Rose referred to the importance of learning Aideas and things on how to deal with teachers that are more difficult,@ and Olivia linked this with parent-teacher relationships as well, by noting that she would like to focus on Ahow to collaborate with parents so you don=t sound like you=re the know-it-all ...you want to make the parents feel like they=re your equals and that their opinions are just as important as yours, which they are .... and how do you handle certain situation, or what would you do if a parent said this, or a parent disagreed.@ These skills could also benefit classroom teachers, if they could help motivate classroom teachers to share their teaching tasks. Faith suggested that she would like to learn to assist classroom teachers in knowing that Athat they can come to the special education teacher .... for help and advice; that

you don=t have to do it all on your own.@ Overall, then, they seem to be suggesting that interpersonal skills training, although ultimately targeted at enhancing student learning, can also be applied to teacher-teacher and parent-teacher relationships in collaboration.

Overall, special education teacher wishes for collaboration in an ideal world centre on the need for formal, planned collaboration time, inservicing in collaboration, and training in interpersonal skills development. To meet these objectives, teachers are quite surely in need of support, leadership and advocacy from school administration. It is interesting that for most, these ideals seemed to be viewed as little more than wishful thinking.

Looking ahead
Overall, the special education teachers in this study seemed to agree in theory with the ideals of inclusion and collaboration. In practice, they do carry out inclusion for the majority of the instructional day, and engage in collaboration in a limited manner. It seems clear, however, that without support, they are not likely to be able or willing to explore fully the potential of true collaboration, as described in the literature. To support special education teachers better, provincial policy needs first to emphasize day-to-day collaboration between the teachers who are responsible for students with special needs, for example by expanding on the collaborative roles each is expected to play in the step by step process of implementing an ISSP plan. More particularly, the Special Education Policy Manual (Draft), Pathways and ISSP documents need to be modified to more explicitly recommend effective approaches to teaching together and talking together. As well, provincial and school board policies must provide individual school staffs with the authority to implement supportive, practical changes.

At the school level, principals need to consider a commitment to collaboration, perhaps through the use of more flexible scheduling. This could be accomplished by reorganizing the school day, for example, or by having local school administrators assign collaboration time, or by making use of student grouping, support staff, volunteers, student teachers or substitute time as suggested by West & Idol (1990). Similarly, perhaps school staffs need to consider their overall attitude towards collaboration and work towards developing a collaborative ethic initiative to ensure that staff have consistent expectations and goals for collaboration (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). School faculties could network locally and with a wider community, sharing information through the use of text, technology or teacher conferencing (Brown & Sheppard, 1997). In this way, teachers who are geographically dispersed could share, learn and reflect through modes such as Acomputer links, newsletters, fax machines, and occasional seminars and conferences@ (10) as a flexible model for rural regions. Making use of a centrally-located teacher centre for the collaborative development of innovations in skills, materials through dialogue is another possibility. Similarly, accessing an on-line community such as the Virtual Teacher Centre (Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association, 2001), a new provincial

initiative, is another alternative where groups such as Online Learning Teams can be utilized. Here, the focus is on the professional development needs of a small group of self-paced, networking teachers who are focussed on meeting goals to find the best classroom practices.

To resolve power issues, school administrators might consider implementing interpersonal skills development training and in-service training on teacher collaboration. A focus on both of these areas should provide teachers with a greater knowledge of possible roles for collaboration and ideas about how to carry out these roles professionally, deflecting potential conflict and building a collaboratively community of teachers. Such training could be provided through involving all staff in a model of staff development, which centres on long-term commitment to professional growth towards a goal (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 1993). As an alternative, programs of skills development, described by Brown and Sheppard (1997) as periodic workshops over a given period of time, including classroom coaching to help transfer skills that are learned to the classroom environment, could be implemented. Other possible ideas include mentoring programs or teacher institutes (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon cited in Brown & Sheppard, 1997), distance education, or making use of school administration days. As well, these plans could be linked with other existing district initiatives involving school improvement or teacher growth.

It will be interesting to see how collaboration will change and develop over time under Pathways. Further research seems indicated in a number of areas: comparative studies of novice and experienced teachers; regional and provincial differences in support and implementation; and the perspectives of classroom teachers, to name just a few.

What this exploratory study shows, however, is that if collaboration is to be successful in its initial stages, the province will need to begin by providing school boards and local schools with the authority and practical means to implement supportive, practical changes. If schools and school systems plan for their special education and classroom teachers to practice effective inclusion, the demands of its implementation in turn necessitate teacher collaboration. Teacher collaboration, in turn, demands the provisions of time and training that special educators clearly require.

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