

PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS  
INVOLVED IN THE ISSP PROCESS IN  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS  
INVOLVED IN THE ISSP PROCESS  
IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

by

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**Thesis**

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*“Teamwork among professionals and parents who are working with the same children and youth is no longer just an idea to be pursued. Today it has become a necessity.”*

Howard G. Garner  
(1995)

## ABSTRACT

Recently the school system in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador has undergone major changes, most notably in the area of special education. Initiatives, such as "Using Our Strengths," "Pathways to Graduation," and the "Individual Support Services Plan," has meant considerable changes to special education in the province. Special education did not begin in Newfoundland and Labrador until 1954 with the introduction of the first program for children with mental disabilities. Today, just 45 years later, integration and inclusion are the established and accepted norm throughout the province. This study examines the perceptions of special education teachers involved in the individual support services plan process, or ISSP process, on a daily basis. The ISSP is an individualized plan for a child/youth who requires additional supports in order to succeed. It has replaced the IPP in education. The ISSP process is a collaborative approach which includes all personnel who are directly involved with the child/youth. Representatives from Education, Human Resources and Employment (formerly Social Services), Health and/or Justice meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the child/youth to develop a one-year program, which builds on the strengths, and meets the needs of that individual. The ISSP process is a new initiative. The senior-high special education teachers, who participated in this study, have shared their perceptions of it. Several strengths and areas of concern have been identified and discussed. Recommendations have been set forth based on these findings.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background to the Study .....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	3
Definition of Terms .....	3
Significance of the Study .....	6
CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE .....	7
The Beginnings of Special Education .....	7
Special Education in Newfoundland and Labrador .....	16
IPP versus ISSP: To Compare and Contrast .....	25

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY .....	32
Participant Choice .....	33
Time .....	34
Procedure .....	34
Analysis of Data .....	35
Confidentiality .....	37
CHAPTER FOUR - THE INTERVIEWS .....	38
The Responses .....	38
CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	108
Strengths of the ISSP Process .....	108
Areas of Concern .....	111
Recommendations for Change .....	116
Further Research .....	119
REFERENCES .....	121

APPENDICES .....	127
Appendix A - Child/Youth Profile Sheet.....	127
Appendix B - Parental/Guardian Consent Form .....	129
Appendix C - Sample IPP Form .....	131
Appendix D - Sample ISSP Form .....	139
Appendix E - Interview Consent Form . .....	145
Appendix F - Interview Questions.....	148

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The schools of Newfoundland and Labrador have recently been exposed to individual support service plans, or ISSPs. As a special education teacher in a senior high school, the author has worked in daily contact with many youths with a diversity of special needs. Some of them were seen by social workers, had long medical histories, and had been in conflict with the law. Prior to the recent implementation of the ISSP, these youths may have been seen and assessed by up to four separate government departments - Education, Health, Human Resources and Employment (formally known as Social Services), and Justice.

With the implementation of the ISSP process in Newfoundland and Labrador during 1998 and 1999 came a partnership of the four departments. For the first time a collaborative process was introduced involving the child, the parent and service providers including school personnel, personnel from the Departments of Health, Human Resources and Employment, Justice and other relevant agencies which would work together to identify appropriate goals/general outcomes for the child's areas in which services were requested. (Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1997).

Implementing such a process, with such widespread implications for so many people, has been met by differing degrees of acceptance. Don Hayes (Personal communication, February 1999), the Coordinator of Interdepartmental Services for Children and Youth, expects that it will take approximately three years before the process is fully operational

around the province, by each department involved. A major area of concern for Mr. Hayes, and other committee members involved in the implementation process, is the issue of confidentiality, and the sharing of information. Although parental consent is a necessity, there will still be those who will be hesitant to share necessary information.

The individual support service plan concept has created a great deal of intrigue and interest throughout Canada. The process has been called "visionary". Others say the theory is extraordinary, but question its practicality. In this thesis, I will take a critical look at the ISSP process from the viewpoint of Special Education Teachers, examining both the strengths and weaknesses of this very new approach.

### **Background to the Study**

Individual support service plans (ISSPs) grew out of 1993 collective bargaining negotiations between the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association (NLTA) and the provincial government. During these negotiations four issues were identified as significant and requiring further investigation. The issues included disruptive students, integration of challenging needs students, quality of work-life, and employment equity. A committee was formed, consisting of senior officials representing appropriate government departments, to investigate the four issues and to compile a report with recommendations for submission to the Social Policy Committee of Cabinet. As a result of this committee's efforts came the Classroom Issues Report of January 1995. Recommended within this report was an approach that coordinated the interventions of all service providers, and one which allowed for

coordination of various services into a cohesive service plan (Classroom Issues Committee, 1995).

The committee developed the model for coordination of services to children and youth, which focused on the child, but also saw professionals from Education, Health, Human Resources and Employment and Justice as being integral parts of the process. Guiding principles were developed to facilitate the process of integrated service management. Each of the four issues referenced above were also addressed with specific recommendations. A total of sixty-nine recommendations were made as a result of the work of the Classroom Issues Committee. The report was submitted to the Social Policy Committee of the Provincial Government and many of the recommendations were accepted (Classroom Issues Committee, 1995).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is twofold: First, to examine the individual support services plan process in Newfoundland and Labrador and determine how it differs from previous programs and policies impacting on the Education System of the province and, secondly, to investigate the experiences of senior-high special education teachers, who have recently been involved in developing and implementing ISSPs.

### **Definition of Terms**

Individual Support Service Plan (ISSP) - The term individual support service plan (ISSP)

used in this study will refer to the written plan developed by the individual support services planning team. It consists of the child's individual strengths and needs, goals or general outcomes which are attainable in one year, a record of services required, and statement of who is responsible for delivering each service.

Individual Support Service Plan (ISSP) Process - Within this study, this term will mean and involve more than the individual support service plan meeting. The process will include the referral of the child, the ISSP meeting itself, the implementation of the plan, the monitoring of the plan, and the review and revision of the plan.

ISSP Team - The ISSP team is a term used to refer to the child, the parents, and the service providers - including school personnel, personnel from the department of Health, Human Resources and Employment, and/or Justice and other relevant agencies. Professionals who serve the child should be an integral part of the ISSP team and be involved in the development of the child's plan.

Individual Support Service (ISS) Manager - The ISS Manager is a member of the team who is chosen as facilitator. The ISS Manager can be from either of the agencies involved, or in some cases may be the parent, or the child him/herself. The ISS Manager facilitates the collaboration between team members and ensures that relevant agencies provide the supports and services agreed upon in the support services plan.

Support Services Planning Team Meeting - The support services planning team meeting is the time for those working with the child, who are identified above as the ISSP team, to come together to design a program for the child.

Implementation of the ISSP - Implementation of the ISSP pertains to the areas of responsibility assigned to the various team members who ensure that the plan is carried out.

Monitoring and Reviewing of the ISSP - Monitoring and reviewing of the ISSP refers to the team coming together twice annually to review the support services plan. Mini-meetings should also occur as necessary.

Child/Youth Profile - The child/youth profile refers to a one-page form which summarizes the child's current status and area(s) of need. The child/youth profile is to be completed at the initial support services planning team meeting, and is then forwarded to the Regional Child Services Coordinator.

Model for the Coordination of Services to Children and Youth - The model refers to the basic framework of coordination of services within which the individual support services plan operates.



### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study relates to four areas. First, this study will critically examine a process which is current and which, to date, exists only in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Secondly, this study will help create a literature base which others may use in their own research and build upon. Since this process is still developing in many areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, very little research has previously been reported.

Thirdly, this research can add to the knowledge of professionals working in this field. Educators can read of the intended role of the ISSP from the policy makers perspective, and can compare it with the pragmatic experiences of special education teachers working in the classroom with the students, whom the ISSP is intended to serve.

Finally, this study has potential to influence program and policy development regarding the ISSP process at the provincial Department of Education, at the local school boards, or within local schools.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The first section of this chapter gives a brief review of the beginnings of special education in Britain and North America highlighting some of the major milestones and accomplishments since the 1750s. The second section describes special education in Newfoundland and Labrador. The first attempts to educate children with mental disabilities are described, as well as a summary of the past fifty years to the present in Newfoundland and Labrador special education. The final section of this chapter is a look at some of the similarities and differences between the IPP process of the past, and the ISSP process of the present.

#### **The Beginnings of Special Education**

Over the years, society has made many great strides to care for its children, especially for those with disabilities. Prior to the 1750s the majority of individuals with handicaps were neglected, mistreated and abused. Endeavours to educate them were few and scattered, and when anything was done, it was usually undertaken by the clergy. During the late 1700s and early 1800s a new humanitarian impetus began to alter public perceptions of persons with disabilities, and sowed the roots of special education in Europe, especially in France (Winzer, 1993).

In France, in 1760, the Abbe Michel Charles de l'Epee opened a school for deaf

children and devised a language of signs to use with them. In the same year, Thomas Braidwood began teaching deaf students in Edinburgh. Later in 1800 at the National Deaf Mute Institute in Paris, Jean Marc Itard began work with Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron. This was the first documented account of intervention with a student having a severe mental handicap (Winzer, 1993).

North American special education began in 1817 when Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, with the assistance of Laurent Clerc, opened a special institute for deaf students in Hartford, Connecticut. The first Canadian special school, again for the deaf, was opened at Champlain, Quebec by Ronald MacDonald, but was forced to close within five years due to a lack of funding. In 1856, the first Canadian permanent residential school was established by two deaf men. This was the Halifax School for the Deaf, with J. Scott Hutton as the first official principal (Winzer, 1993).

Special education efforts continued to grow throughout Britain and North America, and began to include disabilities other than deafness. Winzer writes:

Residential schools - variously referred to as asylums, institutions, colonies or training schools - were established in Canada in the late 1860s to serve children described in the parlance of the day as deaf and dumb, blind, and idiotic or feeble-minded. In the United States and Canada these special schools were divorced from the general educational system and administered along with prisons, asylums, and public charities. Not until the early 1900s were special schools in most parts of Canada placed under provincial departments of education (1996, p.62).

Special education milestones continued. In 1884, Alexander Graham Bell used the term "special education" for the first time. In 1888, free education for the deaf was available in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. In 1905, Alfred Binet produced the first widely acceptable test

of intelligence. From 1910 to 1950, special schools and special classes became more prevalent. Residential institutions also continued to grow and expand (Winzer, 1993). As Hall states:

Progress in extending educational rights to children with different impairments was slowly gathering pace as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, but there remained a hierarchy of perceived rights with the greatest opportunities being accorded to those with sensory impairments, who were favoured before those with physical impairments while children with significant learning disabilities trailed along behind in what we might call the impairment pecking order (1997, p.19).

Public awareness support and progress, continued to gather steam in North America. In 1922 the Council of Exceptional Children was initiated in the United States. This organization was established in Canada in 1958, and by 1968 had a Canadian office with the potential to coordinate efforts on behalf of exceptional children across Canada (Winzer, 1993).

In Britain, in 1944, a major piece of pro-special education legislation was passed. "The Butler Act," as it was called, established the firm foundation of special education as we have come to know it, and in doing so, shifted the power of diagnosis and determination of need from the medical profession to the Local Education Authority (LEA). Prior to the 1944 Act, most schools - mainstream and special - were either private or run by the church under the supervision of local boards (Hall, 1997). With the introduction of "The Butler Act," the government became directly involved in the education of students with special needs. Even after the 1944 Act, however, there was still one category of children with disabilities who were deemed unworthy of education, or "ineducable." According to Hall,

“The Act described these children as ‘suffering from such a disability unsuitable for education at school’ (Education Act, 1944, Section 57). These children were for the time being, to remain the responsibility of the Local Health Authority” (1997, p.21).

Those termed “ineducable” were admitted to the education system with the passage of the 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act. The Act took effect in 1971, and gave these children access to special schools and classes. As Wedell (1990) points out however, “While this legislation change was undoubtedly a major step forward, it did not change the view of special education as separated from the mainstream of education” (p.21).

Canadians in the 1970s saw a strong movement away from special classes and institutions. Wherever possible, the exceptional children began to be educated in the regular school or classroom, with the help of support services. This change was a direct result of the report by the Commission of Emotional and Learning Disabilities in Canada (“CELDIC Report”) set forth in 1970. The most significant recommendation of this report was that “special education should function primarily in the regular classroom and not in segregated classes or schools” (Karagianis and Nesbit, 1979, p.8). The report stated that about 12% of Canadian children would require some special education during their schooling. In addition, this report stressed the need for educational services for emotionally disturbed children (Winzer, Rogow and David, 1987). This report was a major step forward and led the way for further developments in the United States.

The “Education of All Handicapped Children Act,” otherwise referred to as “U.S. Public Law 94-142,” was passed in the United States in 1975. This law moved the United

States further ahead than any other country in attempting to provide a meaningful educational life for handicapped children. The purpose of the Act, according to Karagianis and Nesbit (1979), as stated in Section 3(9)(c) was as follows:

It is the purpose of this Act to assure that all handicapped children have available to them, within the time periods specified in Section 612(2)(B), a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their needs, to assure that the rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected, to assist states and localities to provide for the education of all handicapped children, and to assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate handicapped children (p.9).

According to Tiegeman-Farber and Radziewiez (1998) P.L.94-142 detailed several important programmatic components: the development of an Individualized Education Program, or IEP; the right to be educated in the least restrictive environment; the provision of appropriate services, based upon educational and developmental needs; the guarantee of a free appropriate education for all; and the advocacy of parental involvement in decision-making affecting their children. These components of P.L. 94-142 led to its popularity and acceptance among advocates for individuals with disabilities, as well as the public in general.

The next major advance came in 1978 with the release of the "Warnock Report" in Britain. A committee had been formed in 1974 under the chairmanship of Mary Warnock. Its purpose, as stated by Karagianis and Nesbit (1979) was to:

Review educational provisions in England, Scotland and Wales for children and young people handicapped by disabilities of body or mind, taking account of the medical aspects of their needs, together with arrangements to prepare them for entry into employment; to consider the most effective use of resources for these purposes; and to make recommendations (p.11 &12).

The Warnock committee made 224 recommendations dealing with both philosophy

and practice in special education. Chasty and Friel (1991) refer to the aims of education of all children in the following way:

The Report builds upon the fundamental egalitarian principle established in English education in the 1944 Butler Act, that the child is entitled to an education in keeping with his needs. In the Report, the aims of education are considered to be the same for all children. In their quest to develop their potential to the full, all children are equally entitled to what they need from the community. These aims are clearly stated as 'first to enlarge the child's knowledge, experience, and imaginative understanding, and thus, his awareness of moral values and his capacity for enjoyment; and secondly, to enable him to enter the world after formal education as an active participant in society, and a responsible contributor to it, capable of enjoying as much independence as possible' (p. 18-19).

The recommendations of the Warnock committee were many. Some of the most notable have been discussed at length in the literature. Wedell (1990) referred to the proposal of the committee that the use of categories should cease, and that one should instead talk about children's "special educational needs." He also pointed out how the committee stressed the importance of early recognition of (and help for) children's educational needs. Early identification of disabilities was now seen as necessary. "Children as young as two years of age enrolled in nursery classes geared to overcome such disabilities" (Karagianis and Nesbit, 1979, p. 13). In relation to this, Wedell (1990) states that, "the Committee pointed to the important role of parents in the education of their children. Parents' rights to participate in discussions about their children's education were strongly affirmed" (p.23). As Rich (1987) states, "reaching the family is as important as reaching the child" (p. 162).

Karagianis and Nesbit (1979) discuss the Committee's proposal that "one in five children will at some time in their school career require some type of special education

provision” (p.12). This would mean extra funding would be needed, since at the time of the report only 2% of children were receiving special education support.

Karagianis and Nesbit also point out the committee’s call for the regular classroom teacher to receive training and education on integration in their classrooms. “Warnock realized that in order to implement and maintain such a plan, support services would need to be available to the regular classroom teacher for she may have little or no training in the area of exceptionality” (p.14). In addition, the committee called for support staff who would provide services which the regular teacher could not.

Probably the most significant recommendation of the Warnock Report was towards integration in general. “By stressing that the aims of education were the same for all children, and that the concept of handicap was relative, the Committee laid the basis for promoting the integration of children with special educational needs into ordinary schools” (Wedell, 1990, p. 22). Chasty and Friel (1991) discuss integration further. They write,

Most needs could be met in the ordinary classroom, some children with greater difficulties may need support or withdrawal from that classroom . while others with more severe needs, require greater withdrawal and less linking back to the ordinary school. A few children may need highly specialized help in a ‘special’ school which is separate from the normal maintained sector, and a very few may need educating outside the school system perhaps at home or in a hospital... It is the meeting of the needs which is important, rather than doctrinaire adherence to the principle that this must happen in the ordinary classroom of the ordinary school. The key criterion must always be that the child’s needs are met, and that should take precedence over where they are met (p. 23).

Mentioned above were some of the most important milestones which paved the way for the education system that we have today for children and youth with disabilities. Wedell



(1990) summarized how far we have come in the following manner:

The effectiveness of educational approaches is improving, and in certain areas (not only in education) preventative measures are showing results. Most important of all, perhaps, the attitudes of society in general are changing, and there is greater recognition of the rights of those with special needs as members of society and a commitment to improve their educational opportunities further (p. 17).

A review of the history of special education is incomplete without a brief look at the trends of the past. The early days of special education meant segregation of students with disabilities from other children their age. Separate schools were often used. Gradually the idea of normalization was accepted. Students with disabilities were mainstreamed into "regular" community schools. Winzer, Rogow and David (1987) define mainstreaming as "the integration and instruction of children with learning, behavior, physical, or other problems in regular classrooms. Children are released from alternate, segregated programs based on their capabilities" (p. 14).

Mainstreaming and integration are often used synonymously in the literature. Lewis and Doorlag write, "Students are considered mainstreamed if they spend any part of the school day with regular class peers" (1983, p. 3).

The trend of the 1990s has been towards inclusion. Lipsky and Gartner (1997) draw attention to the benefits of inclusion in their quote of a 1994 U.S. National Study:

Inclusive education is providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighbourhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society (p. 99).

"Inclusive schools begin with a philosophy and vision that all these children belong

and can learn in the mainstream of school and community where all children work, talk, cooperate, and share" (Winzer, 1996, p. 71). In such an environment, children with disabilities, whatever the severity, would be amongst their peers for all aspects of their school life. "In an inclusive school, everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported while having individual educational needs met" (Barnes and Lehr, 1993, p. 82).

Debate as to the most appropriate placement for a child with disabilities, will no doubt continue for a long time. Advocates of inclusion have stated that in order to be "integrated" one must first be segregated. Inclusion, on the other hand, means that all students would be included from the onset. Totally inclusive schools have faced many challenges and will continue to do so. As Ferguson (1995) states, "In trying to change everything, inclusion all too often seems to be leaving everything the same. But is a new place" (p. 19).

It has been the personal experience of the author, having worked in several schools around Newfoundland over the past seven years, that for the most part, the Newfoundland and Labrador system of education is a combination of integration and inclusion. The severity of the child's disability seems to be the primary determinant of the extent of integration possible. For children categorized as Criteria C, or Severely Mentally Handicapped (SMH), much of their programming is based on an alternate curriculum emphasizing life skills, therefore making full inclusion impossible if it is to meet the child's educational needs most appropriately. For children with less severe disabilities, full inclusion has worked very well. The following section looks more closely at the development of special education in

Newfoundland and Labrador.

### **Special Education in Newfoundland Labrador**

The earliest records of special education for children and youth with disabilities in Newfoundland date back to 1875, when the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador made minor contributions to the education of the deaf and the blind. At that time arrangements were made with the provinces of Nova Scotia, and later Quebec, for deaf and blind students to participate in inter-provincial school programs in these provinces. It wasn't until 1964 that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador opened its own School for the Deaf in St. John's (Andrews, 1980).

The actual beginnings of special education within Newfoundland and Labrador began in 1954 according to Andrews (1980). He writes:

In 1954, a small group of concerned citizens, meeting in St. John's at the home of a very dynamic lady, Mrs. Vera Perlin, planned the beginning of the first special education program for mentally handicapped children. Through the support of the local church, which was then operating as an orphanage, and the enthusiasm of the group, encouraged by private donations, a teacher was employed. Thus, began special education in the Province of Newfoundland (p. 137).

This program met with such success that it encouraged the group to organize appeals to the general public for funding. The group formed the Association for the Help of Mentally Retarded and immediately began to plan for an extension of the program throughout the province. A government grant in 1960, although the amount was small, provided the encouragement that the Association needed. It was a major breakthrough in that it was an

official recognition of the government's interest. Government funding and public donations increased between 1960 and 1967 at which time the Association had spread to twelve communities and employed twenty teachers. Appeals to the government to assume full financial responsibility were made in 1967. Action came four years later (Andrews, 1980).

Public interest and support continued to grow. Advocates for children with disabilities called for the government to assume responsibility. The 1968 Report of the Royal Commission on Education and Youth made several recommendations in this area regarding the rights of exceptional children. As a result, in 1969 the Government created a Division of Special Education within the Department of Education. For the first time, Government would be responsible for the education of children with disabilities.

In 1969, a new School Act was passed. As a result, "school boards were authorized to establish classes for children who for any physical or mental cause are unable to benefit from regular classroom instruction" (Education Act, 1969). New regulations made it possible for school boards to establish special classes with a maximum of twelve students. In some areas around the province these groups were known as "opportunity classes." These classes consisted of students with mild mental handicaps. Gradually more students with moderate to profound mental handicaps were admitted and were provided with specialized programming. This was prior to mandatory legislation in the province (Andrews, 1980).

Another milestone was reached in Newfoundland and Labrador special education in 1970 when the provincial government "assumed full responsibility for the salaries of all teachers under the Association for the Help of Mentally Retarded, and in 1971 extended its

mandate to full administrative and programming responsibility for the schools and classes operated by the Association” (Andrews, 1980, p. 139).

In 1973, Memorial University’s Faculty of Education introduced a special education teacher training program. Prior to this only a few special education courses were available. Program development and delivery began under the leadership of Dr. D. Merrick and Dr. W. Nesbit. Support for the program, particularly the trust towards inclusive education, received strong support from Dr. M. Steer, who was Director of Special Needs Support Services for the province during the late 1970’s.

In 1979, the Newfoundland Task Force on Education headed by Crocker and Riggs was released. They presented a report to the Minister of Education recommending increased integration, increased services, increased expenditures on a per pupil basis, and rearrangement of the administration of special schools and classes (Winzer, 1993).

In 1987, the province released its first “Special Education Policy Manual.” This manual listed a total 50 policies with accompanying guidelines regarding special education and was intended to serve as a model for the development of school district policies and procedures for special education services.

According to the “Special Education Policy Manual” (1987):

The Department of Education is committed to the following aims, which apply to all school age children having special needs: To develop the policies, personnel, environment, material resources, and educational practices which will ensure that all children with special needs receive an education that is

1. designed to respond to individual strengths and needs.
2. provided in the most enhancing environment.
3. characterized by its effectiveness in matching the student’s strengths and needs in

his/her preparation for the world beyond school; its comprehensiveness in encompassing all of the general objectives for education; its consistency in terms of educational practices, whether received in school, at home, in church, or in the wide community.

4. directed towards their futures as productive, independent, participating, community members (p. xiii).

The policies were divided into three sections. Section one dealt with the responsibilities of the Department of Education for special education services. Section two focussed on the responsibilities of school districts. Section three set forth policies and guidelines regarding the process of screening, identification, referral, assessment and program implementation. Attached to the document were appendices containing several forms, regulations and sample letters, for the convenience of those involved in special education.

In 1992, the "Special Education Policy Manual" was revised. Very few changes exist among these two versions. Three policies were omitted in the 1992 manual: policies regarding student referrals, the integration of exceptional children, and school-leaving certificates. One policy was added. It dealt with supports within individual programs.

There were also changes made to the appendices. Added to the 1992 manual, was eligibility criteria, application forms for special transportation, a staffing information form, and a sample role description of special education/resource teachers.

One policy which was presented in the 1987 manual and again in the 1992 manual was policy 1.A.3. It read, "Interdivisional and interdepartmental cooperation is encouraged, to increase the effectiveness of identifying and providing essential services to children and

youth with exceptionalities.” This policy and its implications, is basic to the ISSP process which we have today.

The education of exceptional children continued to gain interest and support in the province. In 1992, the Graduation Requirements Committee issued its report. A major recommendation was that the Department consider the modified course route as a valid pathway to graduation. After a pilot project was completed, it was also noticed that some students would require alternative resources and instructional practices in order to succeed.

As a result of these findings, the “Senior High Pathways” document was released in 1993. Using the Pathways approach, children and youth could complete their courses by taking advantage of extra supports established for them. A brief description of “Pathways to Graduation” follows:

Pathway 1 - Students do provincially approved courses or locally developed courses without any extra supports. The majority of the students the Newfoundland and Labrador school system are on Pathway 1.

Pathway 2 - Students do provincially approved courses with supports. This may mean making adjustments to the learning environment, alternate instructional techniques, different evaluation strategies, increased time, etc.

Pathway 3 - Students have their courses modified. This means that the course outcomes are altered. Students who are unable to meet the prescribed objectives, may have some deleted, while others who are able to excel and go beyond the prescribed, do extra. Course modifications are indicated on the child’s transcript.

At the high school level, this is done through the course numbering system.

Pathway 4 - Students have alternate courses. This route is for individual students for whom all or most of the provincially prescribed, approved or modified objectives in existing subject areas are inappropriate, or in an area or domain not currently addressed by the prescribed curriculum.

Pathway 5 - Students have an alternate curriculum. This pathway is designed for individual students who require an alternate curriculum in all areas of development, such as students with moderate and severe cognitive delays.

It should be noted that students on Pathways 1 to 4 may often straddle two or more pathways at once depending on their individual strengths and needs. Students who are approved for Criteria C services and who are on Pathway 5 should have alternate curriculum for all areas of their programs.

The goal of high school teachers for students, with the exception of criteria C students, is that they complete their 36 high school credits required to graduate. For some students, this means taking courses with supports or modifications, and/or alternate courses.

The 1994 document "Using Our Strengths" addressed requests from those seeking current information regarding programming and resources for students with moderate to profound cognitive disability as the primary disability, some of whom have physical disabilities as well. Representatives of the Department of Education, as well as representatives from various school districts in Newfoundland and Labrador, developed this practical resource book. It was introduced specifically for teachers allocated through Criteria



C. It was to be used with students who were moderately, severely, or profoundly globally delayed in the area of academic, communication, decision-making, functional skills, non-scheduled time usage, self concept/self esteem, sexuality and social skills. An alternate curriculum would be designed for these students on an individual basis which would address each of the eight domains listed above.

In 1995, the Classroom Issues Committee released their report to the Social Policy Committee of the provincial cabinet. The committee made 69 recommendations. A major theme throughout many of the early recommendations was an approach that coordinated the interventions of all service providers, and one which allowed for coordination of various services into a cohesive service plan. The cooperation and collaboration of the Departments of Government who are in direct contact with an individual child/youth, such as Education, Human Resources and Employment, Justice or Health was called for. It was recommended that these parties would work together with the child/youth and his/her parents to develop a comprehensive individualized support services plan.

Dr. Patricia Canning (1996) released "The Report of the Review of Special Education." This was a report which looked in-depth at special education in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The report gives much credit for recent developments in special education in the province to the "Cascade of Services" model, which suggested that "exceptional students should receive their education in the most enhancing educational setting, based upon an assessment of their educational needs" (p. 10). According to Canning:

In the school year 1988-89, 8.1 percent of the total student population was receiving

instruction in segregated special classes. By the school year 1991-92 the number had been reduced to only 0.6 percent of the total school enrolment [in Newfoundland and Labrador] (1996, p.10).

This is a dramatic change in just three years. Students are being integrated to a much greater extent today than even in the recent past. "The Special Matters Report" included a total of 226 recommendations which dealt with a wide range of issues in the area of special education.

In 1996, the Division of Student Support Services, Department of Education, released "Programming for Individual Needs: Individual Support Service Plans." This was a document which described the support services planning process in order to assist the various agencies and service providers. It also addressed issues regarding writing an Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP) for a child. As stated in the document, "The overall purpose of the support services planning process is to ensure continuity of services at all developmental stages in the child's life" (p.1).

In 1997, another document was released which was also developed as a direct result of recommendations toward increased inter-agency cooperation, collaboration and communication as outlined in the "Classroom Issues Report". This document was called "Coordination of Services to Children and Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador: Profiling Needs of Children/Youth." It described which children/youth should be profiled, and the guidelines for doing so (see Appendix A).

Many changes have taken place over the past few years in the area of special education in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The majority of these changes

have been both positive and long overdue. Some changes however, have been adopted with seemingly little thought as to their implications and consequences.

In 1999, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association (NLTA) released a paper entitled, "The Crisis in Student Support - Call for Action on Special Matters: A Report of the Review of Special Education." It called for action on the recommendations laid out by Canning in 1996. This paper was written because of the substantial changes which the education system had undergone including restructuring, downsizing, and the introduction of an overwhelming number of new initiatives which had not been addressed in depth to date.

In this paper, the NLTA recommended that inclusion must include the provision of adequate supports. Reference is made to both "Programming for Individual Needs" and "Senior High Pathways" in this paper. The NLTA (1999) stated:

It is clearly intended that special education units be allocated only for students on Pathways 3, 4, and 5 and that students will only be accepted into these categories after a process of identification and assessment, which is time consuming and comprehensive... It should also be clarified here that all students on Pathways 2 through 5 must have any specified supports recorded and written in an individualized support services plan (ISSP). In the new coordination of services model, input in the development of an ISSP is to be made by all agencies who deal with a child. In Pathway 2, however, the primary, and often sole, responsibility for the development and implementation of the ISSP rests with the regular classroom teacher (p. 5-6).

Having these types of expectations placed on the regular classroom teachers, who generally have no training in the area of special education, will in all likelihood result in unfavorable consequences. The classroom teacher will have his/her "regular" 20-25 students, plus children on Pathways 2, 3 and/or 4, for whom he/she will be expected to write

and/or assist in writing ISSPs. Additional supports need to be established.

Special Education in Newfoundland and Labrador has come so far since the early beginnings by Ms. Vera Perlin in 1954, that it would be very disappointing for the recent initiatives in special education to be thrown out because of a lack of resources and funding. New initiatives often sound very good and seem to have tremendous potential, however in practice, enough thought is not always given, nor the resources provided, to make them a success.

#### **IPP versus ISSP: To Compare and Contrast**

Previous to the introduction of the Individual Support Services Plan Process, or ISSP process, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador had been using the Individual Program Plan Process, or IPP process, to program for children and youth with disabilities in our school system. Although some differences do exist among these two processes, there are also several similarities. The following section takes a brief look at some of these differences and similarities.

Probably the most significant comparison between the two processes is that the IPP was strictly an educational program plan involving the school and the education of the child. The ISSP, however, is a plan which looks at the child's total life and includes his or her involvement with other agencies such as Health, Human Resources and Employment, and Justice. In the past, if a child were receiving services from Human Resources and Employment, he or she would have a General Service Plan, or GSP, in place. If the child

were receiving services from Health, then a Treatment/Care Plan would have been developed. If the child were receiving the assistance of special services teachers at school, then an IPP would have been in place. Each of these agencies would have generally worked separately for what they felt was best for the individual child. The ISSP in comparison, is a collaboration of the work of each of the agencies involved with the child. One document, or program, is developed which takes into account the ideas and efforts of each agency involved. Hewitt and Whittier (1997) discuss the benefits of such a collaborative approach as follows:

When the performances of each team member is assessed, individual accountability exists. Evaluating individual contributions reduces the likelihood of duplication of effort by team members and also provides a mechanism by which team members can channel their support and assistance to one another (p. 131).

A second difference related to the first, is the composition of the planning teams. As stated in the Special Education Policy Manual of 1992 for Newfoundland and Labrador, Section 2.D.2., the core members of the IPP team were the school principal/vice-principal, teachers involved, and parents/guardians. Additional members might include the special education coordinator, school counsellor, educational psychologists, speech-language pathologists, itinerant teachers, and/or representatives of other agencies. According to the document entitled, "Programming for Individual Needs," released by the Department of Education in 1996, the ISSP team membership should consist of the child, parent(s)/guardian(s), Health Personnel, Human Resources and Employment personnel, Educational personnel (at age 4+), and other agency representatives. Only agencies involved

with the specific child are included. All agencies are not represented on every ISSP team. A significant change is that the child is included in the process and in deciding his/her future. It should also be noted that in the IPP process the school principal (or his/her designate) was responsible for calling and chairing the IPP meeting, whereas in the ISSP process, the ISS manager takes responsibility for this.

A third difference is "who" actually needs such a plan. According to the 1992 Policy, Section 3.C.1., "An individual program plan, based on an assessment of the student's strengths and needs, will be designed and implemented for every student requiring objectives that are different from those stated in the prescribed or approved curriculum." In determining which children might need individualized support services planning, or ISSPs, the list includes (1) any child who has an exceptionality and requires adaptations and modifications to programs and strategies, and/or (2) any child who has mastered many or all of the outcomes of the subject, course or program prior to instruction, and/or (3) any child whose emotional and/or behavioral difficulty or disorder is preventing him/her from being successful with the curriculum or causing him/her to be consistently disruptive to other students, and/or (4) any child whose mental health needs prevent him/her from coping effectively and/or puts him/her at risk of self-harm, and/or (5) any child whose physical and/or communication disability or disorder is preventing him/her from being successful with the curriculum (Programming for Individual Needs, 1996).

Another difference is that previously IPPs were written by Special Education teachers with minor input from others involved with the child. Now, according to the 1993

“Pathways to Graduation” document, if a child on Pathway 2 needs specialized supports whether it be extra time, oral testing, etc., this has to be recorded and written in an ISSP. Since special education units are allocated only for students on Pathways 3, 4 and 5, this means that the regular classroom teachers may very well be responsible for the development and implementation of the ISSPs (Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association, 1999). This is a major shift and transfer of work within the education system.

Fifth, although early identification of disabilities was encouraged during the IPP process as outlined in the 1992 “Special Education Policy Manual,” it did not go nearly as far as did the ISSP in this regard. The document, “Programming for Individual Needs” (1996) states:

Early identification is a critical component to the support services planning process. All newborns and their families identified to be at risk are referred to the Community Health Nurse and are followed during the preschool period. The Community Health Nurse normally assumes the responsibilities of ISS Manager during the preschool period (p. 11).

Another difference between the two processes is the use of a common parental/guardian consent form. This single form (See Appendix B) is designed for the release of information across agencies on a need-to-know basis. Before the introduction of the ISSP process, each agency had its own parental/guardian consent form for the release of information.

A seventh and final observable difference between the IPP process and the ISSP process, involves the completion of a child/youth profile sheet. This is a form that is sent to the Child Health Coordinator in the area for each child requiring an ISSP. It is designed to

assist in establishing a database of the number of students receiving support services, the amount of services and resources available, and the amount required. The previous IPP process did not include this form or procedure.

Although the IPP process and ISSP process differ substantially, there are also several ways in which they are similar. The first is in their overall intent. The purpose of both processes is to develop an individualized plan for a child or youth who is experiencing difficulty coping with the "regular" system. Both processes build on the child's strengths and work towards addressing his or her needs.

A second similarity is that both the IPP and the ISSP involve the same eight basic steps: (1) screening and identification, (2) assessment and exploration of instructional strategies, (3) referral to planning team, (4) team meeting, (5) development of the plan, (6) implementation of the plan, (7) monitoring of the plan, and (8) review of the plan. Although the wording may be slightly different, the basic steps are the same.

A third way by which the two processes are similar is that they state the importance of parental involvement in the process. As stated in the "Special Education Policy Manual," 1992, Section 3.B.1., "Parents/Guardians will be involved in all stages of the referral and program planning process." The role of the parent/guardian is to share information regarding their child's strengths, needs, interests, relevant background information, as well as their own wishes for their child at the team meeting. They are full partners in the decision-making process at team meetings. They are involved in assisting with the writing of any component of the plan in areas for which they have responsibility for implementation. They are also



responsible for monitoring the child's overall progress.

Fourth, the components of the actual plans are very similar. The wording may be slightly different, however the basic components are the same. They include: (1) a summary of the child's strengths and needs, (2) annual goals or outcomes, (3) short-term objectives or outcomes, (4) specific support services, (5) responsibility areas, and (6) review dates.

Another similarity is that the forms for both the IPP and the ISSP can be developed locally. Although suggested forms are supplied and guidelines as to what should be included are provided for both the IPP and the ISSP, it is up to individual school boards as to the format of the forms they use. A sample IPP form can be found in Appendix C, while a sample ISSP form can be found in Appendix D. As can be seen, very few real differences exist. Both IPPs and ISSPs are written for a one year period, and should be reviewed twice annually.

A sixth similarity of the two is their emphasis on planning for senior-high special education students after they leave school. This has also been termed "transition planning." Both processes encourage the planning teams to make appropriate arrangements for the youth after completing high school, whether it be a work program or some type of post secondary training. This type of intervention often occurs as early as the junior-high level with prevocational skill development, work experience, etc. This is particularly important for youth with more severe disabilities, who would have difficulty succeeding without this intervention.

As can be seen, the IPP process and the ISSP process share several differences and

several similarities. Whether the differences have warranted such a major change in procedure is still unknown and debated. Change is something which is often difficult to accept, however at times, something which is very necessary. The ISSP process has grown out of the need to incorporate procedural aspects of the four agencies involved to produce an acceptable combined process. Although some sectors of the education system may doubt the necessity of this change, it may be fundamental for all agencies in their efforts to serve the children/youth most effectively.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative research study employing methods consistent with the approach. "Qualitative research is an umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. The data collected has been termed soft, that is rich in description ... and is not easily handled by numbers" (Caines, 1998; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p.2). As Caines (1998) stated, "This research is not about trying to prove a particular hypothesis or test a set of variables. Its purpose is to come to understand how others experience a particular phenomenon" (p.41). This thesis may be viewed both as educational criticism and as participatory research. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) wrote that, "in participatory research ... ideally all research participants are co-researchers who combine investigation, education, and action" (p.11). The current study takes a critical look at the ISSP process in the education system of Newfoundland and Labrador from the perspective of five teachers involved with the process on a daily basis. Each of the participants has a vested interest in the outcomes of the research and is hopeful that changes may come about as a result of the ensuing research recommendations.

Chapter four describes the selection of participants for the study, the time involved in data collection, the procedures followed, a description of the analysis of the data, and the issue of confidentiality.

### **Participant Choice**

Five senior-high special education teachers working in various schools from Western Newfoundland, were interviewed for the purposes of this thesis. This area of the province was chosen for the research for two reasons: first, it was one of two districts initially chosen by the Newfoundland Government to implement the ISSP process (according to Mr. Donald Hayes, Newfoundland Department of Education), and secondly, because the researcher had worked in this district for a number of years and was therefore familiar with both the policies and teaching staff in the area. Each participant was made aware of the research design and was given an opportunity to prepare his/her answers prior to the interview. Each participant signed an Interview Consent Form (See Appendix E). The names used in this thesis are fictitious to protect the identities of those interviewed. A brief background description of the interviewees is presented below to help the reader more fully understand and appreciate the views and opinions recorded.

**Ms. Johnson:** A female teacher, with between 20-30 years experience in the teaching profession. The bulk of her experience has been with Challenging Needs, or Criteria C students. Recently she has had some noncategorical Special Education duties as well.

**Mr. Brown:** A male teacher, with between 10-20 years teaching experience. Previous to his current noncategorical Special Education position, he worked in the area of Challenging Needs.

**Ms. Young:** A female teacher in a noncategorical Special Education replacement position. She has had a variety of experiences as a substitute and replacement teacher over the years.

**Mr. Davis:** A male teacher with 20-30 years teaching experience. He has worked at both the junior and senior-high level in the area of noncategorical Special Education.

**Mr. Williams:** A male teacher with 10-20 years teaching experience, has worked in the area of senior-high Challenging Needs for many years. He briefly worked as a noncategorical Special Education teacher for two years.

### **Time**

The data for this study was collected over a two-day period, March 11-12, 1999, in Western Newfoundland. Interviews ranging from 45 to 75 minutes were conducted with each of the five participants. Interviewees received by mail a copy of the interview questions one to two days prior to the interview. No additional follow-up sessions were necessary.

### **Procedure**

In preparing for the interviews with each of the participants, a list of twelve semi-open ended questions were developed which focused on various aspects of the ISSP process. Questions were arranged in an order whereby the first ones asked for information which did not require too much thought, but looked at specific aspects of the process, such as the significance of parental involvement. Questions gradually increased in complexity and in the amount of reflection and opinion required of the participants. For example, the final question asked how the interviewee would change the process if given the opportunity.

Arranging the questions in such an order facilitated rapport building as well as a continuous flow of ideas. Participants were given the opportunity to add to the interview any points which they deemed significant, provided they were not included previously. The intent of this type of interview procedure has been summed up by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) in the following way. "The intent of such interviewing is to capture the unseen that was, is, will be, or should be; how respondents think or feel about something; and how they explain or account for something" (p.92).

Each of the participants was contacted by telephone and a meeting time was arranged at their convenience. The purpose of the study was explained, and they were informed that a copy of the interview questions would be mailed to them (Appendix F) prior to the meeting so that they could begin to consider their responses. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed personally by the author. As well, handwritten transcripts of the interviews were taken to ensure compatibility and accuracy.

Each interview began with a brief introduction in which the purpose of the study was reiterated. Confidentiality and permission to tape-record the interview were also addressed. Each participant signed the Interview Consent Form (Appendix E). At the end of the interview, the participant was thanked for his or her participation. Each was sent a thank-you card.

#### **Analysis of Data**

In qualitative research the author must analyze the data collected, and from it try to

induce meaning. Analyzing data implies three kinds of operational processes according to Coffee and Atkinson (1996): "(a) noticing relevant phenomena, (b) collecting examples of those phenomena, and (c) analyzing those phenomena to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures" (p.29). Data collection in this research study was fostered by the author's personal experiences with the ISSP process, and the apparent need for alterations to the process. The data were collected through the use of twelve questions. Even though the questions were linked - in that they all dealt with aspects of the ISSP process - they were also distinct in that they focused on specific issues and concerns for individual teachers.

Since the interviews were structured with the twelve questions being asked of each of the five participants in the same order, the analysis of the data was fairly straight-forward. Each question was dealt with on an individual basis, and the five responses were included with each of the questions (see Chapter Four). Each group of responses was analyzed and a brief summary was written to highlight the most important points from the five responses to the questions. Participant quotes were used to substantiate the researcher's conclusions.

Chapter Five is devoted to conclusions and recommendations drawn from the analysis of data. Strengths of the ISSP process are highlighted, as well as a range of concerns expressed by the interviewees. Based on the responses of the participants, recommendations are made which the author feels would be of benefit to those with the authority to alter the ISSP process. Only those recommendations which are practical and might truly benefit both those involved in the ISSP process on a daily basis and the children/youth are included.

Each of the interviews was audiotaped. Written transcripts of the tapes were made within days of the interviews to ensure accuracy of the data. Before the data was reported in this thesis, participants were given the opportunity to read through the transcript of their interview and ensure that quoting was accurate. A few minor changes were made. Once these changes were made participants were satisfied that their opinions and ideas were accurately presented.

#### **Confidentiality**

The identity of all participants in this study were kept confidential and their names were changed. School names, which might aid in the identification of teachers, were omitted. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix E) prior to participation. This form explained the intent of the study and provided information concerning the researchers immediate supervisors. Confidentiality was verbally guaranteed by the author as well. Copies of the consent form were retained by both the author and the participants. All audio-tapes and transcripts will be destroyed upon thesis completion.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE INTERVIEWS

The most significant focus of any thesis or research study is the data collected from the participants of the study. Their responses to questions or statements are what provides the author with data to analyze and from which to draw conclusions and make recommendations. The following chapter presents the twelve questions asked of the participants, followed by their individual responses. Each section ends with a brief summary of the responses.

#### The Responses

##### Question #1

*When were you first introduced to the ISSP process?*

**Ms. Johnson:**

When I first got into Special Education, or Special Needs, or SMH, about 16 years ago they were called IPPs then, and that was when I first started doing them. When I first started doing IPPs I was inserviced in a way. I didn't go to any inservice, but I got a lot of help from coordinators in using it. Recently I haven't had any inservice, although there was an inservice scheduled a few years ago, but I didn't get to go to it because there wasn't enough substitute teacher time. They couldn't get a substitute to come in for me, so I missed out on the whole thing. You see what I've learned about those ISSPs, I've learned from other

special education teachers in this school. I picked it up as I went along.

**Mr. Brown:**

I was first introduced to the ISSP process when I did the Train-the-Trainer workshop last year.

**Ms. Young:**

Actually it was last year, April of '98, when I was in a replacement position. I did my first ISSP at that elementary school with the special education teacher there. I have had no formal inservice at all and that's because I've been a substitute up to this point, so anything I've learned, I've learned from other teachers and through reading myself.

**Mr. Davis:**

I was introduced to the ISSP process two or three years ago.

**Mr. Williams:**

I was first introduced to the ISSP process in 1997, I think.

***Do you feel that you were properly inserviced?***

**Ms. Johnson:**

No. But I should have been, because an inservice was provided, but the problem was with the substitute teachers. Two other teachers went from this school. We could only send two, and they sent them and I didn't get to go. That was last year. It was nobody's fault. There just wasn't enough substitute days.

**Mr. Brown:**

I guess that I felt that I was properly inserviced as I was one of the trainers. I volunteered for the trainee program, I didn't know at the time, but that's what it was. Getting away from school for three days, I thought I would gain a bit of knowledge, but the workshop was actually training the ISSP trainees. We had four days initially of inservice in that area. All of us, not all of us, a lot of us, came away with questions and concerns, because you had Justice people, you had Health people, you had Education and you had Social Services people.

I felt comfortable with it because of my experience as a teacher in category C. We were of course, exposed to IEPs all the time. I saw the ISSP process as really no different than what we were doing with the IEP. Simply a little more coordination, and I don't even know from my perspective if it was a lot more coordination, because when I did IEP's with my students, the parents were involved, Social Services people were involved, and pertinent people were involved because there seemed to be much more cooperation among all adults involved if you are teaching someone with a severe developmental disability or a mental disability. In fact, you had to rely on whatever supports were out there, so you had to contact whatever resource people you could. It's almost a necessity if you're doing a program for a child, you had to reach out and touch all bases. We had to call for help and say, "Listen, we don't know what to do." "I'm frustrated, the parents are frustrated, who's out there to help us." We did in fact, search out resource people wherever we could. So for myself, I felt comfortable with the ISSP process. Other people I can understand who were not exposed

to IEPs in the past, or working in that kind of capacity would have some apprehension as the Justice people did with confidentiality and the sharing of information. Health people saw it as something different because they've worked in isolation most of the time. Social Services probably to a lesser degree. But confidentiality was an issue there as well. But myself, I felt comfortable with it.

**Ms. Young:**

No, I do not. I think substitute teachers should be given the opportunity to be inserviced as well.

**Mr. Davis:**

Yes and no. The philosophy and the booklets were all well put together at the time, but I don't think they knew how to do it in the real world. I think the theory was great and it still is. But I just think they are trying to do it too fast.

**Mr. Williams:**

At that time I was, but once we got into the process itself more questions came up. And the way we thought things were going to run, didn't run that way. But, at that time I thought I was inserviced properly.

**Summary**

Of the five teachers which I interviewed, two were not formally inserviced at all. Ms. Johnson wasn't because of a lack of substitute teacher days in her school, and Ms. Young wasn't because at the time of the inservicing, she worked as a substitute teacher and

substitutes were not provided with inservice. Currently she is in a replacement position. Neither of these teachers thought they were properly inserviced.

One of the teachers, Mr. Brown, was a trainer. This meant that he was involved in a four day inservice by personnel from the Department of Education, and was then expected to inservice, with three other teachers, the special education and guidance personnel in their school district, which he subsequently did. He recalls still having many unanswered questions himself at the end of the four days, however he does feel that this inservice was sufficient.

Only two of the teachers, Mr. Davis and Mr. Williams, were inserviced in the expected manner. Both were somewhat uncertain of the date of the initial inservice. Both seemed to be only somewhat satisfied with their inservicing. Mr. Davis states, "The philosophy and the booklets were all well put together at the time, but I don't think they knew how to do it in the real world." Mr. Williams had similar complaints, and made reference to questions which arose when he started using the process.

*How do you feel now about developing an ISSP for students?*

**Ms. Johnson:**

Well I have no problems developing ISSPs for SMH students because I've done them so often, and I've done so many of them, that I don't have any problem doing them. I'm still using my old forms because I find them much better, considering the board told us to use what we thought was appropriate, so that's what I use. We really have nothing that came

from the board office. We got a smattering of this and that, which I have collected from around. The two regular special services teachers here have put together something that would be serviceable for their needs. I don't like them nearly as well as my own, although I haven't done enough of them - I haven't done any of them actually except for the one for Heidi, so I really can't say. To me they seem to be like everything is just slapped together. They're not nice, organized things to use. They're cumbersome. They're cluttery. They're like bits and pieces pulled from here, there and everywhere, and stuck together and I don't like them, personally. They're not done well, but I really don't know enough, since this is the first time I've worked in the regular special education, what I would want in one.

**Mr. Brown:**

I guess my position now, as noncategorical special education teacher, as opposed to my position in category C, is the greater number of students I work with. It frustrates me in a way, because I see seventy or eighty students, although I know deep down that we haven't got to do seventy or eighty students with ISSPs. Still we haven't identified really a core of students that we can work with and apply the ISSP too. So I guess there is some apprehension from that perspective, about actually getting into the process and doing them. I mean we went through a few at school, but we're certainly not even getting close to having done what we need, simply because most of us see it as overwhelming at this point. If I were still a category C teacher with three or four students then it would be no problem. I'd get it done, and the process would be sailing along quite well. It's simply because of the numbers of students that we have. We're still at odds. "We say who are we doing an ISSP for? Who

needs one?" It's frustration I think, on the part of our staff in that respect, and myself also.

**Ms. Young:**

Well, it's a process. It's pretty much straightforward in the things that you have to do. It takes a lot of time and a lot of effort, but I think in the end it's probably an excellent source of information about students. It gives you the total overview of the student's strengths and weaknesses, and sort of gives you a comparative picture of the student. I guess the thing that I find really difficult is gathering all the information and trying to find time to put it all together and meet with all the people involved. As far as understanding the process, once you do one or two, the rest of it, with some help, gets easier all the time.

**Mr. Davis:**

It's no problem. It's the kind of thing we have been doing for years and years and years under different names. But, the thing about this one is getting all the other people involved together and setting your priorities in terms of gathering information, or do you spend the time with this process. Because you know with this process you can spend hours and hours and hours documenting and having meetings and that kind of stuff, and then the child is probably left there by himself for the most of the time, for weeks at a time probably, because you're trying to put together a program on paper, that's if you go by the theory of the ISSP.

**Mr. Williams:**

I feel fairly confident in my role with the process, and I feel confident developing

programs, using that. In my particular situation sometimes all the possible agencies aren't involved. So, my experience has been that things have gone fairly well. I found things to go quite well. The kids are benefitting from it, and the parental involvement, was there before in IEPs. I feel it is going pretty well. With the different agencies, there seems to be more cooperation or openness, and more knowledge of what one is doing. The left hand finally seems to know a bit more of what the right hand is doing. For years that wasn't the case.

### **Summary**

Although each of the teachers interviewed feels that he/she is capable in developing ISSPs for students at this point, there seems to be a clear distinction between regular, or noncategorical special education teachers who work with high numbers of students, and those who have a categorical position and work with six or less students. Mr. Brown summarizes this position nicely by saying, "If I were still a category C teacher with three or four students then it would be no problem. I'd get it done, and the process would be sailing along quite well. It's simply because of the numbers of students that we have."

For those teachers who work with seventy or eighty students, planning ISSP meetings, gathering information, attending meetings, etc. seems overwhelming. These teachers have to decide where their priorities lie. Mr. Davis says, "...with this process you can spend hours and hours and hours documenting and having meetings and that kind of stuff, and then the child is probably left there by himself for the most of the time, for weeks



at a time probably, because you're trying to put together a program on paper..." Developing the ISSP does not appear to be the problem. The problem lies in getting the time to formally assess students, gather information, plan and attend meetings, and write programs.

### **Question #2**

*Generally children and youth have not been included in individualized program planning meetings which focused on establishing goals for them. The ISSP process involves children/youth as active participants in the development of the ISSP. How do you feel about this particular change? What implications, positive and/or negative, might this have for program development?*

#### **Ms. Johnson:**

I think it's important. I think it's very important especially at the senior high level, and I think they have something to contribute, speaking from my own point of view with the SMH students. I think it's high-time that they had some say in things that affect their daily living - And they do have important things to say. I'm sure it must be even more-so for Special Education students. I think it's very important. I think it's high-time, they should be asked to participate more.

#### **Mr. Brown:**

I think that it really is a plus. A big plus. The child, whenever possible, should be involved, and his or her wishes should be known. Their input is quite valuable around the table with teachers and other professionals, whoever they be. That gives a chance for the

individuals, such as teachers and parents, to see the child in other settings. Although they know the child in their setting, at the meeting it gives everybody a chance to see the child in a new form. Another thing is, that the child does have the opportunity to be able to speak.

The one caution I see with that, is also an issue with parents. Sometimes they don't know what to ask, how to ask, or really what their role should be at those meetings. That was an issue with our IEP meetings, and it still is in the ISSP, because it can be quite intimidating for parents and children especially, sitting around with large numbers of people, including professionals. That can be quite intimidating for parents and children too.

**Ms. Young:**

I think when it's used properly it's okay, like everything else. If students are involved in developing their own program they accept some responsibility for it. It puts the onus on them to make it a success. The amount of participation, I think depends on the age of the student and the intellectual ability of the student.

I think careful consideration should be given to the child's personality and his ability. If these considerations are not taken into account the student may be pressured into making decisions he doesn't feel capable of making, or receiving information he's not capable of handling - things he doesn't want to hear, or things he can't cope with. Maybe some of the information about himself he shouldn't know. Again, I think it depends on the child's age. At high school, the student, who is non-categorical, should be informed as much as any teachers and parents think is necessary. Teachers and parents, I think, have to decide the programs. The student can just give you his opinion and consent. But I think when it comes

down to it, teachers and parents, are the professionals, and they should certainly decide on the program, with some input from the student.

**Mr. Davis:**

The one big advantage with the child being a part of the meetings is that he will know what the plan is and that we are all working together.

There are negative aspects as well. The child may not understand what's going on. He may not be responsive, or may not be knowledgeable enough, to participate. Another negative is that in these meetings, they will be given labels, for example, "severely mentally handicapped," or "emotionally disturbed." This hurts them to know that they are different, especially at the age when fitting in is so important.

**Mr. Williams:**

That's quite a change. It's certainly different when a group of people are sitting around a table or a desk or whatever, talking about kids and trying to come up with some strategies and planning for them. It's certainly different when you have the child right there with you. It certainly puts a whole new perspective on what you're saying sometimes and the approach you're taking.

I got to be honest with you and just say for example, last December or January we had a meeting, and the child was there. The team met and it was concerning re-documentation of this particular child, and whether we would re-document her or not. The child was there. I was comfortable with that. I found other people weren't. Let me give you an example, the principal at the time said, "Let me tell you the truth, I don't feel comfortable talking about

whether the child is severely mentally handicapped or whatever you want to call it.” He said, “I just don’t feel comfortable.” From a personal point of view, I’m fine with it. I believe it’s good, particularly for the children I am working with, because they are 15 to 21 years old. Those students are adults. And I believe it’s very beneficial for them. I haven’t been involved with younger children. I’m not sure what benefit it would be to them. To older kids I can see it being a benefit. For myself, I believe they should be there. I have no problem with it. I believe it is positive for them. I explained to a parent and I explained to the principal too, if you’re going to have the stakeholders around the table, well you’ve got to have the main stakeholders there, and that’s the child, or in our case, the young adult.

It’s particularly important at this stage of the game because as you know, in most cases, this is going to be the last formal education that these kids are going to have, and it comes at a time when they’ve got to be active, in whether we’re talking about where they’re going to work, or their behavior, or if we’re thinking about some kind of anger management. How they are socially, what other types of activities we would like to see them participate in after they get out of school. If those things are decided, that child has to be actively involved. The only negative thing that I do see is some people, some team members are uncomfortable with it.

### **Summary**

Each of the teachers whom I interviewed, said that there were some good points to having the child actively involved in the ISSP process. The main point included the fact that

at this age, senior high, these students should be mature enough to handle any information which is discussed regarding them, and they should have some input about the program which is decided for them in the future. By involving them in the process, this puts some onus of responsibility on them to make sure the program is a success. If the wishes and preferences of the children/youth are taken into consideration, the program is more likely to be successful. Mr. Brown states that by having the child attend the meeting, this lets all involved observe the child, and his or her behaviors, in a different environment.

Two teachers also expressed their concern over instances when the inclusion of the child in the ISSP process may not be so positive. Children/youth need to have enough maturity and intellectual ability to participate in the ISSP process according to Ms. Young and Mr. Davis. They need to be aware of what is going on and how it directly affects them. Mr. Davis was also concerned with the use of labels with these children. He states, "This hurts them to know that they are different, especially at the age when fitting in is so important."

The teachers who had a background in working with Challenging Needs, or Criteria C students, each thought that the involvement of students in the ISSP process was a long overdue and necessary step. They tended to focus more on the transitional planning of the child once he/she leaves school, then on the immediate academic goals. The special education teachers who did not have a background in Challenging Needs, focused more on actually what the student could, or could not, contribute or understand.

**Question #3**

*Parents and/or guardians have always been a very important component of any planning program for their child. From your experience as an educator, how do you see the role of the parent and/or guardian in the ISSP process?*

**Mr. Johnson:**

Well in nutshell, they are able to provide information and provide input that is necessary for the development of the best possible program for the student. We cannot put together a good, accurate, comprehensive program without the input of parents. So in a nutshell, I think that is the main role. We need to share information, that's necessary for program planning. We need consistency in expectations and management, and we can only do this if parents are involved. We can learn from the parents as much as they can learn from us. Also, if parents are involved it provides parents with a support system, and provides us with a support system, because it's so much easier when we're all working together for a common goal. Well, we've all seen the results when home and school don't work together. It doesn't work.

**Mr. Brown:**

The parents are probably the most important members of the team, next to the child. It's from my own personal experience that the best information does not come from psychological assessment done by teachers or anything else, but the assessment by parents and their stories, and how parents describe their child. Actually that's where you gain real insight into how they act in a natural environment. School or a testing situation, is certainly

not a natural environment. The parents, I've found, are the best source of information. Even this year, I was still surprised, when one parent came in and sat, and told us at one of the meetings, some of this off-the-cuff incidental. You know at meetings sometimes, you'll go off and side-track a little and talk about this or that. The type of information that can be learnt from these little side-tracks about students is invaluable information.

The parent is the key person. If the parent is not there you're at a losing battle - the parent or guardian [should be there] for the person. It's a necessity. I know in lots of cases that for whatever reason, sometimes the parents are not there, or don't want to be there. But of course that's another issue, but an advocate should be there. Someone acting as an advocate for the child should be at these meetings. We all have the child's best interests in mind, but sometimes our professional disciplines or training may get in the way of what we feel is really best for the child. After all, we are all university educated and are familiar with the school system. We prepare, or try to prepare, the child for what he needs for university or post-secondary. But again, a lot of them are certainly not geared up for that, but that's what our value system is. That's where we came from, and we sort of displace values on others.

**Ms. Young:**

Well I think the parent is the source of so much information, important information on the student, they know the child, his physical and social development. They also have certain expectations for the child, and the teacher becomes aware of that. By becoming part of the team, they assume some responsibilities and some limitations, and I think it really

helps the communication with the parents. I think communications become more positive and parents feel the teachers and educators, in general, are less intimidating. They feel more comfortable expressing their views as they get to know you over a certain amount of time. You're almost forcing them to take a role in their child's education and sometimes the parents of special education children, don't take a very big role in their child's education, but this, sort of, makes them become involved, and I think it's a really good thing.

**Mr. Davis:**

The parents or guardians are a very important component of the whole process. They bring so much information with them about the child that we don't know.

A lot of parents may be intimidated by a group of teachers and other professionals, and feel that are not in the same league or on an even playing field with them.

There is no doubt that they are a very valuable members and if the process is done in the right way it can work with parents. They should be updated regularly, and by that it might mean on a weekly basis, not just once or twice a year. You need to have continuous communication with the home whether that's little notes being written back and forth, telephone calls, or what not. Now I know some teachers do this anyway. For the process to work, parents have to be kept up to date and communication needs to be continuous.

**Mr. Williams:**

I find that for parents, generally speaking, their role is central. I've said to parents in the past, your role is more important than my role. I firmly believe that. I believe it's their child. As a parent not only as an educator, what I want for my own child is much more



important than what Ms. Walters wants for my child, or what any other teacher wants for my child. Besides the child, they are the major stakeholders. When you think about parents who have dedicated their lives to these children, and they continue, in many cases, to dedicate their lives to these children, they have to be central.

I've found for years, that sometimes parents are overwhelmed and frightened with coming to schools, or to pick up the phone and call the school. Some of the children I work with come from harsh or low socio-economic backgrounds. Some of my parents are grade 5 drop-outs. For those people to come into a high school and sit around a table where there is a guidance counselor, a special education teacher, a principal or vice-principal, a couple of classroom teachers, a social worker etc. etc. that's very intimidating.

I think we have to make those parents as comfortable as possible. The process is not going to work if they aren't there. They're central to providing background information. They're central for consent. They know their children better than anybody else. If we're not all pulling together, we may as well not be pulling at all. You just pull yourself apart. It just doesn't make sense.

My own personal view, I believe, has changed somewhat in the past five or six years. I believe as a parent, I know what I want for my children by the time they're finished grade 12. If I wasn't involved and I wasn't set in my wishes in what was central to my kids education, I may be inclined to take them out. As an educator we must keep that in mind. Parents have got to take ownership, and parents have got to be given the opportunity to take ownership. They're role is central to provide background information. For example, when

you sit down and talk to those parents, you find out so much about these children. "I didn't know Johnny wasn't toilet trained until he was eight years old." Or, "I didn't know that has been a problem since kindergarten." Or sometimes, "I didn't know Johnny was deaf in one ear." There's often so much information left behind, everybody assumes that everybody knows. Nobody ever told me that Johnny was deaf in one ear. "Sure all teachers knew that!" The information doesn't always come with them. If we don't ask, we may never know.

### Summary

All five of the individuals that I interviewed said that the role of parents was instrumental in the gathering of information about students and that they play a very significant role as team members. The type and amount of information that they supply, cannot be obtained from any other source. They present a picture of the child in his/her natural environment. As Mr. Williams put it, "If we're not all pulling together, we may as well not be pulling at all. You just pull yourself apart."

Another common trend among the responses was that very often parents feel intimidated and overwhelmed about coming into a school and meeting with a large group of professionals, such as educators, social workers, justice and health personnel. Going into a school and being unaware of what these strangers will say about your child can be very intimidating. We must make these meetings as comfortable and inviting for parents as possible.

Each of the teachers made mention of the importance of open communication

between the home and the school so that everyone knows what the others are doing. Ms. Young states, "I think communications becomes more positive and parents feel the teachers and educators, in general, are less intimidating. They feel more comfortable expressing their views as they get to know you over a certain amount of time."

This idea of parental involvement in educational program planning is not new to Special Education teachers. Parents have been involved in the IEP process for years. Their continual support and involvement is seen as absolutely necessary if the ISSP process is to be a success.

#### **Question #4**

*The ISSM, or manager, has very specific roles in the ISSP meeting and afterward.*

*What do you see as the most important tasks of the ISSM?*

**Ms. Johnson:**

Well, you need someone to organize the things and set things up, and get what's needed. Also, to facilitate communication, probably that's the most important thing. You've got probably 10 or 12 people, or maybe more, on a team for any particular student and communication is not going to be passed to everybody unless somebody assumes that role. Also, you need to see that follow-up is done.

**Mr. Brown:**

I think the most important task, there, is for the person to really get a sense of what their responsibility is as ISSM.

I'm manager on a few ISSPs and it comes easier with experience. The more you do, it comes easier. It's not an undaunting task. I guess it's a matter of becoming familiar with the position and knowing what to do. I think too, over time it will work out. It's not something, I don't think, that we need to shy away from because really anybody can be the ISSM to keep track and see that things are on schedule and that all things are done and this sort of thing. The child can even be his own ISSM. In theory and on paper things work well. When you're in the situation it gets a little rough around the edges simply because you're not used to doing it. I see any role like that. It's much like a sport when you take a certain position on a team - if you've never done it before, certainly you need lots of practice. The same things apply to ISSP meetings, whether it's the manager's role or you're there in a role of a parent, or a professional, or whatever. The more you do, the more comfortable you become.

**Ms. Young:**

To facilitate meetings for all the parties concerned, which is a formidable task, you have to get different agencies involved. I think the manager has to be diligent in updating the ISSP when necessary. I think just getting everyone together is the most important aspect of his role.

**Mr. Davis:**

The first thing is that he/she needs to be committed to the process, and not just do it because it is part of the job description, or because so and so tells me to do it, but they must be really committed.

The second thing is they must plan carefully and keep in mind the schedules of others involved. They must be accommodating to everyone. This is very hard to do, but essential if you are going to do a good job. They have to be accommodating to the team.

Another thing is that each and every team member should know his/her role. It is up to the manager to see that everyone knows what is expected of him/her.

**Mr. Williams:**

I think the most important responsibility of the manager is that once responsibilities have been settled upon, to ensure that these responsibilities are carried out. Whether that's somebody responsible for note-taking or whatever. Once the meeting is over then it's got to be carried out. That's what I believe to be the central role of the manager - ensuring that the plan goes forward, that things move forward.

**Summary**

Those interviewed seemed to think that the main role of the ISSM, or manager, is to facilitate the ISSP meetings. This person would have several responsibilities including setting up the meetings, keeping in mind the busy schedules of those involved, and trying to accommodate everybody as much as possible. He/she should be very familiar with the roles and responsibilities of each person, and make others aware of them. He/she should ensure that there are open channels of communication so that everybody gets the information that they need. The manager must be committed to the process and willing to commit a lot of time and energy. According to Mr. Brown, "It's much like a sport when you take a certain

position on a team - if you've never done it before, certainly you need lots of practice. The same things apply to ISSP meetings, whether it's the manager's role or you're there in a role of a parent, or a professional, or whatever. The more you do, the more comfortable you become."

**Question #5**

*Consultation and meeting with professionals from Social Services, Health and Justice is an integrated component of the ISSP process. What are your thoughts regarding this issue?*

**Ms. Johnson**

I think it's a must. It's necessary in programming to be comprehensive. It's necessary for gathering information. It's also necessary to get other people's assessments and opinions. And it's necessary to get a complete assessment of the needs of the student, because we see certain things as the needs of the student - we see it from our own point of view. Often we don't see the home environment. We don't see the social environment. In order for it to be comprehensive, it's important we include all those people. They are very important in the lives of our students as well. Nobody can work independently. We're all working towards the same goals. We must work together.

**Mr. Brown:**

If you're asking about the relationship between professionals themselves, yes it is. Again, personalities come into play a lot of times. Sometimes as professionals we all have

our own opinions about another's profession. Sometimes probably highlighting the values of our own, or probably dragging down the values of some other. I think, the arguments, or the conflicts that we can get into as professionals, we have to set aside and see the child as being the center of everything and focus on what's in the best interest of the child. Sometimes in professional relationships, one agency is probably accusatory of another, or defensive in the sense "you have never done this", or "you have never done that", "you haven't done your job in relation to this child". As professionals we tend to get into those little nit-picky things that doesn't do the child any good and sets the relationship between professionals on an uneasy ground. In turn, that affects the outcome of what you're going to be able to do in the way of a quality program for the child. How the professionals relate and get along is instrumental, because you can be told to go and do something, but you can sit there idly and not be willing to put your best in if you are at odds with the person you're working with. You have to put personal values and judgements about a person's job, or what they're doing away, and look at the child, and see how we can come together and help each other to do the best for the child. Again, the relationships between professionals is very important.

**Ms. Young:**

I think it makes teachers aware of the child's life outside the school. It fills gaps about a child's development and his behavior. Unfortunately, these people are often as overworked as we are, and trying to arrange meetings is often an impossibility. They do play a role though, especially if they are working with the child, or working with the child's

family. Special education people should be aware of the role they are playing and how they're involved. If a family is on social services for example, it makes you aware that the child can't always afford things in school, may not be properly fed, and that certainly would affect his learning ability. Or if they are involved in the justice system, or with the law, then that's another component of stress in the child's life, and something to be aware of.

**Mr. Davis:**

Duplication of services is common at this level. Children are often seen and worked with by more than one person or group at the same time. If this process is done in the right way and they are committed, consultation will be a lot easier. At the present time many are not committed to the process and therefore it is not taken seriously. The significance of the process is not fully understood or cared for. Consultation is very important, especially if this ISSP process is going to work.

**Mr. Williams:**

We have kids in the system, who are involved in education, obviously education because they're in school. They're involved with Social Services, they're involved with Health, they're with the court system, or the justice system. These agencies have got to be coordinated, if not you're getting duplication. Like I said before, the left arm doesn't know what the right arm is doing. It's long overdue. These are significant agencies. Education can't work in a vacuum, neither can Social Services, or Health, or Justice. What's happening in one area is often impacting on other areas. If Education is here, Social Services is there, Health is there, and Justice is over here, and none of them ever meet, it just doesn't make



sense.

### Summary

All those interviewed thought that the consultation and meeting of the various agencies of Education, Social Services, Health, and Justice was a very positive move. The most common reason cited for its importance was the fact that under the old system information seemed to be missing in the child's life and there were things about the child, important things, that teachers were unaware of. Under the ISSP process, the parents, the child, and all the agencies involved with the child meet to develop a comprehensive program for the child. Ms. Johnson summarizes: "... it's necessary to get a complete assessment of the needs of the student, because we see certain things as the needs of the student - we see it from our own point of view. Often we don't see the home environment. We don't see the social environment. In order for it to be comprehensive, it's important we include all those people. They are very important in the lives of our students as well. Nobody can work independently. We're all working towards the same goals. We must work together."

Duplication of services was another concern for some. They thought that once all the agencies work together, such duplication should end. According to Mr. Williams, "...the left arm doesn't know what the right arm is doing. It's long overdue. These are significant agencies. Education can't work in a vacuum, neither can Social Services, or Health, or Justice. What's happening in one area is often impacting on other areas."

Personality conflicts were also mentioned by Mr. Brown. He stressed the importance

of everybody putting aside their opinions about another's profession, or the blame for things left undone, and concentrate on the child.

**Question #6**

*Based on your experiences, what would a typical ISSP team meeting look like?*

**Ms. Johnson:**

Probably 10 to 12 people, sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the student, including everyone who has been involved with the student and including the student as well. Parents, respite workers, special needs/special education teachers, appropriate classroom teachers (not everybody, because then it gets so cluttered up that nothing gets said, nothing gets accomplished), student assistants (definitely you got to have your student assistants), social worker (if there is a social worker involved), behavior management specialist, health care specialist (rehab, for example), justice department people (if they're involved with the student), guidance counselor, somebody from administration, at least for the first team meeting. Usually I have an administrator there for the first meeting, and then unless there are ongoing problems, they won't show up for every meeting. [Also included are] representatives of the community employment groups (for example, the Sedlar program, and that's been very effective for us at our level, where we have students now leaving and going into the community. We usually try to work with these people a couple of years before the student moves on.) [Sedlar is a community-based program in Western Newfoundland designed to help primarily young adults with a disability find employment in the

community].

I try to have my meetings informal and relaxed because people are much more into expressing themselves when meetings are informal. We try to have it like a social thing too, with cookies, coffee or something, so that sort of facilitates people to talk more. I find that very, very good. We get comfortable. We've had up to 15 people at some meetings. By the time you get the parents (2 parents), myself - and I'm working this year more closely with regular special education - because I feel it's just another section of a special education job anyway, so I like the special education teachers to be involved too, and someone from administration, and student assistants, respite worker, and sometimes you'll get someone from the community, someone from the Vera Perlin Association, and the counselor, by the time you get everyone in, it adds up.

I usually act as manager for meetings that involve my own SMH students, but I haven't so far acted as manager for any regular special education team meeting because I'm only quarter-time special education. I have been to team meetings for special education students, but just as another team member. I usually call the meeting. I haven't attended any meetings outside the school. Nobody has ever requested that I attend a meeting anywhere else.

**Mr. Brown:**

I'd say the typical ones that we've had, probably you're looking at 5 to 10 people. Most of those are within the system, the parents, and educators. I don't think any of the ISSP meetings that we have had so far involved any other outside agencies, just within the

education system itself, within the school, and sometimes the guidance counselor or educational therapist, or someone like that. But I have been involved in meetings outside the school in the past. I have been called out to IEP meetings regarding students. In the child's and parent's home sometimes for example.

**Ms. Young:**

I've been involved in 14 to date. The special education teachers, the classroom teacher (in high school it's different because you have so many subject area teachers, as opposed to the elementary school, where you may have just the one classroom teacher and special education teacher), the parent, any outside agency, the school guidance counselor, and sometimes someone from the department of social services, are most likely to attend. When too many people become involved, it makes it really difficult to coordinate and I think it's also really intimidating for parents. When a parent walks into a meeting, and there's all these so-called professionals there, talking about their child, they must feel a little intimidated. I think if you keep it down to the minimal number that's truly necessary, then it's better for everyone. The meeting would be more meaningful and the parents would feel more comfortable attending the meeting.

When I attended a meeting about a spina bifida child at the hospital, there were many people there. The parent walking into that meeting must have felt overwhelmed. If it had been me, I would have been totally intimidated from doctors, to counselors, to speech therapists, to occupational therapists to teachers. It was just so many people that it just lost any impact. I think the meeting should be kept to the absolute minimum number, just people

that are directly involved to the child's education, his development, or for whatever good reason for the meeting has been arranged. I don't really know why I was invited to that meeting at the hospital. I taught the student one subject, but that was it.

**Mr. Davis:**

The initial meeting would probably be just the school staff, where we would discuss the student and if there is a need to go further. A typical meeting after that might include the parents, the social worker, someone from the school administration - the principal or vice principal, the student, sometimes the staff which would be the special education teacher and any other [teacher] directly involved with the student, and any other professionals who are involved from Health or Justice.

**Mr. Williams:**

From my own personal experiences, the size of group would probably be 8 or 10. I'll just give you an example of some of the people who would be there: principal, vice principal, special education teacher, guidance is usually there, or educational psychologist, some classroom teachers if that's applicable, social services for some of my kids, parents or guardians, or foster parents, public health. From my own situation, justice hasn't been involved. Usually social services, health and the school. You probably have 10 or 11 people there, and the child. There are a lot of issues with so many of these kids around health. Public health is such a great resource, whether [the issue is] personal hygiene, or sexuality, or whatever.

### Summary

The typical size of an ISSP meeting seems to vary greatly according to the responses of those interviewed. It has been their experiences to attend meetings that range from 5 to 15 people. The size of the group seems to depend on several factors. The type of student that you are working with should be considered - whether the child has challenging needs, or is a noncategorical special education student. The age of the student is a factor. The amount of involvement the child has with outside agencies, such as Health if he/she is a foster child, or if there are behavior problems involved must be considered as well. Whether the child is involved with the Justice or court system, or whether there are medical problems or concerns are further issues. The nature of the problem should be addressed - Is it an academic problem only, or does it seem to be an issue with the whole child? The type of plan required needs also to be considered, such as if the child is in a transitional phase and will be leaving school shortly, or if they still have three years left in high school.

The composition of the group varies depending on the above factors. It seems to be a consensus within this group that certain individuals should be present at all meetings. The group needs to consist of the parents, the child, special education teachers, someone from the school administration, and any classroom teachers who work directly with the child. Other group members may vary depending on the child's needs and his/her individual situation. Group sizes should be kept as small as possible according to Ms. Young who says, "I think the meeting should be kept to the absolute minimum number, just people that are directly involved with the child's education, his development, or for whatever good reason the

meeting has been arranged.”

**Question #7**

*Concerns regarding the sharing of confidential information have been addressed through a parental consent form. How do you feel about discussing confidential information about a child with outside agencies?*

**Ms. Johnson:**

I have no problem with Social Services, and the Justice Department, and Sedler, and people like that. I do have concerns where there is so many people involved with the child. A lot of people who are not from a professional background, and who really don't work with the child on a professional basis, in particular respite workers who often change almost on a monthly basis, and in some cases student assistants, because they don't seem to have the same concern for confidentiality, and they're often not with the same student for a long enough period of time to have the same respect for protecting the student. We had an incident here this year, where there was confidential information spread around the community, and it got into the school, regarding a new student we had, and it had a lot of negative consequences for the student. It was spread around by somebody who was involved with the student, and should not have been discussing the student outside. For that reason, I am very concerned about sharing confidential information in team meetings where there are people who will go out and discuss these things with their friends, because it makes for an interesting topic of conversation. But it's not just the student's confidentiality, it's also the

family's confidentiality.

If I were some of those families, I would not want the things that happen in my family, the family's private information, talked about with anybody at all. A respite worker is often someone from the community who just gets hired. There's no screening process or anything, and for this reason I'm very concerned about it. We have had bad experiences with it.

For myself, I don't get into very sensitive information at those big team meetings. I try not to. If it's something that's very sensitive, I'd prefer to discuss it in private with Social Services, or with whoever, and generally deal with less sensitive information, or if I refer to it, I don't discuss it, I refer to it as "a certain incident," or something like that and I always, at the beginning of every team meeting, stress that confidential information is to be kept confidential and if we discovered that there has been things discussed outside the school, there will be consequences. If there is something about a child that is really private and confidential, and other people are dealing with it, I don't have to know every single detail about my students, or about their families. Some things are none of my business. If a child has problems in the home, I don't need to know the details of the mother's problems.

**Mr. Brown:**

If it's okay with the parent and they're fully aware of what the consent forms are implying, what can be shared, and so on, I feel confident in sharing with some other outside agency. I look at it as, you're a professional, and you would treat the information the same as I would. Be discreet about it, and use the information for the purpose of which it was



intended, to provide better understanding and better programs for the child. I have no problems sharing it with other people who are professionals. We have to treat each other as professionals and act in a professional way. I am not personally aware of any time when this kind of confidentiality has been broken.

**Ms. Young:**

It's a really difficult question. I certainly wouldn't share any confidential information unless the parent was present, or had given me consent to do so. I would only share the information on a need-to-know basis. I certainly wouldn't share information unless it was directly pertinent to what we were discussing. When discussing any kind of information about other people, you have to be very careful about what you say outside the school. I think confidentiality can be broken, especially if you go to a meeting where there are a lot of people involved, when you're talking about 10 or 12 more people, it has a way of getting out of hand. You have to be really careful in what you say. Anything said in a meeting like that, becomes a matter of record and people can access it. I think you should be really careful in what you say.

I've never had any incidents, to my knowledge, when confidentiality has been broken. I know some people are really careless about what they say, like things that are said in staff rooms. I am really against children's names being mentioned in staff rooms. I don't think teachers should say names of students in staff rooms, or give any specific information about them. It becomes a problem in some places.

**Mr. Davis:**

That's a very good question. We're all professionals. As a professional I should have common sense enough to only give and discuss information that would be appropriate for the meeting.

There are some things we should know. For example, if the child is in trouble with the law, or if he/she comes to school hungry in the morning. There are some things we need to know and by knowing we can do our jobs much better. We should share as much as we need to know.

I think that professionalism is the key, and if we act like professionals there shouldn't be any problem.

**Mr. Williams:**

Personally I have no problems with it. Outside agencies are as professional and cautious, or more really, then teachers are in some cases. I can say that based on what I sometimes hear in the staff room, and I can say this based on what I hear people outside the school have heard about students. I can be fairly certain that if I am giving information on a particular student to a pediatrician or a family doctor, that the information is never going anywhere but there. As for social workers, their standards are at least so high as ours, often built right into the profession itself. I have no problems sharing information with these outside agencies. Other agencies are not as open in sharing information with me as I am with them. For example, one time last year I had a child go back to a community to see a biological parent. After the child came back I knew there was something wrong with her,

the student assistant knew there was something wrong with her, everybody knew there was something wrong - that something had happened. She was fine before she went, when she came back there was something drastically wrong. I had to initiate discussions to find out what the social worker already knew. There was some sort of abuse or assault that happened while the child was at home. That's obviously going to impact on what the child does at school, but the information didn't warrant a call. That is not to lay blame. I'm sure that in some cases, there is so much on these people's plates that time does not allow that simple transmission of information. That might not be a priority. That's just the way things are, unfortunately.

### **Summary**

Professionalism seems to be the key to the willingness of special education teachers to share confidential information with outside agencies. Mr. Davis states, "We're all professionals. As a professional I should have common sense enough to only give and discuss information that would be appropriate for the meeting." He later says that, "There are some things we should know. For example, if the child is in trouble with the law, or if he/she comes to school hungry in the morning. There are some things we need to know and by knowing we can do our jobs much better. We should share as much as we need to know. I think that professionalism is the key, and if we act like professionals there shouldn't be any problem."

The possibility of some team members not respecting confidentiality, or fully

understanding its significance, appears to be a concern among many, especially as group sizes increase. Ms. Young says, "I think confidentiality can be broken, especially if you go to a meeting where there are a lot of people involved, when you're talking about 10 or 12 more people, it has a way of getting out of hand. You have to be really careful in what you say." Although only Ms. Johnson gave a direct example of confidential information getting out into the community, others mentioned how sometimes information regarding students is discussed openly in the staff room. They were very concerned about this and the possible implications for some students.

#### **Question #8**

*After the ISSP team develop an ISSP that they feel meets the needs of the child/youth and has reasonable, attainable goals, a child/youth profile should be completed. This sheet is then sent to the Child Health Coordinator. What are your thoughts regarding the profile sheet?*

#### **Ms. Johnson:**

This is the first time that I've seen one of those profile sheets. I haven't used it. I think it's a good idea. It's sort of like a summary, that summarizes everything - sort of like a file card that tells you where to find all the information and I think it's a good idea. I just haven't used it. I really don't have much to say about it. It just seems to be a really good idea. I have a copy of it. I just have not done it. This is something brand new to me. It seems like a good idea though. It doesn't go into detail about anything, but it just gives you

a quick look at the child.

**Mr. Brown:**

When we were in-serviced, we were told basically, that the profile sheet was an administrative tool. It was to help administrators keep a database of who is in the system, and probably help facilitate the coordination of services. If the school is doing a program for the child, the profile sheet is sent in, and if someone else from Justice, Health or Social Services is also doing a program with that child, their profile sheet is also sent in. The idea was that the Child Health Coordinator was suppose to pick up any dual services being offered to the child in isolation of each partner. Therefore, they would be able to coordinate the next time that a planning session was to be done around a child where these agencies were involved. They would get together and plan a holistic approach to the child. From that perspective, I thought that seems fair enough and a worthwhile cause. But then again it's like everything else, in theory it's fine, but when it comes to practicality, how well that'll actually work itself through is something else.

We're in the first year of this really, and I'd say, just my own personal feeling, and talking to another person in another school, or maybe two other schools, that's how far people are in the ISSP process is still in the very, very beginning stages. For people to get a feel for this, a handle on this, to get things moving well, you're looking at two or three years. You're asking people to change a lot, and doesn't come overnight. It takes practice.

**Ms. Young:**

I really haven't given it a whole lot of thought. I don't see anything wrong with it -

anything negative. I suppose it provides a database for the child involved if all the information can be brought to one agency. I guess that's a good thing. It's paperwork that's for sure, but if it serves the purpose which it is intended it's okay.

**Mr. Davis:**

I think that this is a good thing and if used the way it was intended could give some very valuable information.

I do see several disadvantages or drawbacks to it. If it is treated simply as paperwork for one central person, who spends her time filing and correlating, then it will be useless to even complete it. This is a very big task for all western Newfoundland for one person. If we have 5000 students and 10% require ISSPs and profiles, that's 500 profiles being sent to the Child Health Coordinator. I'm just wondering what will be done with them. I think they should be treated with professionalism and looked at respectively.

**Mr. Williams:**

I have to ask you now first, is this the right sheet that I have here? I thought it was, but I wasn't absolutely sure. I've got to be honest with you. I've found this to be very cumbersome. I think that's the best word I can probably use, and in fact to get back to the initial inservice I had, and I would think that about 75% of people in that room were so confused after this, that they were totally turned off, and then I think we were left. I think this is actually being revised again. I found it very, very cumbersome to do. It's almost an awkward thing. I think a lot of people felt that way about it at the time. It seemed like teachers became overwhelmed with these profiles. I've never used these profile sheets

myself, personally. I don't think people will use them. This profile sheet itself has almost taken on a life of its own, I remember after the two day inservice, the focus after, for some people, was just on this profile sheet, not on the process, not on the idea of openness, not on the idea of trying to coordinate services between agencies. The focus was "we'll never do that!" So now everything is thrown out, the baby with the bath water. Because this sheet is bad, everything is bad! It's too bad really. I don't think this sheet will ever be done, as it is now. It has caused a lot of people grief and anxiety.

### Summary

While those interviewed generally saw the purpose and intention of the profile sheet and thought it was a useful tool, very few had used it much. Each of them noted its possible usefulness as a database at a central location, however many faults were also identified with it. Ms. Johnson had no experience with the profile sheet before. Mr. Williams had a copy and was inserviced on it, but saw it as a cumbersome task which made a lot of people uncomfortable and would likely not get done. The profile sheets in their present form may prove to be a stumbling block in the successful completion of the process. Ms. Young hadn't given it much thought, but did say that it involved additional paperwork. Mr. Davis questioned what would actually come of the profile sheets that are submitted - Would they serve a purpose or just be more paperwork to be filed away? Mr. Brown seemed to believe in the profile sheet and it's potential, but stated, "...in theory it's fine, but when it comes to practicality, how well that'll actually work itself through, is something else."

**Question #9**

*It seems as though many of the models and programs adopted by the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador are very popular for a few years, then exchanged for newer models and programs. What kind of role do you see the ISSP process as playing in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system ten years from now?*

**Ms. Johnson:**

Well, for one thing, change doesn't necessarily mean improvement. As I showed you, I'm still using the same old form that I used years ago, and think it's the best form, so I'm going to keep using it. I would hope that at some point in the future the Department of Education puts together a comprehensive, uniform ISSP package that every school in the province will use. I would stress that it's simple and easy to use, and it provides for program planning and record keeping. Most of what I have seen recently is so complicated, and disorganized, and cluttered, and cumbersome that nobody wants to do them. You look at them and you say "what do they want here"?, "There's only one line and ...". It's like something slapped together. One of the things I like about the ISSP is it's a great way to keep records, and I think that has to be included in any program you have developed. Actually, I'd like to be on a committee that's developing one. You know how particular I am with organizing things. Well, this mess with the ISSP, I feel like throwing it all in the garbage and doing my own. Sometimes when people are making up these plans, they get so carried away, that it becomes useless. It's like a pretty object you're making. It has no purpose.



**Mr. Brown:**

Well, I see it as an evolving process. It wasn't until the mid 1980s or later, that Individualized Educational Plans were beginning to be required. I probably see the ISSP, if I can reflect back to those times, it's like with the IEP. The Department of Education people said that students in category C were required to have IEPs and written documents like that. We're still 12 or 15 years later, ironing out some of the wrinkles in that process. That's an indication of change over time. The IEP had come a long way since the Department of Education said that students required them, because for many years they weren't done - they were not written. There was no follow-up. There was no one accountable for them. So in this case again, if there's no accountability, and no chain of command as such, that someone's going to come back and say, "Those ISSPs, they have to be done. Where are they? They have to be done" [it won't work]. I can see the ISSP ten years down the road, probably somewhere along the lines as where the IEP went ten years later. It's growth. It's a change. It's motion by it's very definition.

The ISSP ten years down the road - It will be evolving and still have growing pains, I'm sure. That's all part of human nature in itself, but that's not to say that it's bad. Because I think if we put something in place, and say this is the way it is, and this is the only way it can be, then that would be bad. There would be no room for change and no flexibility for the generations. People grow and experience things through change, not by stagnation. We complain a lot in the education system because things are so stagnate, so routine. Other times, we complain that they're always bringing in something like this, or that's coming in.

I think it's our very nature sometimes, to complain about everything. Education has to continue changing with technology coming on. We can't do the same thing 10 years ago as we do now. I think the ISSP is a way to address some of the demands of the system of today. How can we better prepare the youth of today for tomorrow? What better way to do this than by bringing together the different agencies who are providing services for the child.

There are also problems associated with this, because now you're dealing with educational personnel within your own school, and organizing meetings and so on. Now you're looking at other agencies, so that is definitely one of the problems that has to be addressed over the growing pains of the program - getting everyone together. Again it comes back to accountability. Who is responsible for ensuring that all of these people get together? Maybe that's one of the responsibilities that comes into play in the role of the ISSP manager. Sometimes the role can be small, or sometimes it can be large, depending on what needs to be done. It's like when we decided to do IEPs - you can't sit down and write an IEP before you meet the child. But we did that many times, until we learned that this was not right. It should be done this way. And then again, every IEP is different.

I remember looking at computer-based IEP programs - you were always looking for the quick, "easy fix," where you could sit down and always slot someone into something. That was the easy way to do it. We are so used to doing it ourselves - well this got to fit there, everything has to fit together neatly and all work out well. We're dealing with people. We can't fit people into little slots here and there and expect this is the way they are going to act because they're in this slot or that slot. We're all different, and we're dealing with

people and a process - It's a change process and it's going to take time. I think we all have to remember, that we all have to work for the betterment of the child.

Right now even, the NLTA has put out a bulletin. I knew this was going to happen. When we were in-serviced, you're telling classroom teachers that they have to start doing, what they were supposed to be doing 25 years ago, but they didn't because we provided special education teachers, who took over the role, took the ownership of that. Again, nobody really knew what the role of the special education teacher was supposed to be. We went into different schools, and we assumed, "Well, I think this is what my role should be," "This is what we'll do." This school does it this way. Another school does it that way. Classroom teachers grew up with this system and all of a sudden, the Department of Education is saying "No, it was never that way." It was! If you were ever in the school, that's the way it was. It wasn't meant to be that way, but that's the way it evolved. No one was there to put any checks on it, saying, "No, no, no. The students are the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Special education is a [support] to the system to help the classroom teacher, to help program and provide for the student." But that's not what happened. The same case could be with the ISSP, if there's not someone who has a good handle on it and how it should go, and a good vision of where it should go. People should be made accountable either at the board level, or principals within the school, or something like this, or it will go the same way as the IEPs went.

Ten years down the road, you'll look back again, scratching your head saying, "Yeah, we learned a lot. How come we didn't know this in the first place? This seems so easy, the

way it should be.” It’s not a complicated process by any means. We make it more complicated than it is.

**Ms. Young:**

I don’t know, if it’s a good thing it’ll probably be dropped!

The role of the ISSP is that it should be a continuing process, it shouldn’t be just a one year thing and then it is dropped. If the child is attending school, the process should continue throughout the child’s school life. I think in ten years time, as times change and programs change, it will probably change too. I think it could be used as a reference for any program developed by the Department of Education. I think it could be used as a research tool for any effective models that they might come up with. It certainly provides lots of information that you can refer to, and see what children who have gone through the system were doing. Or for masters students like yourself, to go back to the ISSP and see what these children finally did, and see if the long range goals that were set out, were ever reached? Did they graduate from high school? Did they get a job? What kind of life are they living now? I think any of this provides basic information about students, whether it’s now or ten years from now. It’s still pertinent information whether they call it an ISSP or call it by a different name, it’ll still be basically the same thing I think.

**Mr. Davis:**

That’s another very good question. I think that it’s important that we continually try new things. Change is very good.

Ten years from now, I can see a special education teacher working with three or four

students at a time as a programmer, not as a teacher. Someone else would carry out or implement the objectives and programs.

The special education teacher would be the writer of programs, not the teacher of them. They would be involved in gathering all the information, doing the testing and assessments, consulting with the parents and other professionals and then writing a program for the child based on their findings. That's where I can see special education in the future, whether it will still be called the ISSP or something else, I don't know.

**Mr. Williams:**

Personally I think the ISSP process or some version of it, is going to be around for a long time. That's my belief. I certainly may be wrong. Ten years down the road people may say "the ISSP, what the heck was that? The IPP, the IEP, the ISSP, and by that time it may be an LMNOP, we don't know because things change so much. The reason I say that I think this is going to be around ten years from now, or some version of it, is that the need has always been there to coordinate the agencies, and I think that things should work better with the process. I think it will be around, I really I do, not necessarily as it is now, but some version of it because the stakeholders, whoever they are, parents, educators, justice, or whoever - the integrated approach by all these people and agencies working for the child, surely that has to be positive for the child. It has to! I'm not too cynical yet. I believe that, somewhere, when something works, it's kept!

### Summary

Most interviewed seem to believe that some form of the ISSP will still be around ten years from now. They question whether the program will have the same name, or be a slightly different version. The fact that we live in an ever-changing society, where we continuously trade in the old for something new and improved seems to be a popular belief. Mr. Williams looks forward to a time when, "Somewhere, when something works, it's kept!" He sees real merit in the given ISSP process. Mr. Davis feels that major changes will have taken place in the next ten years regarding the ISSP process. He sees the role of the Special Education teacher as completely changing from teacher to program developer. "The special education teacher would be the writer of programs, not the teacher of them. They would be involved in gathering all the information, doing the testing and assessments, consulting with the parents and other professionals, and then writing a program for the child based on their findings."

Ms. Young sees the process itself as changing to meet the needs of the changing times. She says that the process will have made a contribution to education in the experience itself of using it, as a research tool for the future, and as a way of tracking students based on their plans for the future while in school, and what they actually did in life. Ms. Johnson would like to see some changes made to the actual document itself. She doesn't like the format and says it doesn't meet her needs.

Mr. Brown discussed many aspects of the ISSP. He feels that we will experience many growing pains in the next ten years with the ISSP process, but that these can be

expected and are good. "I think if we put something in place, and say this is the way it is, and this is the only way it can be, then that would be bad." He states the importance of accountability from superiors in the system, and fears that without it, the ISSP will go the course of the IPP and IEP before it. He also suggests that if concerns such as the roles of the special education teacher, the setting aside specific times for meetings, teacher workload, and leadership responsibility of the ISSP process are not addressed, then the program will not be successful.

These are all very real concerns and issues surrounding the ISSP process and its possible fate ten years from now. We are uncertain of the future, and hence can only make speculations based on our past experiences.

#### **Question #10**

*Based on your experiences, share with me in a prioritized fashion, what you feel to be five strengths of the ISSP process. Prioritize from greatest strength to less significant ones.*

#### **Ms. Johnson:**

Well, I think the most important thing is that it provides a clear, comprehensive plan of action. When you go to work in the morning, you know what you're supposed to be doing - what your goals are that you're working towards.

That's the second one. It clarifies the strengths and the needs of the student, and it clarifies what our goals and objectives are. There's something about writing things down in

an orderly fashion, that just clarifies everything in your mind about what you want to do.

Number three is that it provides for evaluation of progress because there's an ongoing system built into an ISSP, so that you have to evaluate from time to time.

The fourth one. It's a great way to record information. That's a strength.

The fifth one is that it encourages accountability, because if somebody comes saying, "what have you done for this child?" You have everything right there. This is where we start, and this is where we're going, and this is where we are. It tells us who is responsible for everything. This is the last one, but actually none is any more important than the other, it's just that starting from the beginning, this is how I see them falling into place.

**Mr. Brown:**

I don't know if I can look at five strengths of the ISSP, but I'll just talk in general terms about it. The most important things to come out of ISSP, first and foremost is that it's child-centered. Being child-centered, you have a group of individuals who comes together to focus on the child, bringing their individual perspectives about the child, and their experiences or whatever with the child, to a group setting, which builds a big picture - a holistic picture of who this person is from 3, 4, or maybe 6 perspectives. That's a major strength in getting to know an individual because it's no longer just John Doe's impression of student A - it's Donna's, Mary's and Fred's, who has a psychological background, who has a nursing background, who has a social work background- all coming from different walks of life, and of course the parent. It gives a nice round, full picture of the student, then we're focusing on the strengths of the student. They're not saying what Johnny can't do, or



that Johnny's behavior is this, this or this. They are trained to look at the strengths. I think that's the major power, but then again, IEPs were like that.

Others that come into play are minor ones in a sense, that individuals feel part of the team. That no longer when you make a decision, are you making it alone, there's a team that says this is the best program we see for this child, whereas sometimes before, the responsibility was put on the teacher in a category C situation, who probably did up most of the program himself, in consultation with the parent, or some others. By then it seemed like the responsibility all fell to the teacher. If the program failed it was the teacher's fault, if the program succeeded, then everybody seemed to take credit for them. But if it was a failure, or if a bad decision was made, then it fell back to one person. I think a lot of people probably felt apprehensive or intimidated about that situation, and a little fearful, because sometimes if you're writing strengths or goals for an individual, you might be saying, well this is what I see, but someone might look at your goals or your strengths and say that's not accurate. I know when I have done IEPs myself and someone else wants to look at them, I wonder what kind of criticisms I'll get because it's something I've done up all by myself. Now with the ISSP, it's something that's done by a group of people, so if there's any question with the document, it's not one individual who answers, it's a group decision. That's probably next in line to what I see as a strength.

I think too, it builds a team consensus. And if you can get this, then people feel at ease working with each other, because within smaller communities you're going to have people that are going to be members of the same team for many students. I think that builds

a closeness between the different professionals, and each probably gets a better understanding of what the other one has to do. A lot of times, for example, people might say, "Teachers don't do anything," "Social Workers don't do anything," "Health Care Workers don't do anything," "the educational psychology people don't do anything". It builds a little greater understanding for each of our roles. That's a strength of the process too.

There are other ones that stem from that. I think, if parents can see professionals working close together, and if educators are cognizant about how parents and students may feel at a meeting, and hopefully bring them into the team situation, then we all feel better. There's no greater experience, or satisfaction, then working with a parent, when both of you can work together. I experienced that in an IEP setting. In most IEP settings, I've always had good relationships with the parents, and that was one of the strengths I've found of getting together. In settings where you did not have a good relationship with the parent, it was doomed to fail. If you and the parent could not come to terms some how, about the way things were going, or take a stand on mutual ground with respect, and value each other's opinions, then it was going to be rough going. I've heard many teachers talk about parents, and I do it myself on occasion too. We all put the blame on parents, and in turn [the parents] blame the teachers. It's a merry-go-round. We blame because we often don't understand the roles, or what the other person is doing. The whole team process seems to work if there's an understanding of the roles of each individual person. Those are the major strengths that I see in the ISSP process.

**Ms. Young:**

I suppose the most important thing is that you focus on the child, the total child, because all the agencies are brought together and you are able to focus on the child as a whole human being, not just his academic part or his development.

Secondly, parents or guardians must be involved. That is a really important part. I think parents have often stayed away from school because they felt intimidated or whatever, and [have] not taken an active role in their child's education. I think they should. It's their children, and they know what they want for their children, and teachers should be aware of it. Whether this is less important than focusing on the child, I don't know, but certainly I think it is a real important one.

Program development, becomes based on the child's needs and goals. In the high school it's really difficult because the basic goal is to graduate the student, to complete 36 credits, with limited choices. You do have certain rules to follow with modified courses and alternate programs.

Continuing in a prioritized fashion, the ISSP is a formal documentation of the child's needs. It's written down. It's been given a lot of thought, hopefully, and it becomes a legal document for reference.

Finally, it gives a better long-range view of the child's goals. It is difficult, depending on what perspective, whether it's as an elementary teacher or a senior high teacher, to prioritize the strengths. The long-range goals at the different levels will differ.

**Mr. Davis:**

The greatest strength of the ISSP process is that it gets things on paper. It's a document.

The second thing, a strength, is that you got the involvement of all the stakeholders.

The third thing, another strength, is that if you lose members you can easily fit in or pick up where somebody else has left off.

The fourth, is that it's very satisfying to parents that they know there is a concrete real plan for their children.

And I guess a fifth strength is that it keeps everybody accountable.

**Mr. Williams:**

One strength that I see is the team approach in working with these kids.

Another strength is family involvement in the process.

Number three, the sharing of information between agencies.

Number four, the reduction of duplication for services.

These are the four, but I don't have a fifth. I hope that's okay.

**Summary**

Several strengths of the ISSP were identified when this question was asked. The fact that the approach is "child-centered" was seen as a major strength of the process. Keeping the child at the center of discussion and focusing on his/her strengths and needs was viewed as being very significant.

Another identified major strength was the team approach. Individuals would work together to develop a comprehensive, well-rounded plan for the child. Individual teachers would not be given the sole responsibility of program development, but it would be a shared responsibility of the group. Mr. Brown states, "Now with the ISSP, it's something that's done by a group of people, so if there's any question with the document, it's not one individual who answers, it's a group decision."

A third popular strength highlighted by those interviewed was the significance of parental involvement in the process. The amount of information that they bring to the group about the child was seen as invaluable and very necessary. Ms. Young says, "I think parents have often stayed away from school because they felt intimidated or whatever, and [have] not taken an active role in their child's education. I think they should. It's their children, and they know what they want for their children, and teachers should be aware of it."

The fact that the ISSP was seen as an important record of information for a given child was also identified as being important. The ISSP is often viewed as a record of the child's strengths and needs at given points in his/her life. It has been referred to as formal documentation which may have legal implications. Ms. Johnson seems to believe that having a clear plan is very important and gives her a sense of direction, "When you go to work in the morning, you know what you're supposed to be doing - what your goals are that you're working towards."

Accountability was also identified as being a significant strength. Teachers seemed to like the idea that they have proof on paper of what they have been doing for particular

children and what their future intentions are for them. Ms. Johnson summarizes the importance of accountability in this way, “[If anyone comes checking we can say...] this is where we start, and this is where we’re going, and this is where we are. It tells us who is responsible for everything.”

Several other strengths were identified as being somewhat less significant. These include: the fact that group members can easily be replaced, that this process will supposedly result in a reduction of duplication, that evaluation of the program is a built-in component of the process, and that having a good working relationship with group members is important overall.

#### **Question #11**

*Based on your experiences, share with me in a prioritized fashion, what you feel to be five weaknesses of the ISSP process. Prioritize from greatest weakness to less significant ones.*

**Ms. Johnson:**

Actually I’ve only got four. Lack of good format. If you don’t have a good format with a thing, it’s a weakness, because it doesn’t serve the purpose. I [have] found a lot of times, it is time consuming, and I don’t think it needs to be, if it was done right. We’re stressed to the breaking point now, trying to keep up with everything and it’s just one more thing. You feel like throwing the whole lot of it in the garbage. It’s just very time consuming, and that defeats its purpose too.

Another problem with the ISSP is that it is very difficult to get everyone together, because everybody is so overworked and overburdened. It is very difficult to get everybody together. Once you get everybody together it's no problem, but often it takes a month. Sometimes you just can't do it. You've got to make concessions and do what you can. This is why it's so important to have a good, simple, practical format that you can use.

Often, and this is another reason that we don't have time to do things properly, it's just filed away and never used, never looked at, which is not the purpose. I have my ISSPs in my classroom. I've seen that - they're filed away and never looked at - taken out and revamped once a year, just for the purpose of saying "Yeah, I've done that." I've come across some people who have never done IEPs or ISSPs in their life, although they've been required to do them.

**Mr. Brown:**

There's none, I'm only trained to focus on the strengths!

The greatest weakness, I guess to any process, is having individuals come together for a common goal. A lot of times we all bring our baggage to the table. We say, "This is my concern," or "This is what I see." Personalities come to the table, and it's hard then sometimes, to leave the personality behind, and get on with the business. Sometimes, if people are not cognizant of working in group situations, [it can be] intimidating. Sometimes the whole process can collapse, because some people seem to be more vocal and dominant than the other. That's why you have a facilitator or ISSM at the meeting, to keep everyone in check. In theory, and again on paper, this is how it goes, but you know in practicality,

there are times when things may disintegrate because of personality conflicts, or grand standings, or so on. This is a weakness, because it is a group process.

Other than that, the other things are growing pains. Things are not always going to go exactly as we plan. Sometimes we're going to go through an ISSP, develop a plan, put it on paper, and it will be something that's only on paper. The role of ISSM manager can be very minor to taking on a whole lot of responsibilities, to make sure that things go into place, and that things are actually done - that the work is taken out again, reviewed and evaluated. From past experiences with IEPs, I know that an IEP will simply be written, put in drawers and never looked at again. This can be a growing pain with the ISSP process as well - that we get the paper work done, get the checkmarks saying that the ISSP is done, but it's shelved again, and we'll go on doing things as we have always done things. That's probably a potential weakness that I can see stemming from it.

A major weakness, I guess, is that it is a people process. It's amazing how they make robots to build cars on an assembly line and everything works perfect, but we are not robots, and so it's not going to work perfect as it looks on paper. That's a growing pain as well.

People coming together for a common goal and being able to realize this, and not to be intimidated by it, and feel like they're contributing to the process. There's nothing worse than being part of a meeting, or part of something, where you don't feel like you're contributing. You don't want to go anymore. You don't want to be part of it. It becomes a drag. Sometimes we refer to staff meetings as, "Oh God, not another staff meeting." If we don't feel important in the process, then we're not committed to it. New situations always



seem a bit intimidating, and apprehensive to me. But as time goes on and I feel comfortable with it - It's good, it's easy. But its after session after session of doing the something over again that we get comfortable with it. It's like we say to students all the time, "Didn't we do that in class yesterday?". I say to students all the time too, "I know we might have done it yesterday, but I think we'll do it again today, we'll get lots of practice at it, so that it's fresh and firm in our minds."

Coming together and talking with new people is a process. Like the in-services that we had on the ISSP, the annual meeting that we had one time last year and we were suppose to carry on with them [and discuss any] updates and concerns. I think there needs to be more of the pulling together of the groups, just to see how things are going, and to remind us and to keep us on track. Then we would go back and say, "Come on guys, we've got to get back on track. We got to get one done. We got to get two done." The more we get done, the more practice we get at it, and the process becomes second nature. A weakness is, the in-service that was done - that four-day intensive one, we had and the little ones we had after, well you almost need something every few months, just to kick start you again. It's like trying to start a car (the old standards) you roll it down hill, it gains speed, you let the clutch out, it doesn't catch the first time, so you got to let it get more speed, and more speed, until it finally catches. I think ISSP could be like that sometimes. We need to get up to the speed until it finally catches. So bring on some more in-services, get the people together again, go over some stuff, see what's going on, take a couple of examples, and see what we need to get moving again, or what's the next step to be done, or what's your hang-ups, or how things are

going. Just get talking about it. Why are we stuck? What's going on? I think in our present situation at school, we are probably stuck. We're stuck because we feel overwhelmed with all the people that we're working with. We don't know how we are going to get it all done. This is a transition year - well you need five transition years. I think the expectations on teachers is a weakness of the system.

There are still lots of questions, and few answers. The Department of Education is still working through the process too. It's a grand scale, we're trying to do this province-wide. They really should have taken a pilot area, and put all their emphasis in one area. They should go in and brainstorm with this group for a year, work with them one-on-one. They should take one school and go in, and do the ISSPs there, whether it is 20 or 40. These teachers would then be trained to go and in-service others. There's quite a difference in doing ISSPs for your own students, then for fictitious students from some book. Bombard a district, until people know it until it's second-hand, coming out of their ears. Then you can concentrate on another area, and if it takes you five years, at least you have well trained professionals everywhere. For educators, they are often already familiar with IEP process, but for people from Social Services, Health and Justice, they are overwhelmed. [Government] wants to change the whole province the one time. Bang! Everything is in motion.

The perceived paperwork is another weakness of the ISSP. It can be as difficult as you want to make it. If you perceive it as a lot of work, then it will be.

**Ms. Young:**

All of this information is put together, and often it is put in the filing cabinet and forgotten about. That's an inherent weakness. If you don't use it, the student will not benefit, and it has been waste of time.

Secondly, the time involved is significant for teachers. We become so bogged down with trying to get students to get assignments done, trying to get them to pass tests, and the everyday running of the classroom, that we don't get meaningful time to sit down and do this. The time factor is one of the biggest weaknesses.

Thirdly, there is so much confidential information shared by so many people, that the possibility of a breach of confidentiality is high.

I can't think of any other reasons.

**Mr. Davis:**

The biggest problem I think is that it's just paperwork. It's just viewed as something else I have to do and other weaknesses would stem from that. Professionals go to the meetings because they have to, you write goals because you have to. The only question then is: "Do we do it?" Or just put the tick by it.

Another weakness is the amount of time in it. If you have 20 or 30 students in your school requiring ISSP's, that's an awful lot of time spent at meetings, etc., when you could be actually working with the child instead. When do we expect to get the time from 9:00 to 3:00 to have the meetings and get all the paperwork done?

A final complaint or weakness is a question "is the government committed to

providing the necessary funds that will be needed, and are needed right now?"

**Mr. Williams:**

A weakness would be the completion of the form - the profile sheet. I thought this was a weakness and should be changed.

I find one of the problems with the whole process is the follow-up. I think that this goes back to the fact that everybody has many things on their plate. So and so is responsible for this or that. Follow-up is difficult, and often it is left not done.

Number three is commitment from everybody. If individuals are not committed, it's just not going to happen. And this happens sometimes. We'll say that this is going to happen, and in the end it is done the same old way as it was done year after year. That's not the fault of the process, but a fault of not following the process.

These are three that I have found and wanted to mention.

**Summary**

Several weaknesses were identified by those interviewed which need to be considered. These are areas that these teachers would like to see improvement in and believe improvement is necessary if the ISSP process is going to be successful. The biggest concern or weakness was that the ISSP would be written then filed away, with the goals and objectives never being implemented. As Mr. Brown says, "... we get the paper work done, get the checkmarks saying that the ISSP is done, but it's shelved again, and we'll go on doing things as we have always done things." In such instances Ms. Young says, "... if you don't

use it, the student will not benefit, and it has been a waste of time.”

Finding the amount of time required to complete the ISSP forms and have the ISSP meetings was another major concern for these teachers. Mr. Davis questions when teachers are expected to carry out the duties associated with the ISSP process. “If you have 20 or 30 students in your school requiring ISSPs, that’s an awful lot of time spent at meetings, etc., when you could be actually working with the child instead. When do we expect to get the time from 9:00 to 3:00 to have the meetings and get all the paperwork done?” Ms. Young relates her personal feeling at the end of a typical school day. “We become so bogged down with trying to get students to get assignments done, trying to get them to pass tests, and the everyday running of the classroom, that we don’t get meaningful time to sit down and do this.”

Another weakness of the ISSP which was identified was the potential lack of commitment by team members. Mr. Williams states that, “If individuals are not committed, it’s just not going to happen. And this happens sometimes. We’ll say that this is going to happen, and in the end it is done the same old way as it was done year after year.” Mr. Davis also sees a lack of commitment as a weakness: “It’s just viewed as something else I have to do and other weaknesses would stem from that. Professionals go to the meetings because they have to, you write goals because you have to.” This sort of attitude on the part of teachers would certainly come through in the writing of their ISSP programs and their motivation to implement them.

A fourth major concern was the difficulty in getting everyone together for team

meetings. As stated earlier, these team meetings can involve anywhere from 5 to 15 people, and getting these people to agree upon a meeting time and place, two or three times during the year, can be quite difficult for the manager. As Ms. Johnson states, "... it is very difficult to get everyone together, because everybody is so overworked and overburdened... Once you get everybody together it's no problem, but often it takes a month."

Two of the teachers expressed a concern over the completion of the various forms associated with the ISSP process. Both teachers are in the area of Challenging Needs. New forms may need to be developed to meet their specific needs.

Other weaknesses, or areas of concern, that were mentioned by those interviewed included: The personal baggage that some team members may bring with them to the meetings which may interfere with progress. The fact that it is a people process, implying people mistakes and misjudgements. The need for follow-up in-service sessions to address concerns that have arisen recently. The fact that the ISSP process was implemented throughout the whole province at once without a substantial pilot project being first conducted may have led to problems which may have been addressed earlier. The perceived amount of paperwork and, the commitment on the part of the government for funding necessary for the implementation of the ISSP process were voiced as concerns as well.

#### **Question #12**

*If you were in the position to modify the given ISSP process to improve it, what changes would you make?*

**Ms. Johnson:**

As I said before, we need to develop a new ISSP format, a new form, and use it in every school. It should be something that's clear, concise, manageable, not cumbersome, not too time consuming, a practical tool that we can use. If you got a good document, it's only easy to do it. I remember doing the old IEP program, and every day you would keep plugging away at them. It's no wonder you feel like filing them away and not looking at them anymore. The old forms that I have and use, are excellent for challenging needs, but no good for special education. I'd like a new format, designed like that one. Our old school board put that one together. They looked at ones from every board and gathered it together and put together their own that they thought was good. I liked it. One thing I liked about it, there's lots of room, and it's typed in big print. I think they should be able to develop one for special education along those lines, just make some changes. The old one is bold - it stands out. It has the strengths and needs, with as many sheets as you want. Then there's the level of performance, your objectives, what materials you need, dates, any additional information you want to put in there, there is lots of room. On the other one nothing stands out. It's so small with little boxes in the middle of the page, you hardly have room enough to put someone's name in the space, let alone what it is they're supposed to do. You feel like you're boxed in. Horizontally would be better. Mostly all we have time to do in special education anyway, are checklists, it has to be a good format. It will be interesting to see what the department comes up with.

**Mr. Brown:**

That's a big question. I guess it is what I alluded to before. I would localize it. I would do pilots and get a district, probably even a small district, and pilot it for two years. We've been going on this way now for 20, 30, 40 years, as long as Newfoundland special education came into place. In the long run it has gotten a lot better. A few more years are not going to kill us the way we're going, until we can do a good pilot and really get a good handle on things. Give the people the proper training and instruction that they need. A lot of us are "yeah, we kinda know, we got an idea, but really we don't know." We need people out there to help and guide us along the way. We've always needed that. We needed that with the IEPs, and need it now with the ISSP. We are always doubting ourselves and our ability. We want a perfect ISSP. We say, "show us a good one." but the department can't do that, because they don't know what is good either. If I could change something, I would change how it was implemented. I would get people on my side, instead of alienating them.

You need to have someone that you can go to, or they can come to you, if you run into a problem. It's not enough to have someone's telephone number or e-mail address, but you have to have someone you can see face-to-face, to guide you through the steps. It's a train-the-trainer [process], which they had set out to do, but you just don't train the trainer that quickly, in just four days. Other than that, time will tell, how well people are committed to it, and right now you're going to get an initial kickback as you did with the IEPs. There's no difference in it.



**Ms. Young**

This is a difficult one. I'm only at the learning stage myself.

Looking at it probably from a high school perspective, in September we have a hundred or more students on our list. Looking at doing ISSPs for all those students is a formidable task. We need better communications with feeder schools. Several meetings with junior-high teachers in the final term of the previous school year would certainly make life easier.

For all of us time is at a premium. If one person was designated as Manager, to collect basic information, we could have them at our fingertips when we wanted to use them, that would help. Also, the cumulative file, should contain updated information. The cumulative records that come in often have the wrong address on them, telephone numbers, etc. It is a mobile society and unless students bring the information with them in the form of updated cumulative records, it's time consuming to obtain such.

As for modifying the process itself, I think that once we start doing this from kindergarten on, and it becomes a process right on through school, then it will not be that difficult, because you just add on as it comes to you. The way it is now, just starting out with all these students, and having to do all these ISSPs, it becomes a really big task.

I don't really know how to modify the ISSP in high school. You have to get students through so many courses for graduation, and nothing much can be changed without the whole education system being changed. We can say, "Your child needs vocational training," but if we have no vocational programs in the school, then we can't offer them. There's only so

much we can do!

I think it could be a wonderful tool if it were used properly, and if the teacher's workload, etc. was taken into consideration. By the time the last period comes around in the afternoon, you're just so worn out, that thinking about doing an ISSP is not a pleasant thought.

A change that I would like to see is that substitute teachers, who work in the area of special education receive in-service. For many of us, if there is a teacher in-service, this is a chance for us to earn a day's pay. I think, however, that it is important for substitutes and teachers in replacement positions, to receive in-services as well. If we are going to be replacing regular teachers, then we need the up-to-date training.

**Mr. Davis:**

I think I would go right back to the beginning. I would put a team in place in each district, and they would spend however long it would take, maybe two or three days or six weeks, to thoroughly in-service the special education teachers in a given school. The team might be two or three people made up of special education teachers and someone from the board who knows what they are talking about. They would have done their homework on the process. Every teacher in every school would be given time to do all their kids.

Special education teachers would be told exactly what their role is. Every school has a different definition for the special education teacher in their school. Nobody seems to know for sure what a special education teacher does. The team would go into the school, make sure the teachers knew what their role was, and what's in the documents. Special

education teachers know the documents are there. I don't think the majority of teachers know how the process works. Then there would be no excuses.

The way it is now, we are being rushed into doing something that we don't feel completely comfortable with. The department needs to slow down if they are going to be successful.

**Mr. Williams:**

I can't specifically say how I would change the process, because I think if it is used correctly it can work. The problem I think, goes back to the one I just spoke about, it's not the process, but sometimes the individuals involved in it. And that is something that we're not going to change. For some of these kids there are so many agencies involved that there's got to be a process, and this is as good as I've seen over the years.

As far as how you could improve it, maybe four or five years down the road, you might say "I would certainly do this," or I would involve this person more or this agency less. Right now for the kids I am working with, and I can only speak as I find it, I find that things are going fairly well. People are generally committed. The kids themselves are behaved well at meetings when given the opportunity. As for changing anything major, No! Not right now!

It's been my experience while working as a regular special education teacher for a short time that there may have been 40 or 50 kids in my school receiving special education services, but you couldn't do these IEPs on kids you don't even know overnight. We feared the school would close. Many times there is no evaluation done on the kids. We're finding

that now we have 75, or 80, or 100 students in this school now receiving the services of special education teachers, but no one can say why they are there. That was a fault of the process. There wasn't enough parental involvement years ago. I got three kids of my own. If someone comes to me tomorrow, and says your child is being recommended for special education services, my first question is going to be, "why?" What are you basing that on? Often kids receive special education help because they have trouble reading, or they were having trouble in the regular classroom. Nobody ever asked why, or really diagnosed their problem. The schools are really in trouble now - really under the gun. I don't know what's going to happen. It's going to be interesting to see really. Whether this in the end means fewer teachers in the system or whatever. It'll be interesting indeed.

### **Summary**

When asked how those interviewed would change the current ISSP process to improve it, many suggestions came forward. Two individuals thought that the initial implementation of the ISSP process to special education teachers and others involved in the process was done poorly. Even Mr. Brown, who participated in the train-the-trainer process, has concerns about the in-servicing that was given. He states, "Give the people the proper training and instruction that they need. A lot of us are 'yeah, we kinda know, we got an idea, but really we don't know.' We need people out there to help and guide us along the way. We've always needed that. We needed that with the IEPs, and need it now with the ISSP." He goes on to say, "It's a train-the-trainer [process], which they had set out to do, but you just don't train the trainer that quickly, in just four days."

The role of the special education teacher also seems to be a concern. Mr Davis, who has worked as a special education teacher for many years states, "Special education teachers would be told exactly what their role is. Every school has a different definition for the special education teacher in their school. Nobody seems to know for sure what a special education teacher does."

Ms. Young was concerned about the amount of communication with feeder schools and the amount of work involved in gathering information and files. "The cumulative file should contain updated information. The cumulative records that come in often have the wrong address on them, telephone numbers, etc. It is a mobile society and unless students bring the information with them, in the form of updated cumulative records, it's time consuming to obtain such . The amount of information in them is minimal. If the basic information was given a little more thought that would make our job a little easier." She hopes that, "... once we start doing this from kindergarten on, and it becomes a process right on through school, then it will not be that difficult, because you just add on as it comes to you. The way it is now, just starting out with all these students, and having to do all these ISSPs, it becomes a really big task."

The format of the ISSP forms themselves was seen as a problem for Ms. Johnson, who works as Challenging Needs teacher. She feels the present ISSP forms are cumbersome and awkward to use. "It should be something that's clear, concise, manageable, not cumbersome, not too time consuming, a practical tool that we can use. If you got a good document, it's only easy to do it. I remember doing the old IEP program, and every day you

would keep plugging away at them. It's no wonder you feel like filing them away and not looking at them anymore."

Ms. Young, who previously worked as a substitute teacher feels there is a need for substitute teachers to be in-serviced along with regular teachers on issues of such importance. She states, "A change that I would like to see is that substitute teachers, who work in the area of special education, would receive in-service ... I think that it is important that substitutes and teachers in replacement positions, receive in-services as well. If we are going to be replacing regular teachers, then we need the up-to-date training."

Mr. Williams seems to believe that many of the problems that we are presently experiencing can be traced to the system of the past. He explains, "Many times there is no evaluation done on the kids. We're finding that now we have 75, or 80, or 100 students in this school now receiving the services of special education teachers, but no one can say why they are there. That was a fault of the process." Because of the lack of parental involvement and general lack of accountability in the past, the school system in 1999 is facing a great deal of work in an attempt to catch up and improve the current situation.

The senior-high special education teachers that were interviewed appear to have some very strong feelings about the current ISSP process. The process itself has become a part of their everyday school life over the past year, therefore they have first-hand experience with the process and are probably some of the best judges of it. The author believe that their ideas for change should be given serious consideration and thought by the those developing the ISSP process in government.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants in this study identified aspects of the ISSP process which they regard as positive and definite strengths, as well as areas of concern, or weakness. The following segments examine both strengths and areas of concern. Recommendations directed toward policy development and implementation are presented, as well as suggestions for further research.

#### Strengths of the ISSP Process

Twelve strengths of the ISSP process were identified by the senior-high Special Education teachers in this study. A brief summary of each strength follows:

- The ISSP process is a child-centered approach. The child/youth is the focus of the entire process and should be included in all meetings and decision-making. His/her strengths and needs are the topic of discussion. Goals are established and future plans are developed. By including the child/youth, he/she becomes more likely to take responsibility for his/her actions.
- It is a team approach. "Team" refers to "a relatively small set of interdependent individuals who work and interact directly in a coordinated manner to achieve a common purpose" (Friend & Cook, 1992; Hewitt & Whittier, 1997, p.130). Professionals who are directly involved with the child/youth come together at the

ISSP team meeting to develop a comprehensive plan. These individuals are responsible for implementation of the plan.

- Parental involvement is emphasized in the ISSP process. Parents are said to not only contribute greatly to background information on the child/youth, but are also instrumental in program implementation. Their intentions for the child/youth should be respected and taken very seriously. "Involvement with the school by a learner's parents enhances his or her chances for success in school and significantly improves achievement" (Epstein, 1989; Henderson, 1987; Hewitt & Whittier, 1997; Kroth & School, 1978; Rich 1987).
- The ISSP can be viewed as a record of information. Plans are made and goals are set annually for the child/youth who requires an ISSP. At the end of the process, which usually lasts until graduation, a complete record of programming exists.
- The ISSP process increases accountability. Because it involves a team process, responsibility for the acquisition of resources and services is assigned to various team members. These responsibilities are stated in the ISSP.
- It is an interdepartmental approach. All government departments involved with the child/youth are part of the ISSP team and process. With all departments working together there is less likelihood of a child "slipping through the cracks" because of noncommunication between agencies according to Dr. Janice Pyne, Department of Education. She also noted that in the past, some children were seen and assessed by more than one agency at once. This would often make assessments invalid. When



involved agencies work together, the chance of children “slipping through the cracks” in this manner is decreased (Personal communication, February 1999).

- The ISSP process decreases duplication of services as the involved departments work together and know what each other is doing. Tasks and responsibilities are clarified, defined and assigned at the team meetings, thus reducing duplication of services and resources.
- The ISSP process has a team member appointed to the role of ISSM, or manager. This person is responsible for planning, organizing and scheduling meetings. The manager facilitates the meetings and ensures that things go as planned. Giving these responsibilities to one person makes a great deal of sense. The manager is then able to hold team members accountable for the responsibilities assigned to them.
- The ISSP process promotes transitional planning. Transition is a term which is often found in educational literature and refers to the bridging process between school and a high quality of life of adults with disabilities as they move from school. According to Everson (1995),

The literature and policies regarding transition are a multi-year planning process resulting in a comprehensive adult lifestyle for youth with disabilities. Second, the transition planning process requires collaboration from multiple agencies and professionals. Third, successful transition requires the development of family and professional partnerships (p. 199).

- Part of the ISSP process involves the completion of a child/youth profile sheet. This sheet is compiled and analyzed by the Child Health Coordinator. The information provided is then included in a district database. Services and resources already in

place are listed, as well as services and resources which are required, but are currently unavailable. Such a profiling system should result in greater accountability and needs being met. (See Appendix A).

- The ISSP process includes a built-in review process. The guidelines state that the ISSP team should meet twice annually. The purpose is to determine if outcomes have been reached, and if so, to establish more challenging ones. If the outcomes have not been met, the team must determine if the targeted outcomes are appropriate for the particular child.
- The ISSP process is designed for use throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Each school, in each district, is expected to have an ISSP in place for each student requiring one. Although the form itself may change slightly from one area to another, the process, strengths and needs remain uniform. This benefits children transferring between areas.

#### **Areas of Concern**

Several areas of concern, or weakness, were identified by the Special Education teachers who participated in this study. Twelve of the most common concerns are highlighted below.

- ISSPs may be written and simply filed away. The Special Education teachers who were interviewed expressed concern that the ISSPs would be written at the beginning of the school year, then filed away until the next meeting. ISSPs are intended to be

the child/youth's plan for the entire upcoming year, and should be written with this in mind, and updated regularly.

- The ISSP process is very time consuming. The amount of time required in gathering pertinent recent information, completing assessments, attending team meetings, and writing ISSPs is substantial. If the child/youth requires modified or alternate courses, this further complicates the time issue. This issue seems much more of a concern for noncategorical Special Education teachers as opposed to categorical teachers who work with 1 to 6 students. Non-categorical Special Education teachers often work with as many as 75 students weekly. For these teachers "time" becomes a serious concern.
- The ISSP process will not work if those involved are not committed to the process. It is a team approach requiring a team effort. Hewitt and Whittier (1997) write of the changing roles of teachers:

It has become very clear that the traditional notion of a teacher working with the same twenty-five students in one classroom all day, every day, with no other adults present, is no longer the case. Instead, the teacher of today - and that of the twenty-first century - will be a member of many teams, needing to organize materials and time carefully, communicate effectively with a variety of personalities, and work productively with others to deliver the best educational program possible to each student (p.2).

- The ISSP process requires all team members to come together twice annually to discuss each child/youth. Apart from the issue of the time involved, actually finding a suitable time when all team members can meet has caused much concern. Calvin Whelan, a guidance counselor from central Newfoundland, suggested establishing

an Internet database, whereby professionals could logon to the student's file and give their input. Such a system is worthy of thought and discussion.

- The ISSP form is in itself a concern for some teachers. Space on the form was seen as inappropriate (see Appendix D) and one teacher noted that she continues to use the old IPP forms. A different form may need to be developed to meet the needs of categorical teachers.
- The lack of initial in-services for Special Education teachers and other educators was perceived as a major weakness. It is through in-services that professionals learn of new initiatives and new approaches. It is a time to ask questions and receive information. 40% of those interviewed in this study, received no professional development on the ISSP process. During the 1998-99 school year, however, they were expected to develop and implement ISSPs for students. In-services must be done by individuals who truly understand the material and are able to answer questions as they arise. Saying, "we'll find out the answer and get back to you," just doesn't work. In-services also need to be available to substitute teachers.
- Follow-up in-services also need to be a part of the ISSP process. Often at initial in-services, individuals are so overwhelmed with the new material and information that they cannot envision themselves in the new role, or foresee problems which might arise. Professionals from each of the four departments need to come together to share their concerns and questions. Follow-up in-services are opportunities to energize and rejuvenate.

- The ISSP process can be a very intimidating experience for parents. Attending meetings with 12 to 15 professionals to discuss your child's life can be nerve-racking for some parents, especially for those who did not do well in school themselves. Hewitt and Whittier (1997) write, "Member's perceptions of their participation and efforts decrease as the size of the group increases" (p.131). This is true for parents as well as other group members. Parents need to feel comfortable with the process and those involved in it. Caines (1998) states:

Parents were required to negotiate in a system where attitudinal barriers became the single greatest obstacle facing them in attaining an IEP for their child - a greater obstacle than the inexperience of school personnel in developing IEPs, or the ability levels of their child (p.274).

- The success of the ISSP process is dependent upon the willingness to talk openly about the child/youth. Confidentiality should be expected and assumed. When team meetings reach sizes of 12 to 15 individuals and include nonprofessionals, the chance of a breach of confidentiality increases. Being able to share information freely is necessary if appropriate planning is to take place. There is no doubt that some team members will not wish to share confidential information. As Garner (1995) questions, "In the field of education and child care, how can anyone oppose sharing information, developing common goals, collaborating in planning and implementing programs and sharing responsibility for the achievement of quality services for children and youth?" (p.1).
- In order for Special Education teachers to work with children/youth, the student first

has to be assessed to confirm that a disability does exist and there is need for intervention . This often means full psycho-educational assessments which take about two days. Assessment information that is on file for students is often outdated. Assessment often confirms what the Special Education teacher has suspected.

- While profile sheets are perceived as a strength, they are also an area of concern. Profile sheets are extra paperwork and requires parental consent prior to submission. Some individuals in this study expressed concern over the possibility of nothing being done with the completed profiles. Everything seems to take extra time and effort.
- Gaining the support and commitment of government is crucial to a process of this magnitude. It is not enough for government to make promises for the future; they must provide financial support and resources if the process is to be successful.

Although the ISSP process appears to have significant strengths, there are also major areas of concern. In 1961, John F. Kennedy announced that the United States would send a man to the moon, even though he did not have all the answers as to how this could be accomplished. He went on to declare: "Now that the vision is in place, the answers will be found" (Hegarty, 1990, p.119). We must employ the same visionary approach with the ISSP process. The theory of the ISSP process appears to be very good, however, there are several weaknesses which exist in implementation and practice. Individuals involved in policy development and implementation must listen to the concerns and recommendations of Special Education teachers and other professionals who use the ISSP on a daily basis.

### **Recommendations for Change**

The insights and understandings gained from the current study warrant a number of recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at policy development and implementation at a number of levels of responsibility.

#### Memorial University of Newfoundland

1. It is recommended that the university offer to students working on Special Education degrees, courses which will prepare them for recent initiatives in the field of Special Education, such as the ISSP process and the Pathways document.
2. The university should make at least four Special Education courses a mandatory component of all education degree programs.

#### Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education

3. It is recommended that the provincial Department of Education establish specific guidelines for the role of special educators. These guidelines should include their responsibilities and duties regarding the ISSP process and the Pathways document, and address questions such as in which instances are teachers expected to complete ISSPs and when should such programming take place.
4. The provincial Department of Education should develop an initial in-

servicing strategy which is comprehensive and thorough. The train-the-trainer approach has proved to be ineffective since the trainers frequently had many unanswered questions themselves.

5. The provincial Department of Education should develop a comprehensive Internet communication system, or computer program, which would save time for professionals from all agencies working on ISSPs and profiles.
6. The provincial Department of Education should establish a system whereby professionals are held accountable for their involvement and commitment to the ISSP process.
7. The provincial Department of Education should provide the supports - funding and resources - needed to make implementation of the ISSP process successful throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. This may include hiring additional Special Education teachers.

#### School Boards

8. It is recommended that school boards provide frequent and ongoing professional development on the ISSP process for both Special Education teachers and guidance counselors.
9. School boards should provide professional development for substitute teachers annually, on topics related to being an effective teacher.
10. School boards should provide professional development on the ISSP process



to regular classroom teachers as well.

11. School boards should provide the supports needed for psycho-educational assessments to be completed as required.
12. School boards should provide information regarding the profiling of students. Much confusion continues to exist in this area.
13. School boards should develop a new ISSP form designed specifically for categorical Special Education teachers.
14. School boards should establish an accountability system whereby educators are accountable for their involvement in the ISSP process, in keeping with guidelines set by the Department of Education.

### Schools

15. It is recommended that schools make parents feel welcome from the onset of the school year in September. Parents should not feel intimidated or unwelcome at school.
16. Schools should encourage parents to become actively involved in their child's education.
17. Schools should ensure that cumulative records and files are recent and updated frequently. Student data should be current.
18. Schools should partner with other schools having exemplary practices of collaborative parent and professional involvement and learn from them.

### **Further Research**

This research study has made several distinctions between categorical and noncategorical Special Education teachers. The duties and responsibilities of challenging needs teachers are quite different from those of noncategorical Special Education teachers, however, training at the university level does not always include this distinction. Some elective courses offered as part of the Special Education degree program at Memorial University provide some differentiation between the preparation of categorical and noncategorical Special Education teachers, however students who do not elect to take these courses may not receive training specific to categorical service delivery. Further research is suggested to examine the need for more definitive differentiation.

As the review of relevant literature states, regular classroom teachers are being required with greater frequency to develop and implement programs for Special Education students in the regular classroom. Several concerns have been expressed by teachers. Their concerns include the lack of training in Special Education; the amount of time and energy that such additional work requires; and the fear that all students will suffer in the end as teachers are being stretched and expected to do more and more. Further research is warranted in this area.

The ISSP process is a collaborative approach involving the Departments of Education, Health, Human Resources and Employment and Justice. This study has focused on the perceptions of Special Education teachers involved in the ISSP process. Research is suggested in the areas of Health, Social Services and Justice. Each of these

departments are components in the ISSP process. Therefore, it would be interesting to see if they share the perceptions of other professionals.

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**Appendix A**

**Child/Youth Profile Sheet**

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROFILE

Community \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Profile (DD/M/Y): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Early Childhood Program/School \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by: (SMM) \_\_\_\_\_  
 School District \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Region \_\_\_\_\_

NAME	Primary area of need (Priority)	Age/Grade of student (or date of A/E assessment)	Assesses to Area (Applicable)	Behaviors	Competency Skills	Work/Blog	Personal Case	Program Historical	Special Adaptations	Teaching	Program
DATE OF BIRTH			a. Behavior b. Communication c. Social Skills d. Self-Concept e. Self-Regulation f. Problem Solving	a. This required information is not available b. Child is not ready to be assessed c. Behaviorally inappropriate d. Not assessed e. Not of interest	a. Attention & Imagination b. Social Skills c. Self-Concept d. Self-Regulation e. Problem Solving	a. Activities b. Self-Expression c. Interactions with Peers d. Interactions with Adults e. Interactions with Family f. Interactions with Community g. Interactions with Environment h. Interactions with Culture	a. Underlying b. Assessment c. Cultural d. Other factors e. Individual f. Environmental g. Program h. Systemic i. Learning j. Other	a. Adults b. Child c. Family d. Large Print e. Small f. Visual g. Verbal h. Written	a. Activities b. History c. Year d. Year e. Individual f. Individual g. Problem	a. Communication b. Motor c. Self-Expression d. Interactions e. Interactions with Peers f. Interactions with Adults g. Interactions with Family h. Interactions with Community i. Interactions with Environment j. Interactions with Culture	a. Early Childhood b. Preschool c. Pre-K d. Kindergarten e. First Grade f. Second Grade g. Third Grade h. Fourth Grade i. Fifth Grade j. Middle School k. High School
LEGAL STATUS			a. English b. Spanish c. Other	a. English b. Spanish c. Other	a. English b. Spanish c. Other	a. English b. Spanish c. Other	a. English b. Spanish c. Other	a. English b. Spanish c. Other	a. English b. Spanish c. Other	a. English b. Spanish c. Other	a. English b. Spanish c. Other

Legal Status: a - none stated, m - none stated, n - none stated, o - none stated, p - family stated as intended

Primary Area of Need:  
 A - Attention/Imagination/Behavior, B - Behavior, C - Communication, D - Cultural, E - Drawing  
 F - Interactions with Peers, G - Interactions with Adults, H - Interactions with Family, I - Interactions with Environment, J - Interactions with Culture  
 K - Interactions with Community, L - Interactions with Culture, M - Other

Program of Need: 1 - One applicable  
 2 - Level of intervention/program is dependent on equipment access  
 3 - Level of intervention/program is dependent on individual child  
 4 - Not applicable  
 5 - Requires ongoing assessment & intervention at under assessment & requires aid for the lowest level  
 6 - Needs regular direct intervention/program (Level 1)

Other: 1 - In one three area only, 2 - none three area only, 3 - none three area only, 4 - none three area only, 5 - none three area only, 6 - none three area only, 7 - none three area only, 8 - none three area only, 9 - none three area only, 10 - none three area only, 11 - none three area only, 12 - none three area only, 13 - none three area only, 14 - none three area only, 15 - none three area only, 16 - none three area only, 17 - none three area only, 18 - none three area only, 19 - none three area only, 20 - none three area only, 21 - none three area only, 22 - none three area only, 23 - none three area only, 24 - none three area only, 25 - none three area only, 26 - none three area only, 27 - none three area only, 28 - none three area only, 29 - none three area only, 30 - none three area only, 31 - none three area only, 32 - none three area only, 33 - none three area only, 34 - none three area only, 35 - none three area only, 36 - none three area only, 37 - none three area only, 38 - none three area only, 39 - none three area only, 40 - none three area only, 41 - none three area only, 42 - none three area only, 43 - none three area only, 44 - none three area only, 45 - none three area only, 46 - none three area only, 47 - none three area only, 48 - none three area only, 49 - none three area only, 50 - none three area only, 51 - none three area only, 52 - none three area only, 53 - none three area only, 54 - none three area only, 55 - none three area only, 56 - none three area only, 57 - none three area only, 58 - none three area only, 59 - none three area only, 60 - none three area only, 61 - none three area only, 62 - none three area only, 63 - none three area only, 64 - none three area only, 65 - none three area only, 66 - none three area only, 67 - none three area only, 68 - none three area only, 69 - none three area only, 70 - none three area only, 71 - none three area only, 72 - none three area only, 73 - none three area only, 74 - none three area only, 75 - none three area only, 76 - none three area only, 77 - none three area only, 78 - none three area only, 79 - none three area only, 80 - none three area only, 81 - none three area only, 82 - none three area only, 83 - none three area only, 84 - none three area only, 85 - none three area only, 86 - none three area only, 87 - none three area only, 88 - none three area only, 89 - none three area only, 90 - none three area only, 91 - none three area only, 92 - none three area only, 93 - none three area only, 94 - none three area only, 95 - none three area only, 96 - none three area only, 97 - none three area only, 98 - none three area only, 99 - none three area only, 100 - none three area only

**Appendix B**

**Parental/Guardian Consent Form**

*CONSENT - RELEASE OF INFORMATION*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ declare that I am: [please check appropriate box]  
 (Name of consenting party)

- the parent/legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_. Who was born on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_; or
- I am a minor child, born on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_, who is 16 years of age or older and who has withdrawn from parental control; or
- I am 19 years of age or older.

I HEREBY GIVE MY PERMISSION to representatives of:

- the Department of Health  
 the Department of Justice  
 the Department of Human Resources and Employment  
 the Department of Education  
 Other (please specify)

to: \_\_\_\_\_ Release to/ \_\_\_\_\_ Obtain from \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Please specify) (Identify Department or agency)

the following information \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Describe information)

which is necessary for the development/implementation of the individual support services plan.

I understand that the information which is the subject of my consent shall be treated as confidential in accordance with the relevant provisions of federal/provincial law and will not be shared with any other person or agency without my consent except in accordance with such laws and with any interdepartmental protocols on the sharing of information.

This consent is given of my own free will and shall be valid for \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Period of time)  
 unless withdrawn by me in writing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (DATE)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 SIGNATURE OF CONSENTING PARTY

\_\_\_\_\_  
 WITNESS

**Appendix C**  
**Sample IPP Form**

**INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM PLAN**PERSONAL DATA

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Guardian (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Person and Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION RELATING  
TO HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Medications: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Warnings: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Special resources or support required (vision, transportation, etc):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT PROFILE**

Learning Style: \_\_\_\_\_

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Physical Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

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Communication Ability: \_\_\_\_\_

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Environmental Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

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Social/Emotional Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

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---

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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RECORD OF RECENT ASSESSMENTS

---

AssessmentDateLocation of Assessment Information

STRENGTHS

NEEDS

1	a.
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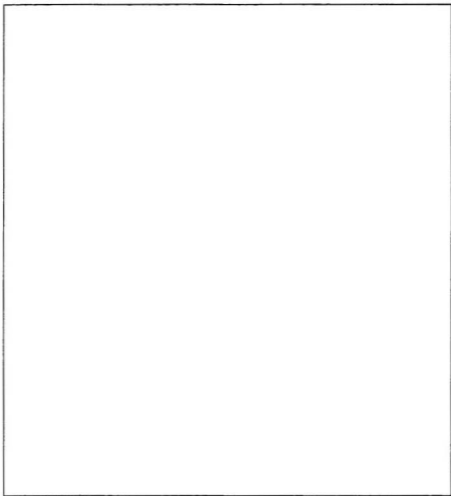
PRIORITIZED  
GOALS

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR IMPLEMENTATION

ENVIRONMENTAL  
DETAIL

PRIORITIZED GOALS	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	ENVIRONMENTAL DETAIL

## TRANSITIONAL PLANNING



Implementation Date of IPP: \_\_\_\_\_

Review Date of IPP: \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONS PARTICIPATING IN PLANNING PROCESS OF IPPNamePosition

---

SIGNATURES

I have participated in the planning process for this IPP.

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Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

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Principal

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Parental Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Appendix D**  
**Sample ISSP Form**

**INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN  
TEAM MEMBERSHIP**

NAME OF CHILD \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNITY \_\_\_\_\_ REGION \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

TEL. NO. \_\_\_\_\_ ISSP MANAGER \_\_\_\_\_

DATE TEAM ESTABLISHED \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF TEAM MEETINGS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME	PHONE/FAX	AGENCY/ADDRESS

NOTE: NAME OF ISSP MANAGER SHOULD APPEAR IN THE LIST

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN  
(Strengths & Needs Agreed by Consensus of Team)

Child/Youth \_\_\_\_\_

STRENGTHS	NEEDS



INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN  
(Goals agreed by Consensus of Team)

Child/Youth \_\_\_\_\_

Goals	To be implemented by	Environment(s)	Date of review

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN  
SERVICE NEEDS

Child/Youth \_\_\_\_\_

Service Area	Description of Needs and Preferred Service Options	Is service available (Yes or No)	Who will be responsible for obtaining service	Person/Agency Responsible for Implementation	Date Service Obtained	Review Date

Items for discussion could include and are limited to: place of residence (location and support needed), social, emotional, developmental, supportive services, health needs (physical needs, medication, procedures), equipment (personal, adaptive), materials and supplies, facilities, behavior, transportation, financial, family, vocational and career planning, recreation/co-curricular

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN  
SUMMARY

Child/Youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Signature: _____	Parent _____
_____	Child _____
_____	(if participant) _____
_____	Position _____
_____	Position _____
_____	Position _____
_____	Position _____
_____	Position _____

**Appendix E**  
**Interview Consent Form**

### Interview Consent Form

I am a graduate student at Memorial University working on my Masters of Educational Psychology thesis. The purpose of my study is twofold. First, to examine the ISSP process in Newfoundland and Labrador and determine how it differs from previous programs and policies. Secondly, to investigate the experiences of senior high special education teachers, who have been involved in developing and implementing ISSPs.

As part of this study, I would appreciate the opportunity to interview you. If you would agree, I would request your permission to tape record the interview, and make a transcript of the recording. In addition to the interview and transcript, please be aware that:

1. All personal identifying characteristics will be removed from the transcript and anonymity will be guaranteed. Be assured that participation in this study is confidential and anonymous.
2. If direct quotations from this interview are used in the written report of my thesis, you will be given the opportunity to read those quotations to ensure: (a) that you have been quoted accurately, (b) that you have not been quoted out of context, and (c) that no personal identifying characteristics have been inadvertently included.
3. All tapes and transcripts made of the interview will be securely stored, and then destroyed upon completion of their use.
4. You will be provided with feedback upon completion of the thesis.
5. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to opt out of the study at any time, or refuse to answer any questions.
6. If you have any ethical questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Wayne Nesbit at (709) 737-8606, or the Associate Dean of Education, Dr. Bruce Sheppard at (709) 737-8587.
7. The Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Education at Memorial University has approved this research.

I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS INTERVIEW, AND TO HAVE A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION MADE OF THE INTERVIEW. I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD CONDITIONS 1 TO 7 OUTLINED ABOVE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of interviewee)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of interviewer)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**Appendix F**  
**Interview Questions**

### Interview Questions

1. When were you first introduced to the ISSP process? Do you feel that you were properly inserviced to the ISSP process? As an educator exposed to the ISSP process, how do you feel about developing and using an ISSP?
2. Generally, children/youth have not been included in individualized program planning meetings which focused on establishing goals for them. The ISSP process involves children/youth as active participants in the development of the ISSP. How do you feel about this particular change? What implications, positive and/or negative, might this have for program development?
3. Parents and/or guardians have always been a very important component of any planning program for their child. From your experience as an educator, how do you see the role of the parent and/or guardian in the ISSP process?
4. The ISSM, or manager, has very specific roles in the ISSP meeting and afterwards. What do you see as the most important tasks of the ISSM?



5. Consultation and meeting with professionals from Social Services, Health and Justice is an integrated component of the ISSP process. What are your thoughts regarding this issue?
6. Based on your experiences, what would a typical ISSP team meeting look like? (Make reference to size of group, participants, etc.)
7. Concerns regarding the sharing of confidential information have been addressed through a parental consent form. How do you feel about discussing confidential information about a child with outside agencies?
8. After the ISSP team develop an ISSP that they feel meets the needs of the child/youth and has reasonable, attainable goals, a Child/Youth Profile should be completed. This sheet is then sent to the Child Health Coordinator. What are your thoughts regarding this Profile sheet?
9. It seems as though many of the models and programs adopted by the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador are very popular for a few years, then exchanged for newer models and programs. What kind of role do you see the ISSP process as playing in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system ten years from now?

10. Based on your experiences, share with me in a prioritized fashion, what you feel to be five strengths of the ISSP process. Prioritize from greatest strength to less significant ones.
  
11. Based on your experiences, share with me in a prioritized fashion, what you feel to be five weaknesses of the ISSP process. Prioritize from greatest weakness to less significant ones.
  
12. If you were in the position to modify the given ISSP process to improve it, what changes would you make?







