CHILDREN AS RESEARCHERS: EXAMINING CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

by © Emily Butler

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Abstract

Previous research has indicated that children with exceptionalities who are included in the regular classroom setting are at risk for social exclusion by their peers, but little is known of children's views on this topic (Nowicki, Brown, & Stepien, 2014a). This study explored both children's understanding of inclusion as well as their understanding of what it means to be socially excluded. This study used multiple ways to explore children's understanding including: interviews, focus groups (using semi-structured interviews), and children's drawings, to begin to explore children's understanding of these topics. Children in two different grades were used for this study, children in Grade 2 (two groups) and children in Grade 4 (one group). The data collected was analyzed using concept mapping, where the children acted as active participants and were involved in analyzing their own data into themes. Themes that emerged were using play as a means of including children with exceptionalities, normalizing exceptionalities, and celebrating individual differences, and teaching acceptance and inclusion in the school setting. Concept mapping was found to be a successful method when using children as participants.

Keywords: inclusion, social exclusion, concept mapping, children researchers

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Chapter 1: Introduction

All schools who have students in attendance with exceptionalities have an obligation to deliver services and provide an inclusive environment for those students. Inclusive education has a long history and continues to be evaluated and reorganized as society works toward bettering the inclusive models (Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018). According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2005):

> Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (p.13).

One researcher reported that there are an increasing number of schools internationally who are embracing the opportunities and challenges of inclusion (Gaskell, 2017). In 2009, Newfoundland and Labrador started implementing inclusion models into their public schools. This was a gradual phase in process that offered training in inclusive practices, differentiated instruction and collaborative teaching to school in Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland and Labrador describes their definition of inclusion as:

> A philosophy that promotes: the right of all students to attend school with their peers, and to receive appropriate and quality programming; a continuum of supports and services in the most appropriate setting (large group, small group, individualized) respecting the dignity of the child; a welcoming school culture where all members of the school community feel they belong, realize their potential, and contribute to the life of the

school; an atmosphere which respects and values the participation of all members of the

school community; a school community which celebrates diversity; and a safe and caring

school environment" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a).

The focus of the current study was to explore children's thoughts, ideas, and perceptions on

inclusion and social exclusion in their classrooms and schools. We have come a long way with

advancing the inclusive model within school systems in Canada. A history of inclusive education

is provided below, accompanied by the rationale for this study.

In the text which follows, the word disability is used to maintain consistency with the

terminology in the presented articles. However, it is recognized that the term "exceptionality" is

used to identify patterns of strengths and needs common to groups of students (Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018b), and when referring to children with diverse needs the term

exceptionality is used.

History of Inclusive Education

The right for children with disabilities to be educated became a prominent notion in the

1950's. During this time, it was believed by the general population that children with disabilities

were not able to be educated (InclusionBC, 2018). This led to parents of children with

disabilities to rally and fight for the children's rights to be educated as other children were. Vera

Perlin was a key leader in the organization of education for exceptionality services in

Newfoundland and Labrador. She established the first class for students with cognitive

impairments. "In 1956 she helped to form, "The Association for the Help of the Retarded Child"

(Philpott, 2002). Independent classes for children with disabilities started happening in places

such as church basements and private homes.

In the 1960s, Students who were not able to perform in the regular classroom were segregated into their own classroom within the same school, or specialized institutions were built for those who could not be taught in the regular stream (Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018). Segregation continued for the most part in Canada until the integration-mainstreaming period in the 1970s-1980s. During this period, students with disabilities were allowed into regular schools and classrooms. However, those students were still often kept in separate classrooms as a group. For certain classes or periods throughout their school day, they were "mainstreamed" meaning that they were physically placed in the regular classroom but were considered more like visitors rather than "full members of the classroom" (Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education, 2018).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Canada became known as a leader for the rights of people with disabilities. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protected the rights of children with disabilities. When the charter was passed in 1982, "Canada became one of the first countries to guarantee rights to people with disabilities in its constitution" (Hutchinson, 2010). By the mid 1980s, Ontario guaranteed the right of all exceptional students to an appropriate education with a new funding model, most provinces developed Individual Education Plans for children with exceptionalities and models of integration were adopted as the most prominent approach to including all children with disabilities and exceptionalities in the classroom (Hutchinson, 2010). Universities have also offered courses to educators wishing to learn more about exceptional students and how to include children with exceptionalities into schools using the normalization concept - that all persons should exist in environments as close to normal as possible (Hutchinson, 2010). In Newfoundland and Labrador, an important initiative arose called the Model of Coordination of Services to Children and Youth with Special Needs in Newfoundland

and Labrador (Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 1996). "The goal was to reduce duplication of service and to increase communication so as to maximize efficiency of interventions for youth with special needs" (Philpott, 2002). This led into the Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP), which was a plan aimed to create support services for the child to meet their identified needs (Philpott, 2002). Today, the ISSP is used for students with exceptionalities who also need support from outside agencies (Government of Newfoundland, 2018c). However, students with exceptionalities now receive an Individual Education Plan (IEP). This is an educational document that is created to record and track supports and services provided to the student (Government of Newfoundland, 2018c).

The inclusion model became more popular in schools. Phase one of the Inclusive Education Initiative began in 2009 in Newfoundland (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a). The Department of Education and Early Childhood describes inclusive education in Newfoundland schools as:

The right of all students to attend school with their peers, and to receive appropriate and quality programming; a continuum of supports and services in the most appropriate setting (large group, small group, individualized) respecting the dignity of the child; a welcoming school culture where all members of the school community feel they belong, realize their potential, and contribute to the life of the school; an atmosphere which respects and values the participation of all members of the school community; a school community which celebrates diversity; and a safe and caring school environment (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018b).

With this definition in mind, The Department of Education and Early Childhood states the goals of implementing inclusive practices is to include inclusive education practices in all

aspects of the learning environment, regardless of any type of diversity that a student may face (Government of Newfoundland, 2018b). Other schools in Canada were adopting inclusion models or had already implemented models into their schools around the same time (InclusionBC, 2018; Government of Ontario, 2009).

The majority of schools in Canada have adopted inclusive education as a right for all students, however there is still much work to be done (Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018). In June 2016, a status report on the state of public education in Newfoundland and Labrador was released by Sheppard and Anderson (2016). It stated:

> Under the leadership of President James Dinn, the Provincial Executive, and in consultation with stakeholders, the NLTA created a Panel on the Status of Public Education in Newfoundland and Labrador (the Panel) to hold hearings, seek submissions and draft a final report (Sheppard & Anderson, 2016, p. 2).

The panel had three members, including representation from the Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher's Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils, and from the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland. Over six weeks, the panel held sessions which were attended by 300 people, viewed hundreds of online submissions of reflections from citizens (such as parents, students, teachers, and community groups), and heard 60 presentations (Sheppard & Anderson, 2016, p. 2). Dr. Sheppard and Dr. Anderson compiled information, completed a data analysis and then completed a final report. They concluded from the data gathered during their study it was evident that the Newfoundland and Labrador education system is under severe stress:

> Due to a lack of personnel needed to deal with the special needs of students... In many cases the solution seems to be a matter of better applying or modifying existing formulas

for allocations, while in some cases there is a shortage of programing availability. For every family and school affected, the need is immediate; for the education system it is urgent, and we may be at a tipping point should these needs not be addressed (Sheppard & Anderson, 2016, p. 4).

Little is known about how children view inclusion and why some children with disabilities are rejected from social situations and relationships in the school environment (Nowicki, Brown, & Stepien, 2014a). The current study used focus groups and semi-structured interviews as well as children's drawing to explore primary (Grade 2) and elementary school (Grade 4) children's understanding and perceptions of inclusion and what it means to be socially excluded. The data were analyzed using a modified concept mapping methodology, where children were involved in both data production and data interpretation. This study yielded important results regarding children's knowledge and understanding of inclusion, exclusion, and exceptionalities within their classroom and school. It provided the researchers with information about how children view social exclusion of students with exceptionalities. Finally, it provided primary and elementary school teachers with suggestions on how to instruct students about exceptionalities and inclusion in a way that children can developmentally understand.

The study

This study is a sub-project of a larger project called, "Children as researchers". The larger project is funded by the Faculty of Education: Research and Development Grant. The principal researcher was Dr. Sharon Penney, with coresearchers Dr. Linda Coles, Dr. Gabrielle Young. This thesis was completed as a sub-project of the larger study. Dr. Penney and Dr. Young aided with all aspects of the sub-project. They were a part of the recruitment process, communication with the schools involved, data collection with the participants, data analysis, and the supervision

of the thesis. Participants involved in this study were considered as active participants as they took part in the data analysis as one of the purposes of this project was to include children in aspects of the research process. The researchers involved in this study will be referred to as "the researchers". This study explored the following questions:

1) What are children's views of inclusion?

2) Why do children believe some students are sometimes socially excluded at school?

This study adds to the literature valuable insight into Grade 2 and Grade 4 perceptions of inclusion and social exclusion. Next, the literature review will discuss inclusive education in Canada, and what previous studies have found on the topic of social exclusion and inclusion with children.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

When deciding what to include in the literature review, a broad search of the key terms'
"inclusion" and "children's perceptions" were used in Memorial Universities Libraries One
Search online. These keywords resulted in 119, 718 results for books, articles, and more. To
reduce the substantial number of results, the search was refined by using only scholarly/peer-
reviewed literature. This resulted in 104, 946 results for books, articles, and more. After perusing
the results, most of the literature found in the search resulted in parents' perceptions of inclusion,
or teacher perceptions of inclusion. However, one article did represent valid literature for the
current study. This article was named, "Exploring Children's Perceptions of Two School-Based
Social Inclusion Programs: A Pilot Study" (Lindsay, McPherson, Aslam, McKeever & Wright,
2013). After reading this article and using it as a part of the literature review, references that
were used by Lindsay et al. (2013) were explored for appropriate usage as references in this
current literature review. Due to the similar topic and research questions that Lindsay et al.
(2013) used, many of the references used in their article were applicable for this current literature
review. References used from Lindsay et al. (2013) included Nowicki (2006); Lindsay and
Mcpherson (2012); and Ison et al. (2010). Further references stemmed from these articles.

The current literature review addresses literature pertaining to the topics of inclusive
education in Canada, and the social inclusion and exclusion of children with exceptionalities.

Inclusive Education in Canada

The history of inclusive education in Canada is discussed in the literature review to give a
background to the readers for inclusive education. Below a brief history will be given, and a
description on where Canada is today in implementing inclusive practices into Canadian schools.

Since the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) launched UNESCO countries into the inclusive model of education, schools have been moving towards improving their inclusive practices. In 2004, the United Nation General Assembly started a global initiative, named "World Programme" for Human Rights Education (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2010, p. 1). This initiative was structured in phases, with the intention of advancing the integration of human rights education into elementary and secondary school systems. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO collaborated with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to provide UNESCO with a report on the implementation of the World Programme (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2010, p. 1). This World Programme proposed that human rights education in school systems should include policies and policy implementation; learning environments; teaching and learning processes and resources; and the training of school personnel. The first phase of this initiative started in 2004 and ended in 2009 in Canada. In the report it is stated that, "Each jurisdiction in Canada is committed to inclusive education, based on a belief that every child can learn" (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2010, p. 15), although all jurisdictions and/or provinces have different visions of what inclusion looks like in their schools. In New Brunswick, universal learning designs programs are applied, when services and/or practices are insufficient to meet the needs of a student, accommodations are provided (Government of New Brunswick, 2009). In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Education advocates for an unconditional commitment to help every child succeed in school, home, and the community which requires strong leadership from all schools (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004). In British Columbia, a manual was created to provide guidelines to assist schools with developing programs and services for students with exceptionalities. The manual describes the responsibilities of the ministry, school boards,

educators, parents, and students for the development and implementation of special education services (BC Ministry of Education, 2016).

As noted above, In Newfoundland and Labrador, a multi-year implementation of inclusive education was undertaken. It involved extensive training of teachers (such as differentiated instruction) to better engage students with varying capabilities (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a). Other provinces and territories have implemented similar phase-in models of inclusive education (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2010). The Canadian Commission for UNESCO concluded with stating, "Human rights education, its principles, values, content, and pedagogical approaches can be found in the education systems of all of Canada's provinces and territories (2010, p. 42). It is evident from this report and educational documents from individual provinces that inclusion practices have already been implemented in many Canadian schools or are continuing to be implemented.

Improving inclusive education is clearly still a work in progress in many Canadian schools. Therefore, it is important for researchers to continue conducting research to provide valuable information that can benefit policy makers and educators who practice in inclusive environments. This study adds to the research literature by providing opinions of children on how inclusive education should be implemented and improved.

Social exclusion of children with exceptionalities

The literature review provided in this thesis addresses social exclusion among children with exceptionalities. The current study addressed why children believe some peers are socially excluded at school, and how children believe this can be improved children with exceptionalities. The literature review below examined why children and youth with exceptionalities are included and/or socially excluded in school settings.

Although many schools have implemented inclusion practices in Canada, research suggests that social exclusion is common among children with disabilities (Frederickson, 2010; Macrae, Maguire, & Melbourne, 2003; Magiati, Dokrell, & Logotheti, 2002; Nowicki, 2003, 2006). Research has shown that children can be biased against peers with disabilities (Nowicki, 2005). Children with disabilities are less accepted, more rejected, and more likely to be victims of bullying than their typically developing classmates (Frederickson, 2010). Nowicki (2006) studied whether children's attitudes towards peers with disabilities were related to age, gender, or type of disability. One hundred children participated in Nowicki's study, with children from Junior Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 3, and Grade 5. The students all attended the same school which promoted a full inclusion model (Nowicki, 2006). The participants in Grade 3 and 5 all had classmates who had Individualized Education Plans for intellectual disabilities, however, none of the participants had intellectual disabilities (Nowicki, 2006). The target conditions included having eight children depicted in drawings (four girls and four boys). The drawings of the children (target children) were diverse, with varied looks (different clothes and hair styles), two of the drawings were of children in wheelchairs, and two of the drawings depicted a child sitting in a regular classroom chair. The researchers provided short, simple verbal descriptions of the children in the drawings to assist children with understanding hidden disabilities such as intellectual disabilities. Measures included using a Multi-Response Attitude Scale, Behavioural Intent Scale, and a Pictographic Scale. The results of this study indicated that the attitudes towards target children with intellectual and intellectual/physical disabilities were negatively biased (Nowicki, 2006). Nowicki (2006) noted that it appeared that this idea was consistent across both age groups and that children's attitudes could be associated with several factors such as age, and the presence or absence of a disability.

Nowicki, Brown, and Stepien (2014a) used concept mapping to study the opinions and thoughts of children on why they thought students with disabilities were sometimes socially excluded. Concept mapping was used as an exploratory methodology and incorporated the participants as active researchers. Participants' ideas and thoughts were used as data. Data were then formed into concepts and ideas and participants were asked to compile data into themes. Concept mapping focused on actively involving participants in all aspects of the research process and aimed to gather the participants opinions and not those of the researchers. Nowicki, Brown, and Stepien (2014a) studied 49 Grade 5 students placed in inclusive classrooms. These researchers initially interviewed the participants individually. From these interviews 49 unique statements were pulled from the transcribed data. Students were asked to sort the statements into categories that made sense to them (Nowicki, Brown & Stepien, 2014a). Four thematic clusters emerged from the data: the thoughts and actions of other children towards peers with intellectual or learning disabilities; differences in learning ability and resource allocation; affect, physical characteristics and schooling; and negative behaviours and thoughts. The overall conclusion from this study was that children with disabilities were sometimes socially excluded due to difference. Differences that were noted by the participants included negative perceptions of physical appearances, abilities pertaining to learning, elicited behaviours, and resource allocation (Nowicki et al., 2014a). Nowicki et al. (2014a) made an important recommendation for teachers from the results. These researchers suggested that teachers should incorporate the teaching of proactive social skills into classrooms to support positive and supportive interactions among students.

Lindsay and McPherson (2012a) wanted to learn about the experiences of social exclusion and bullying at school among children and youth with cerebral palsy. They used a

qualitative methodology as it was an ideal way to explore in-depth perspectives and processes from children (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012a). The participants included children from 8 years to 19 years diagnosed with cerebral palsy and currently attending an integrated classroom (students with and without disabilities). One-on-one interviews and focus groups were conducted with the participants. They asked the participants questions such as: "Do you feel that you belong with other kids? Has somebody who you think is your friend bullied and/or excluded you? Has anyone ever made fun of you or made you feel bad?" (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012a, p. 102). They also incorporated drawing and visual prompts to engage children more effectively in answering the questions. Pictures included usual places where bullying could occur, or the participants could draw pictures of their own. Data collected from the interviews were analyzed and coded into themes. The results indicated that the socio-contextual environment in which the participants were placed in influenced the social exclusion that they experienced. Factors that affected the socio-contextual environment included school policy and accommodations. For example, some participants felt that if they had to write their exam somewhere else in their school or receive accommodations within the classroom, it caused them to feel isolated from their peers. It was also found that children felt that teachers' attitudes toward children with disabilities influenced social exclusion experienced from their peers. Lindsay and McPherson (2012a) recommended that both teachers and students need more training in disability awareness, so inclusion can occur effectively in the classroom.

Siperstein, Parker, Bardon, and Widaman (2007) conducted a national study of youth attitudes toward the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities. Forty-seven school districts were randomly selected from 26 states in the United States of America. Sixty-eight schools in suburban, rural, and urban communities were selected to take part. Two Grade 7

classes and two Grade 8 classes were chosen from each school. The total number of participants with parental permission was 5, 837. The teachers in the schools were asked to distribute surveys to the students who had parental permission to take part in the study. The researchers asked questions surrounding the topics of present and prior contact with and exposure to people with intellectual disabilities (ID), perceived capabilities, impact of inclusion, behavioural intentions, academic inclusion, and non-academic inclusion (Siperstein et al., 2007). The main results from this study were: students with an ID are not as competent as the average adolescent; students with ID should not participate in academic classes such as English and mathematics; and that engagement with students with an ID was limited to superficial activities such as saying "hello" rather than engaging with them during free time. Siperstein et al. (2007) stated, "the results strongly show that neither contact nor exposure per se leads to more positive attitudes, but rather contact and exposure that provide youth with the opportunity to witness the competence of individuals with ID" (p. 451). The youth attitudes toward others with ID were found to be more positive when they were informed that people with ID were competent and able. Although the current study did not include students in Grades 7 or 8 as participants, it is important to show the literature is consistently shows patterns of social exclusion among children with exceptionalities from childhood into adolescence.

There are various reasons why children and youth believe their peers with exceptionalities are excluded in school settings. The literature review presented below identifies that children with exceptionalities are still being socially excluded at school. This research sections aims to provide the context for why this is occurring, and what children believe can be done to include others at school.

Inclusion of children with exceptionalities

The journey towards truly inclusive schools is ongoing (cite Jacquie Specht - google). In the Canadian context, educators, researchers, and policy makers continue to find models that work effectively for including all children of diverse needs into classrooms where they can learn and grow alongside their typically developing peers. The studies addressed below present strategies that have been found to support the inclusion of children with exceptionalities as one of the aims of the current study was also to discover how inclusion can be promoted in schools.

Inclusion models have been or are being introduced into Canadian schools and classrooms. Inclusive school environments are being promoted so that all students feel welcome and accepted. When describing an inclusive school, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador stated on their website:

> In an inclusive school culture diversity is embraced; learning supports are available and properly utilized and flexible learning experiences focus on the individual student. There is an innovative and creative environment and a collaborative approach is taken. At the heart of an inclusive school is a committed leadership and a shared direction (2018a).

In a study by Lindsay, McPherson, Aslam, McKeever and Wright (2013), an exploration of two group-based social inclusion programs involving disability components was completed. The inclusion programs that were evaluated were an interactive game and a puppet show. They chose these programs as they were found to have a similar overall goal of promoting inclusion and were designed for the same age group. The research design used mixed methods to provide an in-depth analysis of children's perceptions of these programs. Data include group discussions, observation notes, and a brief questionnaire. The participants were children who were in school classes considered integrated (where children with disabilities spend most of their time in the

same class as their typically developing peers). Six Grade 4 and 5 combined classes were a part of the study, with 165 students serving as participants. Three of the classes had children with non-visible disabilities such as intellectual disabilities. The programs were assigned randomly to each school, where three schools were assigned the puppet show to watch and the other three played the interactive game. The interactive game involved a team-based environment, where the participants would spin a wheel, answer questions, and earn points for their team. The puppet shows included scripts depicting scenarios where children were dealing with bullying, social issues, physical differences, disabilities, and/or educational differences. Afterward, the participants were given a questionnaire asking questions pertaining to how much they liked or did not like the program, what they learned about children with disabilities, showing kindness to others, and if they learned anything about bullying. A brief group discussion with the researchers followed the questionnaire. An inductive process of thematic analysis was used to analyze the data provided by the participants. The results showed that the participants felt they learned about bullying, disability, and how to build friendships with children with disabilities from these programs. They also enjoyed the interactive components, the relevant topics, and the duration of the programs (45-60 minutes). Lindsay et al. (2013) noted that playing games and having fun are important strategies to use when motivating children and to enhance cooperative learning. These researchers noted using arts-based programs to teach children about the inclusion and social exclusion of children with disabilities was an effective way to build inclusive practices in the classroom.

In another study by Lindsay and McPherson (2012b), strategies were explored for improving disability awareness and social inclusion of children and young people with cerebral palsy. The participants were between 8 to 19 years of age, had to be diagnosed with cerebral

palsy, and had to attend an integrated classroom. In total, there were 15 participants with 12 of the children had functional verbal communication, three used a wheelchair, and all of them attended integrated classrooms. Interviews, discussion questions, and focus groups were used to gather data. Open-ended questions such as, "What are your suggestions for improving inclusion and reducing bullying of young people with disabilities?" (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012b, p. 811). Themes from the data were developed using interpretive analysis, compared and contrasted by the researchers. The results indicated three key strategies for improving social inclusion at school: allow students with disabilities to disclose their condition to peers and teachers to create a general awareness about their disability; build an awareness at school that bullying can occur for children with disabilities, so the problem can be addressed; and create a peer support network to build friendships and social networks. Lindsay & McPherson (2012b) discussed the importance of good-quality friendships for children with disabilities as friends tend to protect each other from social exclusion and bullying. Social networking and building friendships are important for the inclusion of children with exceptionalities.

Ison et al. (2010) evaluated the effectiveness of a short-term disability awareness package for fifth grade students. They wanted to know: what are the attitudes of Grade 5 students toward peers with disabilities; was there an improvement in attitude, knowledge, and acceptance of students with disabilities if the program was co-facilitated by someone with a disability; and what were Grade 5 students' opinions of participating in a disability awareness program. A total of 147 Grade 5 students between 9 to 11 years of age participated in this study. A mixed-method approach, with both quantitative and qualitative methods, was used for data collection. A baseline questionnaire was used prior to the intervention session. After the intervention session had been implemented, the participants completed the same questionnaire along with open-ended

questions. A few weeks after the intervention session, focus groups were held with four students from each class to discover their understanding of their experiences of participating in the disability awareness program. The actual intervention (disability awareness program) consisted of two 90-minute sessions held at separate times. The sessions were given by two presenters, of which one presenter had cerebral palsy. The program included activities designed for children to raise awareness of disability and promote supportive communities. Activities included simulations of daily activities of someone with a disability, question and answer periods with a person with a disability and demonstrating the usage of common equipment used by people with disabilities. The results suggested that participation in this program led to significant improvement in the attitudes, knowledge, and acceptance of individuals with disabilities. Participants noted that they enjoyed the program and felt more comfortable around people with disabilities after the program was over. Ison et al. (2010) stated:

> This research has shown that a short disability awareness program combining information, discussions, written activities, demonstrations, disability simulation activities and extended time with a person with a disability leads to improvements in knowledge, attitudes and acceptance of disability in the short-term (p. 367).

Creating inclusion programs and practices have been found to increase children's perceptions of inclusion and their attitudes toward others with disabilities. This current study yielded results that may be used to promote inclusion practices in the school and classroom. They will be discussed in the discussion section.

Children as participants in research

Research and practice that take children's perspectives seriously has become important in in understanding children. Children offer unique perspectives that are personal and can provide

adults with a critical understanding of children's worlds (Kellett, 2005). Researchers have highlighted that not only are children social actors who take part in and contribute to relationships, but that the dichotomization between adulthood and childhood institutionalizes age-based power inequalities. This serves to oppress and marginalize children, both in their everyday lives and in research investigating these lives (Mason & Hood, 2010).

Bergström, Jonsson, and Shanahan (2010) used children as researchers to gain perspectives from them on food and eating. The rationale for the study was to develop an understanding of how children's food habits can develop in healthier ways. The research methods included sensory tests, study visits, observation, and interviews. Children could use notebooks for gathering and recording data, drawings and photographs to illustrate their food environments, and consult tutors to summarize their findings. The children participating were 10-year-olds attending two classes in the fourth grade of a Swedish government-funded school. The results demonstrated the children were in fact knowledgeable and competent as coresearchers. Bergström et al. (2010) found that involving children in the research process allows freedom for them to let their voices be heard.

Ryan (2009) studied the opinions of a wide age range of students and explored their ideas surrounding inclusion. Participants that took part in this study were from either a high school, primary school, college (grammar school for children), or special school (primary aged students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties). The project explored differences in perceptions between students with and without special needs or disabilities. Students with parental permission to take part in the study were asked to represent their ideas on inclusion through visual media and art. Cameras were provided to encourage visual narratives and to provide recommendations on how inclusive practices can be improved upon in their school. All

the schools involved in the project included students with and without special needs. The project ran from October 2005, to the end of the school year in June 2006. Based on the findings, Ryan (2009) commented that there are clear financial factors that aide in making reasonable accommodations for students with special needs and that it is crucial that students are actively involved in decision-making processes. Some issues raised by students included sensitivity to bathroom and toilet smells, loud eating areas, and visually overstimulating classrooms. The over-whelming lesson learned is that 'reasonable' adjustments may not fully be considered reasonable where the pupil at the centre of the need for adjustments has not had an input into the decision-making process" (Ryan, 2009, p. 83). Ryan (2009) indicated that to improve inclusion practices in the classroom and in schools, children's voices should be considered as important.

When exploring the topic of transitioning to school, Dockett and Perry (2005) not only wanted the opinions of teachers and parents, but also the student's perspectives. They believed that children are not often recognized as knowledgeable or even experts on their own experiences (Dockett & Perry, 2005). They used conversations with children, picture books, oral and written journals, role-play, drawings, reflections, and video recordings to discuss children's feelings and ideas about going to school for the first time. They concluded that children demonstrated their expertise and competence, which surprised some school personnel as well as some family members. The perspectives described by the children stimulated discussion surrounding creating positive transitions for child when entering the school system (Dockett & Perry, 2005).

Nowicki et al. (2014a) found that children can be competent coresearchers. They felt that there is a gap in the literature where little is known about children's thoughts surrounding the social exclusion of peers with learning disabilities. Nowicki et al. (2014a) used concept mapping to discover children's thoughts on the social exclusion of peers with intellectual or learning

disabilities. The researcher to collected data and facilitated analysis with the participants. Participants were asked to sort key statements gleaned from interviews into meaningful clusters (Kane & Trochim 2007). This study provided evidence that children are effective, reliable and competent participants in concept mapping research. Coad & Evans (2008) noted that, "Research which seeks to involve children in data analysis processes can help to reduce some of the power imbalances between adult researchers and children, challenge adult representations of children, enable children's voices to be heard and influence policy and practice in health, social care and children's services" (p. 50).

Drawing as a method. Drawing has been found to be an effective way to engage children as active participants. The research outlined below addresses how researchers have implemented drawing as a purposeful way to gather children's ideas and perspectives without verbalizing them. Kendrick and Mckay (2004) used drawings as a way of exploring children's constructions of literacy. The purpose was to investigate ways in which drawing allows children to communicate their knowledge of literacy. A qualitative, interpretive research approach was used, with a focus on image-based research. Image based research allowed participants to see themselves reflected in images rather than solely relying on words to represent themselves. The participants included children in Grade 1 and Grade 2. The children were grouped, and were asked to discuss reading and writing, and were then asked to draw a picture of reading and writing. Afterward, the children explained what they drew to the researchers. "The children in this study produced unique texts into which their personal and social histories were woven" (Kendrick & Mckay, 2004). The researchers found that the children's drawings allowed them to share their spontaneous thoughts in relation to reading and writing both inside and outside of

school. Through drawing, the children were able to create concepts about literacy that demonstrated a full range of their experience.

The draw-and-write technique for collecting data was used in two studies conducted in England. The purpose of the studies was to gather children's perceptions on transitioning from primary to secondary school, and the management of bullying and/or victim issues in schools. The results demonstrated the value of using the draw-and-write technique to engage children in giving their perceptions and emotions around these two topics. They also found that having children draw was a method that helped build rapport with children as it promoted inclusive and participatory research (Sewell, 2011). However, Sewell (2011) warned that the draw-and-write technique should not be used as a stand-alone method and should be used alongside other methods such as interviews to enable the participant's voices to fully be explored.

Drawing was used in the current study as the researchers felt it could provide an alternative way for children to share their ideas and opinions without having to verbalize them to the researchers. The studies discussed found drawing to be a useful tool when conducting research with children.

Concept mapping with children. Concept mapping has been found to be a useful method for data analyzing when working with children. It gives children to opportunity to engage in parts of the research process and strives to provide an unbiased opinion from children without researcher interference. The studies presented below discuss concept mapping and how it can be used with children.

Dare and Nowicki (2015) found concept mapping to be a viable tool when exploring student's view surrounding acceleration programs. They concluded that researchers can use concept mapping to discover unknown perceptions from students concerning diverse types of

acceleration among different stakeholder groups, including students, parents, and educators (Dare & Nowicki, 2015). In another study conducted by Lopata and Nowicki (2014), it was found that concept mapping produced a visual representation of the beliefs of pre-service teachers on the causes of bullying. Themes that emerged from the data collected with pre-service teachers included family factors, abuse, instability, socio-economic status, school and exceptionalities, interpersonal factors, and personality factors as antecedents to bullying. They found concept mapping to be a worthy methodology for this reason.

Concept mapping provides a viable way to gather and document children's thoughts on a topic and provides the opportunity for an explicit representation of their conceptual schema (Nowicki, Brown, & Stepien, 2014a). Concept mapping is characterized using qualitative techniques, multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis (Trochim, 1989). It requires the researcher to facilitate the collection of data analysis by involving the participants in sorting statements gleaned from interviews into meaningful clusters (Trochim, 1989).

In a study completed by Nowicki, Brown, and Stepien (2014b), concept mapping was used to explore children's knowledge of learning difficulties and the factors that contribute to learning difficulties. They chose to use this method with the children as participants because concept mapping allows for the participants to express their opinions with limited researcher bias (Nowicki et al., 2014b). Nowicki et al. (2014b) commented that why concept mapping is not used frequently with children is unclear. However, concept mapping studies can provide educational researchers with insight into children thoughts and beliefs about experiences at school and elsewhere. They predicted that if children had knowledge about the plausible causes of learning difficulties and can take part in the concept mapping process, then they would be able to sort items into meaningful concepts (Nowicki et al., 2014b). The participants were recruited

from Grades 5 and 6 in five different schools in a Canadian city. The children were first interviewed, and later in the study asked to participate in the sorting activity. "They were asked to group each set of cards together in a way that makes sense to them according to the following criteria: each statement can only be placed in one pile (i.e., a card cannot be placed in two piles simultaneously), all statements cannot be placed in a single pile, and all statements cannot be put into their own piles (although some items may be sorted by themselves)" (2014b, p. 74). In the last stage, the participants were asked to label the groups of statements they had created. A Concept System program was used for data analysis. Nowicki and colleagues found that elementary students can provide valuable and sound results. They also argued that concept mapping offers an alternate way of obtaining children's thoughts and beliefs on a multitude of topics as it provides a way of exploring children's beliefs (Nowicki et al., 2014b). They suggest that more studies using concept mapping need to be completed with children and adults on the same topic.

Dare and Nowicki (2015) used concept mapping to discover motivations for choosing concurrent enrollment with high-ability secondary students. Because concept mapping allows statistically based graphs and charts to be created from the participant's beliefs and ideas, they felt this method was an appropriate approach to use with high school students. The participants consisted of 21 high-achieving students who were in Grades 11 and 12. They were required to be involved in concurrent enrolment. "In Phase 1 data generation, participants brainstormed statements in response to the focus prompt" (Dare & Nowicki, 2015). The statements were then prepared for the sorting activity, in which the participants engaged. The participants organized the statements in a way that made sense to them and instructed to make as many piles as they would like. After sorting the statements into groups, participants rated the importance of each

statement on a 5-point, bidimensional Likert-type scale from 1 = *not important* to 5 = *important*. The data was then analyzed using Concept System Global software. They found that, "this study further demonstrates the utility of Trochim's concept mapping as a research tool… Researchers can use this participatory method to explore and reveal underlying perceptions about different types of acceleration among different stakeholder groups, including students, parents, and educators" (Dare & Nowicki, 2015).

The researchers in the current study chose to employ concept mapping as it has been found to be an effective method to use with children and engage them as active participants. This study aimed to demonstrate how concept mapping can be used with children, obtain children's ideas and opinions to inform inclusive practices, and highlight how we can use children's voices to reduce the social exclusion of children with exceptionalities.

Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework is the lens through which a researcher explores the research. A theoretical framework is used to connect specific theories and concepts to the topic of the research at hand. It also connects the researcher to existing knowledge and allows the reader to critically analyse the theories. A theoretical framework explains the meaning, nature, and challenges associated with a phenomenon, so we may use those theories to understand and explain knowledge (University of Southern California, 2018). A theoretical framework "…serves as the guide on which to build and support your study, and also provides the structure to define how you will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the [paper] as a whole" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 13).

There is a growing trend to explore children's views of inclusion and their understanding of what inclusion means in their schools and classrooms as children's voices are being realized as influential factors in enhancing educational research (Norwich & Kelly, 2004). When considering theories to describe children's views of inclusion, and why they may choose to include or socially exclude certain peers, the cognitive-developmental theory of friendship can be applied. Young children tend to be attracted to developing friendships with others who are like themselves (Byrne & Griffitt, 1966). Children with exceptionalities sometimes display unconventional interests and ways of engaging with their peers (Attwood, 2007). Developing friendships with students who have exceptionalities, can appear to be a challenging task for typically developing peers. In this study, the cognitive-developmental theory of friendship may explain why children with exceptionalities may be included or excluded at school based on the concept of friendship development among children.

Attwood described how young children with Asperger's syndrome (AS) have been considered by other children as, "not fun to play with" or they do "not conform with the usual rules of friendship, such as sharing, reciprocity and cooperation" (2006, p. 58). Children with AS sometimes socially isolate themselves by choice, which can create barriers for other children wanting to play with them (Attwood, 2007). This can be problematic for creating meaningful friendships with others as children tend to seek out friends who are like them in the way they look and their interests (Byrne & Griffitt, 1966). Bigelow and La Gaipa (1975) explored how children in Grades 1 through 8 characterized their best friends. Teachers were asked to have their students draft an essay about what they expected in their best friends and how their expectations were different for those not considered to be their best friends. For primary grades (Grades 1 to 3), some of the most significant friend expectations were being a helper, shared activities,

organized play, demographic similarity, and evaluation. Children in elementary grades (Grades 4 to 6) shared that their most significant friend expectations were acceptance, admiration, incremental prior interaction, loyalty and commitment, and genuineness. From a developmental perspective, children with exceptionalities may not possess these friendship expectations during the same developmental period as their peers or may not possess them at any given time. Attwood explained that in the early primary or elementary years, children with exceptionalities may want to be involved in socializing, however, despite their intellectual ability, their level of social maturity could be approximately two years behind their typically developing peers (2007).

In the current study, we explored children's views of social inclusion and exclusion of others in their school and classroom. The selected theoretical framework offers ideas for why children may choose specific peers to include or exclude within activities or the school environment. Using the cognitive-developmental model of friendships could offer ideas such as children wanting to include others who are deemed as "friends" and excluding others who are not seen as friends. Attwood (2007) explained that children with exceptionalities may struggle to find common activities to engage in with their peers. He explained that children with exceptionalities are often more interested in the physical world rather than the social world. This could be viewed as boring with "incomprehensible social rules" (Attwood, 2007, p. 60). The researchers in this study believed this could be the case for why some children with exceptionalities are included or excluded in the school setting. Attwood (2007) noted that entering the middle school years, children with exceptionalities may achieve genuine friendships with others who may also feel social isolation and share similar interests. This theoretical framework provided the researchers with a lens to view the participants in this study and offered

an understanding of ways children may include their peers with exceptionalities and to understand ways to prevent their social exclusion.

To increase the likelihood of friendships and peer support for students with exceptionalities, increasing contact between children who are typically developing and children with exceptionalities has been found to be an effective strategy (Maras & Brown, 2000). Harper, Symon, and Frea (2008) studied a peer support program that was implemented in a school. Typically developing peers worked with children with exceptionalities during recess activities to improve social interactions. They found that the social interactions of children with exceptionalities increased and they were able to interact with peers by turn taking and initiating play. Another way friendships and peer relations have been shown to increase between typically developing peers and children with exceptionalities has been the use of explicit instruction about exceptionalities from a social/developmental perspective. This means that educators can teach their students about exceptionalities at an appropriate social or developmental level to increase their understanding about children with exceptionalities and to normalize behaviours within the classroom (Ison et al. 2010)

The cognitive-developmental theory of friendship was chosen as a theoretical framework for this study as it offers insight into how children view friendships and how they develop. The research questions aimed to discover children's perceptions of inclusion in their classroom, and the social exclusion of children with exceptionalities. Understanding how children develop friendships can play a key role in successful inclusion practices in school classrooms. Exploring these research questions through the lens of a friendship theory could offer insight into how children perceive those with exceptionalities, and if they perceive them as friends or as potential friends in the classroom. This study aimed to discover this by gathering children's ideas through

interviews, focus groups, drawings and concept mapping. The methods section will explain what methods were used to employ concept mapping with children.

Chapter 3: Methods

Research Design

A qualitative research methodology was employed to gain insight into children's perceptions of inclusion and social exclusion within a school setting. Children's perceptions were viewed as the central phenomenon requiring exploration and understanding (Creswell, 2002). Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that, "qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods" (p. 11). This was the premise used when learning about children's perceptions of inclusion and social exclusion. The methods used for the current study included interviews, focus groups, and drawing. Concept mapping was utilized as a way to analyze the data, as it has been found to be a successful method to use when exploring children's perceptions (Nowicki et al., 2014a; Nowicki et al., 2014b; Dare & Nowicki, 2015). The research questions were as follows:

(1) What are children's views of inclusion?

(2) Why do children believe some students are sometimes socially excluded at school?

Concept Mapping. Concept mapping avoids the potential for researchers to impose their biases in summarizing participants' responses (Nowicki et al., 2014b). It is an unbiased method as it uses students as active participants by including them in the process of analyzing their own data and asking them to categorize statements into their own themes and concepts. This reduces researcher bias being reflected in the results. Concept mapping gathers both implicit and explicit knowledge, allows interview data to be summarized effectively, and provides a visual picture of themes that are created from the conceptual schemas gathered from the data (Nowicki et al., 2014a). This method is particularly effective when research questions are exploratory in nature,

when interviews are used as a method, and when developing themes or schemas from open-ended questions (Jackson & Trochim, 2002). Although not commonly used in psycho-educational settings, Nowicki et al. (2014a) argued that it is a powerful technique that is used successfully in schools when utilized. Nowicki, Brown, and Stepien (2014b) argued that concept mapping studies can provide educators and educational researchers with an appropriate avenue to understanding children's opinions and ideas about experiences in a school setting, or in other contexts. Concept mapping works effectively with children and adolescents as it allows them to create concepts and constructs on their own, but with the help of the adult researchers involved (Bayer et al., 2010; Dare & Nowicki, 2015; Nowicki et al., 2014a; Nowicki et al., 2014b). Concept mapping is a useful method of exploring children's thoughts and opinions and employing them as active participants.

Sample and Recruitment

The sample for this study was drawn from two schools in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The participants were not required to give specific details about personal demographics, but it was apparent to the researchers that the two schools were diverse in nature. Both schools were located in different urban areas in the province, and it was clear to the researchers that the participants ranged in ability and included diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The zoning for one school attracted families from a higher socioeconomic status, as houses in the school zoning area were detached single family homes. The other school catchment area included zoning for families living in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, where some students attended free after school programs at the local community centre, which gave the researchers the impression that the school was located in a lower end socio-economic location.

Prior to beginning this study ethical approval was granted from Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (Appendix A). A second ethics approval was sought from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School district (NLESD) (Appendix B).

A random sampling strategy was initially used to decide what schools would be asked to take part in this study. This strategy was chosen so that we could generalize findings or results (Creswell, 2012). An online tool called "random name picker" (Retrieved from https://www.miniwebtool.com/random-name-picker/) was used to choose 10 schools from the NLESD to contact about participation in the study. After the 10 schools were randomly selected, a google search was conducted to discover the principal working at each school. The principal at the chosen schools were contacted via e-mail. The content of the email can be viewed in Appendix C. After waiting two work weeks for a reply from the selected principals, the researcher received no reply from any of them.

The researchers met to discuss an alternative plan for recruitment and decided to change the random sampling strategy into a purposeful sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling was employed as it allowed us to use people and places that can best help us to understand our central research questions (Creswell, 2012). One of the researchers held a professional relationship with a principal as she once taught under their leadership. This principal was purposely contacted via e-mail about the study. The principal agreed to participate, and the Grade 2 classes who participated were recruited from this principal's school. The other researchers knew a Grade 4 teacher whom they believed would be interested in taking part of this study. The Grade 4 teacher was asked during a face-to-face meeting if they thought their principal would be interested in allowing their school to participate. The Grade 4 teacher discussed the project with the principal

of their school, who agreed to allow their school to participate. The recruitment email was sent to the principal, and the Grade 4 teacher agreed for his class to be a part of the study. Once the Grade 2 and 4 teachers agreed to have their students be a part of this study, parental consent forms and information letters were given to the students from their teachers (the researchers dropped these forms off at the schools). Students were encouraged to share the information about the study with their parents/guardians (Appendix D). The forms were sent home via the students. Parents/guardians were required to sign the informed consent for their child to participate in the study and return the consent to their child's teacher (Appendix E). The information package informed parents that the data collected in this study would be used for a graduate student's thesis. The participants were encouraged to contribute to both the data collection and the data analysis portions. However, they were not required to participate in both the interview/focus groups and the data analysis phase of this study. The participants who received permission from their parents to participate, were provided with information about the study, provided with the opportunity to ask questions, then asked to sign a student assent form before the study began. All participants chose to take part in both the focus group and drawings sessions. However, due to illness and sporting activities (a hockey tournament) on the day of the sorting activity, there was one participant absent from both Grade 2 classes and the Grade 4 class (one participant from each class). The total number of students who provided parental consent and student assent were 13 Grade 2 students, and 10 Grade 4 students, with 23 participants in total. The Grade 2 students were between 7 to 8 years of age and the Grade 4 students were between 9 and 10 years old. It should be noted that on the student assent form, one participant did not agree to be audio recorded. For this participant, their responses were handwritten, or notes were taken by a researcher.

Focus Group Interviews

McMillan (2016) described focus group interviews as an interview of 8 to 12 people which focuses on promoting interaction among the individual's understandings of the topic that is being explored. Merriam and Tisdell noted that a researcher may want to conduct a focus group interview if they were interested in engaging a group of individuals to obtain meaningful exploration of the topic (2015). The purpose of the focus group interviews used in this study was to engage participant in interacting with each other and the researchers about the topic (McMillan, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), and to add a richer understanding of children's perspectives on inclusion and exclusion in their classrooms.

Interviews

Interviews are commonly used in research designs. McMillan (2016) stated that a well-conducted interview allows you to capture the thoughts and feelings of participants in their own language, using words, phrases, and meanings that portray their own thinking and perspectives. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) noted a similar finding stating that the purpose of an interview is to collect data from a participant. Semi-structured interviews were used during the focus group sessions. All participants were asked the same open-ended questions during this phase.

Clark (2005) noted there are concerns when interviewing children, in that children may be inclined to provide responses that they feel the adult may want to hear, rather than offering genuine opinions. As a result, a doll was present during all phases of the study. Dolls were another tool used during research when working with children (Clark, 2005). Dolls can be used when working with children when they are uncomfortable speaking directly to an adult. The doll used in this study was borrowed from one of the researchers' family members. There was no

specific reason for why this doll was chosen, except that it was available from the family member. The doll however had the ability to sit in a doll sized wheelchair. The researchers decided to use the wheelchair as they felt it fit well with explaining differences among others to the child researchers. This gave the participant the opportunity to ask questions about the doll (named Alexandria) and ask about her physical disability. Although the doll was provided as a means for children to communicate their answers without needing to speak directly to an adult, the participant were comfortable speaking independently as no one asked to speak to the doll rather than a researcher. Below is a picture of the doll that was used:

Figure 1- Doll used to facilitate focus group discussions

Drawing

Allowing children to express their opinions and ideas through drawing can be a useful way to engage children as participants, as some children can portray themselves as shy, or not interested in participation. Drawing may be a reliable way for children to engage and can help children feel comfortable. It does not require them to use verbalization, and allows for reduced eye contact, as drawing requires attention to the work being carried out (Dockett & Perry, 2005). Children can sometimes be more comfortable engaging when there is less pressure to maintain

eye contact with adults (Dockett & Perry, 2005). Drawing was used as a method to gather the participant's thoughts and concepts of inclusion. Our participants were given time to draw whatever came to their mind when they thought of the word inclusion and what it means to them.

Data preparation and data analysis

The funding provided for this study allowed for a transcriptionist to be hired. To ensure that the participants and researchers' confidentiality was protected, the transcriptionist was required to sign a confidentiality agreement. The transcriptionist transcribed all interview verbatim. Afterward, the researchers read each transcript to ensure its accuracy with the transcriptions. The analysis began when the researchers read the transcriptions to note emerging themes and patterns. Analysis is described as "coding" which takes raw data and brings it to a conceptual level (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through the analysis, themes and patterns were identified surrounding the topics of inclusion and social exclusion of children with disabilities. Broad themes were compared, merged, relabeled or changed to the appropriate codes, as explained by Corbin and Strauss (2008). The codes were re-read and compared with each other. The researchers read the transcripts again to decide which key statements should be used for the sorting activity with the participants. When the statements were finalized by the researchers, the statements were printed on cardstock and cut out individually. Each set of statements were placed into a white envelope. For the Grade 2 classes, a total of 37 statements was used. For the Grade 4 class, a total of 44 statements were used. The data analysis that occurred with the researchers and participants together during the sorting activity will be discussed in the Procedures section.

Procedures

For this study, the participants were included in all stages of the data collection and data analysis. It has been noted by Coad and Evans (2008), that if children are to be active participants, then it is important to include them throughout all the stages for the study, including data analysis. This study actively engaged participants in the data analysis process to allow their opinions to be heard.

Session one was considered an introductory session where the researchers were introduced to the participants, and vice versa. Session two involved the reading of a book to the participants, and focus groups were held. Session three involved drawing as a means of representing what inclusion means to the participants and session four consisted of the sorting activity (coding and data analysis with the participants). At the end of all the sessions, participants were given snacks and juice boxes to eat in the moment (if time allowed) or to bring back to class with them.

Session one. The first session was held with participants during their lunch break in the library at their school. During the first session, an introductory discussion of the study occurred. The study was explained to the participants, and they were asked to sign a student assent form before discussion began. No participant refused to be a part of the study during this session. Time was provided to participants to ask questions about the study or ask what tasks they were required to complete during the study. Once the student assent forms were signed by participants, a warm-up question was given, such as what the participant's hobbies or interests were. They were then shown pictures on a laptop that represented the words inclusion, exclusion, and exceptionality (Appendix F). Participants were asked their interpretation of the picture and the meaning of the terms: inclusion, exclusion, and exceptionality. These terms were discussed in in-

depth to ensure that participants understood what all terms meant before moving on to the next task. Definitions can be viewed in Appendix G. At multiple points the participants were asked if they were aware of components of the study and if they understood the meaning of the words we were discussing. Prompts were used throughout the discussion to aid participants to elaborate on their answers. The researchers encouraged the participants to further explain by using the following prompts: "Can you tell me more?" and "Is there anything else you can think of?" After this discussion took place, participants were asked to take part in creating a picture, which represented what inclusion, exclusion or exceptionality meant to them. All participants chose to create a picture. Visual methods have been known to be a powerful tool to use in educational research as it allows a child to display their knowledge and understandings without verbalization (Prosser, 2007). Among the different kinds of visual methods that can be used, drawing has been known to aide young children with expressing their views and experiences (Clark, 2005). Allowing children to use this form of representation has been found to build rapport among the researcher and participant and increase involvement in the research (Sewell, 2011). The researchers engaged with the participants as they developed their artistic portrayal of their understanding. The researchers listened actively to the participants as they created their art as it has been known that researchers may gain more from listening to young children talking during the drawing process than from a formal analysis of their drawings (Clark, 2005). At the end of this session, participants were given a piece of cardstock that had six different pictures of facial expressions (See Appendix H). Participants were asked to point to the facial expression, which represented how they were feeling at the end of our session together. All participants chose a happy face, however, if students were to choose a different facial expression, the researcher was prepared to talk to them privately about how they were feeling before sending the participants

back to class. They were also informed that the researchers would be staying in the library for 30 minutes after the session was over if they needed to discuss anything with us. All participants were given a copy of the student assent form to take home, so they could re-read what the study was about.

Session two. This session involved one of the researchers reading a book about diversity and a child who was diagnosed with autism. The selected book was titled, "My Brother Charlie" (Peete, Peete & Evans, 2010). This book was chosen as the story delves into the life of a girl and her brother, who is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The story is told from the sister's perspective, and discusses her brother's exceptionalities, and how children with exceptionalities can be included in society. The book was chosen as the researchers felt that the participants could relate with the narrator as she was a similar age to the participants. The book introduces Charlie, a young boy with ASD, who has a range of interests and skills. The book was selected as the story was written from a child's perspective, and the storyline was relatable, highlighting the experiences of a young boy, who has similar interests, and a range of strengths and challenges. The text highlighted that like themselves, children with exceptionalities can have a range of gifts and talents. It was also a relatively short book that could be read and discussed within the school lunch break. This book was read to the participants, and afterward, they participated in a focus group which used a semi-structure interview format (See Appendix I). The participants sat in a circle with the researchers on the floor and were asked the questions. The participants were told they could respond to any question they would like to answer or choose to not answer any question they did not feel comfortable with answering. An audio recorder was used to record their responses which was initially passed around to each student in a circular formation, where they could choose to answer the question or pass the audio recorder

on to the next participant. However, one of the researchers recommended placing the audio recorder in the middle of the circle to ensure that the participants did not feel pressure to respond when the audio recorder was placed in their hands. After the first session, the audio recorder was placed in the middle of the circle rather than in the participant's hands.

Session three. The participants created or finished the artwork that began in session one. When participants had completed their drawing, each participant was interviewed about their artwork. "One-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably" (Creswell, 2012). They were asked questions such as, "What does inclusion mean to you?" and "How does this picture represent inclusion to you?" This occurred in a one-on-one interview setting with one of the researchers. The audio recorder was used to record the responses of the participants. Afterward, a researcher took a picture with a digital camera of the participant's drawing to keep for data analysis. The participants were given their original drawing to take home with them.

Session four. This session involved the participants in the data analysis of the study (the sorting activity). When the participants arrived, they were asked to be seated at one of three tables with a researcher. Groups were chosen by the three researchers beforehand to eliminate the possibility of all participants choosing to join the same group, which would result in uneven numbers within the groups. At the table, there was an envelope, which contained unique statements that were extracted from the transcribed data from the three previous sessions. There was also a piece of paper at each table explaining the rules for the sorting activity (Appendix J). The rules were explained to the participants to ensure they understood what their participation entailed and were explained in a way to ensure that the coding of the key statements was understood. Concept mapping procedures recommend that participates should be instructed on

how to sort keys statements in a way that makes sense to them (Trochim, 1989). In concept mapping, ideas are displayed by creating a picture or a map of the information. "To construct the map, ideas first have to be described or generated, and the interrelationships between them articulated" (Trochim, 1989, p. 1). Concept mapping is characterized using qualitative techniques, multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis (Trochim, 1989). It required the researcher to facilitate the collection of data analysis by including the participants and involved the participants in sorting statements gleaned from the data into meaningful clusters (Trochim, 1989).

Trochim (1989) described Concept mapping as having six sequential multi-stage steps:

1. Identify the research questions and participants. First, the researcher works with the parties involved to decide who the participants will be. Second, the researcher works with the participants to decide on the specific focus for the conceptualization (p. 2).

2. Interview participants. The participants are encouraged to create many statements, no matter how legitimate they are. Researchers are encouraged to use one hundred or less statements. Once a final set of statements have been created, the group is asked to examine the statements to ensure that their responses are clear, free from jargon, or to remove redundant statements. The unique statements are then printed on cards (p. 4).

3. The cards are then returned to participants to individually sort them into meaningful groups. The person is told to structure the cards into piles in "a way that makes sense to you". There are a few rules that coincide with this instruction. Each card can only be placed into one category or pile, all cards cannot be laid in the same pile, and all cards cannot be placed into their own piles (p. 5-6).

4. The researchers perform multidimensional scaling and cluster analyses on participants' groupings of statements and decide on the optimal number of concepts. First, an analysis is conducted which puts each statement as its own location on a map, which is called the point map. Locations that are closest to each other displays statements that were sorted together. Then a cluster analysis is completed by the researchers. This is done using a Concept Mapping software system (Trochim, 1989, p. 7-9).

5. Label the concepts using participants' comments. There is a sequence of steps that occurs:

   a. The Statement List: this is the original list of statements

   b. The Cluster List: this displays the statements that were grouped into clusters

   c. The Point Map: this is the map which shows the statements numerically as placed during the multidimensional scaling

   d. The Point Rating Map: "the numbered point map with average statement ratings overlayed" (Trochim, 1989, p. 9).

   e. The Cluster Rating Map: "the cluster map with average cluster ratings overlayed" (Trochim, 1989, p. 9).

6. Create a map that shows the relationships among statements within each cluster and the position of each cluster within the overall structure (Trochim, 1989). The map is then used to aid evaluation and planning of the results (p. 12).

The rules of steps 1, 2 and 3 were condensed and modified into child friendly language (See Appendix J). When it was evident that the rules were understood by all participants, the researcher began the sorting activity with them. Each group followed the same steps to completing the activity: the researcher or the student would read aloud a statement and the participants would decide what category to place the statement into.

The researchers used the vocabulary that was introduced in the first two sessions as the thematic categories for the data analysis phase. The rationale was due to the time constraints that were imposed, as researchers only had access to the participants for 30 minutes during their lunch break. The topics used as categories were: Inclusion, Exclusion, Helping, and Exceptionality. Participants sorted the statements into one of the four categories and could decide that the statement belonged one or more categories. The statements were kept in place by using a paper clip, and then placed in an envelope with the researcher's name on it, to ensure the grouped statements did not get mixed up. For the first class in Grade 2, there were three participants placed with one researcher forming the first group; the second group consisted of three participants placed with two researchers, resulting in two groups. For Class 2, there were two participants per researcher, resulting in three groups. There were five groups of Grade 2 participants in total.

Table 1 - Arrangement of groups for sorting activity

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Class 1	One Researcher, Erin, Luke, and Georgia	Two researchers, Alicia, Courtney, and James	N/A
Class 2	One Researcher, Rebecca and Amanda	One Researcher, Alexa and Owen	One Researcher, Don and Jeremy

Triangulation and member checking

Qualitative researchers consider their research as interpretive and believe that the researcher should be self-reflective about their roles, their interpretation of their findings, and their viewpoints when interpreting the data (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, it is critical that

qualitative researchers maintain the accuracy of their findings. One way of enhancing the validity of a study is to use triangulation. Triangulation is the process of establishing evidence from multiple persons, data, and methods of data collection (Creswell, 2012). The researcher examines evidence to support a specific theme through every information source that they work with. "The essential idea of triangulation is to find multiple sources of confirmation when you want to draw a conclusion" (Willis, 2007, p. 218-219). Using triangulation helps to mitigate biases that a researcher may have and allows the results to be relayed in the most truthful manner possible. Triangulation serves as a reliable way to display results to readers and allows the audience to deem your work as fair and valid. For this study, triangulation served as, "a conservative way of preventing [the researcher] from drawing unsupported conclusions from [the] data" (Willis, 2007, p. 219).

The researchers worked together to ensure triangulation was occurring to make the study as accurate as possible. Before any decisions were made during the study, researchers first consulted with each other before moving forward with decisions. During every session that occurred, all three researchers attended and participated to observe and engage in all data collection procedures. Prior to the sorting session, all three researchers reviewed the transcripts both individually and then together to discover themes, analyze the data, and find key statements for the sorting activity.

Member checking was used to further enhance the accuracy of the findings. Member checking is a process where the researcher askes participants to review the findings (Creswell, 2012). All the participants were considered to be student coresearchers when they were involved in both the data collection and data analysis. Themes were established from the information they provided through the interviews and focus groups. During the sorting activity, the participants

were provided with categories and were then asked to place key statements in each category. At the end of the sorting activity, the participants had the opportunity to move statements or keep them placed where they were. This allowed them to establish the core concepts within each theme on their own. Member checking and triangulation served to validate the findings presented in this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The results for the Grade 2 and Grade 4 sessions will be presented separately. Due to the age difference and the ample data that was gathered for both grades, presenting them separately aims to clarify and demonstrate independently the unique findings for Grade 2 and Grade 4 classes. Table 1 outlines the pseudonyms used for the schools and participants. Each group of participants attended four sessions in total. The results will be presented from each session that took place. Session one reviewed the participant's understanding of the key terms' inclusion, social exclusion, and exceptionality. Session two discusses the results from the focus group questions that were posed to the participants. Session three describes the representation of pictures drawn by the participants. Session four results are displayed in tables to display how the participants chose to sort the statements.

Table 2- Pseudonym names for schools and students

Pseudonym Names for Students and Schools		
Deer River Academy *Grade 2* *Class 1*	*Deer River Academy* *Grade 2* *Class 2*	*Sunset Academy* *Grade 4*
Erin	Rebecca	Colin
Luke	Amanda	Bradley
Georgia	Alexa	Jason
Alicia	Owen	Matthew
Courtney	Don	Victoria
James	Jeremy	Julia
	Sherry	Charlotte
		Timothy
		Chris
		John

Deer River Academy results (Class 1 & Class 2)

Although Grade 2 participants seemed to be aware of students with exceptionalities and the concept of inclusion and exclusion, many of their comments focused on "playing with" other children to include them or "being nice" to others to make them feel included at school. Below each question that was posed to the Grade 2 participants will be discussed in detail, and results from the interviews and focus groups will be presented.

Session one – discussing inclusion, exclusion and exceptionality. Overall themes that emerged from the first session included physical disabilities, identifying emotions, and understanding exceptionalities. When discussing the meaning of the keyword "inclusion" with the Grade 2 participants the themes of physical differences and being included in all activities at school arose. Students were shown a series of pictures to help with both the explanation of the terms and to stimulate the conversation/discussion (Appendix F). The first picture (Picture A, Appendix F) depicts several children sitting around a table with a teacher. One of the students is sitting in a wheelchair. This picture was used to introduce the key term "inclusion". The second picture (Picture B, Appendix F) shows two boys staring at another boy across from a table. One of the boys looks upset about the other two boys staring at him. This picture aided the conversation in explaining the key term "social exclusion". The third picture (Picture C, Appendix F) shows diversity among several children. One is in a wheelchair, others are of different race and ethnicity, and the children are diverse in physical appearance. This picture aided the discussion around the meaning of "exceptionality". The participants were asked to explain what they saw to enable the researchers to determine their understanding of the terms.

In the first picture, Grade 2 participants noticed that there was, "Someone… in a wheelchair" (Alicia, Grade 2, Class 1; Owen, Grade 2, Class 2), and that there was a teacher, "Helping someone" (Erin, Grade 2, Class 1). Most of the participants voiced an awareness that the student in the wheelchair was different from the other students. They also noticed that the teacher was aiding the student in the wheelchair with their schoolwork.

When discussing the second picture (Picture B, Appendix F), the participants commented that one of the boys were being excluded from the others. When asked if the students thought that all the boys were being included in the activity presented in this picture, Owen said, "No…

because that one's on the other side [of the table]" (Grade 2, Class 2). They described or assigned emotions to the boys in the picture, based on their facial expressions. When discussing the picture, Luke said, "One looks happy, one looks angry" (Grade 2, Class 1), and Alicia noted that, "One's mad, one's happy, one's crying…" (Grade 2, Class 2). Although the Grade 2 participants could recognize that one boy is clearly being excluded from the group of boys in this picture, Grade 2 participants did not comment as to why this may be occurring. The participants noted that the boy in the photo was physically sitting away from the other two boys, therefore, he was being socially excluded; however, they did not comment further on why the student may be excluded from the group. One participant suggested that the boys were not, "getting along" in this picture. When a researcher asked the student to elaborate on why they thought the students might not be getting along, Georgia explained, "Because one of them is looking at him and it looks like he is angry at him" (Grade 2, Class 1).

Students were shown a third picture (Picture C, Appendix F) when discussing the definition of exceptionality. It was evident from their responses that they were unsure about the exact definition of this word. When asked what the students saw in the picture, they commented on how all the people were "different people" and noted that one student was, "in a wheelchair" (Multiple students, Grade 2, Class 1 & 2). When the researchers elaborated on the fact that a child in the picture, who required the use of a wheelchair to walk and has an exceptionality, the Grade 2 participants did not respond. The researchers used prompts such as, "What do you notice about the people? What do they have in common? What are the differences about the people?", to ensure that the students understood the word exceptionality before moving forward in the session. When relating the idea that the child in the picture has an exceptionality, because the

child is in a wheelchair, Rebecca responded that the child needed help with, "her legs" (Grade 2, Class 2).

As the sessions progressed, and students started building relationships with the researchers, it seemed students were either learning more about the keywords as discussions progressed, or the students were becoming more familiar with the researchers and felt more comfortable speaking. The participants called researchers by their first names, researchers sat at the same level as the participants, discussed ground rules together, and incorporated warm up activities. In the first session of this study, a similar structure that was used in a study completed by Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten (2002) was also used to help build relationships with the children so they were comfortable answering questions in a warm, and welcoming environment.

Session two - focus group results. During session two, a book depicting a character with Autism Spectrum Disorder was read by the researcher, followed by a brief discussion of the story. Students were asked how the character was included or excluded in the story, and they were asked about their understanding of the exceptionality "Autism Spectrum Disorder". Before progressing into the focus group questions, discussion took place to ensure that students understood the keywords inclusion, exclusion, and exceptionality. The understanding of these key terms was essential for the students to be able to answer the focus group questions. Because of the comments made by the participants, the researchers felt that the participants had a clear understanding of the meaning of these terms.

When discussing the meaning of the word exceptionality, participants used an example of a student in their class with an identified exceptionality. Luke noted, "sometimes he hugs… but he accidentally chokes you because he doesn't know how much strength he's using" (Grade 2, Class 1). Another participant, Georgie, commented on a student in their classroom stating, "And

we have somebody in our class that has Autism" (Grade 2, Class 1). When discussing what the word Autism meant, Luke responded saying, "Yeah, it means your brain doesn't work and there's too many things going on, so your brain gets kind of messed up and you don't know how to do stuff right" (Grade 2, Class 1). The researchers felt that this statement demonstrated that Luke had an awareness that there are developmental differences within the functioning of the brain when a child is diagnosed with Autism. Whether the student learned the meaning of autism in or outside of the classroom is unknown. However, this knowledge is encouraging as students are aware that other students may struggle in the classroom due to an exceptionality, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder.

    Focus group results. The results will be presented under separate headings for every focus question that was posed:

    Understanding inclusion. When questioning participants about the meaning of the word inclusion, themes such as playing and sharing emerged. The concept of play is a normal developmental practice for students at this age. Play is fun and essential for young children and is a common activity for most children in this age group (Isenberg, Packer, & Quisenberry, 2002). It is not surprising that the meaning of inclusion for young students included the concept of play. When describing inclusion, Courtney responded saying, "that means you have to let mostly everyone play or every single person" (Grade 2, Class 1). James noted that, "inclusion means… if someone isn't playing with anyone and they're feeling left out, go ask them to play with you" (Grade 2, Class 1).

    Understanding exceptionalities. When asked what the word exceptionality meant, academic differences were briefly discussed. Students were unsure; however, about the meaning of the word exceptionality, even with the previous discussions about the meaning of this term in

session one and the explanation of exceptionalities from the storybook. Researchers had to use prompts to encourage conversation and understanding such as, "this is when students have learning differences or difficulties" or "there are some things we're all good at, and some things we're not good at". While using these prompts, James responded saying, "Like if we don't know math?" (Grade 2, Class 1). Don stated, "So, it means that people are good at stuff and people are not good at stuff?" (Grade 2, Class 2). However, it was interesting that two students noted that autism spectrum disorder is connected to having an exceptionality. Alicia said, "If people have autism, being nice to them" (Grade 2, Class 1), while a student followed up with, "If people have autism, share with them" (Georgia, Grade 2, Class 1).

Understanding exclusion. When students in Grade 2 were asked to describe scenarios at school which may exclude someone, many comments were related to being "left out" of a play situation (such as not being asked to play a game, or someone asking to play a game and being told no). Luke stated, "it means if someone wants to play or if someone is talking... and someone is ignoring the other person who is trying to speak to the person who's ignoring. It means like they're kind of being rude and they're excluding them" (Grade 2, Class 1). Other responses included the idea of being bullied means being excluded at school. James said, "Excluded would basically mean, if you're being bullied or left out in any kind of way" (Grade 2, Class 1). A student noted that exclusion could occur at school due to size or age. When asked to explain his answer, he explained, "Because they [could be] too young for a game, if they're too frustrated, or they're too big, or rough, or too gentle" (Jeremy, Grade 2, Class 2).

Thinking of situations at school where students have difficulty. As was expected from children at this age, many answers given to this question included students having difficulty with the main school subjects (such as math, reading, writing). Luke answered, "There are people

having trouble with math" (Grade 2, Class 1), while Amanda responded, "Sometimes in math I have trouble because sometimes I am really slow at doing it because I don't know the answers and I don't know how to, like, get it right, but it's really hard though sometimes" (Grade 2, Class 2). Physical differences were noted by a few students. Luke said, "[there are] people having trouble walking" (Grade 2, Class 1), while another participant mentioned, "or people with their eyes that are, like, some people that are blind or something" (Owen, Grade 2, Class 2). A student did describe a scenario at school where a classmate, diagnosed with autism experienced frustration as a difficulty in school. Courtney exclaimed, "A boy... in our class has autism and he has some difficulties in school because he's either… having a hard time or… he has to sharpen his pencil and he… pushed on it too hard, maybe it broke" (Grade 2, Class 1). Although the student could not explain the meaning of her statement (such as, sometimes children with autism can become easily frustrated by breaking their pencil), she could recognize that a student with autism sometimes has difficulties in school due to his frustration. This demonstrated the beginning of understanding that children with exceptionalities may have different emotions and reactions to an event at school than their peers might experience. Other emotional and social differences were not apparent in conversation with Grade 2 participants. Other than Courtney mentioning frustration as a difficulty with students at school, there were no mention of other emotional states.

Including children with exceptionalities. When asked to think about how children with exceptionalities can be included in their school and classroom, most responses were related to the concept of play. Rebecca responded saying, "Include someone in your game" (Grade 2, Class 2). Luke noted that, "You should play with them" (Grade 2, Class 1). Jeremy said, "But what if there's just too many people on a board game, you can get another game, and it can be when that

is over, include the other person" (Grade 2, Class 2). Owen stated that you could, "help people read" (Grade 2, Class 2), which was the only comment made that related to helping a student with their academic work to include them. As indicated, playing with others as a means of inclusion was the prominent theme from this question. Students in this Grade 2 class indicated that playing with others who have exceptionalities demonstrated inclusion in the classroom and school. This finding will be further addressed in the discussion section.

Session three - drawing. Before engaging in the creation of their drawing, the researchers asked the students to close their eyes and think of what they would like to draw to answer the question, "what does inclusion mean to you?" When the researchers asked each student what they were going to draw, Luke responded saying, "The world" (Grade 2, Class 1). The idea of drawing the world created a "groupthink" scenario (Yuen, 2004) as five other participants from this class drew a world to represent what inclusion meant to them. Two students decided not to draw a world but instead drew social scenarios with friends. Students in class one did however offer various reasons for why they chose to draw a world. One boy drew an astronaut in his picture alongside of a drawing of the earth. When asked why this picture meant inclusion to him, he stated, "He's included in the galaxy, yes, but excluded from the world" (James, Grade 2, Class 1). When a girl described why she chose to draw a world, she said, "because everyone is in the world" (Erin, Grade 2, Class 1). The pictures are shown below:

Figure 2 -Luke's drawing of the earth (Age 7, Grade 2, Class 1, Deer River Academy)
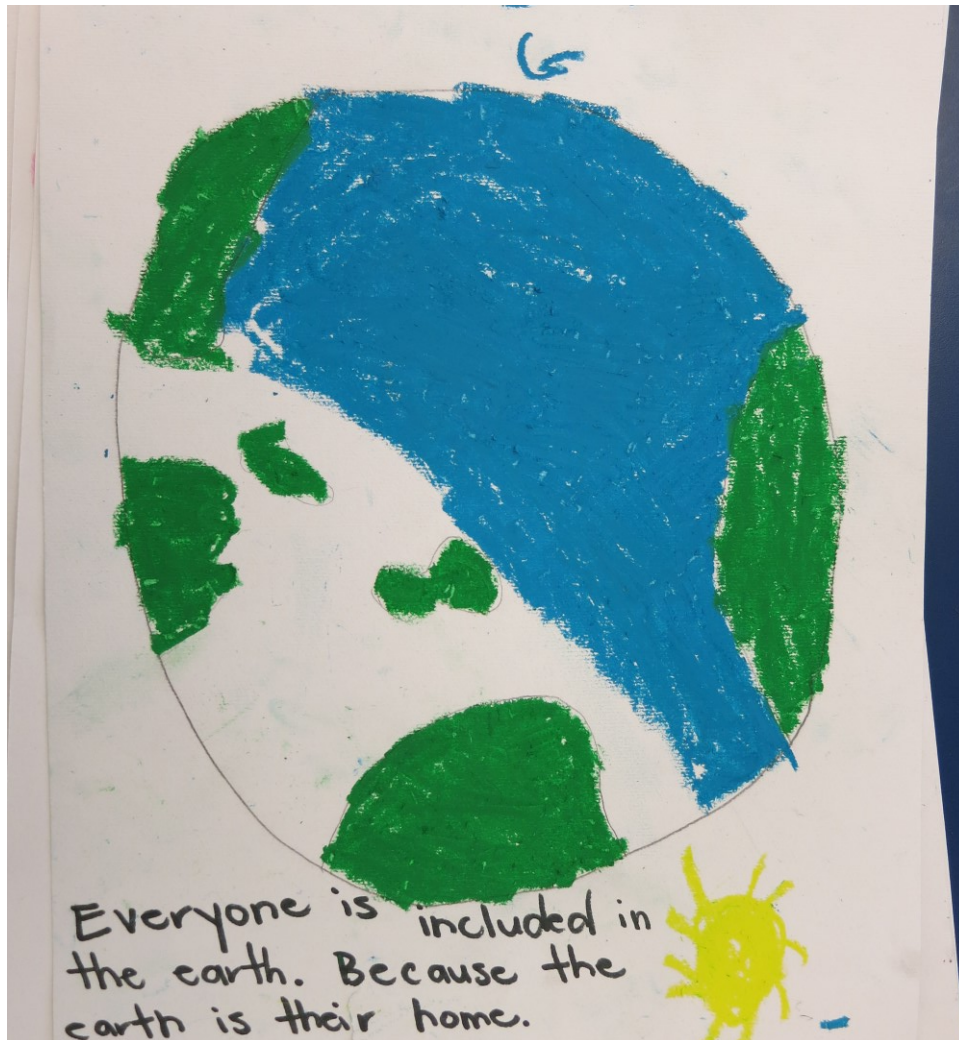
Figure 3 - Erin's drawing of the earth (Age 7, Grade 2, Class 1, Deer River Academy

Alicia decided that she would draw a picture of her and her friend playing tag. When the researcher asked why she drew it, she said, "people are all playing tag and they are included" (Alicia, Grade 2, Class 1). James decided to draw a picture of himself and his friend and discussed with the researchers that his picture displayed "friendship" to represent what inclusion means to him (Grade 2, Class 1). Their pictures are included below:

Figure 4 - James' drawing of friendship (Age 7, Grade 2, Class 1, Deer River Academy)

Figure 5 - Alicia's drawing of playing tag (Age 7, Grade 2, Class 1, Deer River Academy)

As seen in the photos of the participants' drawings, many themes that emerged were related to playing, friendship, and the idea that "everyone" is included if you attend school or live in the world.

Themes that emerged from the drawings in Class two were helping others who struggle, including everyone during playtime, sharing with friends, and making others feel happy. In the picture represented below, a girl decided to draw a picture of helping her little sister to print her name. Alexa explained, "it was her first day at kinder start... Mom told me to teach her how to write her name... she still needs a little practice, so maybe when I get home I'm going to get a piece of paper and a pencil... and I'll teach her how to write her name again" (Grade 2, Class 2). Although the girl did not mention whether her sister was diagnosed with an exceptionality or not, she believes that she should help her sister because she is struggling to print her name on paper. Jeremy drew a similar concept when he drew a picture of himself helping his brother with math. When asked how his drawing meant inclusion to him, he noted, "because I'm helping my brother with math... I do it every day" (Grade 2, Class 2).
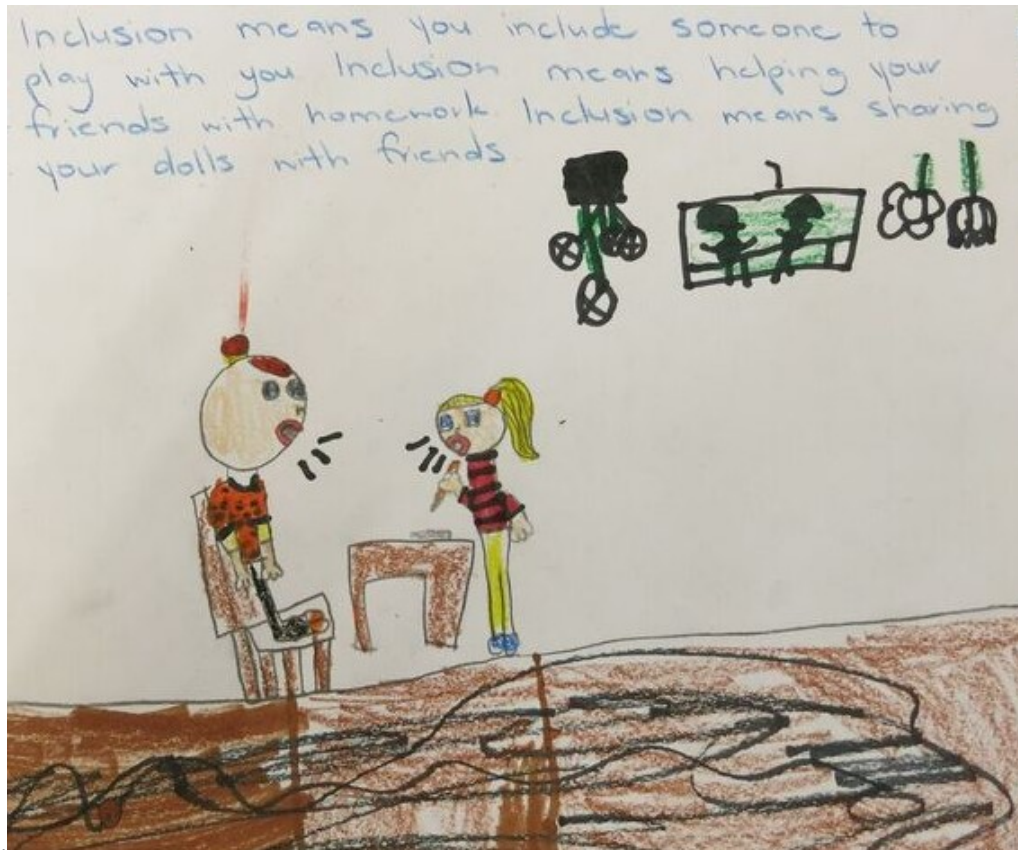
Figure 6 -Alexa's drawing of helping her sister (Age 7, Grade 2, Class 2, Deer River Academy)

Figure 7 - Jeremy's drawing of helping with math (Age 7, Grade 2, Class 2, Deer River

Academy)

Other students drew pictures of sharing, playing and feeling happy with their friends and family to represent inclusion. Owen drew a house, which included himself and others, and discussed his drawing of a house in relation to the meaning of inclusion. When asked what inclusion means to him, he stated, "Inclusion means everybody being together like a family, then they are happy" (Grade 2, Class 2). To Owen, inclusion means that everyone should feel happiness when they are together. Although this does not explain the definition of inclusion or display understanding of exceptionalities, Owen demonstrated an understanding that people should feel happy when they are included.

Figure 8 - Owen's drawing of inclusion at home (Age 7, Grade 2, Class 2, Deer River Academy)

Sherry decided to draw a picture of herself playing with her friend, and then another person outside of their playgroup asking if he can join them. When describing her picture, she explained, "We played a game together one time and [he] asked to play with us and we played tag... everyone was included" (Grade 2, Class 2).

Figure 9 - Sherry's drawing of playing tag (Age 7, Grade 2, Class 2, Deer River Academy).

Many of the same themes that were previously discussed emerged in the Grade 2

drawings. Themes such as playing with others, making others feel happy, and helping others

with schoolwork were the main definitions for what inclusion meant to them. Participants were

not able to describe their pictures in detail, even after prompts were used by the researchers.

However, there seemed to be an understanding that the Grade 2 participants understood that

exclusion can lead to negative emotions while including others lead to positive emotions. To

include others, they need to feel welcome and included in play to ensure that they feel included

at school. The drawings aided the researchers in understanding what the Grade 2 participants

were able to understand and explain at their age, and as predicted given their age and

development.

Session four – data analysis. The sorting of the key statements in groups of two to four participants occurred during the last session. One student was not in school on this day due to illness. This resulted in a group of four students with one researcher, a group of three students with another researcher, and two students with another researcher (grouping decisions were previously explained in measures section). It should be noted that each statement was printed only once, and students were directed to sort each individual statement into only one group. However, due to differences in answers, they sometimes felt that a statement belonged to more than one group. This was represented by placing the statement between two or more groups to display the student's decision that the statement belonged in more than one category. Students were also encouraged to create new categories other than inclusion, exclusion, helping, and exceptionality. This concept is represented in the following picture where students felt that the statement placed in the middle of the category of "inclusion" and "exclusion" belonged in both groups:
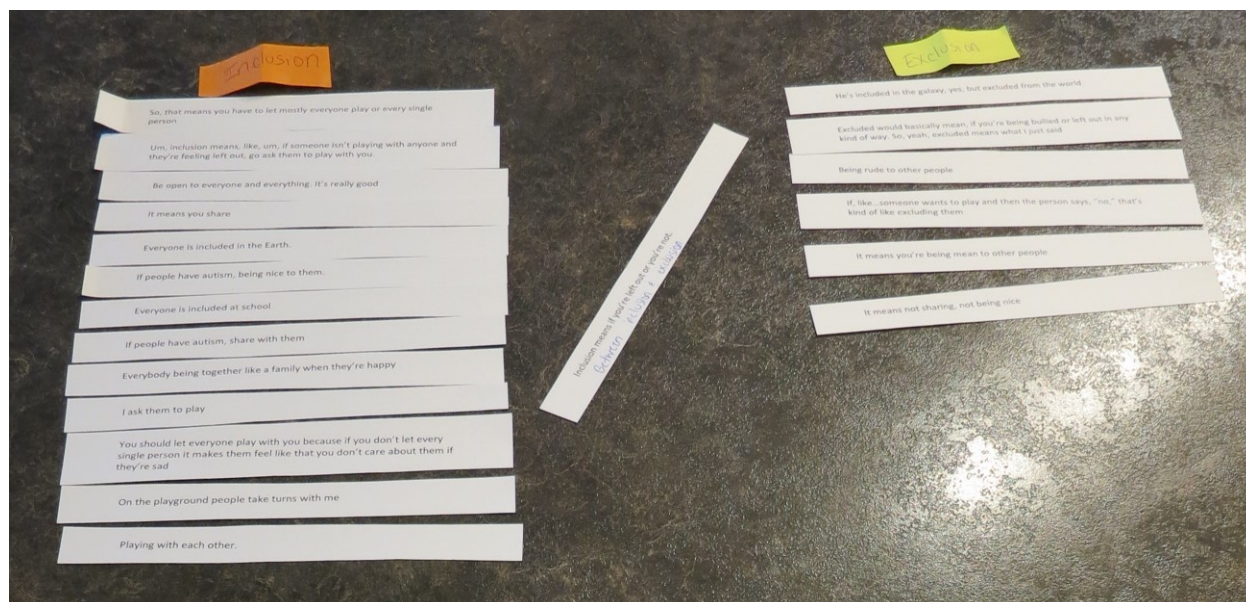
Figure 10 - Grade 2 Sorting Activity (Deer River Academy)

In the next section the results of the sessions with both Grade 2 classes will be discussed. In total, there were five groups of Grade 2 students from class 1 and class 2 combined. Values were assigned to statements to signify their importance for theme development. A rating scale of 1-5 was assigned to evaluate each statement. If a statement had a rating of 5, it meant that all five groups placed that statement in the same category. Therefore, if a statement had a rating of 4, it meant that 4 groups placed that statement in the same category, and so the rating scale continued in the same manner for a rating of 3, 2, and 1, therefore, the rating scale is as follows: 5 = Highly Relevant (meaning that all 5 groups placed this statement in the same category); 4-3 = Moderately relevant (meaning 4-3 groups placed this statement in the same category); 2-1 = Less relevant (meaning 2-1 groups placed these statements in the same category). This method of presenting the findings was chosen as other authors who employed concept mapping has presented their findings in a related way (Bayer et al., 2010; Byrne & Grace, 2010). It is

important to note that the key statements were assigned codes by the researchers, for example, the code "stigma" may have been used to code key statements relating to this topic.

Category one: inclusion. In this category, statements (n=15) were centered on being nice, playing with others, or sharing with others as a means of including them at school or in the classroom. Four statements were highly relevant with a rating of 5. These four statements revealed similar keywords such as "everyone" and "together". When reading the highest ranked statements, a theme of togetherness emerged as the main concept for what inclusion means to the Grade 2 participants. Nine statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 4 or 3. Key words that surfaced from these statements included "share", "play", and "take turns". The concept of play was interpreted as the main theme from these statements, meaning that the idea of play is moderately relevant to the Grade 2s perception of inclusion. Two statements that were less relevant with a rating of 2 and were only placed in the category of inclusion by two groups were, " If people have autism, being nice to them" and, "If people have autism, share with them". The main concept that came from these two statements was sharing and caring which appeared to be less relevant to Grade 2's ideas of what inclusion means. (Please see Appendix K). It is unknown exactly why the Grade 2 participants used "people with autism" in their responses. The researchers could only assume that it is possible the participants may have been influenced from the main character in the book read to them beforehand, as the main character was diagnosed with ASD. Therefore, we cannot ensure that the Grade 2 responses were entirely organic.

Category two: exclusion. Statements (n=13) related to excluding someone from play, not sharing, being mean to others, or leaving people out of playtime, were included in this category. Five statements were considered highly relevant with a rating of 5. The five statements were similar due to the keywords that appeared: "rude", "mean", and "saying no". From these

statements, the concept of being mean or rude was considered the most relevant theme when thinking of the Grade 2 participants' ideas of exclusion. Two statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 4 or 3. Key words that connected these statements were, "too young", "frustrated", "too big", "rough" or "too gentle". From these key words, a theme of physical differences was interpreted as moderately relevant to Grade 2's perceptions of exclusion. Six statements were less relevant with a rating of 1 or 2. These statements included ideas about being excluded or included in the world (Please see Appendix L) which were deemed less relevant to Grade 2 ideas about exclusion. All statements for this category can be seen in Appendix L.

Category three: exceptionality. This category included statements (n=13) relating to classmates with exceptionalities, differences among children, physical disabilities, and struggles with school subjects or classwork. Seven statements were highly relevant with a rating of 5. A theme that emerged from these statements was emotional and behavioural difficulties, which could be interpreted as the most relevant theme for the exceptionality category among Grade 2 participants. Key words that were similar for these statements included, "frustrated", "can't see very well", "blind", "strength", "different" and "having a hard time". Four statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 4 or 3. Out of these four statements, key words and phrases such as, "wheelchair", "they don't sing the right notes [in music]", and "brain gets kind of messed up" attributed to a theme of academic and physical differences. Therefore, academic and physical difference was considered moderately relevant to Grade 2 participants' ideas of exclusion. Two statements were less relevant with a rating of 2. Both statements were considered less relevant to the category of exceptionality and related to the topic of Autism.

Category four: helping. Statements (n=13) in this category demonstrated concepts about helping someone with school subjects or schoolwork, helping others if they feel sad or are hurt,

and helping students who demonstrated a need for support at school. Five statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 4. These statements were similar with key phrases emerging such as "helping... with math and... language", "help people to read", "helping people who are sad", and "helping people [with] homework". From these key phrases, a theme of helping with academics and emotional regulation can be interpreted as highly relevant to Grade 2's concepts of helping. Eight statements were less relevant with a rating of 2 or 1. Variances in the physical, academic, and cognitive realms emerged as the main theme for these statements with key phrases appearing such as "wheelchair", "trouble with math", "brain gets kind of messed up". This theme appeared to be less relevant to Grade 2 participants' perceptions of helping (Please see Appendix N).

Subtheme 1: helping/schoolwork. This category was created by the students. They felt that three statements belonged to this category (all statements with a rating of 1) as they related specifically to helping someone with schoolwork. All statements that were rated with a 1 (Please see Appendix O).

Subtheme 2: helping people when they are not feeling well/helping with emotions. This category was created by the students. They felt that two statements belonged to this category (all statements with a rating of 1) as they related specifically to helping people who feel unwell or felt sad at school. All statements that were rated as a 1 by one group only can be seen in Appendix P.

Subtheme 3: sharing/playing. This category was also created by the students. They felt that three statements belonged to this category (all statements with a rating of 1) as they related specifically to sharing and playing with other students. All statements that were rated as a 1 by one group only can be seen in Appendix Q.

Subtheme 4: sharing. Students created this category as they felt that three statements belonged to this category (all with a rating of 1). All statements are specific to sharing with others. All statements that were rated as a 1 by one group only can be seen in Appendix R.

Sunset Academy results (Grade 4)

      Session one – discussing and describing the meaning of inclusion, exclusion and exceptionality. The process that was used in session one with the Grade 2 participants was also used with the Grade 4 participants. When the participants were shown the first picture (Picture A, Appendix F), and were asked what they saw, Colin stated, "I see a girl in a wheelchair, and she has to be paralyzed from her waist down maybe?" (Grade 4). This added detail demonstrated the connection that the student made between the fact that the student in the picture is in a wheelchair, and the possibility that it is because the student has a disability (paralysis). When comments were made about the second picture (Picture B; Appendix F), Victoria noted that the boy that was excluded was being bullied, "because he looks sad and they're making rude faces at him" (Grade 4). Julia noted that, "It looks like they're not including [him] and they're making – or they're making fun of him or something" (Grade 4). The girls in Grade 4 displayed an understanding that the boy may be excluded because he may be a victim of bullying. They could also explain their reasoning for why they thought the boy may be a victim of bullying: because his facial features show sadness. When discussing the third picture (Picture C, Appendix F), the Grade 4 participants needed further prompting and explanation. When asked, "What does exceptionality mean?" Charlotte responded, "You're accepted" (Grade 4), while Bradley stated, "You're accepted for you" (Grade 4). Jason mentioned that exceptionality means you are, "accepted for who you are" (Grade 4). There were no responses that resembled the definition of exceptionality that was used

in this study. Therefore, the researchers used prompts to ensure that there was an understanding of the true definition of exceptionality. The conversation is displayed below:

Researcher: You're accepted for who you are, so that means that everyone is exceptional in their own way. We all have different things about us, but we all want to be accepted for our differences. That boy who is in the wheelchair, who is helping him out?

Bradley: The girl.

Researcher: The girl. Now, this boy, he's exceptional in a different way. We're all exceptional in our own way. Some of us are really good at things. Some of us are really good at hockey, and some of us are not so great at other things. Like, I'm not very good at math.

Bradley: I'm really good at math.

Researcher: Right. And some of us, for example [the girl in the picture], are not great at what? She's not great at?

Bradley: Walking.

Researcher: Walking. So, that means she has an exceptionality.

It was evident that the grade four participants were unaware of the exact definition of an exceptionality. Researcher prompts were used for this key term only.

Session two - focus group results. The storybook, "My brother Charlie", was also read to the Grade 4 participants. This book was chosen to read to the Grade 4 class as well as the Grade 2 class as the book is recommended for Grades 1-5 on the scholastic book website (see references for website link). The author of the book writes from the sister's perspective as a ten-year-old, we thought this would connect and engage the Grade 4 participants in the book as the

participants were between 9 and 10 years of age. This book was read to ensure that the participants understood the meaning of the words inclusion, exclusion, and exceptionality. The Grade 4 participants did not seem to struggle with understanding the definition of inclusion and exclusion, as demonstrated from the results from session one. However, it was evident that they were still unsure about the exact definition of exceptionality. When a researcher was discussing the main character's exceptionality, she posed the question, "Do you know what that word means, 'exceptionality'?" Matthew responded explaining that it meant, "you're accepted to be whoever you want to be" (Grade 4). When the researcher was reading about Charlie having difficulties (such as hating math and having trouble expressing himself verbally), Chris discussed how he knew someone diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) who struggled with his emotions. Chris explained, "[They have] ADHD and sometimes, like... if I beat him in the game or something he gets like mad at me." (Grade 4). Julia discussed how a family member has Autism and, "on his birthday, we always go bowling and we always have a team [with] our whole family... with a puzzle piece design" (Julia, Grade 4). As the conversation and reading continued, the researchers related their comparisons of people they knew (such as the person with ADHD and Autism), with the idea that they have an exceptionality to make sure that the definition of "exceptionality" was understood.

    Focus group results. The results for each question posed to the Grade 4 participants will be explained separately. (Please see Appendix I for the interview questions.)

    Understanding inclusion. When explaining inclusion means, John stated, "you should include everyone for who they are, or what they look like" (Grade 4). Other definitions participants gave were, "including everybody" (Chris, Grade 4), and when "no one is left out" (Colin, Grade 4). Students were quick to offer their responses and did not falter when asked what

inclusion meant. It was clear that the Grade 4 participants knew the definition of inclusion, and prompting was not required.

Understanding exclusion. On the specific date that we were at the school, it happened to be anti-bullying day (pink shirt day). When answering this question, we discussed the idea of bullying and how this is a form of exclusion in a school setting. When discussing the second picture, (Picture B, Appendix F), the participants felt that one of the boys was being bullied. As mentioned previously, they indicated that they felt that the other kids in the picture were "bullying him" (Victoria, Grade 4), because the boy wearing the green shirt looked "sad" (Colin, Grade 4). Another boy also noted that the boy wearing the green shirt is being excluded because it is unclear as to whether they are participating as a group or not. When discussing the picture, Bradley stated, "I don't know if they're a group" (Grade 4). This led us into a discussion of exclusion from groups at school. Once again, participants were competent in their explanation about exclusion in a school setting, and the researchers felt confident that they understood the meaning of exclusion before moving on to the next question.

Understanding exceptionalities. The participants in Grade 4 demonstrated a much better understanding of the definition "exceptionality" with their responses to this question than when the key term was first introduced in session one. John answered, "I feel like exceptionality is really nice because – just because you're different doesn't mean you can't do other things" (Grade 4). In this statement, John has related the idea of being "different" to the definition of "exceptionality". He also relayed that just because someone is different, it does not mean that there are no other activities that a person with exceptionalities can complete. Jason elaborated on this response and stated, "I think an exceptionality means, like, just because you have something wrong or you have a problem that it doesn't mean that you won't be included for who you are

and what you do" (Grade 4). Once again, the student recognized that having an exceptionality could mean that the person could struggle due to having something "wrong" or because they could have a "problem". Charlotte was the first student to demonstrate the understanding that having an exceptionality could mean that someone is exceptional with a skill. She said, "Another thing I think exceptionality means, it means if you're good at something that your friend isn't, you're able to teach them what it means and able to help them" (Charlotte, Grade 4). This statement could be interpreted as understanding that if someone is exceptional with a specific skill, they can help others who are struggling. It could also be interpreted as knowing that someone may struggle with a skill that you may not struggle with; therefore, we should help those who need it. In terms of relating physical differences to the definition of "exceptionality", Timothy described a scenario he has seen in a recent movie: "The main character in the movie had a weird face and everyone would stare at him and look away and be mean to him. And I think that they shouldn't have done that, and they should have included him and respected him– even though his face wasn't ordinary" (Grade 4). Julia supported this idea when she said, "Exceptionality means don't judge people of what they look like or what they do" (Grade 4).

Thinking of situations at your school where students have difficulty. The Grade 4 participants discussed multiple scenarios where a student may have difficulty in school. The participants were able to describe in detail situations they have experienced at school where others have struggled, and the reasons why they did. Situations included students having trouble with social behaviour, inattentiveness, learning disabilities, coping mechanisms, and school subjects. When discussing difficulties with social behaviour at school, Matthew reported how he knew a classmate diagnosed with Autism who would display behaviours that were, "very inappropriate" (Grade 4). However, he noted that, "A lot of people still accept him for who [he

is] because it wouldn't be nice to just leave him there" (Matthew, Grade 4). Victoria explained how a family member has, "disabilities of learning at school because he has very great hearing, but if someone whispers he instantly looks at them and he has troubles of looking at the teacher and learning" (Grade 4). In this scenario, Victoria has acknowledged a family member (who is a student in school) who has learning disabilities; however, because of the student's exceptional hearing, she believes the student has trouble focusing on the teacher and learning due to the student becoming distracted by his "great hearing" (Victoria, Grade 4). When the researcher prompted the participants about the possibility of students in school having trouble, Charlotte responded, "he always sooks and cries whenever he loses the game, but he mostly breaths so he doesn't get mad and yell at his friends" (Grade 4). Regarding struggles with emotional regulation, Julia stated, "if he loses at a game he'll get mad, but then his parents will say don't get mad and stuff and then he won't" (Grade 4). This discussion demonstrated the participants understanding that some classmates may struggle with emotional and bodily regulation and employ coping mechanisms when someone becomes upset. The Grade 4 participants also mentioned others struggling with school academic subjects, such as language arts, science, math, and gym. However, it was interesting that school subjects were not the main focal point for the conversation. A Grade 4 participant also described a scenario where he feels he struggles in school. He gave a personal example when he said, "I'm kind of bad at listening. Sometimes I mishear people... and I'm kind of making them repeat, and I kind of feel like I don't like asking people to repeat themselves" (Chris, Grade 4). The Grade 4 participants further discussed struggling in school due to physical exceptionalities. When playing games at school, Matthew noted that a student could, "not be able to move their fingers in certain directions or do

something physical with their hands, so they can't play any, like, video games or stuff like that maybe" (Grade 4).

Including children with exceptionalities. When asked how we can include children with exceptionalities at school and in the classroom, participants responded with ideas that related to both academic social realms in their school and classroom. Jason responded saying, "help them with their work (Grade 4) in relation to helping others who are struggling academically. Colin commented that if classmates have exceptionalities and cannot play the same games as others (such as video games) in the classroom, "they might be able to play something like tag or something like that" (Grade 4). When discussing a family member who is diagnosed with ADHD, Timothy stated,

> Well [he has] ADHD, he's not allowed to play certain games on my Xbox that I'm
> allowed to play. So, I have to play games that he's allowed to play that he likes playing...
> so the game is fun for me as well and for him. So then that way… he's not left out (Grade
> 4).

The topic of befriending others if they are struggling arose. Bradley talked of when he moved to a new school, and how he did not have many friends when he first arrived at the new school. In describing how he tried to make friends and include others, he said, "we were sitting across from each other and I asked him does he want to be friends and he said, 'sure'... and I showed him around the school too" (Grade 4). The Grade 4 participants portrayed understanding that they can include people with exceptionalities by helping them with their academic work, with social scenarios such as playing, and by accommodating their needs if they are unable to perform like other students (such as not being able to play certain games due to an exceptionality). They also displayed understanding that we all want to feel included, whether a classmate has an

exceptionality or not. This was demonstrated through their discussion about including new students at school because they may not have many friends.

   Session three - drawing. Drawing was also used with the Grade 4 participants to ensure that they felt their opinions and ideas were expressed. During session three, the researchers explained the same instructions to the Grade 4 participants that were provided to the Grade 2 participants: that they were being asked to draw a picture of what inclusion means to them. The participants were asked to close their eyes and to think of what they would like to draw. When the participants felt they were ready to draw their picture, the researchers did not ask the participants to verbalize what they would draw to avoid the occurrence of groupthink. Instead, the participants were sent to the drawing table to begin their artwork. Similar themes such as friendship, including others when they are feeling left out or sad, and playing with others arose again from the drawings with the Grade 4 participants. However, new themes such as including others who have a disability, individuals from a diverse cultures, race and ethnicity also emerged. Chris decided to draw a picture that included four squares that represented inclusion to him in four separate ways. Below is the picture and the conversation between the researcher and Chris:

Researcher: Why don't you tell me what the picture means?

Chris: I have four squares, and the first one is somebody who is black and somebody who is white and they're holding hands because they might look different, but they can still be friends. And just because they look different doesn't mean that, like, you shouldn't exclude them.

Researcher: Just because you look different… doesn't mean they can't be friends. Perfect. What about the second one?

Chris: The second one is somebody, um, being bullied and the bully has kind of, um, is kind of – um, he looks kind of happy that he is bullying the other. And the one who's being bullied, is saying, "Please stop." And there's another guy, and he is saying, "Hey you, stop bullying him."

Researcher: Perfect... How about the third one?

Chris: Um, the third one is just a big sign that says 'inclusion' with a whole bunch of exclamation marks.

Researcher: What does the fourth one mean?

Chris: The fourth one, um, is basically, um, this guy playing tag with another guy because he can't move his hands in the right positions to play any games and stuff on the iPads, phones, and stuff like that.
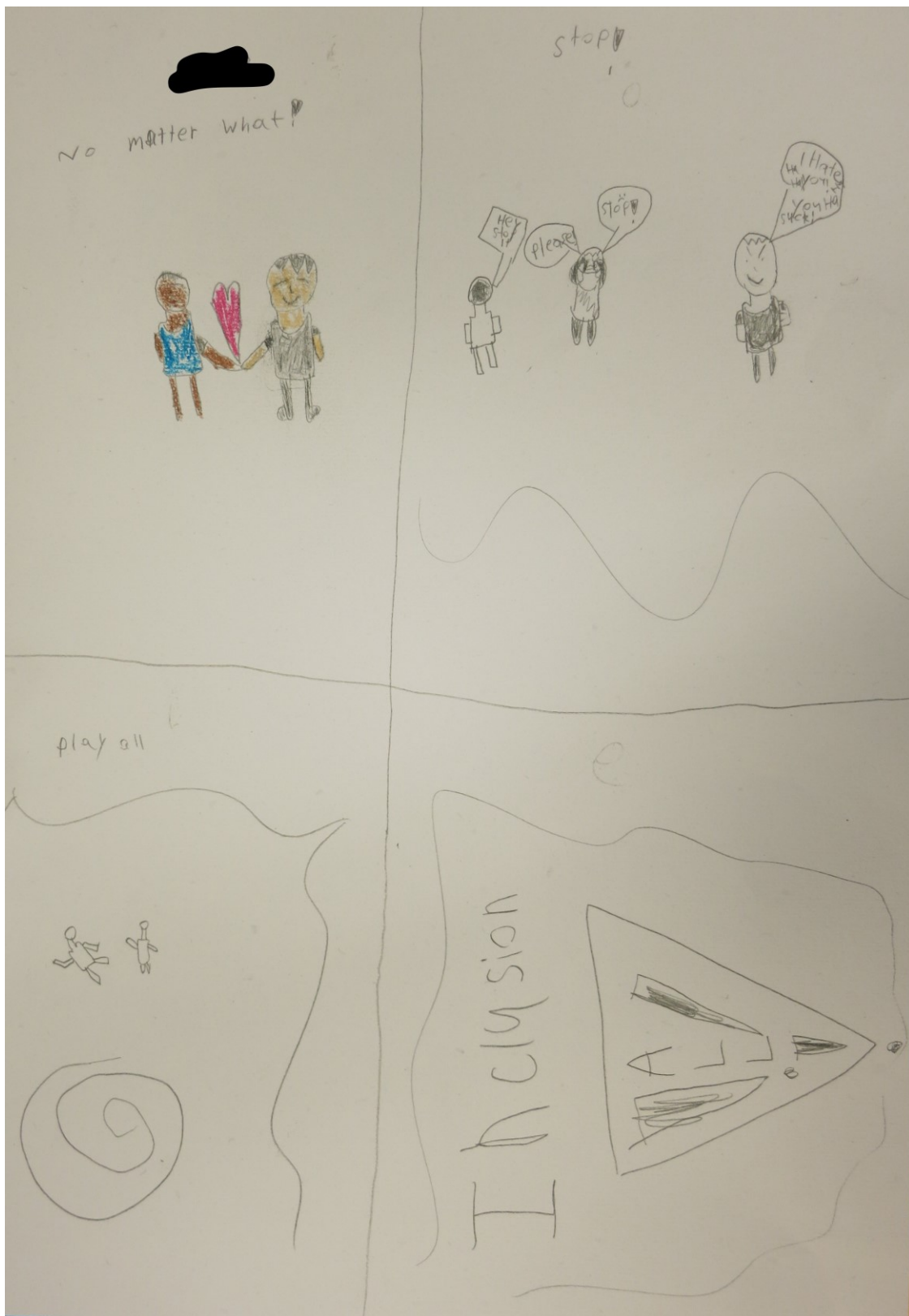
Figure 11 - Chris' drawing with four squares (Age 10, Grade 4, Sunset Academy)

Chris seemed to have a well-rounded view of what inclusion means. He believes that all people, no matter what race they are or what disability they may have, deserve to feel included. He also described how bullying is a form of exclusion and believes that bullying should not occur. The topic of race did not occur during the focus group verbally but was expressed in Chris' drawings. The drawing allowed Chris to express his opinion about race and inclusion that he may not have felt comfortable discussing verbally in the focus group.

Other drawings included the concepts of inclusion of new students, of classmates with physical disabilities, and befriending those who feel left out. Julia, a Grade 4 participant, drew a classroom with a student who was new to the school. When asked why this picture came to her mind when she thought of the word inclusion, she stated, "Well this [boy] is new, and, like, I think she thinks that he's lonely because he's new... and no one wants to be his friend... [I'm going to write] be friends with anyone" (Julia, Grade 4).

Figure 12 - Julia's drawing of a new student (Age 10, Grade 4, Sunset Academy)

Victoria drew a student with a physical disability who seemed to be struggling to make friends. Victoria was particularly quiet throughout previous discussions and did not contribute often during the focus group session. As Yuen (2004) explains, some children may not feel comfortable verbalizing their thoughts but will express them through the visual arts. This student did just that. Here is the conversation between a researcher and the student:

Researcher: Do you have someone in a wheelchair?

Victoria: Yeah.

Researcher: And is someone saying, "Hey, do you want to hang out?"

Victoria: Yeah.

Researcher: Cool. I think that is a really great picture. I think you did a really good job.

Victoria: Thanks.

Even in a one-on-one conversation with a researcher, Victoria did not elaborate or describe her picture in detail. However, her picture depicts the meaning of inclusion without the need of a descriptive response. In the picture, it could be interpreted that there is a friendship occurring between a girl in a wheelchair and a girl who is not in a wheelchair. They have smiles on their faces and look to be bonding. In the same picture, a different girl is off to the side, pointing her finger at the two girls that are bonding, with a neutral face. It could be understood that the girl pointing the figure is confused by the friendship that is occurring. However, the girl who is not in a wheelchair has chosen to befriend the girl in the wheelchair anyway. This picture depicts the definition of inclusion, as it demonstrates two girls who have clear differences deciding to be friends. This drawing aided Victoria in expressing what inclusion meant to her.
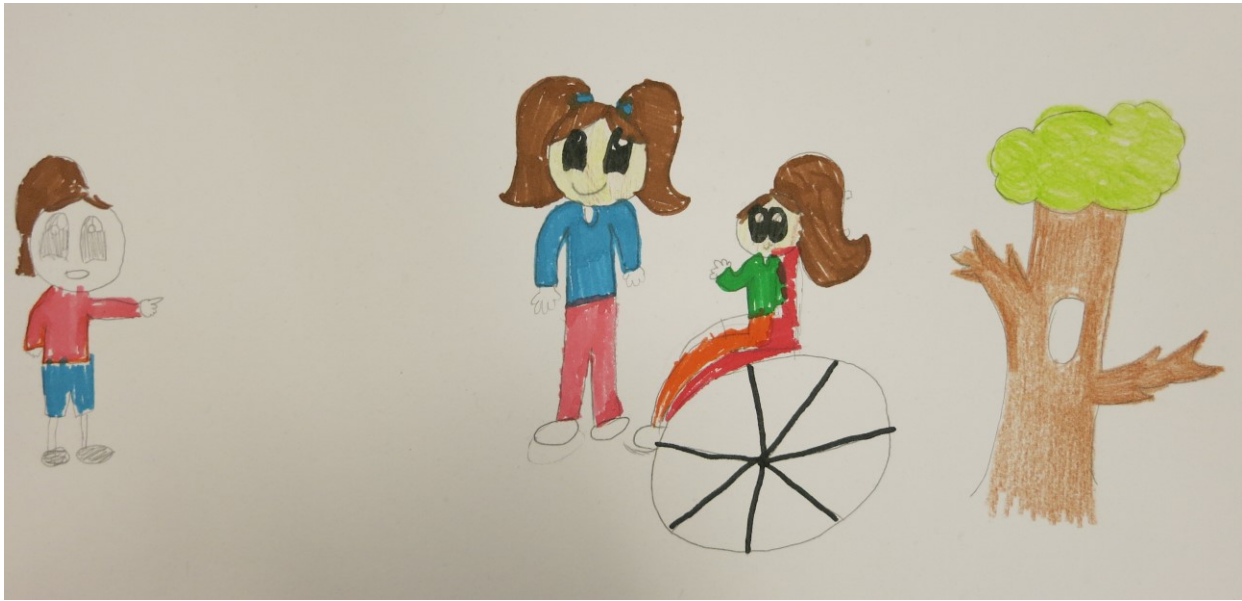
Figure 13 - Victoria's drawing of friendship (Age 10, Grade 4, Sunset Academy)

Grade 4 participants were able to draw meaningful pictures of what inclusion means to them which included broader themes such as race, physical disabilities, and mental health concerns (such as someone feeling nervous on their first day in a new school).

Session four – data analysis. The data analysis occurred in the same manner as it did with the Grade 2 participants. A rating scale was used to describe the results. Three groups engaged in the data analysis session. This means that a rating of 3 means highly relevant, and that all three groups categorized this statement into the specified category. A rating of 2 means moderately relevant, and that two groups categorized this statement into the specified category. A rating of 1 means less relevant and that only one group categorized this statement into the specified category. The themes and concepts that emerged from the Grade 4 data has been interpreted by the researchers. It should be noted that the key statements were taken from rich conversations from the Grade 4 participants. In the transcripts, the participants provided

elaborations and explanations for the key statements. Therefore, some statements may read out of context.

Category one: inclusion. In this category, statements (n=29) were centered on accepting everyone despite differences, and addressed including students with exceptionalities, anti-bullying, and playing inclusive games for students with exceptionalities or disabilities. Ten statements were highly relevant with a rating of 3. Key words that emerged from these statements were, "Autism", "disabilities", "friends", and "play". A theme that connects these statements was accepting and playing with others who have disabilities. This theme can be interpreted as being highly relevant to inclusion for Grade 4 participants. Ten statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 2. Key words and phrases that connected these statements included, "respect", "wasn't ordinary", "gets mad", "inappropriate stuff", "accept", "ADHD", and "different". Emotional regulation and differences were the main theme for these statements, which were considered moderately relevant to Grade 4 ideas of inclusion. Less relevant statements included key phrases such as, "look down on you", "if he loses a game he'll get mad", "play a different game", and "making fun of him" which were considered less relevant to the Grade 4 participants' ideas of inclusion.

Category two: exclusion. Statements (n=8) related to bullying others, having physical abnormalities, and showing respect were apparent in this category. Four statements were highly relevant with a rating of 3. Keywords that connected these statements were, "bullying", "rude", "sad", and "weird". The main theme that emerged was being mean to others. This theme could be interpreted as relating highly to Grade 4 participants' ideas of what exclusion means. Two statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 2. These two statements related to themes of respect and anti-bullying. This theme was moderately relevant to the participants concept of

exclusion. Two statements were less relevant with a rating of 1. These statements expressed themes of being friends with others and engaging in activities others can play. This theme was less relevant to the meaning of exclusion for Grade 4 participants. All statements can be reviewed in Appendix T.

Category three: exceptionality. This category included statements (n=35) relating to classmates with specific exceptionalities such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), accepting others despite differences, emotional regulation, individual differences, and academic differences among classmates. Eight statements were highly relevant with a rating of 3. Keywords such as, "ADHD", "problems", "trouble", "difficulty", and "good" connected the statements. A theme of accepting others even if they are different arose from these statements. This could be interpreted as being highly relevant to the topic of exceptionality for the Grade 4 participants.

Ten statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 2. Key phrases such as, "paralyzed", "something wrong", "look down on you" and "they have Autism" emerged from these statements. An appropriate theme for these statements could be stigma of disabilities. Seventeen statements were less relevant with a rating of 1. A theme that emerged from these statements was of differences in self-regulation and physical appearances. The topic of race and "looking down" on others was raised during the conversation about exceptionality. It is important to note that this was the first time these topics were raised during our sessions with both the Grade 2 and Grade 4 participants. Although these statements were less relevant to the category of exceptionality, this could be due to the idea that Grade 4 students are only now becoming aware of these topics because of their age. All statements can be viewed in Appendix U.

Category four: helping. Statements (n=22) in this category portrayed concepts about helping others with exceptionalities, accepting that people make mistakes, coping skills for emotional regulation, helping classmates with school work, and helping classmates to feel included at school despite individual differences. Three statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 3. Key phrases that emerged as connectors between these statements were, "wrong response", "cries when [they] lose", "help them with their work", "breathes", and "fix". A theme that can be interpreted for the combined statements is self-regulation as the participants discussed redoing a mistake with academic work, breathing when anger arises, and helping others with their academics. This was seen as being the most relevant theme to the category of helping. Three statements were moderately relevant with a rating of 2. A theme that emerged from these statements was adaptation. This was seen as a theme because of the statements discussing adapting games so others can play them and standing up for others if they are being bullied. This theme was considered as being moderately relevant to the idea of helping for the Grade 4 participants. Sixteen statements were less relevant with a rating of 1. These statements related to concepts of being friends with others as a means of helping (Appendix V).

The results proved to be different between the Grade 2 and Grade 4 participants. The discussion expand on the differences between the two age groups and implications for educators gathered from the results.
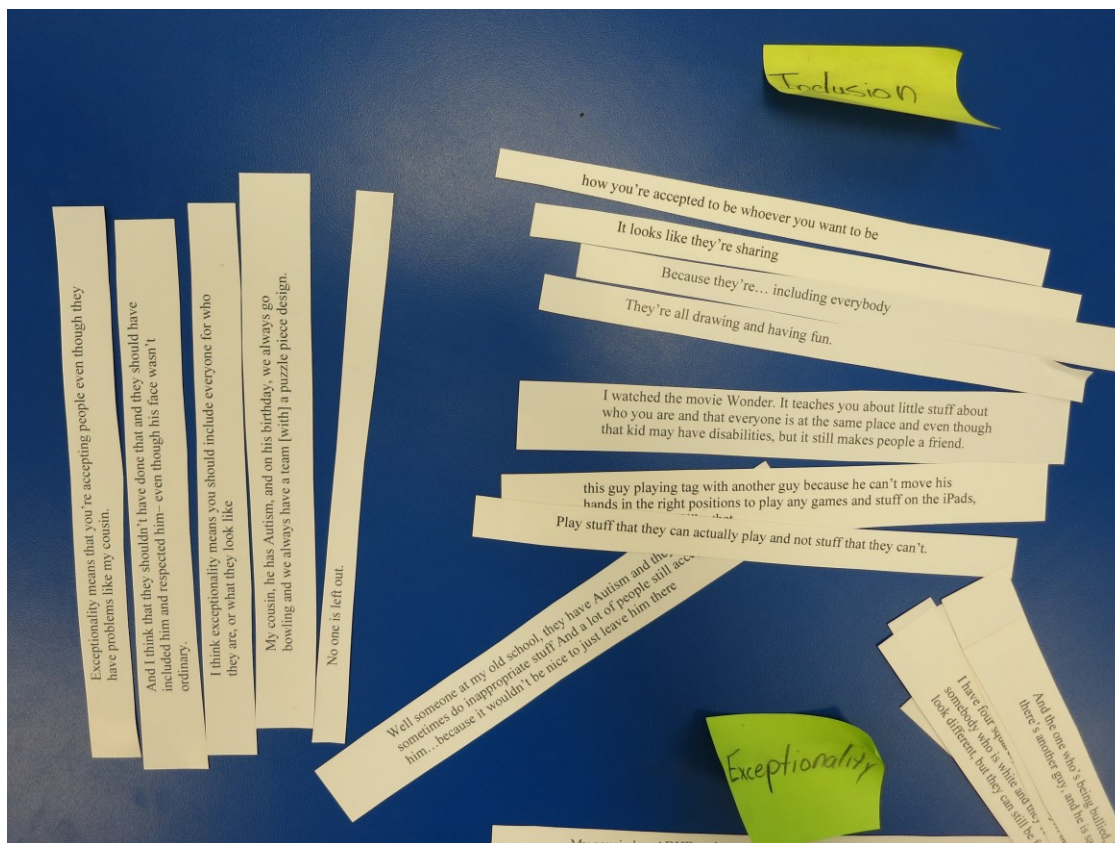
Figure 14 - Grade 4 sorting activity

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore children's concepts of inclusion and social exclusion of students and/or peers with exceptionalities in a classroom and school setting. A qualitative methodology was implemented with using concept mapping as one of the main methods to analyze the data. The researchers engaged the children in this study as active participants, and coresearchers for the data analysis portion of the study. Participants were recruited from Grade 2 and Grade 4 to explore children's thoughts and opinions on inclusion and social exclusion across age ranges. Below the categories of inclusion, exclusion, exceptionality, and helping will be discussed in relation to the data given from the participants in Grade 2 and Grade 4. Implications for educators will also be discussed.

Category one: Inclusion

The overarching theme for the inclusion of students with exceptionalities among Grade 2 participants was play. Through the focus group sessions with the Grade 2 participants, and the results of the sorting activity, it appeared that Grade 2 participants felt the best way to incorporate students with differences, disabilities, or exceptionalities, was to make them feel welcome in the classroom and school by playing with them and being "nice". The literature supports the importance of play for children's development both socially and cognitively (Hestenes and Carroll, 2000; Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002; Burke, 2010). Play allows children to become sensitive to others, manage their emotions, learn how to share, learn how to deal with conflict, and to allow development of other viewpoints that may be different from their own (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002). Play can be social in nature and can foster children's ability to develop peer group relationships (Burke, 2010). Play can sometimes be troublesome and difficult for children with disabilities, especially for those who lack the knowledge and skills to play with

others (Attwood, 2007; Hestenes and Carroll, 2000). Therefore, creating time in the classroom for play can allow children to engage naturally with their peers who have exceptionalities, especially if the play is free choice as it allows for children to form their own friendships (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2003). However, for children with exceptionalities, it may be helpful if the educator acts as a "social coach" to support the development of friendships among typically developing children and children with exceptionalities (Buysse et al., 2003). Another theme that emerged during this study relevant to inclusion was togetherness. Children with exceptionalities expressed in previous studies feeling excluded and isolated when they are required to leave the classroom to receive accommodations (Lindsay & Mcpherson, 2012). Therefore, promoting the inclusion of children within the classroom is important for creating a feeling a togetherness for all children.

When exploring the meaning of inclusion with the Grade 4 participants, play also emerged as a relevant theme. However, the Grade 4 participants had different perspectives of play. Grade 4 participants noted that they could include others with exceptionalities by playing inclusive games. Chris suggested, as an example, not playing games on an iPad if a peer has trouble using their arms to play. Acceptance of others despite exceptionalities was an equally relevant theme for the inclusion of peers. Teaching the acceptance of others and embracing diversity within the classroom has been found to be an important aspect of inclusive education (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Lindsay et al., 2013). In a study completed by Lindsay and McPherson (2012) with youth who had disabilities, the participants noted that they would like to self-disclose about their disability to classmates and would also like to see further awareness of disabilities brought into the classroom to promote social inclusion. Marini, Fairbairn, and Zuber (2001) extended this idea explaining that school climates need to allow children with disabilities

to feel included and safe to ensure they do not become excluded from the classroom environment. Therefore, teaching all students about disabilities helps the typically developing child to become more aware of children living with disabilities, and the child with disabilities to feel less isolated.

Category two: exclusion

For the category of exclusion, a main theme that emerged from the Grade 2 participants' statements was being mean or rude to others. Grade 2 participants felt that to prevent exclusion, people should be kind to everyone. Teaching children how to be kind to others can result in improved self-esteem for the child, but also prevents peer abuse and establishes respect and kindness for others (Lickona, 2009). Exclusion behaviours has been reduced in children when they were taught behaviors related to sympathizing with others, kindness, and forgiveness (Bulach, 2002). Therefore, implementing an education program such as this among children may be a way to teach children how to be kind and accepting of others (Prestwich, 2004).

Similarly, Grade 4 participants felt that showing respect and advocating for anti-bullying in schools were ways to prevent exclusion in schools. The National Disability Authority (2014) is a strong advocate for teaching schools how to create environments that are inclusive, welcoming, and safe for all children. For children with exceptionalities, they note that social isolation is a high-risk factor for them to be bullied in schools (The National Disability Authority, 2014). The recommended practice is a whole school approach to ensuring that students with exceptionalities are not a target for bullying, meaning that the whole school participates in anti-bullying measures. The Grade 4 participants commented on how their school participates in anti-bullying day every year, where they wear anti-bullying t-shirts and engage in

anti-bullying activities all day at school. The Grade 4 participants felt that bullying was an exclusionary practice, and that it should not occur in their classrooms or schools.

Category three: exceptionality

When thinking of the category of exceptionality, themes that emerged from the Grade 2 participants were emotional, behavioural, and physical difficulties. Key describing words and phrases used by Grade 2 participants were "blind", "strength", "wheelchair". Grade 4 participants felt that if students have an exceptionality, others should be aware that they may not react and respond in a manner that is considered normal. This was apparent when participants commented on playing different games if a classmate has an exceptionality, such as playing a game other than tag if a classmate has a physical disability and cannot run or playing a different video game if specific video games can cause a classmate with an exceptionality to become emotionally upset. The main difference seen between the responses from the Grade 2 and Grade 4 participants was the recognition of visible and invisible disabilities. The Grade 2 participants commented on physical disabilities among children as being an exceptionality, except when Luke commented that the, "brain gets kind of messed up" when a peer as an exceptionality (Grade 2, Class 1). However, Grade 4 participants mentioned AD/HD, ASD, and emotional difficulties as exceptionalities that peers could have. The differences in age and cognitive development could explain the reasoning between responses from the Grade 2 and Grade 4 participants. When a child has invisible disabilities, it can be difficult for children who may not have the emotional knowledge to understand them (Adams, 2016). Therefore, it is not surprising that Grade 4 participants had a better understanding of invisible disabilities than the Grade 2 participants.

It should also be highlighted that participants in Grade 4 understood that having an exceptionality can also mean peers who excel. This was noted when Victoria explained how a family member has, "disabilities of learning at school because he has very great hearing, but if someone whispers he instantly looks at them and he has troubles of looking at the teacher and learning" (Grade 4). In this scenario, Victoria acknowledged a family member (who is a student in school) who has learning disabilities; however, because of the student's exceptional hearing, she believes the student has trouble focusing on the teacher and learning due to the student becoming distracted by his "great hearing" (Grade 4). This is an important finding as students with exceptionalities can be celebrated within a classroom setting and can be acknowledged for their strengths and not only their weaknesses, which can lead to better support systems and friendships for students with exceptionalities (Ison et al., 2010). Victoria noticed this with a classmate and portrayed her peer's "great hearing" as a positive skill and could be the reason that her classmate cannot focus on the teacher because of this exceptional skill.

Category four: helping

Grade 2 participants felt that they best way to help others who are struggling, was to help them with school work or comfort them when feeling sad or hurt. When thinking of the category of helping, the Grade 4 participants statements elicited similar themes of helping others with their emotions and academic work. Encouraging children to help others in classrooms and schools has been proven to be beneficial for both the typically developing child and the child with exceptionalities. The Inclusive Schools Network (2015) discussed using peer supports to encourage children to help others who have exceptionalities. This strategy was found to be improve friendships between typically developing children and children with exceptionalities,

increased respect for children with exceptionalities, and increased the understanding of individual differences (Inclusive Schools Network, 2015). This will be discussed further below.

Implications for educators

The Grade 2 participants expressed that play should occur to make students with exceptionalities feel included in their classroom and school. Therefore, play opportunities should be encouraged and promoted among children with and without exceptionalities to encourage peer support systems and friendships (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012a; Lindsay et al., 2013). It should be considered that students with exceptionalities may struggle with socializing with others or initiating play with other children. Children with exceptionalities may not know how to play appropriately with other children (Attwood, 2007). Creating play scenarios within the classroom for children with and without exceptionalities takes effort and resources for it to work effectively. Teacher assistants, student assistants, special education teachers, and guidance counsellors should be utilized if a teacher feels they will need assistance when creating playtime in the classroom to specifically promote playtime between children with and without exceptionalities.

Taking turns is key for children's social development and encourages the ability to interact with others positively as the child ages (Early Childhood Australia, 2018). It is encouraging to see the connection that the Grade 2 participants created in relation to including everyone at their school. Inclusion for this age group essentially means that all should be included in the classroom and school, and to do this, social interactions should occur between regular typically developing students and students with exceptionalities.

As children age and move through elementary school grades they start comparing themselves to others. During the elementary year children tend to evaluate their performance

based on their peer's performance and this comparison continues to increase as children age (Lapan & Boseovski, 2017). These comparisons can lead to the social exclusion of others if differences are not celebrated and promoted within the classroom setting. Teachers can use students at this age to help others who are struggling in the classroom, such as creating a peer model system, where a child without exceptionalities models positive behaviour for a peer with exceptionalities (Locke, Rotheram-Fuller, and Kasari, 2012; Lindsay & McPherson, 2012b). Normalizing exceptionalities within the classroom is another recommendation for teachers. Grade 4 participants expressed that students with exceptionalities should be accepted for who they are, what they are and are not capable of doing. As well, they suggested that everyone should be included in the daily activities of the classroom. Encouraging contact among students with and without exceptionalities increases the student's ability to understand that we are all different and allows students to learn respect and appreciation for all people. It also aides in friendship development when students are taught about exceptionalities and how to create an inclusive classroom (Lindsay & McPherson 2012b; Ison et al., 2010). The cognitive-development theory of friendship aligns with this strategy. Teaching children how they can become friends with their peers with exceptionalities can provide them with essential information on how to befriend peers who are different from themselves. Typically, young children are attracted to developing friendships with others who are like themselves (Byrne & Griffitt, 1966). Children may not know how to befriend peers with exceptionalities, they may lack awareness of the characteristics and behaviours associated with specific disabilities (Attwood, 2007), and that while there may be developmental differences, they may also share common interests. Providing children with this information can aide in forming friendships in the classroom among children with and without exceptionalities.

Mckown and Weinstein (2003) studied children's development of an individual's stereotype and found that there were a limited number of children at age 6 who could understand someone else's stereotype. However, "after age 6, the proportion of children able to infer an individual's stereotype increased linearly with age, peaking at 93% at age 10" (Mckown & Weinstein, 2003, p. 505). In relation to knowledge about stigma at this age, it has been found that children become increasingly better at understanding people's social beliefs about others after the age of 6 as well (Flavell, 2000). Discussing social exclusion, and the reasons for why it occurs, with Grade 4 students can allow the inclusion of children with exceptionalities as they may feel less isolated from the classroom (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012a).

Concept mapping

Concept mapping was felt to be a successful methodology to use with participants in Grade 2. The participants appeared to be excited to participate and seemed overjoyed when they received certificates at the end of the project (Appendix W). However, a limitation to this study was considering the participants' ability to sort key statements within a specified timeframe. The Grade 2 participants were able and capable of sorting key statements; however, due to time restraints associated with conducting research during the participants lunch period, the researchers created the category names (inclusion, exclusion, exceptionality, and helping). Typically, students would create the category names themselves. However, because the sessions took place during the recess portion of the lunch break, the researchers felt they could not offer the Grade 2 participants enough time to sort the key statements and create the category names. Therefore, it is unknown how easy or difficult it may be for Grade 2 participants to create category names on their own, and then sort the key statements on their own. Participants in

Grade 2 needed prompts when asked focus group questions and when they categorized key statements. This could potentially be due to the developmental stage at their age.

This study initially intended that steps 4-6 of the concept mapping procedure would be implemented (please see Methodology for future description of steps 4-6). Due to the sparse number of participants (23 in total) the researchers felt it was unnecessary to purchase the Concept Mapping software system as concepts and themes were able to be analyzed manually. Therefore, only steps 1 through 4 of the concept mapping methodology were utilized in this study. Concept mapping should be further explored when there is an opportunity for larger sample sizes, a wider range of grades, and the ability to use the concept mapping software system to compare results with what was found within this research study.

Concept mapping was a more efficient tool to use with students in grade 4 when compared with students in grade two. Prompts were used rarely when working with children in Grade 4 as they were able to read the statements on their own and categorize the statements without researcher input. The Grade 4 students put a lot of thought and effort into their decision of where to place the statements and they often re-evaluated their decisions and tended to change their mind about where a statement should be placed. Although the category names were chosen beforehand, due to the researcher's choice to keep the methods the same for the Grade 2 and the Grade 4 participants, the researchers believe that the Grade 4 students would have been able to create category names on their own without researcher interference. The students enjoyed hearing statements that they had previously provided and were proud to be a part of the study as multiple students commented on their participation certificates and the fun that they had being a part of the project.

As noted in the literature review, drawing can be a useful tool for aiding children in expressing their opinions and ideas. Yuen (2004) found that using drawings in focus groups with children allowed them to express themselves and enabled them to feel like they were being heard by others. In Yuen's study, eleven-year-old participants were asked to draw as a part of the focus group session (2004). Yuen (2004) noted that drawing gave children the opportunity to express emotions that otherwise may not have been verbalized throughout the focus group session. This was a finding aligned with the current study. The researchers found that using drawing as a source of data collection aided them in understanding what the participants thought inclusion and social exclusion meant for them. There were participants who did not communicate much verbally throughout the sessions, or answer questions often throughout the focus group interviews. However, when they had the opportunity to draw and explain why they chose to draw their picture, it allowed the researchers to see ideas and concepts from the participants that may not have ever been expressed verbally. Yuen (2004) explained how using drawings created a relaxed environment when working with children and eliminated the possibility of "groupthink". Groupthink occurs when members of a group feel persuaded by others to conform to other thoughts and opinions. Yuen states, that, "drawings may help reduce the possibility of groupthink by providing a structure for the... group to help ensure that every participant has the opportunity to contribute to the discussion" (2004, p. 476).

Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study that should be noted. First, this study did not have a large number of participants. Therefore, readers should be aware that the findings are not necessarily generalizable to other populations of Grade 2 and Grade 4 students. Further research is needed to discover the opinions of primary and elementary students surrounding the concept of

inclusion and how children's voices are important for contributing to school and classroom environments (Nowicki et al., 2014a).

It should also be noted that recruitment was not an easy task. An e-mail sent to principals was the approved method for recruiting students (approved through ethics at Memorial University). This communication route proved to be a difficult way to ask schools to be a part of this study. When discussing this with one of the principals who agreed to have his school take part in the study, the principal noted that he receives an abundance of e-mails per day and unless the email is significant, it is easy to overlook them. For future studies looking to recruit students from a school system, it is recommended that another recruitment route (such as phone calls or face-to-face meetings with principals) be used, due to the small number of schools responding to participate in this study.

Initially this study included the recruitment of students from Grade 2, 4 and 6 to allow for a comparative analysis. However, due to lack of interest surrounding taking part in this study, we were unable to secure Grade 6 teachers to assist with recruitment efforts. Once again, recruitment of Grade 6 classes may have been easier if face-to-face meetings were able to be arranged with classroom teachers (with approval from the principal), rather than using e-mails as a way of communicating with teachers who were interested in the study. For future studies, to gain access to participants, it is recommended that researchers ask permission with their ethics board to communicate with teachers and principals through other means than e-mail.

Time restraints were of concern in this study. This study was approved by the ethics committee dependant on the idea that students' class schedule would not be interrupted. As a result, the sessions occurred during a portion of the student's lunch hour (the portion when they were not eating and had free time), which resulted in the sessions being between 20 to 25

minutes. Upon completing the study, it was noted that 20 to 25 minutes often made the sessions feel a bit rushed, and accommodations had to be made to the sorting activity to ensure there was enough time to complete it (such as pre-assigning category names). A recommendation to future researchers would be to propose after school sessions. This would allow time for the students and the researchers to complete everything that is assigned without feeling rushed. However, the researcher would have to consider sample bias if there were students who could not stay after school.

Another limitation was the use of photographs within the study. Initially the researchers hoped to use photographs to further engage children in the interview and in the data collection process. However, for ethical reasons, the researchers were unable to allow the children to take photos with a camera due to privacy concerns.

The concept of "groupthink" occurred during the first session conducted with the Grade 2 participants. This was an error on the researcher's behalf as the student was praised for mentioning the idea of drawing "the world" as their representation of inclusion. The majority of students chose also chose to draw the world after this was stated by a participant. In the future, the researchers would have discussed the student's idea with them individually, rather than in a group setting, to prevent the occurrence of groupthink. In class number two of the Grade 2 participants, researchers ensured that the students had their own original ideas about what inclusion meant to them before beginning their artwork. Students were asked to close their eyes and picture what they would like to draw in their minds. When a student told the researcher that they had an idea, the researcher did not ask them to verbalize it, but instead directed them to the drawing table to begin their work. This session occurred after the session with class one, therefore, researchers were keenly aware of avoiding groupthink for this session.

Another limitation of this study was the introduction of the researcher's biases. When the participants were unaware of what a key term meant, such as the word "exceptionality", it was explained by the researchers. It was possible that some of the responses from participants were impacted by the researcher's feedback, deeming their response as not being organic. It is difficult to know whether their responses were truly their own when this occurred, or if responses were impacted by the definitions provided the researchers.

Summary

This study highlights the benefits of using play as a means of including younger children with exceptionalities in the classroom and school, normalizing exceptionalities by celebrating individual differences and acknowledging peer's exceptionalities in an age appropriate way within the classroom and school for young and middle-aged children, and teaching acceptance and inclusion in the school and classroom setting for all ages. This study highlighted the benefits of using concept mapping with children and should be used by other researchers wanting to complete research with children, as it offers a unique insight into children's views and opinions. Concept mapping also allows understanding of children's views without researcher bias as the data is interpreted by the children themselves. The usage of multiple forms of data collection aided the researchers in further understanding children's perspectives and points of view rather than solely relying on verbal data. This study highlights the important of using alternative ways of gathering data (such as drawings) when working with children and presents the importance of using children as active participants in the research process.

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Appendix A - Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research Approval

MEMORIAL
UNIVERSITY

**Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)**

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	**20180360-ED**
Approval Period:	June 2, 2017 – June 30, 2018
Funding Source:	Faculty of Education Research and Development (RGCS: 20170202; Penney)
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Sharon Penney Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	*Children's Perceptions of Inclusion*

Title of Parent Project:	*Children's Perceptions of Inclusion*
ICEHR Number:	*20170758-ED*

June 2, 2017

Mrs. Emily Butler
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mrs. Butler:

Thank you for your submission to the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) seeking ethical clearance for the above-named research project. The Committee has reviewed the proposal and agrees that the proposed project is consistent with the guidelines of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS2). *Full ethics clearance* is *granted to* June 30, 2018. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

If you need to make changes during the project, which may raise ethical concerns, please submit an amendment request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration. In addition, the TCPS2 requires that you submit an annual update to ICEHR before June 30, 2018. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance, and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide the annual update with a final brief summary, and your file will be closed.

Annual updates and amendment requests can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Portal homepage.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Russell J. Adams, Ph.D.
Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
  Ethics in Human Research
Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics
  Faculties of Science and Medicine

RA/lw

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Sharon Penney, Faculty of Education
        Director, Research Grant and Contract Services
        Associate Dean, Research, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education

Appendix B - Newfoundland and Labrador English School District Approval

**Newfoundland & Labrador
English School District**

Office of the Senior Education Officer (Human Resources)
Deborah Toope (709) 758-2391

Chairperson: Goronwy Price
CEO/Director of Education: Anthony Stack

Research Approval Conditions

Research Title & Investigator(s): Children's Perceptions of Inclusion - Sharon Penney

Your request to conduct this research is NOT approved: _____

Your request to conduct research in our district is approved subject to the conditions/requirements checked below:

1. A list of selected schools must be forwarded to my office before the research can begin.
   - 1a. The list of targeted schools has been received ☑
2. Final approval to conduct this study will rest with the principal of each targeted school and the targeted group of teachers/students/parents where applicable. ☑
3. Conducting the research will in **no way negatively impact instructional time for students and teachers.** ☑
4. Conducting this research must not put any burden of responsibility on our school administrators or other staff unless they s p e c i f i c a l l y agree to it. **Such agreement must not negatively impact instructional time.** ☑
5. **Participation in the study will be voluntary** and participants will be able to opt out at any time without prejudice. This must be clearly communicated to the participants at the outset. ☑
6. For students under 19 years of age, **the researcher(s) must secure parental consent and confirm such consent with the principal before the research proceeds.** Students 19 years of age and older must provide their own consent. Regardless of age, youth must be clearly informed from the outset that they may refuse to participate, even if their parents consented to their participation. ☑
7. Anonymity of participants must be ensured. ☑
8. Before the research project can begin, **it must receive final approval from your university's Research Ethics Committee** and a copy of this approval must be sent to the Senior Education Officer (HR) as per the contact information listed below.
   - 8a. Ethics Committee approval letter has been received ☑   8b. Not applicable ☐
9. Given the inherent potential risk in this research project that some participants may relive a traumatic experience which can cause emotional or psychological stress, counseling services and other appropriate supports must be available during and subsequent to the data collection process. **Researchers are responsible for providing such supports. This service will not be provided by the NLESD.** ☑
10. A copy of the research findings and resulting papers/reports must be directed to the Senior Education Officer (HR) and to the regional Assistant Directors of Education (Programs) where applicable. ☑
11. Research results must be made available to the schools involved and the individual participants who request them. ☑
12. The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District takes no responsibility in conducting this research, and will not be held liable for any negative impacts relating to this research effort. **The full responsibility to organize & conduct this research rests with the researcher(s).** ☑

Recommended by: *Deborah Toope*   Date: *Sept. 18, 2017*
Senior Education Officer

Signature of Approval: *Lucy Wa*   Date: *Sept 21, 2017*
Associate Director of Education

Signature of Compliance: *Sharon Penney*   Date: *Sept 26, 2017*
Researcher

A signed copy of this form MUST be returned to the address below and to the target schools before research can begin:
Attention: Senior Education Officer (HR)
Newfoundland and Labrador English School District
95 Elizabeth Avenue
St. John's, NL
A1B 1R6

Appendix C - E-mail to Principals

To [principal's name]:

If you agree to have your school participate in this research study we ask that you please forward this email to your teachers (for grades 2, 4, and 6) as it explains the study. As well, we would like your permission to also explain the study to the guidance counsellor at your school.

Invitation to Participate

Students at your school and in your classroom are invited to take part in a research project entitled: *"Children as Researchers: Examining Children's Perceptions of Inclusion."*

Purpose of Study

Previous research has demonstrated that children with exceptionalities are at risk for social exclusion by their peers, but little is known of children's views on this topic. It will also explore children's understanding of inclusion and socially exclusion at school. Children's perspectives are needed for theory development surrounding children's understanding of inclusion.

What Will Your Teachers and Guidance Counsellors Do in This Study?

1) We will invite children in Grade 2, 4 and 6, at four schools located in St. John's to take part in a guided discussion about inclusion and social exclusion.

2) With your permission, we would like to describe the study to students in your school and in your classroom. We will provide a package at the time for each student to bring home to his or her parents.

3) With your permission we would ask you as the teacher assist with collecting parental consent forms.

4) Finally, we would ask that your guidance counsellors provide support if students experience negative emotional responses to the discussion.

All sessions for this research study will be conducted during your students' lunchtime. Each session will occur in a designated classroom provided for the study. Each session will be in groups of approximately 6 to 8 children from your child's grade.

Session 1 (Approximately 30 minutes) (Each session will be audio-recorded and any art work developed during each of the session will be photographed.)

1) Explaining the study to your students in groups.
2) Explaining the informed assent and signing the form (voluntary).
3) Answering any questions your students have about the research.
4) Exploring/explaining the terminology that will be used in the study (for example inclusion, exclusion and social exclusion).
5) Checking with students their understanding of the terminology.
6) Paper, crayons, markers will be provided to enhance expression of understanding. Any pictures created will be photographed and students will be encouraged to take their art production home.
7) A check out process will be used at the end of the session to check for any emotional reactions.

Session 2 (Approximately 30 minutes) (Each session will be audio-recorded and any art work developed during each of the session will be photographed.)

1) The group leader will begin the second session with reading a preselected story about inclusion (based on the grade). The purpose of the book is to stimulate conversation.
2) Guided discussion will be used to gain an understanding of your students' views, ideas and understanding of inclusion and social exclusion. Some of the questions may include:
   a. What does exceptionality mean?
   b. Do you know of situations at your school where students have difficulty in school?
   c. Describe things that students may have difficulty with at school?
   d. They will also be asked how they may include children with exceptionalities.
3) Prompts will be used to encourage students to elaborate on their responses. Each child will be asked, "Can you tell me more?" and "Is there anything else you can think of?"
4) Paper, crayons, marker will be provided to enhance expression of understanding. Any pictures created will be photographed and your students will be encouraged to take their art production home.
5) Students will be given the opportunity to describe their art. This is voluntary and your students will be instructed that they can pass on describing their work.
6) A check out process will be used at the end of the session to check for any emotional reactions. (Please see Script)

Before Session 3
A university staff person who has signed a confidentiality agreement will transcribe the audio-recordings. Then the researchers will identify key words, phrases, and sentences. These key words, phrases, and sentences will be provided for use in the third session where students will be asked to help sort the statements into themes or content areas.

Session 3 (Approximately 30 minutes) audio-recorded

1) One researcher/group leader along with one or two students will work together to sort the key statements. (One adult will be assigned to each group of 2-3 children)
2) Students will be instructed to group the statements together in a way that makes sense.
3) Students will be asked to place each statement into only one pile or to place them by themselves if they want.
4) Students will be thanked for their participation
5) A check out process will be used at the end of the session to check for any emotional reactions.

Who will be included?
Any student who returns the parental consent forms (sent home on a package) and also gives their own assent will be selected to participate. Even if a parent provides consent but the student does not want to participate then they will not participate we would require both consent and assent.

What can you do?

Please distribute the attached letter of information to teachers of students in Grades 2, 4 and 6, and ask them to consider to supporting this study by distributing and collecting consent forms from students and parents.

We look forward to hearing from interested teachers, and being able to discuss this study with their students.

Sincerely,
   Sharon Penney (scpeney@mun.ca), Gabrielle Young (gabrielle.young@mun.ca), Linda Coles ([lcoles@mun.ca)](mailto:lcoles@mun.ca) and Emily Butler (u23esh@mun.ca).

Appendix D - Letter or Information for Parents

Title: *Children as Researchers: Examining Children's Perceptions of Inclusion*

Researchers:
Primary Investigators
Dr. Sharon Penney, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
scpenney@mun.ca
(709) 864-7556

Dr. Gabrielle Young, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
gabrielle.young@mun.ca
(709) 864-4413

Dr. Linda Coles, Teaching Faculty, Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
lcoles@mun.ca
(709) 864-8989

Ms. Emily Butler, Graduate Student, Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
u23esh@mun.ca

Sponsor: The Faculty of Education, Memorial University, Research and Development funded this research.

Invitation to Participate
Your child is invited to take part in a research study entitled *"Children as Researchers: Examining Children's Perceptions of Inclusion."*

This letter is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you information about the research and what your child will do if you choose to allow your child to participate. It also describes their right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish your child to participate in this research study, you and your child should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision.

Please take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. You may contact Dr. Sharon Penney, Dr. Gabrielle Young, or Dr. Linda Coles, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent to allow your child to participate. Dr. Penney, Dr. Young and Dr. Coles are happy to take the time to explain any aspect of the research study.

Purpose of Study
This research study will explore children's views, ideas and understanding of inclusion and social exclusion. The researchers will explore with your child (in groups) their understanding of the terms that will be used (for example inclusion and exceptionalities). This study will explore why children believe some students are socially excluded at school. Children's perspectives are needed for theory development surrounding children's understanding of inclusion.

This research study's overarching goal is to gain an understanding and insight into the following questions:
1) What does inclusion mean to children?
2) What are children's perceptions of why are some children excluded socially at school?

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even though your child's school has agreed to allow their students to be involved in this research study, it is still your decision. You do not have to allow your child to take part in this research. It is up to you. You can say no now or you can even change your mind later. No one will be upset with you if you decide that your child will not participate in this research study.

Your child's relationship with their school, their teacher and their classmates will not be affected if you decide not to allow your child to take part in this research. As well, there will be no negative consequence if you decide to stop your child's participation at any point during the research study.

All children who have submitted signed parental consent and also provide their own consent (called informed assent) will be permitted to take part in this research. If your child decides they do not want to participate (even if you consent) or if they choose to stop at any point during the study no one will be upset and their will not be any consequences to them now or in the future.

What Your Child Will Do in This Study?
All sessions for this research study will be conducted during your child's lunchtime. Each session will occur in a designated classroom provided for the study. Each session will be in groups of approximately 6 to 8 children from your child's grade.

Session 1 (Approximately 30 minutes) (Each session will be audio-recorded and any art work developed during each of the session will be photographed.)
1. Explaining the study to your child and other children in groups.
2. Explaining the informed assent and signing the form (voluntary).
3. Answering any questions your child and other children have about the research.
4. Exploring/explaining the terminology that will be used in the study (for example inclusion, exclusion and social exclusion).
5. Checking with your child and other children in their group about their understanding of the terminology.
6. Paper, crayons, marker will be provided to enhance expression of understanding. Any pictures created will be photographed and your child will be encouraged to take their art production home.

7. A check out process will be used at the end of the session to check for any emotional reactions.

Session 2 (Approximately 30 minutes) (Each session will be audio-recorded and any art work developed during each of the session will be photographed.)

1. The group leader will begin the second session with reading a preselected story about inclusion (based on the grade). The purpose of the book is to stimulate conversation.
2. Guided discussion will be used to gain an understanding of your child's views, ideas and understanding of inclusion and social exclusion. Some of the questions may include:
   a. What does exceptionality mean?
   b. Do you know of situations at your school where students have difficulty in school?
   c. Describe things that students may have difficulty with at school?
   d. They will also be asked how they may include children with exceptionalities.
3. Prompts will be used to encourage your child to elaborate on their responses. Each child will be asked, "Can you tell me more?" and "Is there anything else you can think of?"
4. Paper, crayons, marker will be provided to enhance expression of understanding. Any pictures created will be photographed and your child will be encouraged to take their art production home.
5. Your child will be given the opportunity to describe their art. This is voluntary and your child will be instructed that they can pass on describing their work.
6. A check out process will be used at the end of the session to check for any emotional reactions. (Please see Script)

Before Session 3
A university staff person who has signed a confidentiality agreement will transcribe the audio-recordings. Then the researchers will identify key words, phrases, and sentences. These key words, phrases, and sentences will be provided for use in the third session where your child will be asked to help sort the statements into themes or content areas.

Session 3 (Approximately 30 minutes) audio-recorded

1. One researcher/group leader along with your child and one or two other children with work together to sort the key statements. (One adult will be assigned to each group of 2-3 children)
2. Your child will be instructed to group the statements together in a way that makes sense.
3. Your child will be asked to place each statement into only one pile or to place them by themselves if they want.
4. Students will be thanked for their participation
5. A check out process will be used at the end of the session to check for any emotional reactions.

Possible Benefits
Previous research has indicated that children with exceptionalities are at risk for social exclusion by their peers, but little is known of children's views on this topic. As concept mapping has not

been used extensively in the field of education, and few studies have used this approach with children, this study will use concept mapping to better understand children's perceptions of inclusion and why some children with exceptionalities are sometimes socially excluded at school.

Student participation will benefit the broader educational community, as findings from this study may be used to help inform policy makers in their consideration and development of policies that further the development of inclusive learning environments. The research findings may also be used to inform teacher educators as they prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs of all students.

Possible Risks
Some student may experience emotional reaction when discussing inclusion and social exclusion. This can be a sensitive topic. Your child may have previous experiences and talking about these experiences may bring about emotional responses. The group leader and researchers will check in with your child at the end of each session to ensure that they are ok (Please See Script). Should your child have an emotional reaction the group leader will talk with your child and ask your child's permission to share that they were emotional with their teacher.

Should your child have prolonged reaction, the researchers recommend that you contact your primary health care provider for assistance. Or you may also contact one of the following:

School Guidance Services (We will check with each school to ensure that this is ok and the name and contact information will be individualized).

Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre (Emergency Services) - 709-777-4228
300 Prince Philip Drive
St. John's, NL
A1B 3V6

Mental Health Crisis Line (709) 737-4668 or 1-888-737-4668 (**24-hour** provincial crisis line with Mobile Crisis Response for the St. John's and surrounding area)

Central Intake for Children and Youth (709) 777-2200
(Monday to Friday intake and information service)

Withdrawal From the Study
Your child can withdraw from participation in this study at any point during data collection, without giving any reason. There will be no consequences for withdrawal from the study. If your child decides to withdraw, they will be given the opportunity to remove collected data where possible from the study. For example, they can remove the photographs of their drawings (students will be assigned a number) and the corresponding audio-recorded explanation of the drawing (students will be assigned the same number). If your child has participated in general discussion their comments will not be able to be identified and removed. You child can remove his collected data up to 4 weeks after the final session (session 3).

In addition to participating in the research project "*Children's Perceptions of Inclusion,*" as outlined in the preceding consent form, we are asking for your consent to use your child's data for a sub-project. Ms. Emily Butler is a graduate student in the Counselling Psychology program at Memorial University of Newfoundland and would like to use a portion of the data collected for her graduate student's thesis. This does not alter what you will be asked to do. If you would like, you can choose to withdraw your child's data from this sub-project.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

In order to ensure confidentiality, the identity of your child will only be accessible to the authorized researchers. Data from this research study will be published and presented at conferences; however, your child's identity will be kept confidential. The key statements from the guided discussion will be reported in aggregate form, so that it will not be possible to identify individuals. Moreover, the consent forms will be stored separately from the guided discussion transcripts, so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses.

Anonymity refers to not disclosing participant's identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure anonymity. Although we will report direct quotations from the guided group discussion, numbers will be used, and all identifying information pertaining to your child, and his or her teacher, school, school district and region will be removed. Identifying information will be removed from photographs of children's work. Your child will not be identified by name in any reports and publication.

Although the researchers will safeguard the confidentiality of classroom discussions to the best of their ability, the nature of groups prevents the researcher from guaranteeing that other members of the group will do so. Students will be encouraged to respect the confidentiality of other students by not repeating what is said in the discussion group to others, and be reminded to be aware that other members of the group may not respect their confidentiality.

Recording of the Data and Reporting of the Results

Your child's guided group discussion will be audio recorded and transcribed. The group leader/researcher will take notes as your child creates multisensory representations of inclusion.

Data from this study will be shared with all members of the research team. Data from this study will be used in conference presentations, submitted in journal publications, and presented to university faculty and classroom teachers. The data from consenting individuals will be reported in summarized form and through the use of direct quotations and images of children's multisensory representation of inclusion.

Storage of Data

All data, including audio recordings and transcription records, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and on password protected devices; consent forms will be stored separately from the data. Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. When the data is no longer required, all data will be appropriately destroyed (i.e., papers will be shredded and audio and video recordings will be erased).

Sharing of Results
We would be happy to provide you with the results of this study. Please provide your e-mail address if you would like a summary of the research findings e-mailed to you.

Questions
You are welcome to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your child participate in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact Sharon Penney through email at (scpenney@mun.ca) or by phone at 709-864-7556 or Gabrielle Young (gabrielle.young@mun.ca) or by phone (709) 864-4413.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix E - Parent Consent Form

Project Title: *Children as Researchers: Examining Children's Perceptions of Inclusion*

Consent:
Your signature on this form means that:
- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what your child will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw your child's participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect your child now or in the future.
- You understand that withdrawal from participation in the study will not affect your child's academic achievement now or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to end your child's participation *during* data collection, any data collected from your child up to that point will be retained by the researcher, unless you or your child indicates otherwise.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw your child's participation *after* the discussion group has been completed, your data can be removed from the study up until the sorting activity is scheduled, approximately 4 weeks after the final discussion group (session 3).
- Data will be anonymized, but it cannot be withdrawn once the study has been completed and the data has been aggregated and prepared for publication.

Consent for recording of data:

I agree to have my child audio-recorded during the discussion group for later transcription.	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to have my child audio-recorded engaging with multimedia (photos, drawings, or electronic imagery).	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to permit my child's work samples to be photographed.	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to have my child photographed engaging with multimedia (photos, drawings, or electronic imagery).	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to have my child's direct quotes used.	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to allow my child's data to be used in professional development resulting from this study.	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to allow my child's data to be used for a graduate student's thesis.	☐ Yes	☐ No

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

We would be happy to provide you with results from this study. Please provide your e-mail address below if you would like a summary of the research findings e-mailed to you.
☐ Yes _____

Please e-mail the results from this study to the above listed e-mail address.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your child's participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact Sharon Penney by e-mail (scpenney@mun.ca) or phone (709-864-7556); or Gabrielle Young by email (gabrielle.young@mun.ca) or by phone at (709-864-4413); Linda Coles (lcoles@mun.ca) or by phone at (709-864-8989) or Emily Butler (u23esh@mun.ca). We would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

Your signature confirms:

☐ I have read what this study is about and understand the risks and benefits for my child. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

☐ I agree to allow my child participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of his or her participation, that participation is voluntary, and that I may end my child's participation at any time.

☐ A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

My child's name is _____

_____   _____
Signature of parent   **Date**

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

_____   _____
Signature of primary investigator   **Date**
Dr. Sharon Penney
scpenney@mun.ca
(709) 864-7556

_____   _____
Signature of primary investigator   **Signature of primary investigator**
Dr. Gabrielle Young   Dr. Linda Coles
gabrielle.young@mun.ca   lcoles@mun.ca
(709) 864-4413   (709) 864-8989

_____   _____
Date   **Date**

Appendix F- Pictures used to explain inclusion, exclusion, and exceptionality

Picture A: Picture representing inclusion

Picture B: Picture representing exclusion

Picture C: Picture representing children with an exceptionality

Appendix G- Key Term Definitions

Key Terms

INCLUSION: welcoming and including everyone into the school and classroom, no matter what

differences they may have.

EXCEPTIONALITY: a strength (something a child is good at) or a need (something a child may

need help with) that someone has.

EXCLUSION: leaving someone out of something (example: not letting someone play with you,

someone being left out of music class, etc).

SOCIAL EXCLUSION: when someone's feelings are hurt or they feel sad about being left out of

friendship groups or other social activities (example: telling someone they can't play a

game because they are in a wheelchair).

Appendix H- Check-out card

Name: _____

Appendix I- Questions used in Focus Group

1. What does inclusion mean?

2. What does the word exceptionality mean?

3. What does it mean to be excluded at school?

4. Do you know of situations at your school where students have difficulty in school?

5. Describe things that students may have difficulty with at school?

6. They will also be asked how they may include children with exceptionalities.

Appendix J - Rules for Sorting Activity

Rules

1. You will work with one of the researchers and one or two other students to sort the key statements that we took from the transcripts.

2. With the help of the researcher you will be asked to sort and group the statements together in a way that makes sense to you.

3. You will be asked to place each statement into only one pile or to place them by themselves if you want.

4. We will thank for your participation and we will give you a certificate.

5. A check out process will be used at the end of the session to check for any emotional reactions.

Appendix K: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 2

Category: Inclusion	
Rating Scale: 5=Highly Relevant; 4-3=Moderately Relevant; 2-1=Less Relevant	
25. Inclusion means if you're left out or you're not.	5
11. Everyone is included at school	5
14. Everybody being together like a family when they're happy	5
20. Um, inclusion means, like, um, if someone isn't playing with anyone and they're feeling left out, go ask them to play with you.	5
23. It means you share	4
12. Everyone is included in the Earth.	4
21. On the playground people take turns with me	4
17. I ask them to play	4
16. Be open to everyone and everything	4
19. So, that means you have to let mostly everyone play or every single person	4
18. Playing with each other.	4
13. He's included in the galaxy, yes...	3
8. You should let everyone play with you because if you don't let every single person it makes them feel like that you don't care about them if they're sad	3
29. If people have autism, being nice to them.	2
30. If people have autism, share with them	2

Appendix L: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 2

Category: Exclusion	
Rating Scale: 5=Highly Relevant; 4-3=Moderately Relevant; 2-1=Less Relevant	
26. If, like. …someone wants to play and then the person says, "no," that's kind of like excluding them	5
22. It means not sharing, not being nice	5
36. Excluded would basically mean, if you're being bullied or left out in any kind of way. So, yeah, excluded means what I just said	5
9. Being rude to other people	5
24. It means you're being mean to other people.	5
13. He's included in the galaxy, yes, but excluded from the world	4
37. Because they're too young for a game, if they're too frustrated, or they're too big, or rough, or too gentle	3
8. You should let everyone play with you because if you don't let every single person it makes them feel like that you don't care about them if they're sad	2
25. Inclusion means if you're left out or you're not.	2
20. Um, inclusion means, like, um, if someone isn't playing with anyone and they're feeling left out, go ask them to play with you.	2
12. Everyone is included in the Earth.	1
25. Inclusion means if you're left out...	1
13. ...but excluded from the world	1

Appendix M: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 2

Category: Exceptionality	
Rating Scale: 5=Highly Relevant; 4-3=Moderately Relevant; 2-1=Less Relevant	
32. A boy…in our class has autism and he has some difficulties in school because he's either…having a hard time or…he has to sharpen his pencil and he… pushed on it too hard, maybe it broke	5
15. Because they're different people	5
10. He gets frustrated a lot	5
28. And sometimes he hugs, but he hugs right here, but he accidently chokes you because he doesn't know how much strength he's using	5
2. Or people with their eyes that are, like, some people that are blind or something.	5
3. It's just like old people, they can't see very well.	5
34. So, it means that people are good at stuff and people are not good at stuff	5
31. Yeah, it means your brain doesn't work and there's too many things going on, so your brain gets kind of messed up and you don't know how to do stuff right.	4
35. Some people have difficulty, um, in music because sometimes they don't sing the right notes	4
1. Someone is in a wheelchair	4
33. There are people having trouble with math	3
37. Because they're too young for a game, if they're too frustrated, or they're too big, or rough, or too gentle	2
29. If people have autism, being nice to them.	2

Appendix N: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 2

Category: Helping	
Rating Scale: 5=Highly Relevant; 4-3=Moderately Relevant; 2-1=Less Relevant	
4. Ah, by helping him with his math and his language sometimes	4
5. Helping people doing their homework.	4
6. To help people read	4
7. Helping people who are sad.	4
27. Helping your friend if they're hurt.	4
30. If people have autism, share with them	2
35. Some people have difficulty, um, in music because sometimes they don't sing the right notes	2
29. If people have autism, being nice to them	2
1. Someone is in a wheelchair	1
33. There are people having trouble with math	1
8. You should let everyone play with you because if you don't let every single person it makes them feel like that you don't care about them if they're sad	1
34. So, it means that people are good at stuff and people are not good at stuff	1
31. Yeah, it means your brain doesn't work and there's too many things going on, so your brain gets kind of messed up and you don't know how to do stuff right.	1
	1

Appendix O: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 2

Category 4: Helping; Subtheme 1: helping/schoolwork	
Rating Scale: 5=Highly Relevant; 4-3=Moderately Relevant; 2-1=Less Relevant	
4. Ah, by helping him with his math and his language sometimes	1
6. To help people read	1
5. Helping people doing their homework.	1

Appendix P: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 2

Category 4: Helping; Subtheme 2: Helping people when they are not feeling well/Helping with emotions	
Rating Scale: 5=Highly Relevant; 4-3=Moderately Relevant; 2-1=Less Relevant	
7. Helping people who are sad.	1
27. Helping your friend if they're hurt	1

Appendix Q: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 2

Category 4: Helping; Subtheme 3: Sharing/Playing	
Rating Scale: 5=Highly Relevant; 4-3=Moderately Relevant; 2-1=Less Relevant	
18. Playing with each other.	1
8. You should let everyone play with you because if you don't let every single person it makes them feel like that you don't care about them if they're sad	1
17. I ask them to play	1

Appendix R: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 2

Category: Helping; Subtheme 4: Sharing	
Rating Scale: 5=Highly Relevant; 4-3=Moderately Relevant; 2-1=Less Relevant	
30. If people have autism, share with them	1
23. It means you share	1
16. Be open to everyone and everything	1

Appendix S: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 4

Category: Inclusion	
Rating Scale: 3=Highly Relevant; 2=Moderately Relevant; 1=Less Relevant	
2. They're all drawing and having fun.	3
4. Because they're… including everybody	3
5. No one is left out.	3
12. My cousin, he has Autism, and on his birthday, we always go bowling and we always have a team [with] a puzzle piece design.	3
20. I have a friend and he has Autism and I accept him for who he is because he's my friend	3
21. I watched the movie Wonder. It teaches you about little stuff about who you are and that everyone is at the same place and even though that kid may have disabilities, but it still makes people a friend.	3
38. Play stuff that they can actually play and not stuff that they can't.	3
41. Be her friend.	3
42. I didn't have many friends until…we were sitting across from each other and I asked him does he want to be friends and he said, "sure."	3
45. this guy playing tag with another guy because he can't move his hands in the right positions to play any games and stuff on the iPads, phones, and stuff like that.	3
46. And the one who's being bullied, is saying, "Please stop." And there's another guy, and he is saying, "Hey you, stop bullying him."	3
9. how you're accepted to be whoever you want to be	2
3. It looks like they're sharing	2

17. I think exceptionality means you should include everyone for who they are, or what they look like	2
19. And I think that they shouldn't have done that and they should have included him and respected him– even though his face wasn't ordinary.	2
24. he gets mad at me a lot if I beat him or something, or if I do something smart in a game or something.	2
26. Well someone at my old school, they have Autism and they used to sometimes do inappropriate stuff. And a lot of people still accept him…because it wouldn't be nice to just leave him there	2
39. Well, my cousin who has ADHD, I have to play games that he's allowed to play that he likes playing. so the game is fun for me as well and for him. So then that way… he's not left out.	2
43. I have four squares, and the first one is somebody who is black and somebody who is white and they're holding hands because they might look different, but they can still be friends.	2
44. And just because they look different doesn't mean that, like, you shouldn't exclude them.	2
1. I see…a girl in a wheelchair, and she had to be paralyzed form her waist down maybe	1
8. It looks like they're not including them and they're making fun of him or something.	1
15. I think an exceptionality means just because you have something wrong or you have a problem that it doesn't mean that you won't be included for who you are and what you do.	1

16. Exceptionality really means like you can be accepted for like who you are, and, like, people won't like look down on you. Like, they can say, like, "Do you want to be my friend?" or like come up to you and just give you a high-five.	1
23. Exceptionality means that you're accepting people even though they have problems like my cousin.	1
25. But I still accept him because he's my cousin and he's a very good friend to me.	1
34. same with my cousin, if he loses at a game he'll get mad, but then his parents will say don't get mad and stuff and then he won't.	1
40. they might be not able to run, but they might be able to play a different game like hide and seek.	1

Appendix T: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 4

Category: Exclusion	
Rating Scale: 3=Highly Relevant; 2=Moderately Relevant; 1=Less Relevant	
6. They're bullying him.	3
7. Because… he looks sad and they're making rude faces at him	3
8. It looks like they're not including them and they're making fun of him or something.	3
18. The main character in the movie had a weird face and everyone would stare at him and look away and be mean to him.	3
19. And I think that they shouldn't have done that and they should have included him and respected him– even though his face wasn't ordinary.	2
46. And the one who's being bullied, is saying, "Please stop." And there's another guy, and he is saying, "Hey you, stop bullying him."	2
41. Be her friend.	1
45. this guy playing tag with another guy because he can't move his hands in the right positions to play any games and stuff on the iPads, phones, and stuff like that.	1

Appendix U: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 4

Category: Exceptionality	
Rating Scale: 3=Highly Relevant; 2=Moderately Relevant; 1=Less Relevant	
10. My cousin has ADHD and sometimes… if I beat him in the game or something he gets mad at me…	3
14. I feel like exceptionality is really nice because – just because you're different doesn't mean you can't do other things	3
23. Exceptionality means that you're accepting people even though they have problems like my cousin.	3
28. One of the classmates in our class, she has troubles with some of our subjects in class. Like language arts and sometimes math, and sometimes science	3
29. Some people like me, I have difficulty with math. I don't really get math sometimes. It's kind of my weakest in school subjects	3
30. I'm good at sports and gym	3
31. She is very good at science.	3
36. They could also maybe not be able to move their fingers in certain directions or do something physical with their hands, so they can't play any video games or stuff like that maybe.	3
1. I see…a girl in a wheelchair, and she had to be paralyzed form her waist down maybe	2
11. They're starting to figure out that he might have some problems or something.	2
15. I think an exceptionality means just because you have something wrong or you have a problem that it doesn't mean that you won't be included for who you are and what you do.	2

16. Exceptionality really means like you can be accepted for like who you are, and, like, people won't like look down on you. Like, they can say, like, "Do you want to be my friend?" or like come up to you and just give you a high-five.	2
17. I think exceptionality means you should include everyone for who they are, or what they look like	2
24. he gets mad at me a lot if I beat him or something, or if I do something smart in a game or something.	2
25. But I still accept him because he's my cousin and he's a very good friend to me.	2
26. Well someone at my old school, they have Autism and they used to sometimes do inappropriate stuff. And a lot of people still accept him…because it wouldn't be nice to just leave him there	2
27. My cousin has disabilities of learning at school because he has very great hearing, but if someone whispers he instantly looks at them and he has trouble looking at the teacher and learning	2
35. I'm kind of bad at listening. Sometimes I mishear people sometimes and I'm kind of making them repeat, and I kind of feel like I don't like asking people to repeat themselves.	2
2. They're all drawing and having fun.	1
5. No one is left out.	1
12. My cousin, he has Autism, and on his birthday, we always go bowling and we always have a team [with] a puzzle piece design.	1
13. how you're accepted to be whoever you want to be	1

19. And I think that they shouldn't have done that and they should have included him and respected him– even though his face wasn't ordinary.	1
21. I watched the movie Wonder. It teaches you about little stuff about who you are and that everyone is at the same place and even though that kid may have disabilities, but it still makes people a friend.	1
32. I'm great in math my whole life.	1
33. My cousin he always sooks and cries whenever he loses the game, but he mostly breaths so he doesn't get mad and yell at his friends.	1
34. same with my cousin, if he loses at a game he'll get mad, but then his parents will say don't get mad and stuff and then he won't.	1
38. Play stuff that they can actually play and not stuff that they can't.	1
40. they might be not able to run, but they might be able to play a different game like hide and seek.	1
41. Be her friend.	1
42. I didn't have many friends until…we were sitting across from each other and I asked him does he want to be friends and he said, "sure."	1
43. I have four squares, and the first one is somebody who is black and somebody who is white and they're holding hands because they might look different, but they can still be friends.	1
44. And just because they look different doesn't mean that, like, you shouldn't exclude them.	1
45. this guy playing tag with another guy because he can't move his hands in the right positions to play any games and stuff on the iPads, phones, and stuff like that.	1

Appendix V: Sorting Activity Results for Grade 4

Category: Helping	
Rating Scale: 3=Highly Relevant; 2=Moderately Relevant; 1=Less Relevant	
22. after you do something, and you make a wrong response, that is OK because you're able to fix that over	3
33. My cousin he always sooks and cries whenever he loses the game, but he mostly breaths so he doesn't get mad and yell at his friends.	3
37. help them with their work.	3
34. same with my cousin, if he loses at a game he'll get mad, but then his parents will say don't get mad and stuff and then he won't.	2
39. Well, my cousin who has ADHD, I have to play games that he's allowed to play that he likes playing. so the game is fun for me as well and for him. So then that way… he's not left out.	2
46. And the one who's being bullied, is saying, "Please stop." And there's another guy, and he is saying, "Hey you, stop bullying him."	2
13. how you're accepted to be whoever you want to be	1
3. It looks like they're sharing	1
11. They're starting to figure out that he might have some problems or something	1
14. I feel like exceptionality is really nice because – just because you're different doesn't mean you can't do other things	1
15. I think an exceptionality means just because you have something wrong or you have a problem that it doesn't mean that you won't be included for who you are and what you do.	1

16. Exceptionality really means like you can be accepted for like who you are, and, like, people won't like look down on you. Like, they can say, like, "Do you want to be my friend?" or like come up to you and just give you a high-five.	1
20. I have a friend and he has Autism and I accept him for who he is because he's my friend	1
24. he gets mad at me a lot if I beat him or something, or if I do something smart in a game or something.	1
25. But I still accept him because he's my cousin and he's a very good friend to me.	1
27. My cousin has disabilities of learning at school because he has very great hearing, but if someone whispers he instantly looks at them and he has trouble looking at the teacher and learning	1
32. I'm great in math my whole life.	1
35. I'm kind of bad at listening. Sometimes I mishear people sometimes and I'm kind of making them repeat, and I kind of feel like I don't like asking people to repeat themselves.	1
40. they might be not able to run, but they might be able to play a different game like hide and seek.	1
41. Be her friend.	1
42. I didn't have many friends until…we were sitting across from each other and I asked him does he want to be friends and he said, "sure."	1
43. I have four squares, and the first one is somebody who is black and somebody who is white and they're holding hands because they might look different, but they can still be friends.	1

Appendix W - Certificate of Participation

CERTIFICATE *of* PARTICIPATION

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

FOR SHARING YOUR THOUGHTS ON INCLUSION AND HELPING TO INTERPRET THESE IDEAS

We have learned from you, and from working with you, and thank you for serving as a
Student Researcher

Dr. Sharon Penney, *Principle Investigator*

Dr. Gabrielle Young, Co-Investigator

Ms. Emily Butler, Co-Investigator

MEMORIAL
UNIVERSITY

Appendix X - Curriculum Vitae

Work Experience

Research Assistant: **July 2018- Present**

Employed under Dr. David Philpott at **Memorial University of Newfoundland**. Required to assist with a project titled, "The Early Years". This project is focusing on the importance of Early Childhood Education for children within a Canadian context. I will be assisting with the writing for this project that will lead to publications and presentations.

Intern: September 2017- December 2017

Completed an internship under Dr. Lester Marshall at the **Student Wellness and Counselling Centre** at Memorial University of Newfoundland. This internship included completing 240 hours of direct counselling alongside completing 600 hours including assessment, group counselling, career exploration, and crisis intervention.

Research Assistant: **June 2017- March 2018**

Employed under Dr. Sharon Penney at **Memorial University of Newfoundland**. Required to assist with current research projects, engage in research relevant to Dr. Penney's projects, aide with data collection during focus groups, and arrange appropriate meetings with participants for the projects. I engaged in the research which led to a publication. Please see publications.

Graduate Assistant: May 2017-August 2017

Employed under Western University to edit publisher information within **the Exceptionality Education Journal**. Supervised under Dr. Gabrielle Young at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Literacy Coach: November 2016- May 2017

Employed as a **Youth Achieve! Literacy Coach** with Community Centre Alliance. This program provides basic literacy skills development to youth ages 11-17 years. The program is an attempt to prevent youth who are struggling in school from dropping out. As the Literacy Coach at Rabbittown Community centre, I worked with 5 youth one-on-one to teach these skills.

Inclusion Support Worker: October 2015 – June 2016

Employed as an **Inclusion Support Worker** to two students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at Early Achievers, St. John's, NL. This position included supporting the students with the classroom routines, classwork, activities, and socialization.

Applied Behavioral Analysis Home Therapist: April 2015 – October 2015

Employed as an **ABA Home Therapist** to a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This position was coupled with an **Inclusion Support worker** position at Children's Choice Learning Centre, Upper Gullies, NL. ABA duties include providing hands-on skills development and behaviour intervention to the child in their home. The Inclusion Support Worker duties include helping the child with daycare routines, encouraging inclusion in daycare activities, aiding in socialization, and behaviour intervention.

Primary/Elementary/Music Substitute Teacher: September 2011 – March 2015

Taught all subjects in the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (312.5 Teaching days as of April, 2015). Duties included lesson planning, following the Newfoundland and Labrador curriculum guides, using inclusion models for all children, using differentiated lesson plans to aide children who struggled with typical learning models, attending staff meetings, following teaching guidelines from Administration, creating assignments and tests, taking classes on fieldtrips, working with children with special needs and conducting a primary choir for National Tree Day at Bowring park, St. Johns, NL (September, 2015).

Education & Certifications

Graduate Student Candidate: May 2016- April 2018

Currently a graduate student at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Completing the Masters of Education (Counselling Psychology) program. **All course and internship requirements for this degree are complete. Currently completing thesis.**

Bachelor of Education (Primary / Elementary): August 2011

Graduated from Memorial University of Newfoundland with a **focus in Music**

Bachelor of Arts: May 2014

Graduated from Memorial University of Newfoundland with a **major in Psychology and a minor in Music and Culture**

Mental Health First Aid: October 2017

Completed through Memorial University

Applied Behavioral Analysis Certificate Program: April 2015

Completed through **Eastern Health**

 Entry-Level Early Childhood Education Course: August 2015

Completed through **College of the North Atlantic**

School Aged Orientation Course: April 2016

Completed through College of the North Atlantic

Emergency First Aid CPR/AED (Level C) Certificate: September 2015

Completed at the Canadian Red Cross, St. John's, NL

"Anxiety Disorders in Children & Youth": January 2015

Participated in a live webinar with Kaila McAnulty (M. Ed Counselling). Offered by **Child and Youth Care Assets**. Certificate available upon request.

"Anxiety – Practical Intervention Strategies – Part 2: January 2015

Participated in the online webinars with John Koop Harder (MSW). Offered by **Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute** Inc. Certificate available upon request.

"Thrive" Workshop: March 2015

Engaged in **four seminars** titled, "The Therapeutic Nature of Humor", "Play Therapy", "Nutrition & Mental Health", and "Music Therapy".

Volunteer Work

- Student Volunteer at the **Canadian Counselling Psychology Association** Conference in St. John's, NL in May 2017

- Current volunteer with **Thrive- Street Reach**. This organization provides hygiene items, clean needles, hot meals, support and socialization to youth and adults who struggle with mental illness or poverty in downtown St. John's, NL.

- Current volunteer with "Supper Bowl", a program offered that provides meals to underprivileged people living in the downtown area of St. John's.

- **Volunteer** at St. Matthew's School, St. John's, NL. Experiences included the breakfast program, school field trips, after school programs, drama club, pancake breakfasts for homelessness, and school concerts (2010-2015)

- **Co-taught Drama Club** at St. Matthew's School, St. John's, NL, with Mr. Gregory Woolgar (September 2011- May 2012)

- Offered free tutoring sessions to any child in grades K-12. This program **offered free tutoring to families** who could not afford to pay for tutoring. This ran from January 2012- May 2012

- Participated as a member of the **Festival Choir** at Memorial University for three semesters

- **Breakfast club** volunteer at St. Matthew's School from 2011-2014

Awards

- The Dr. Edith M. Manuel and Ms. Olga Anderson CFUW St. John's **Entrance Bursary** at Memorial University

- The **Canadian College of Teachers Scholarship** (Awarded annually to a full-time student in the Faculty of Education for outstanding research)

- The **Ever Green Environmental Scholarship** in Social Enterprise and Mental Health, in Memory of Edwin M. Drover

Publications/Presentations

- Penney, S., Young, G., Maich, K., & **Howell, E.** (Submitted September 30, 2017*). Promoting home-school communication surrounding children with disabilities: Parental perceptions in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.* Paper prepared in English and translated into German for publication in the anthology by D. Jahr & R. Kruschel (Eds.). Inclusion in Canada: Perspectives on Cultures, Structures and Practices. Weinheim, Germany: Beltz Verlag. (Currently in the process of being published)

- Penney, S., Young, G., Maich, K., & **Howell, E.** *Strategies to Promote Home and School Relationships Surrounding a Child with a Disability.* (2018). Inclusive Education Canada. http://inclusiveeducation.ca/2018/02/20/teachers-and-parents-working-together-to-support-inclusion/

- Presented the previously noted publication in a **Doctoral Series Presentation** alongside Dr. Sharon Penney and Dr. Gabrielle Young at Memorial University.
- Presented the previously noted publication in a conference held by **The Learning Disability Association of Newfoundland** alongside Dr. Sharon Penney and Dr. Gabrielle Young at Memorial University.
- Upcoming presentations/publications as a result of working on an "Early Years" project with Dr. David Philpott, Dr. Sharon Penney, Dr. Gabrielle Young, and Dr. Kimberly Maich.