UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# COLLABORATIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS IN SCHOOLS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

BY

© JOANNE M. BARDAK.

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This thesis is dedicated to the all the children who,
through their diversity and uniqueness,
challenge educators to seek more innovative and responsible ways
of meeting their needs.

And to the caring and dedicated educators
who are committed to lifelong learning and growth
so that they can create enriching environments for students
where meaningful learning occurs.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the meaning of the experience of collaborative working relationships for the educational stakeholders involved. This study sought out the experiences of regular and special educators, administrators, and support personnel from one urban elementary school to explore the phenomenon of collaborative working relationships in schools. A qualitative research approach was use to gain first hand subjective data of the experience of collaboration. In-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted with each participant, tape recorded and transcribed. The participant's transcribed protocol was analyzed according to procedures outlined by Colaizzi (1978) and Wertz (1984). Meaning units were identified and paraphrased, themes were abstracted, and common themes were clustered which reflected the experience of collaboration for the participant. Phenomenological analysis of the data revealed twenty-two themes. These themes were grouped into four component areas for the purpose of discussion. Themes forwarded by the participants that represented the structure of the collaborative process were time, administrator's role, role function, buy-in, and training. Themes that represented necessary collaborator characteristics were flexibility, openness, communication, and risk-taking. Themes identified that were reflective of the collaborative process were parity, trust, reciprocity, shared responsibility, support, commitment, acceptance, and resistance. Finally, themes identified by the participants as outcomes of the collaborative process were a child-centered approach, skill development, empowerment, personal fulfillment, and cost effectiveness. A shared description of the meaning of collaborative working relationships in schools was then generated from the themes. Recommendations for school administrators, school districts, school collaborators, and teacher educators were discussed based on the findings. Implications for future research were also discussed.

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# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

Historically, the provision of special services for people in society who have been deemed handicapped has varied greatly, with the most significant changes occurring within this century. Hewett and Forness (1977) provided a comprehensive and succinct history of the treatment of persons with disabilities that underscores the variability and discrepancy of services and treatment for these individuals. Treatment has ranged from cruel to humane, exile to inclusion, rejection to acceptance. This range can be accounted for by a variety of influences: natural influences; irrational and rational beliefs; social and economic conditions; religion, law, and scientific knowledge. Decisions regarding service delivery systems provided for individuals with special needs such as the segregated classes for students with special needs, are still reflective of these influences today.

In our schools and communities many exclusionary practices and negative attitudes are still prevalent and must be examined and reevaluated. To this end, Wolfensberger (1972) developed a philosophy and set of practices designed to expose and remove attitudinal, programmatic, and physical barriers that limit the integration and normalization of handicapped individuals. The development and attainment of goals related to integration and normalization of individuals with handicaps is still at issue today as educators, parents, and individuals with handicaps continue to struggle to remove barriers that deny the handicapped individual full participation in our educational system.

Twenty years following Wolfensberger's efforts in the area of normalization, administrative and managerial practices based on theoretical constructs such as the cascade model for service delivery (Reynolds, 1962) continue to influence our progress. Use of the cascade model has lead to the "justification" of placement of students in separate and segregated settings, as opposed to the regular classroom with support from special education services. Reynolds (1977) has since suggested a new paradigm, entitled the "instructional cascade", which contains fewer specialized places and more diverse "regular" placements. This new model would call for increased collaborative interaction between regular and special educators and other school level personnel to facilitate the educational needs of children with special needs in the regular classroom.

As increased integration of children with special needs becomes reality, examination of how regular classroom teachers are going to provide for the needs of those students in their class becomes critical. What will be the level and type of support afforded to the

teacher and child from special education services? How will this change in system structure and how might educators roles and responsibilities be carried out? Many researchers and educators are looking to collaborative frameworks to address these issues.

This is a time when education as a whole and special education as a subsystem of education are undergoing close review and transition, when questions are being raised as to the efficacy of segregated special education services, when answers are being sought as to the restructuring of the educational system, and when the role of the special educator and the relationship between special and regular education is under change. From these multiple concerns, the question arises - is increased collaboration between regular and special educators and related school personnel an effective part of that change?

It is recognized that change is an ongoing part of the education system today. As the system changes, so do the roles and responsibilities of people defined within that system. In some Alberta schools, educators are redefining their roles to better meet the needs of students and to function within the changing system, and in some cases, increased collaborative consultation between regular and special education personnel and others has been found to facilitate this merger. Many questions arise when this change, focused on the increased use of collaboration in schools, begins to become reality. Questions such as: what is the meaning of this newly defined collaborative relationship for those involved; how do the stakeholders function within this collaborative framework; what are the perceived changes to the system and the stakeholders within, and how do those changes impact upon the process of collaboration and the provision of services to special needs students?

## Justification for the Study

The establishment of collaborative relationships between regular and special educators has received a significant amount of attention in the special education and related literature recently (Friend & Cook, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Idol 1988; Lilly & Givens-Olge, 1981; West, 1990). Collaboration among school professionals who can share their expertise has been called for as a result of: greater diversity among the students that the school system is serving; increased severity of students with handicaps entering the school system; more children who are considered at risk for school failure; increased numbers of children from dysfunctional homes; and a myriad of other social and economic conditions (Cook & Friend, 1991). From the literature, many stated benefits of collaboration can be

cited. For example: school personnel and parents can be more directly involved in a student's educational program (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986; Idol-Maestas, 1983); interaction and collaboration among teaching professionals can foster mutual understanding and the sharing of material and instructional techniques (Idol et al., 1986); and, collaborative consultation is cost effective in that it allows special education teachers to manage larger caseloads than is possible when only direct special education services are available (Idol, 1988).

An appreciation for the range of student needs presented to teachers and the espoused benefits of collaboration have prompted educational leaders, policy makers and many teachers to support the development of collaborative working relationships in schools (cf. Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984a; Will, 1986). Despite the apparent need for and promotion of collaborative working relationships between educators in schools, the collaborative ethic is often non-existent in schools today (Phillips & McCullough, 1990).

Research has suggested that many teachers are neither prepared nor motivated to engage in the shared instructional planning and teaming that is necessary in the collaborative relationship (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmeldin, 1989; Gersten, Walker, & Darch, 1988; Myles & Simpson, 1989). Several reasons have been suggested for this reluctance on the part of regular and special educators, administrators and other stakeholders. Among these reasons, lack of ownership of programs, feelings of inadequate preparation and support, and a lack of training and experience in collaborative teaming may be the most significant (Friend & Bauwens, 1988; Idol, West, & Lloyd, 1988)

Gathering data from the lived experiences of stakeholders involved in the collaborative consultation process will assist in the development of understanding of the meaning of the collaborative experience and the development and implementation of the collaborative process at the school level. This information is becoming increasingly important as we look towards vehicles of system and school change to promote such concepts as integration of children with special needs into the regular classroom.

## Purpose of the Study

Through in-depth phenomenological interviews of regular and special educators, administrators, and support staff; observations of the collaborative consultation process; and related school data, this study explored the extrapolated meaning of the process of

collaborative consultation between educational stakeholders in one north-central, urban Alberta school where collaboration is defined and operational within the school.

This study represents an attempt to understand more fully the experience of educators and other school personnel as they engage in collaborative working relationships. Developing an understanding of the experiences of teachers who are currently functioning in collaborative relationships may provide some insight into what enables or inhibits the collaborative experience from being desirable and workable. The research literature to date, however, does not include in-depth reference regarding the meaning of the collaborative experience for those who are functioning within collaborative working relationships, therefore, requiring investigation in this area. A major motivating factor for undertaking this study, then, is the concern that although various models of collaboration are being put forward as desirable in education, little is known about how educators and others experience their engagement in collaborative working relationships in schools. Gaining a more complete understanding of what collaboration is according to those engaged in the process will set the groundwork for understanding how to further research collaborative school environments and how to evaluate them as being successful or not successful.

In order to gain an understanding of the experience of collaboration for school personnel it would seem essential for the researcher to explore with the participants the meaning of their experiences and to spend time observing and experiencing their life-world.

## Theory and Method

A naturalistic research paradigm which can accommodate qualitative methodology and phenomenological inquiry was selected as most appropriate for this research project. Naturalistic is a term used by Guba (1981) to identify a research paradigm used to investigate naturally occurring social phenomena. Important to the naturalistic research paradigm is that the researcher acknowledges his/her interdependence with the people who are the focus of the investigation. The researcher must accept that multiple realities exist and be open to all of them. The researcher must recognize the uniqueness of the phenomenon under investigation, yet believe that the value in describing and analyzing this case comes from its similarity to other situations with which readers may be familiar. Deep rich, qualitative data which permit the researchers and readers to identify with the participants in their setting is considered critical. The researcher in the naturalistic paradigm attempts to describe meaning from the perspective of the participants and, as such,

represents the key data-gathering instrument. In the naturalistic paradigm, the researcher must be open to the natural unfolding of events as they will guide the research process.

The qualitative framework of research has been utilized for this study as it is best suited to gaining an understanding of the process of collaborative consultation from the perspective of the participants. The researcher recognizes that a school is like a mini community filled with complex and dynamic relations that change over time and across circumstances. Through qualitative research methods the researcher was able to study the collaborative process without manipulating or controlling it to fit predetermined constraints or outcomes, but instead allowed it to emerge as part of a complex system full of complex interdependencies. According to Stainback and Stainback (1984b), the qualitative approach should be considered for research in education insofar as it helps to define the complexity of the school environment and the human relations therein.

In order to understand the processes involved in an activity such as collaborative consultation, one must examine the influences and variables involved within that process, many of which are not easily measured. Beliefs, perceptions, definitions of events, personal appraisals, attitudes, and personal reflections of the individuals involved in the process are all important to gain understanding of the process. In-depth phenomenological interviews, therefore, were utilized as the primary data source to gain first hand, subjective descriptions in the participants' experience of working in collaborative relationships. Phenomenological study allows the researcher to turn to the lived experiences of a phenomenon as it exists in the everyday world (Aanstoos, 1986). It is the task of the researcher, then, to describe the phenomenon with the purpose of illuminating the essential structures of the phenomenon without destroying the holistic meaning that the phenomenon provides (Polkinghorne, 1983).

Further sources of qualitative data collection in the form of observations, field notes, relevant documentation, and reflective journaling were utilized to establish the context of the participants life-world and to provide for support for trustworthiness of the study.

## Delimitations and Definitions

The focus of this study was the meaning of collaboration as experienced by educational stakeholders at one school including regular and special education teachers, administrators, and support personnel.

A number of terms of particular significance to this study are defined below:

Consultation is understood in this study as an indirect service provided to general educators (usually from special educators) that results in high-quality solutions to student related problems (Friend, 1985; Lilly & Givens-Ogle, 1981).

Collaboration is utilized in this study as an umbrella term to mean the act of working with others in a mutually beneficial way, of which consultation may be a part.

Collaborative consultation is defined in this study as an "interactive process that enables teams of people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems" (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986, pg. 1).

Inclusion/inclusive education refers to the provision of services for students with special needs taking place in the regular classroom often with the support of special education personnel.

Resource facilitators are the special education teachers in this study who have redefined their role to include consultation and collaboration with regular classroom teachers and others. This term was developed and utilized by the school district in which this study took place.

Special needs students/students with special needs represents a student for whom a significant adaptation must be made to either the regular program or the classroom setting in order to meet each child's needs.

Stakeholders are described as individuals within the school system who have a vested interest in the provision of services to special needs children.

Team members are those stakeholders working in collaborative relationships in the school.

## Preliminary Questions

The central question of this study was: What is the meaning of collaborative working relationships for the major in-school stakeholders who had defined their relationships as collaborative.

In order to address this question the researcher anticipated that the following related questions would have to be addressed:

1. What are the principles and characteristics of collaborative consultation.
2. How is collaborative consultation happening - in what time frame, environment, within what support system?
3. What is being accomplished through collaborative consultation?

4. How does collaborative consultation fit into the continuum of services for children with special needs and others?

5. What are the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved in this process?

6. How are stakeholders defining their relationships and patterns of interaction when engaged in collaboration?

7. What are the perceived effects of the collaborative process for the stakeholders involved?

## Assumptions

It is assumed in this study that individual schools have developed creative and unique ways of defining and implementing collaborative consultation between regular and special educators and related school personnel who serve the needs of special needs children in the regular class setting. Understanding how the school has established, defined and enacted the principles and characteristics of collaborative consultation provides the backbone for inquiry into gaining understanding of the system variables that are in place to support the process.

It is further assumed in this study that through in-depth phenomenological interviewing within the qualitative research process, the researcher can gain insight into the expressed experiences and perceptions of individuals involved in and affected by the collaborative consultation process and that the meaning of the collaborative consultation process for those individuals can be extrapolated from the expressed language of the participants. Gaining understanding in this manner will allow for interpretation of how participants view their roles and responsibilities and how they perceive these roles as changed within the system due to the collaborative consultation process.

It is also assumed in this study that collaborative consultation takes place in schools where it is supported by the majority of stakeholders in that school. Understanding what factors influence the stakeholders' perceptions of the collaborative consultation process is central to further understanding what affects their perception of the collaborative consultation process as being either positive or negative.

Finally, it is assumed that the process of collaborative consultation is being utilized in schools to provide for the needs of students with special needs in schools where collaborative consultation is in place. Gaining understanding then of how these needs are

being met, by whom and under what conditions allows for analysis as to how collaborative consultation fits into the continuum of services for students with special needs in that school.

## Significance of the Study

This study comes at a time of increased scrutiny of school organizations, educational programs, teacher professional development time, use of school resources, spending of special education dollars, and teacher performance in general. Policy makers, educators, politicians, parents, and a myriad of other interested stakeholders are very concerned about how educational time and dollars are spent and are seeking ways to make educational services more effective and efficient. Spending of educational dollars must be continually justified and, as a result, quantifiable, easily measurable performance objectives are often utilized to determine if programs or concepts implemented in schools are valuable. There is little evidence in the research literature of the use of qualitative data in the creation of policy regarding educational programs. Even less frequently are educational stakeholders asked the meaning of their lived experiences in their daily teaching/work world. This study seeks to contribute to the limited information in this area.

This study will provide educators, administrators, parents, and policy makers with insight into the collaborative consultation process as it is defined and operational in an Alberta school today. This study will highlight how the collaborative process is developed, supported, implemented and experienced through the expressed language of the stakeholders involved. Implications for the future direction of school personnel and school policy makers who desire to become involved in the collaborative consultation process will be revealed. More importantly, implications for how stakeholders (teachers, administrators, and support staff) involved in the collaborative process currently understand and carry out their roles will be expressed through this inquiry. Better understanding of the collaborative process, the meaning of the collaborative process for those involved in it, and the roles of the people involved is the goal of this research project.

This study is important in that it investigates a phenomenon which is becoming increasingly common in our schools today, but which has received little systematic investigation. It also employs qualitative methodology which will illuminate the process of collaboration in a way rationalistic inquiry can not. Once an understanding has been gained of the experience of collaboration in schools, further studies may springboard from these

findings which will allow for the further analysis of the principles and conditions for its functioning. This study is the beginning to understanding the collaborative consultation process as it is enacted in Alberta schools today.

## Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature and is divided into significant areas of research. Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual framework of phenomenological inquiry and the naturalistic research paradigm utilized for this qualitative study as well as addressing the issue of trustworthiness as conceptualized within the naturalistic paradigm. Chapter 4 outlines the particular methodological procedures used and includes information regarding the context for inquiry, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 5 consists of the phenomenological analysis of the participants' interviews. Chapter 6 illuminates the shared meaning of collaboration as defined by the participants. A discussion and analysis of the findings and their relation to relevant literature is presented in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 contains a summary of the study and provides a number of conclusions, recommendations, and implications derived from the study.

# CHAPTER TWO
# LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature as it relates to consultation and collaboration in schools, especially as it is conceived with respect to the working relationship between special and regular education. This chapter begins by addressing the history of school consultation and how it has evolved into a collaborative framework. The second section provides an overview of how collaborative consultation is currently viewed in theory and in practice. Following is a discussion of both the reported benefits and barriers to the collaborative process. An overview of the research related to necessary skills and competencies for those engaged in consultative relationships precedes discussion of the administrator's role in collaboration. The next section examines the literature as it relates to collaboration and system change. Finally, the types of on-going research in educational consultation are examined along with implications for further research.

## History of School Consultation

Even a preliminary view of the current literature related to school consultation will reveal definitions and descriptions that vary significantly in terms of theoretical basis, components and procedures. Much confusion exists regarding school consultation, due at least in part to the diverse descriptions of consultation in the literature today (Gresham & Kendell, 1987). An examination of the historical roots of school consultation may help bring some clarity to this issue.

School consultation models began to appear in the literature as potential bridges between the two separate systems of special and general education more than 20 years ago (e.g., Bauer, 1975; McKenzie, 1972; McKenzie, Egner, Knight, Perelman, Schneider, & Garvin, 1970). Lilly (1971) called attention to the need for a training-based consultative model of delivering special education services to handicapped children in mainstream settings. By this time, a variety of specialists from almost all categories of handicapping conditions had already written about the need for developing a trained consultant to work with teachers who served children with special needs. These were represented from the areas of speech and language (Yauch, 1952), hearing impairment (Paul, 1963; Streng, 1953), visual impairment (Lowenfeld, 1952), emotional disturbance (Knoblock & Garcea,

1965), and mental retardation (Dunn, 1968). Up to that point in time there was little coordinated effort to examine the practice of consultation in schools, however, since that time a more integrated concept of consultation has appeared.

Since the 1970's a more coordinated effort has been put forward by educators and researchers to understand the value of consultation in schools. The importance of consultation has been emphasized by Blake and Mouton (1976/1984):

> Consultation and education are probably the two most importance influences behind the forward movement of society. In certain respects, consultation is even more important than education in giving society its forward thrust. The reason is that consultation alone deals with the actual "here and now" problems - ones that, if solved, can make a real difference to real people in the way they live and work. Consultants offer assistance by intervening - this is by taking some action to help a client solve his or her problems. (p. 111)

The Blake and Mouton definition of consultation represents an early conceptualization of consultation that was dyadic (two-person) and more expert oriented and unidirectional than current, collaboratively oriented and multidirectional views. The concept of consultation has since evolved to be viewed as a mutually enhancing educational process that occurs between educators and others in order to provide high-quality solutions to student-related problems. The need for special education personnel who act as consultants and for classroom teachers to work together has been explored by many educators and researchers with increasingly more emphasis placed on a collaborative approach to consultation rather than an expert approach (Idol, Nevin, Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1993; Parsons & Meyers, 1984, Rosenfield, 1988), requiring a broad range of expertise. As early as 1978, Lippitt and Lippitt described the role of consultant as being more multifaceted than the expert model including roles such as advocate, as an information specialist, as a trainer/educator, as a joint problem solver and an identifier of alternatives, as a resource coordinator, and as a fact finder. All of these roles would require skill in working with others in a collaborative fashion, using effective communication and interaction skills coupled with a thorough knowledge of the decision-making process.

## Consultation as Collaboration

The concept of consultation as a mutual educational process is supported by many researchers and educators (Brown, Wyne, Blackburn, & Powell, 1979; Block, 1981;

Conoley & Conoley, 1982; DeBoer, 1986; Heron & Harris, 1987; Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986; Idol-Maestas, 1983; Lippitt & Lippitt, 1986; West, Idol & Cannon, 1989). West and Idol (1987) and Idol and West (1987) through their extensive review of the literature on school consultation have advocated the implementation of interdisciplinary networking among professionals involved in school consultation. This configuration would allow professionals with diverse expertise to work collaboratively to develop consultation as a viable, effective service delivery option for all students including those with special needs.

From the school consultation literature, Brown, Wyne, Blackburn and Powell (1979) defined school consultation in a manner which frames consultation within the overall rubric of educational collaboration. Brown et al. describe consultation as a process based on an equal relationship characterized by (a) mutual trust and open communication, (b) joint approaches to problem identification, (c) the pooling of personal resources to identify and select strategies that will have some probability of solving the problem that has been identified, and (d) shared responsibility in the implementation and evaluation of the program or strategy that has been initiated. This definition moves the role of consultant away from that of an expert advising and guiding others to that of a facilitative collaborator, skilled in drawing others into shared and mutual problem solving, program implementation, and program evaluation (West, 1990). However, despite attempts by some advocates of school consultation to de-emphasize the image of the expert consultant providing the answer to the problem identified by the consultee, the term consultation continues to be viewed by many in the educational community as an "expert" approach to problem solving.

The term consultation has since been teamed with the word collaboration in order to reflect the nature of consultation to include the concepts of mutual helping and joint responsibility. Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin (1986) used the term collaborative consultation to describe a special education service delivery option for students with handicaps that was intended to reflect this conceptualization of consultation:

> Collaborative consultation is an interactive process that enables teams of people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems. The outcome is enhanced, altered and produces solutions that are different from those that the individual team member would produce independently. The major outcome of collaborative consultation is to provide comprehensive and effective programs for students with special needs within

> the most appropriate context, thereby enabling them to achieve maximum constructive interaction with their peers. (p. 1)

In a similar vein, Curtis and Meyers (1988) defined collaborative consultation as a "collaborative problem solving process in which two or more persons [consultant(s) and consultee(s)] engage in efforts to benefit one or more person(s) [client(s)] for whom they bear some level of responsibility, within a context of reciprocal interaction" (p. 36).

More recently, in a discussion of the use of collaboration consultation as a school-based problem-solving process, West and Idol (1990) noted that in the Brown et al. (1979), Idol et al. (1986), and Curtis and Meyers (1988) definitions, there are two important notions critical in collaborative interventions: mutuality and reciprocity. West and Idol (1990) define mutuality as shared ownership of a common issue or problem by professionals. Reciprocity is defined as allowing collaborators to have equal access to information and the opportunity to participate in problem identification, discussion, decision making and final outcomes (West, Idol & Cannon, 1988).

Several definitions of collaboration in the educational context have been offered in literature of curriculum and supervision as well as educational administration. Citing the effective school literature, Olsen (1986) describes collaboration as "interactive processes based on joint problem-solving and a set of commonly held beliefs, norms, and practices" (p. 12). Schaffer and Bryant (1983), in describing a collaborative effort between institutions of higher education and local public schools, defined collaboration as "shared decision making, in governance, planning, delivering, and evaluation of programs. It is a pluralistic form of education where people of dissimilar backgrounds work together with equal status" (p. 3).

Scott and Smith (1987) broadened the concept of collaboration by defining the characteristics of the collaborative school. Within the context of the collaborative school, collaboration means engaging in "help-related" activities that promote effective teaching. Scott and Smith stress the importance of shared norms of collaboration among the school faculty. Norms are shared expectations, usually implicit, that help guide the psychological process and behavior of group members. When a norm is present, according to Schmuck and Runkel (1985), most people know that their view of things is shared by others, and that the others expect them to have the same viewpoint and to behave accordingly. Thus certain ranges of behavior are approved, others are disapproved, and still others are neither approved nor disapproved. What Little (1982) called the "critical practices of adaptability" are the principal practices encouraged by norms of collaboration.

1. Teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice.
2. Teacher are frequently observed and provided with useful critiques of their teaching.
3. Teachers plan, design, research, evaluate and prepare teaching materials together.
4. Teachers teach each other the practice of teaching.

It must be made explicit that collaborative consultation differs from the expert model of consultation in many ways. Cook and Friend (1991) describe collaborative consultation as a situation in which participants have a mutually defined goal; voluntarily participate in the process; have equally valued personal and professional resources to contribute; and are willing to share decision making, authority, and accountability.

As the concept of collaboration is being developed, attempts are being made to produce more comprehensive and specific definitions of collaboration. West (1990) offers this definition of collaboration for consideration which is designed to encompass the problems solving orientation of educational collaboration:

> Educational collaboration is an interactive planning or problem solving process involving two or more team members. The process consists of up to eight interrelated, progressive steps: goal setting, data collection, problem identification/analysis, alternative solution development, action plan development, action plan implementation, evaluation/follow-up, and re-design. Team interactions throughout the process are characterized by: mutual respect, trust, and open communication; consideration of each issue or problem from an ecological perspective; consensual decision-making; pooling of personal resources and expertise; and joint ownership of the issue or problem being addressed. The outcomes of educational collaboration may focus on changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviors at one or more of three levels: child, adult or system. (p. 29)

## Collaboration in the Current Context

The current trend in education is towards inclusive education where all students receive the majority of their education in the regular classroom. In Alberta Education's document *A Vision Shared: An Integration Resource for Teachers and Administrators* (1990) it is stated that "integration is appropriate for most children...(but that) an effective

program is not provided simply by placing the student with disabilities in the regular classroom" (p. 2). If it is appropriate to integrate children with special needs and if, in fact, it is inappropriate to simply place the student in that setting without support, the question arises: What will that support be, how will it be provided, who will provide the support, and within what structure? Alberta Education has produced a document entitled *Teacher Support Models* (1989) which outlines options for providing support to regular classroom teachers through consultation with special educators at the school level. Several models are examined, however, all emphasize the use of collaborative techniques between regular and special education.

A review of the literature demonstrates a current emphasis towards the merger of special and regular education services. Traditional special educational services have been criticized by many as placing the student at greater risk for educational failure by creating a fragmented approach to educational services and by creating an ever-widening gap in skills (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Will, 1986). Stainback and Stainback (1984) report that the separation between special education programs and the regular classroom contributes to a lack of coordination of services, raises questions about leadership, clouds areas of responsibility, and obscures lines of accountability in the schools. Teachers working independently with small groups or individually with students in isolated special education settings tend to minimize communication between special education teachers and general education teachers. This results in a lack of coordination between on-going classroom instruction and specially designed remedial programs.

This dual system of education has been characterized as establishing "artificial barriers among educators that promote competition and alienation" whereas a unified system has been described as promoting "cooperation through sharing of resources, expertise, advocacy, and responsibility" (Stainback & Stainback, 1984a, p. 107). Reynolds, Wang and Walberg (1987), in their argument for the restructuring of the school system, called for a move away from "disjointed incrementalism" to a "new wave of innovation in which special education would join others to advance to a broad program of adaptive education for all students" (p. 396). In addition, given the inconsistency of efficacy research from studies comparing current special education alternatives (Sindelar & Deno, 1978; Weiderholt & Chamberlain, 1989) decisions about how, to whom, and under what circumstances to provide services to students with special needs is still in need of significant investigation. A merger between general and special education services, both

philosophical and practical, has been discussed as a way to respond to the deficiencies in current special education practices (Stainback & Stainback, 1984a).

According to Keogh (1988), the question is not if increased cooperation and sharing between regular and special education is desirable, but rather how to provide adaptive and appropriate education for all students.

Support through the use of collaborative models implemented by teachers can take a variety of forms in the collaborative environment. Basic collaborative structures include (a) mutual helping formats such as Collaborative Consultation (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986) and Peer Consultation (Pugach & Johnson, 1987); (b) team formats, such as Teacher Assistance Teams (Chalfant, Pysh, & Moultrie, 1979) and Prereferral Teams (Graden, Casey, & Christenson, 1985); (c) joint teaching formats such as co-teaching or team teaching (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989); and (d) teacher learning formats such as peer coaching (Showers, 1990).

A number of service delivery options for students with special needs related to the above collaborative models have been described and evaluated in the special education and related literature that address a closer working relationship between regular and special education. Idol and West (1987) provide a comprehensive overview and evaluation of various consultation models and the various service delivery options that are currently being utilized. Within a spectrum of service delivery options, consultation between regular and special educators, to varying degrees, is a component. These consultation service delivery options can range from full time indirect service as in the Vermont resource-consulting model (Paolucci-Whitcomb & Nevin, 1985) to the resource teacher alternative model (Vasa, Steckelbuy, & Ronning, 1982 as cited in Idol & West, 1987) in which consultation is presently a minor component.

Consultation is becoming recognized as a service necessary for the integration of students with special needs into the regular classroom. Lilly and Givens-Olge (1981) called for the increasing need for cooperation and communication between regular and special education and a decreasing distinction between regular and special education techniques. Collaboration among school professionals who can share their expertise has been called for due to the greater diversity among students the school system is serving, the increased severity of students with handicaps entering the school system, the more children who are considered at risk for school failure, the increase in children from dysfunctional homes, and a myriad of other social and economic conditions currently affecting our school systems. Cook and Friend (1991) state that no single professional or single group of

professionals will have the expertise to meet the needs of all students served in our schools and that collaborative consultation between professionals where each can contribute towards the generation of solutions is needed.

In Canada, the use of consultation models between regular and special education is not as well documented as in the United States. One model that has been in effect and has made available published documentation and analysis is the Manitoba Consultative-Collaborative Service Delivery Model (Freeze, Bravi, & Rampaul, 1989). This model is based on the belief that the goal of special education is to provide the best education possible to all students. "Special education is neither a preserve of experts nor a special service for some children; rather it is an integral part of the evolution of an equitable, egalitarian, non-exclusionary, and professionally developed educational system" (p. 48). Some noteworthy features of this approach include non-categorical service delivery, the use of ecological assessments which are data-based and curriculum referenced, an indirect service base, systematic rather than child-focused intervention, the crucial role of the resource teacher and other support staff, the use of home-school problem solving approaches, funding based upon school needs rather than individual child needs, and adequate professional development activities for all staff involved in programs for students with special needs.

In Alberta, an example of one school jurisdiction's move toward a more collaborative approach to service delivery for students with special needs is the Edmonton Catholic School District's School Based Service Delivery Model for Students with Special Learning Needs - Learning Resources Model (Willis, 1990). The Learning Resources Model as described in the document is a "multi-dimensional service delivery model which focuses on developing within each school a collaborative approach to planning and programming for students with special learning needs" (p. 3). It is described as a school based, flexible model that should change to accommodate the needs of the teachers and students within that system through a range of service options and a team approach to programming.

Regardless of the particular format being utilized to express the new collaborative relationship between regular and special educators and related school personnel in which consultation is a part, certain benefits of these interactive, collaborative relationships are being identified in the literature.

## Benefits of Collaborative Consultation

When examining the literature, many stated benefits of collaborative consultation can be cited: school personnel and parents can be more directly involved in a student's educational program (Idol et al., 1986; Idol-Maestas, 1983); interaction and collaboration among teaching professionals can foster mutual understanding and the sharing of material and instructional techniques (Idol et al., 1986); collaborating teachers can develop teaching and management techniques that prevent future classroom problems and reduce the amount of referrals from classroom teachers requesting special programs (Graden, Casey & Bonstom, 1985); classroom teachers can develop strategies that assist many students with academic and social problems not just those labeled with special needs (Idol-Maestas, 1983); and collaborative consultation can be cost effective in that it allows special education teachers to manage larger caseloads than is possible when only direct special education services are available (Idol, 1988). In direct relation to students with special needs, the following stated benefits of collaborative consultation are found in the literature: reduction of stigma attached to special needs students who had previously been served in pull-out programs (Lloyd, Crowley, Kohler, & Strain, 1988; Reisberg & Wolf, 1986; Will, 1986); potential decrease of referrals for special education placement and, therefore, a decrease in the possibility of mislabeling students as having special needs (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1982; Christenson, Ysseldyke, & Algozzine, 1982; Nevin & Thousand, 1986).

Collaborative consultation has also been cited as desirable between regular and special educators at the school level for the following reasons: having local resource personnel is superior to having outside consultants; one time sessions with outside consultants prior to expected implementation of a program are not useful, as compared to those provided by in-house consultants during the implementation stage; specific concrete training that provides first hand experience is useful; and direct participation in learning, including direct observation is useful (Berman & McLauglin, 1978; Hutson, 1979; Lawrence, 1974; Mazzarella, 1980; McLauglin & Murch, 1978 as cited in Idol & West, 1987).

## Barriers to Collaboration

Teachers may resist engagement in consultative or collaborative relationships for a number of reasons. Several prominent barriers to effective collaborative consultation have been noted in the literature. These barriers include: lack of planning for collaborative interaction (Idol et al., 1986; Snow, 1988); lack of training in consultative skills and competencies and collaborative relationships (Idol et al., 1986; Snow, 1988; Thousand, Nevin, & Fox, 1987); lack of time for effective consultation; lack of a common knowledge base from which educators can work (Idol et al., 1986; Johnson, Puguch, & Hammittee, 1988; Snow, 1988); out-dated hierarchical relationships that are not conducive to collaborative formats (Idol et al., 1986; Johnson et al., 1988; Snow, 1988); and collaborators demonstrating a lack of responsibility or ownership for all students (Idol et al., 1986; Johnson, Puguch, & Hammittee, 1988; Snow, 1988; Thousand et al., 1987).

Huefner (1988) wrote extensively about the potential barriers to consultation in schools. Huefner's comments focused on the dangers of casual or premature implementation of consultative formats. Huefner was concerned that if implemented inappropriately, a consultative format could lead to inefficient or ineffective caseloads for special education resource personnel, causing them to be unable to truly meet the needs of students with special needs or their classroom teachers. Secondly, there is a danger that direct service models of consultation could be unwittingly converted into a tutoring or classroom aide models, thereby under utilizing the consulting teacher's potential contribution to regular education. Thirdly, the consultation model is at risk when unrealistic expectations such as viewing the consulting teacher model as a panacea for services to special needs students and the overloading or underloading of the consulting teacher with respect to expectations for services to classroom teachers. In addition, Huefner viewed inadequate support from regular educators and administrators due to insufficient preparation and resistance to the collaborative format as a barrier to collaborative consultation.

Teachers' attitudes towards integration and teachers' resistance towards change have been frequently noted in the literature as barriers to the implementation of collaborative formats in schools. As cited in Heidemann (1988), research regarding teacher attitude toward mainstreaming has been both positive (Guerin & Szatlocky, 1974; Harasymiw & Horne, 1975) and negative (Shotel, Iano, & McGettigan, 1972; Vace & Kirst, 1977).

Teacher attitude toward mainstreaming is also affected by various institutional variables (Larrivee & Cook, 1979). Heidemann (1988) conducted in-depth interviews with 23 rural Alberta teachers to determine their perceived problems and concerns regarding the mainstreaming of students with handicaps. Heidemann concluded that teachers felt a real sense of isolation in the mainstreaming process. Teachers reported that lack of time, combined with a lack of support services and educational preparation lead to feelings of guilt and inadequacy. These teachers were not involved in a collaborative relationship with a special educator at the school level although many cited increased interaction between regular and special educators as being a critical factor in the successful mainstreaming of students with handicaps.

Other studies have been conducted on a wider basis, for example, 314 regular education teachers were surveyed in Illinois by Phillips, Allred, Brulle, and Shank (1990) to examine their attitudes and perceived abilities in working with students with handicaps. The results from this study showed that regular educators perceived that they were both willing and able to work with special needs children when they were part of the decision making process and were involved with other regular and special educators in a collaborative/consultation relationship. Studies examining teacher attitude about or resistance towards collaborative formats generally demonstrate that teachers who are prepared and supported in terms of time, resources and personnel are less resistant to entering into collaborative relationships with others (Tetreault, 1988, as cited in Thousand & Villa, 1990).

## Skills and Competencies of Collaborators

A number of researchers have examined consultation knowledge, skills and competencies that are required by those engaged in consultative relationships (Canon, Idol, & West, 1992; Friend, 1984; Friend & Cook, 1988; Heron & Kimball, 1988; Idol, 1988; Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1993; Kurpius & Lewis, 1988; Polsgrove & McNeil, 1989; Tindal & Taylor-Pendergast, 1989; West & Cannon, 1988). Collectively, these studies have produced great lists of skills and competencies that would be beneficial for those involved in consultative relationships. Although consultation researchers, trainers, and practitioners have yet to come to a consensus on a common set of necessary consultation skills (Nevin, Thousand, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Villa, 1990), there is agreement on the fact that collaborators in consultative relationships must build skills and

competencies in three main areas. These areas are interpersonal communication, knowledge of consultation research, theory, models, and procedures, and competency in problem solving and evaluation. In addition, some researchers (Idol, 1988; Idol et al., 1993) have indicated that collaborators must also demonstrate competencies in knowledge of exceptional students, special education history, legislation, and legal rights.

## Administrator's Role in Collaboration

Frequent in the educational administration literature is the examination of the role of the administrator towards the creation of collaborative cultures in schools where teacher resistance is overcome (cf. Firestone & Wilson, 1985; Jwaideh, 1984; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Peterson, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989). Glatthorn (1987) states that strong leadership at the school level is essential to the development of collaborative relationships where educators engage in cooperative professional development. The administrator must provide leadership in fostering norms of collegiality, in modeling and rewarding collaboration, and support cooperation. It is the administrator's responsibility to make the structural changes to support collaboration (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Piersal and Gutkin (1983) state that long term enthusiastic support of administrators is essential for consultation programs. Consultation programs need not only verbal support from administration, but also an appropriate allocation of time to become stabilized and effective (Graden et al., 1985). Gerber (1991) identified three essential administrative behaviors that contribute to collaboration in the school: program advocacy, visible participation, and support for the maintenance of the program. According to Gerber, these behaviors create the building blocks of the collaborative ethic: credibility and durability.

Program advocacy refers to the promotion of beliefs, goals and information about the value of collaboration. According to Phillips and McCullough (1990) this involves the building of a collaborative ethic involving:

1. Joint responsibility for problems
2. Joint accountability and recognition for problem resolution.
3. Communication of a belief that the pooling of talents and resources is mutually advantageous, with the benefits of increased range of solutions generated, diversity of expertise and resources available to engage in problem solving, and the superiority and originality of the solutions generated.

4. Communication of a belief that teacher or student problem resolution merits expenditure of time, energy and resources.

5. Communication of a belief that the correlates of collaboration, namely, group morale, group cohesion, increased involvement in the problem solving process, and support for classroom innovation are important and desirable .

In addition to the promotion of the collaborative ethic through supporting the principles and benefits of collaboration, the administrator must be involved in the provision of specific strategies and methods for carrying out collaborative efforts. The administrator must be involved in advocacy for the collaborative process through a visible commitment to it, which further builds credibility for the process (Gerber, 1991). This can be accomplished through providing staff training on methods and strategies of collaboration, visibly endorsing and participating in the collaborative process, and, most importantly, creating the time and resources in which collaboration can occur. Finally, administrators need to provide on-going support so that maintenance and durability can be achieved within the collaborative process. This means that the administrator is prepared to support the process with documentation on program effectiveness so that the case can be made for on-going program support.

## Collaboration and System Change

Some authors contend that the collaborative process itself, when conducted appropriately, is an effective vehicle for bringing about change in teacher attitudes and reducing resistance to change (Fullan, 1991; Goodlad, 1987; Rosenholtz, 1989). Development of parity among professionals, trustworthiness, shared responsibility, and reciprocity is the key to reduce resistance to change according to Idol et al. (1986). Conoley and Conoley (1982) believe that by cultivating a collaborative problem solving relationship between teachers, attitudes and perceptions will change and resistance will be reduced.

It is interesting to note that the collaborative process itself appears to account for a number of the variables identified by Waugh and Punch (1987) in their examination of teacher reciprocity to systemwide school change in the implementation stage. According to their findings, teachers are receptive towards change when: fears and uncertainties associated with change are alleviated, the new educational system has practicality in the classroom, there are important aspects of the new educational system that they believe in,

they perceive support of their role in the school within the new system, when the personal cost of change is not greater than the benefits, and that when compared with the old system, the new system is seen as beneficial. The question, of course still remains, can the process of collaborative consultation help to facilitate change in the educational system and is it the type of change that is needed and being called for in the literature. Examining the role of collaboration as a vehicle for school change has significant importance to gaining understanding of how to affect teachers' attitudes towards implementing change.

Collaborative consultation as a process has been related to what effective schools research is saying about what is needed in school today. The effective schools literature shows a relationship between instructional support to improve the skills of educators and the academic growth of students. Effective schools can be described as having these characteristics: 1) effective instructional leadership, 2) expectations for high achievement, 3) monitoring of student progress, 4) an orderly and safe environment, and 5) emphasis on teacher variables that increase academic learning time (Edmonds, 1982; Lezotte, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Robinson, 1983, as cited in Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 1992). Idol and West (1991) describe collaboration as a "catalyst for effective schooling" (p. 70). Scott and Scott (1990) in *The Collaborative School* state that the collaborative school is easier to describe than to define and that its elements are based on effective schools research. These elements include: a belief that the quality of education is largely determined by what happens at the school site; a conviction that instruction is most effective in school environments characterized by norms of collegiality and continuous improvement; a belief that teachers, as professionals, should be responsible for the instructional process and be accountable for its outcomes; a belief that the use of a wide range of practices and structures are needed to enable administrators and teachers to work together on school improvement; and, that the involvement of teachers is necessary in decisions about school goals and the means for achieving them (p. 2).

In effective schools research, evidence is growing regarding the organizational conditions necessary to promote teacher development. For example, Rozenholtz, Basslernad, and Hoover-Dempsey (1986) surveyed 1213 teachers in 78 schools to measure the relation of ten organizational variables of the workplace to the teacher's reported skill acquisition. This report showed that the condition most apparent in effective schools is the degree to which teachers collaborated with one another. Rosenholtz et al. concluded that professional development is one direct outcome of collaboration as teachers share ideas, strategies, and techniques with their colleagues.

Little (1982) examined high success, high involvement schools (as measured by both achievement scores and teachers' participation in staff development) in order to identify those variables conducive to staff development. Little found that in effective schools teachers participated in the following behaviors: they frequently talked to one another about teacher practices; they planned, designed, and evaluated teaching materials together; they were encouraged to play the role of instructor with one another. Little concluded that staff development is greatest when a high degree of collegiality is the norm. In a related study, Little (1984) discovered that staff development programs were effective where collective participation of staff and administration was required and where collaboration was encouraged to build trust, to demonstrate reciprocity, and to develop group efficacy over time.

It is apparent that collaboration between educators is a process that has been given a lot of attention in the professional literature of late as it relates to the merger of regular and special education, the changing roles of educators, the development of new service delivery models for special education and school effectiveness. It is important to examine the research base in collaborative consultation as it relates to the above.

## Research Types in Educational Consultation

Four main types of studies have been conducted in the special education and related literature concerning educational consultation: field based survey research; follow up studies, outcome studies; and process studies (Heron & Kimball, 1988). Each of these areas of study will be briefly discussed with an emphasis on the results as related to collaborative consultation. This will be followed by a discussion of how this study fits into the current scientific dialogue.

A number of field-based survey in consultation have examined preferences for various models, comparing and contrasting the following models of consultation: mental health model, medical model; expert model; and, collaborative (sometimes defined as behavioral) model. Findings have generally shown that preferences for a particular model are related to particular roles. For example, psychologists prefer a mental health model, and teachers prefer a collaborative model (Babcock & Pryswansky, 1983). Teachers tend to prefer a collaborative consultation model because it focuses on the client's problem and because the collaborative format utilizes stages consistent with a problem solving approach (Babcock & Pryswansky, 1983). According to West and Idol (1987), field based

preference studies find that a collaborative orientation enhances the consultation success. In special education, specifically, studies have examined the resource room teacher's role as important in providing collaborative consultation services to regular educators (Evans, 1980). These studies discovered that this role function was rated as important by regular educators (Speece & Mandell, 1980), and that the climate created by collaboration between educators is an integral part of effective consultation (Friend, 1984).

Follow-up research studies have been conducted to examine and evaluate the use of consultation skills utilized by graduates who have completed consulting teacher training programs. Studies indicated that resource teachers trained in consultation skills tended to engage in consultation as part of their regular duties in the field (Idol-Maestas & Ritter, 1985).

Outcome studies are numerous and varied in this field. All attempt to answer the question, "Did consultation work?" Using meta analysis, Medway and Updyke examined 125 outcome studies related to consultation published between 1970 and 1985, with 54 studies meeting their criteria for inclusion in the final analysis (i.e., reported quantifiable outcomes, use of a control group, or use of multiple subjects). Results showed that consultee and/or client behavior improved as demonstrated through 192 positive outcomes.

Process studies in consultation research take into account that consultation in schools is a social activity. It involves two or more people who are attempting to improve the educational skills of the consultee, the learning or performance of the client (student), or the structure, design, or operation of the system (Heron & Kimball, 1988). Studies related to the consultation process have focused in two areas which according to the literature seem to be central to its success: interpersonal skills, and communication skills. Research in this area consists basically of the use of questionnaires and rating scales. The current literature on the interpersonal process aspects of consultation represents a quantity of descriptive data indicating that an effective consultant is one who facilitates a cooperative and positive relationship between participants, uses clear communication, and promotes consultee participation at every stage of the process (Heron & Kimball, 1988). For a current and comprehensive examination of skills deemed important for both regular and special educators for the collaborative consultation process and for meeting the needs of integrated students see Cannon, Idol, and West (1992) and West and Cannon (1988).

In review, the research base has focused on examining the outcomes of consultation efforts, determining preferences for consultation models, and identifying effective communication/process variables that facilitate consultative interaction. Evans (1991) notes

in the concluding remarks of her examination of the research base in collaborative consultation in special education that most research reviews in consultation and other collaboration related literature frequently end in statements of how difficult it is to conduct research on these constructs, how broad and how complicated these topics are and how difficult is to determine clear directions for future research. However, she concludes that this "is not a valid justification for the limited empirical knowledge in the area" (p. 13).

## Implications for Further Research

Implications for further research in the area of collaborative consultation have been outlined by several prominent researchers in the field. According to West and Idol (1987), school consultation and related collaboration research is in its early stage of development. They also state that "in special education the use of consultation as an indirect service delivery model has far outdistanced any theoretical or empirical base" (p. 404). West and Idol (1987) call for continued research in theory and model building, and both basic and applied research. It is in the area of applied research that the present study falls and therefore recommendations in this area of study will be discussed. In addition, West and Idol call for "sound applied research" in which the focus is "on the complex, multidimensional variables (input, process, and outcome) and their interactive effects within the consultation process" (pg. 405). Heron and Kimball (1988) echo this direction in their statement that "future research should maintain a broader based ecological perspective to increase the relevance of consultation" and "the effectiveness of consultation cannot be appropriately evaluated without examining the environment in which the services were delivered" (pg. 24).

Heron and Kimball (1988) note that as consultation effectiveness research evolves, all facets of the consultation environment and ecological variables should be considered. These include: intervention management (space, facilities, record keeping, evaluation procedures, maintenance of intervention); logistics of the collaborative team process (coordinating of schedules, responsibilities of team members); fiscal cost (personnel requirements, training and inservicing needs, caseload size, facilities required); time cost (consultation activities and the time required for each); organizational factors (written policies, administrative support, clarity of roles, consultation skills of consultee and consultant, referral patterns, support of consultation by parents, students, and support

professionals); and, generality of consultation outcomes (application of strategies by consultee).

The following chapter discusses the current study in light of the conceptual framework and research paradigm utilized. The key concepts of qualitative methodology and phenomenological inquiry will be discussed. A comparison will be made between the naturalistic paradigm which was utilized for this study and the rationalist paradigm.

# CHAPTER THREE

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PARADIGM

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the characteristics of the conceptual framework of phenomenological inquiry and the naturalistic research paradigm. The chapter begins with an explanation of the key theoretical underpinnings and concepts inherent in qualitative methodology and phenomenological inquiry . The second part of this chapter compares the key assumptions of the naturalistic research paradigm which were utilized for this study with the key assumptions of the rationalistic paradigm. The third part of this chapter relates Guba's (1981) criteria for the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiry to the steps utilized in this study to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

## Understanding Qualitative Methodology

The term qualitative research does not refer to a single method, but is an umbrella term for numerous methods and techniques (Osborne, 1990). Qualitative research can be conducted from the conceptual framework of symbolic interaction, ethnography, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. Qualitative research methods encompass research strategies such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing and document analysis which allow the researcher to obtain first hand knowledge about the world of the participants. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to get close to the data, thereby developing the "analytical, conceptual, and categorical components of explanation from the data itself" (Filstead, 1970, p. 6). Guba (1981) provides three reasons why a qualitative approach is more suitable then quantitative methods to examine social/behavioral phenomena: (1) there are multiple realities, existing chiefly in the minds of people; (2) it is impossible to maintain investigator neutrality when working with people; and, (3) human behavior is rarely context free. Qualitative research approaches, then, should be based on the reality of the participants as viewed in the natural context in which they function, by a sensitive and reflective researcher.

Although the use of qualitative research methodology is comparatively new in the field of education, it has been used for a long time in the areas of anthropology and sociology. In the past few decades adherence to the logical positivist approach in education has been questioned, criticized, and judged less than adequate by educational researchers

like Culbertson (1983) and Borman, LeCompte, and Goetz (1986). Other researchers and educators (Bogdan & Lutfiyya, 1988; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Iano, 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1985) posit that there is a need for a different type of research strategy than quantitative research in education; a research strategy that allows researchers to broaden their perspectives to encompass new ways of knowing and understanding. These authors contend that the field-oriented qualitative approach may prove quite useful in educational research. Bogdan and Biklen (1982), in writing about the use of qualitative research in education, indicate that qualitative research strategy has some of the following characteristics which make it desirable in educational research:

1. Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the direct source or data, and the researcher is the key instrument of investigation.
2. Qualitative research is descriptive.
3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
5. "Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

(pp. 27-30)

West (1977) also points out that qualitative research approaches "allow one to understand how conceptions held by people shape their behavior, at least in part, and how such conceptions and behavior change over time" (p. 61).

## Phenomenology

The phenomenological approach in qualitative research is based on existential phenomenological thought, which has its origins in both phenomenology and existential philosophy (Valle & King, 1978). Colaizzi (1978) states that the existential-phenomenological view involves the philosophical position that we are in and of the world. The researcher in the phenomenological study begins to identify data by turning to the lived experiences of the phenomena as they exist in the everyday world (Aanstoos, 1986). In accordance with the naturalistic paradigm and the principles of human science philosophy, the descriptions of the experience as given by the participants are recognized as contextual and blend with the common meanings of the historical, social, and cultural situation. This view sets phenomenological research and natural science research apart. That is, in phenomenological study, the individual is not viewed as merely an object in the world, but

as forming an inseparable unity with it. The individual, therefore, has no existence apart from the world and the world has no existence apart from the individual. The meaning of each individual's existence can be viewed only within the context of the world and vice versa, therefore, discussion of one in the absence of the other would render the discussion meaningless (Valle & King, 1978). For this reason, it is critical that the researcher actively engage the participants as active co-researchers in the inquiry.

Phenomenology's subject matter is the world as experienced by the individual. Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, referred to this world as the Levenswelt or lifeworld. It is "the everyday world as it is lived by all of us prior to explanations and theoretical interpretations of any kind" (Giorgi, 1975, p. 99). The starting point of existential phenomenological thought must be an individual's direct and immediate experience (Valle & King, 1978). Husserl's famous maxim "unto the things themselves" reflected his belief in the importance of using lived experiences as phenomenology's starting point. The task of the phenomenological researcher, then, is to study people's experiences as they occur in the everyday world. In accomplishing this, phenomenological research adopts a critical, descriptive approach as opposed to the explanatory and primarily quantitative approach of experimental psychology (Seamon, 1982).

Phenomenological researchers have challenged the natural science approach to psychology and stressed the importance of existential-phenomenological thought for all aspects of psychology. The implications of moving the pendulum away from natural science methodology towards phenomenology are broad, as outlined by Giorgi (1971):

> The overall effect, therefore, of the phenomenological critique of the way experimental psychology has been practiced is to free psychology from artificial boundaries and restrictions in terms of the number and kinds of phenomena that can be studied, and also in the ways in which these phenomena can be approached. This freedom in turn will permit a new period of growth and development for psychology (p. 14).

Phenomenology and other qualitative research methods are understood and evaluated according to the naturalistic paradigm as opposed to the rationalistic or natural science paradigm. The use of the naturalistic paradigm as it is conceived and related to this study will be discussed in the succeeding section.

## The Naturalistic Paradigm

Guba (1981) distinguishes between the naturalistic and rationalistic paradigms of inquiry. Each paradigm has its legitimate place in empirical inquiry, neither one being inherently superior to the other. Rather, the selection of a paradigm of research inquiry should be made on the appropriateness of certain key assumptions to the problem being investigated. This study utilized those assumptions and methods that are encompassed in the naturalistic paradigm. Guba (1981, pp. 3-8) suggests that these assumptions concern the nature of the reality, the nature of the inquirer/object relationship, the nature of truth statements, methods, quality criterion, source of theory, knowledge types used, instruments, design, and setting.

### Characteristics of Naturalistic Research

Table 3.1 provides a brief comparison of the key assumptions held by the rationalistic and naturalistic paradigms. The naturalistic paradigm has been selected as being most appropriate for the present study. The following section will examine the ten assumptions of the naturalistic paradigm and how they apply to the study.

Table 3.1

A Comparison of Key Assumptions in the Rationalistic and Naturalistic Paradigms*

| Assumptions | Rationalistic | Naturalistic |
|---|---|---|
| The Nature of Reality | focus on single variable | multiple realities exist |
| The Nature of the Inquirer/Object Relationship | independence | acknowledges interdependence |
| The Nature of Truth Statements | generalizations possible | working hypotheses possible |
| Methods | preference for quantitative data | preference for qualitative data |
| Quality Criterion | rigor | relevance |
| Source of Theory | deductive | inductive or "grounded" |
| Knowledge Types Used | propositional | tacit and propositional |
| Instruments | tests, machines, etc. (measurable) | researcher |
| Design | advance design (a priori) | emergent design |
| Setting | controlled | natural, uncontrolled |

*adopted from Guba (1981)

The Nature of Reality.

Naturalistic inquiry assumes that multiple realities exist for individuals as they experience their lives and are affected by many situations, people and conditions, both remembered and experienced. Over the three-month period of the study, the reality of working in collaborative school environments was examined for the major stakeholders in one school. The reality of this experience was both personal and multi-dimensional to each of them. The researcher's task was to describe this reality in all its complexity and variety, but not by disassembling the experience, but rather through providing a description of the wholeness of the experience. In this manner, the researcher sought to provide a sense of this lived experience; a sense of reality that could become vital and meaningful to others.

The Nature of the Inquirer/Object Relationship.

The naturalistic paradigm recognizes that the researcher and the participants must interact and that in doing so each influences the other. This interdependence of inquirer/object must be recognized by the researcher and monitored as the researcher moves through inquiry, analysis and interpretation of the experience of the participants. In the study, the researcher made every effort to see the world and interpret it from the perspective of the participants. In doing so, the meaning of the words and experiences related could be given accurate description and interpretation. At the same time, the researcher attempted to maintain her own perspective as an inquirer (Wilson, 1977) through continuous monitoring of her own perceptions of the experience of collaboration and of her reaction to the experience as described by the participants.

The Nature of Truth Statements.

The researcher in a naturalistic study is not out to prove the truth of a principle someone has previously expounded. Rather, the goal of naturalistic inquiry is to provide a rich description of a phenomenon to allow those who read about it to easily recognize similarities and differences in situations they have experienced or may encounter. Out of examining the specific contexts of the participant's experiences, the generation of a working hypothesis is feasible, the truth of which will be highly context dependent. Guba (1981) suggests that "human behavior is rarely, if ever, context-free; hence knowledge of human behavior individually or in social groups is necessarily ideographic, and the differences are at least as important as the similarities to an understanding of what is happening" (p. 4). This study provides a description of the lived experience of working in

collaborative relationships in schools through the use of in-depth phenomenological interviews that should find resonance with those with similar experiences.

Methods.

The naturalistic paradigm shows a preference for the use of qualitative methods, while rationalists prefer to use quantitative ones. Guba suggests that either methodology is applicable to the other paradigm, yet researchers tend to relate to qualitative versus quantitative methodology suggesting a relationship between paradigm and chosen methods of inquiry. This study employed primarily qualitative methods including in-depth phenomenological interviews, participant observation, taking of fieldnotes, collecting of relevant documents, and keeping a reflective research journal. These methods of data collection permitted the researcher to produce rich descriptions portraying the lived experiences of the participants.

Quality Criterion.

Naturalistic research strives to provide descriptions of experience that are meaningful and relevant. In doing so, naturalistic inquiry often appears "messy" as it attempts to describe the multi-faceted aspects of the experience, situation, and context. Yet, according to Bolster (1983), this is precisely what makes this paradigm relevant to school investigation. Teachers and other school staff members live cluttered, context-rich lives. To ignore parts of this existence would be to ignore their reality and defeat the purpose of the research. For this study to be valid, it must reflect the human situation as it relates to the reality of the participants.

Source of Theory.

Naturalistic inquiry considers the human experience to be the source of theory from which working hypotheses can be derived inductively in an attempt to describe and explain the phenomenon under study. Naturalistic inquiry recognizes that each participant brings his/her uniqueness to the situation, but at the same time, comparisons may ultimately be possible due to common themes with other cases. These common themes can further find correspondence with other cases and further hypotheses or, in some cases, grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) can be developed. Therefore, during naturalistic inquiry it is imperative that the researcher not try to utilize previously held principles or theories against which the data from the study would be compared. Instead, the researcher gathers

the experiences as described by the participants to formulate a statement of shared experience that can be utilized by others as a tool for examination of their own experiences.

Knowledge Types Used.

Naturalistic inquiry utilizes both propositional and tacit forms of knowledge. In this study, tacit knowledge such as intuitions, apprehensions, and feelings revealed the meaning which collaborative working relationships held for the participants. Propositional knowledge such as the participants' written and spoken language, relevant school documents, and observational and field notes also provided critical information for the researcher in her attempt to understand the context of the lived experience of collaborative relationships as described by the participants in this study.

Instruments.

In research which purports to investigate the subjectivity of human beings, the key instrument for investigation must be another person with whom the participants have established rapport and with whom they are willing to enter into an ongoing dialogue (Wolcott, 1975). As it was in this study, the critical instrument for data collection then becomes an empathetic and sensitive researcher who is willing and able to take on the perspectives of the participants.

Design.

The rationalistic paradigm always begins inquiry with an advanced or a priori design which carefully delineates all the aspects and steps of the research inquiry prior to the onset of investigation. Naturalistic inquiry, comparatively, would appear to be quite undisciplined in that the design is considered to be fluid and allowed to emerge in response to the researcher's attempt to procure a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation. This is, of course, one of the most challenging and frustrating aspects of naturalistic research in that the researcher must be prepared to surrender to the phenomenon under investigation; willing to give up unrealistic or unfruitful methods of inquiry and take on new sources of information and methods for obtaining that information when necessary. In the research proposal for this study, the primary focus was identified, the participants were selected, and the methods for inquiry outlined. However, this proposal did not commit the researcher to a rigid plan, but instead allowed the researcher to follow sources of information and methods of inquiry in some areas that had not previously been

anticipated, while at the same time dropping some sources and information and methodological procedures as they appeared to be unworkable and unrealistic in the field. The researcher's job then is to carefully outline this process and portray to the reader that appropriate conceptual framework and methodology were utilized to collect and interpret the data.

Setting.

Many of the previous assumptions of the naturalistic paradigm imply that the research setting must be a natural one; uncontrolled and free from manipulation by the researcher. To attempt to control or change what the participants normally do or think in relationship to their experiences would destroy the naturalness which makes this type of research relevant and powerful to educators. Participants in this study were both interviewed and observed in their natural school and classroom settings. All attempts were made for the researcher to become a "fixture" in that setting over the course of the three month investigation in order to limit researcher effects on the participant responses or actions.

The use of the naturalistic paradigm for educational research has many positive characteristics which are now being recognized in the literature. Wideen and Holborn (1986), in their survey of research in Canadian teacher education, call for increased support for and expansion of qualitative research in education. Others such as Bolster (1983), call for increased support of the naturalistic paradigm in educational research as it is better able to reflect the central importance of the teachers' perspective and creation of meaning:

> The most important elements of any social situation are the shared meaning which participants take from the process of interaction and which ultimately shape their behavior. Significant knowledge of any social situation, therefore, consists of an awareness of the emerging meaning that participants are developing and the specific ways that the meanings are functioning to shape their endeavors and thus the characteristics of the situation itself. (p. 303)

Concerns About Trustworthiness.

Questions sometimes arise about the internal and external validity, the reliability, or the objectivity of naturalistic research. This section attempts to address the issues that are related to the trustworthiness of data collection, analysis and interpretation through the naturalistic paradigm.

Guba (1981) maintains that validity, reliability, and objectivity are scientific terms which belong within the rationalistic paradigm. Instead he argues convincingly for the use of the terms credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as more appropriate to use when answering questions regarding the trustworthiness of naturalistic research. Guba's description of trustworthiness is echoed in the writing of other researchers, educators, and theorists (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Geertz, 1979; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Wertz, 1984,1986; Wolcott, 1975) and is considered here as a succinct and useful way to present a comparison of the issue of trustworthiness in both the rationalistic and naturalistic paradigms.

The following section draws mainly from Guba's (1981) "Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries" in which Guba identifies four aspects of trustworthiness: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Table 3.2 compares these four aspects of trustworthiness and their respective terminology in the rationalistic and naturalistic paradigms.

Table 3.2
Scientific and Naturalistic Terms Appropriate to the Aspects of Trustworthiness in Rationalistic and Naturalistic Paradigms

| Aspect | Scientific Term | Naturalistic Term |
|---|---|---|
| Truth Value | Internal Validity | Credibility |
| Applicability | Generalizability | Transferability |
| Consistency | Reliability | Dependability |
| Neutrality | Objectivity | Confirmability |

*adopted from Guba (1981)

Credibility.

The truth value or credibility of naturalistic research requires that the researcher demonstrates that the data represent the truth about what occurred. The term credibility implies that the researcher's task is to show that the data are believable because the thoroughness and total integrity of the description enables the reader to get a complete understanding of the event or phenomenon. To establish credibility, Guba suggests that the researcher remain engaged in the field over a prolonged period of time, and utilize on-going and persistent observation during the period of data collection. Peer debriefing,

triangulation, collecting related documents, and checking the meaning of the transcripts with respondents also allow for increased credibility. Prior to engagement in data analysis, the researcher must first "bracket" or suspend his/her preconceptions, beliefs, and biases regarding the phenomenon. The ultimate goal of this procedure is to foster greater openness and receptivity on the part of the researcher to the phenomenon as it is actually expressed by the participants. This process of self-reflection is continual, occurring over the entire course of the research study and is meant to bring objectivity to the investigation. Objectivity, from a phenomenological perspective, is fidelity to the phenomenon and is characterized by "a refusal to tell the phenomenon what it is, by a respectful listening to what the phenomenon speaks of itself" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 52).

During data analysis, checking for coherence between different sources of data, testing interpretation against one's data, and obtaining respondents' reactions to the report in various stages of development provide further checks of credibility.

Transferability.

A scientific study done in the rationalistic paradigm has to meet the criterion of external validity or generalizability. Guba suggests the use of the term transferability when researching under the naturalistic paradigm. It implies that a naturalistic researcher does not expect findings from the study to be generalizable completely to different situations outside of the study. Rather, the researcher attempts "to form a working hypothesis that may be transferred from one context to another depending on the degree of 'fit' between the contexts" (p. 11). The goal, then, is for the researcher to collect thick descriptions that will allow the reader to visualize the context and grasp the meaning. The reader may then be able to transfer the ideas from the study to new situations, being aware of those characteristics in the study which do and do not fit their own lived experiences. Transferability can be increased when the researcher provides details of the setting in which the study takes place carefully giving the reader a complete picture of the context and a "feeling" for the participants' situation in the study.

According to Osborne (1990), generalizability in phenomenological research is also based upon empathic understanding. Thus, if the description of a person's experience resonates with the experiences of others, it has empathic generalizability. Generalizability in phenomenological research is therefore established a posteriori as opposed to a priori as it is in rationalistic research (Osborne, 1990).

Dependability.

Consistency, Guba's third aspect of trustworthiness, asks whether another study conducted under similar circumstances would produce similar results. Since in naturalistic studies it is impossible to repeat a study under identical circumstances, dependability, rather than the scientific term of reliability, is preferred. Guba suggests that naturalistic researchers leave an "audit trail" (p. 21) to show the steps the researcher has taken at various points in the data collection and analysis so that others wishing to follow that pattern can do so. Leaving an audit trail also allows the reader to determine if the methodological decisions made during the course of data collection and analysis were appropriate to the question. Dependability is further enhanced if, after data analysis is complete, the researcher seeks the assistance of an experienced naturalistic researcher to perform a dependability audit to ensure that acceptable practices were followed.

Confirmability.

In any study, the researcher must be aware of the potential of his/her subjective bias clouding the data and its interpretation. Neutrality, or confirmability as it is termed in naturalistic inquiry, is the extent to which the findings of the study truly reflect the experiences of the participants rather than the biases of the researcher. It is critical in this type of inquiry, which may be more prone to researcher bias due to the fact that the researcher must take both the insider's perspective and yet maintain his/her own, to have a number of tools to maintain confirmability throughout the study. Guba specifically pointed to two steps which the naturalistic researcher can take in the interests of confirmability. Triangulation, which was earlier suggested as enhancing credibility, also supports confirmability because it forces the researcher to collect and examine data from a variety of sources and perspectives. Practicing reflection by keeping a journal is another way of becoming aware of the researcher's orientation. In addition, confirmability can be maintained through the use of frequent member checks throughout the course of the study, allowing modifications to be made that more accurately reflect the perspective of the participants.

For a naturalistic study to be trustworthy, it is important for the researcher to engage in some essential procedures, namely triangulation and member checks, complete and insightful descriptions, leaving of an audit trail, and researcher bracketing and reflection. The methodological procedures undertaken to ensure trustworthiness in this study will be discussed in Chapter 4.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In choosing a research methodology, the researcher must determine which approach will be most appropriate for answering the research question. Phenomenological methodology, with its emphasis on meaning and understanding individual experiences of a phenomenon, seemed to be appropriate for gaining greater insight into the phenomenon under investigation. The phenomenological approach uses first person descriptions of how a phenomenon is experienced and may therefore provide us with a greater understanding of the school stakeholders' experience of working in collaborative relationships. Moreover, the intent was to investigate and understand the experience of collaborative working relationships in their entirety as opposed to narrowing the focus to one aspect of the phenomenon, such as the participant's perception to what the barriers of collaboration are. For these reasons, it was felt the phenomenological research methodology was the most appropriate for this study.

In this chapter, the methodological procedures that were undertaken during the course of this study are outlined beginning with the bracketing of the researcher's presuppositions and beliefs. In the second section the context of the inquiry is discussed in terms of the researcher gaining entry and establishing credibility, the selection of the participants, a discussion of the development of collaboration at the study school, and a description of the setting. In the third section of this chapter, methods of data collection and the role of the researcher during data collection are discussed. This chapter ends with an outline of the phenomenological data analysis used as well as a discussion of how the researcher dealt with the primary interview data and the secondary data in the analysis and writing stages of the study.

## Bracketing of Presuppositions and Beliefs

The act of bracketing of one's presuppositions and beliefs is critical in phenomenological inquiry. Awareness of one's presuppositions and biases is necessary because it is from this perspective that one views and interprets the data. As Polkinghorne (1981) explains, the researcher must "cleanse himself/herself of presuppositions . . . [in striving] to allow the modes and objects of consciousness to be seen as they are in their

original appearance" (pp. 6-7). Therefore, every attempt was made in order that I be aware of my own biases regarding the phenomenon under investigation and to suspend or bracket them so that I could be open to the participants' lived experiences and allow the data to "show themselves". Following is my personal story as it relates to collaborative working relationships and a short discussion of the beliefs and biases I currently hold in relation to this phenomenon.

I am a trained and practicing special education teacher with six years teaching experience. I have taught in special needs segregated classrooms through to programs that emphasized a highly integrated format. I have worked extensively with various professionals and paraprofessionals involved in service delivery to special needs children both within the school, within the district school system, and from outside agencies.

I have experienced a wide range of responses to my role as a special educator. When I first began teaching in a segregated, self-contained classroom, we did not have all the rights and responsibilities afforded a regular classroom program. Integration of special needs children into regular program was viewed and expressed as "dumping" of the students on classroom teachers and as an abdication of my responsibilities as a special education teacher. It was impossible to get a teacher to cover my class; even getting a substitute was at times difficult. Overall, I felt as singled out as I'm sure the children did.

As an educator who believes that all children, regardless of their level of functioning, have a right to be considered fully functioning members of a school body and that all educators within a school, regardless of their title or teaching assignment, have responsibility for the education of all the students served by that school, I was very uncomfortable with my "place" and status within the school. More importantly, I did not feel that the children unfortunate enough to be labeled "students with special needs" were being treated fairly or with respect. I believe that every child has a right to have his/her educational needs met in a way that ensures success both academically and socially in an environment that is most educationally enhancing, by caring and well-informed educators, within a supportive and interested school milieu. I began to wonder out loud with the other educators in my school how this could be accomplished in our school.

In my third year of teaching, we had an administrative change at our school. The new administrator had little experience with providing educational services to students with special needs. However, he had a firm belief that it was the responsibility of the teachers themselves to develop, implement, and evaluate school programs that provided the best

possible educational programs for the students they serve. This change in focus provided the impetus for system-wide change at our school.

The staff at the elementary school where I was teaching decided, after much philosophical debate and personal soul searching, to reconstruct the school's mission statement and to develop a statement of beliefs about students, specifically about students with special needs. Included in those statements were concepts reflecting a redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of special and regular educators with a value placed on shared responsibility, shared problem solving, shared accountability, and an overall collaborative outlook. Also included was a statement that planned consultation time between regular and special educators was both appropriate and necessary to develop a collaborative approach and to meet the needs of students with special needs in the regular program. It was also stated that special services would be provided to the students with special needs where appropriate and necessary; providing for their unique needs outside the sphere of the regular classroom if necessary.

As a special educator, my primary responsibility shifted from removing students from the mainstream and "fixing" them, to working jointly with the regular educators to explore possibilities in how we could make curricular, instructional, and environmental accommodations for the child so that he/she could experience success in the regular class. In addition, we examined ways in which we could share ideas and expertise so that all students, regardless of their level of functioning, had the most appropriate educational experience. The development of this collaborative process took at least 3 years and was (and still is) under constant change as the needs of the teachers and the students changed. It was a dynamic and exciting professional interchange; not the staid, defensive, closed-door experience I had when I first started teaching. There were many painful hurdles as teachers learned to trust one another, truly share their spaces, resources, and ideas, and live with the flexible nature of the model. However, for the first time I felt part of a team that was endeavoring to meeting the needs of all students and it developed into the most enjoyable teaching experience I have had. Other teachers working within the process expressed to me the same type of feeling.

As a result of my personal experience and subsequent involvement with educators who are experiencing a shift toward more collaborative work environments and the personal research and investigation I have conducted to date, I have come to hold certain beliefs about the development and maintenance of collaborative working relationships in schools which are outlined below.

1. Educators and other school personnel must choose to engage in collaborative relationships; the collaborative condition cannot be forced upon them or the essence of collaboration breaks down.

2. Educators and other school personnel who form collaborative relationships will experience many pitfalls and setbacks; resistance to an unfamiliar process and new roles may destroy their efforts.

3. When collaboration does occur it will impact greatly upon both the personal and work lives of those involved because it essentially requires a major shift in one's way of being in the world.

4. Collaborative working relationships can result in a more enjoyable work environment that is viewed as both more productive and more meaningful by those involved.

5. Collaboration between school stakeholders may assist those involved to provide more or better services to our increasingly heterogeneous school population, including students with special needs.

6. The development of collaborative relationships in schools will occur only if there is effective leadership and only if the leader is willing and able to provide for the conditions in which collaboration will occur.

Since returning to graduate studies in educational psychology, I have become very interested in the whole area school of collaboration including the restructuring of special and regular education services, alternate options for service delivery for special needs students; various teacher support models, issues surrounding integration of students with special needs, the development and implementation of collaborative consultation at various levels of education, and the characteristics, attitudes, and skills of individuals involved in successful collaborative relationships. I am aware that my interest and extensive reading in these areas coupled with my previous experiences as a special educator and a member of a collaborative school team are a clear indication of my "vested interest" in the area of collaboration. However, in phenomenological inquiry, such awareness is critical in that it allows for suspension of the researcher's presuppositions and biases which creates the opportunity for a fresh immersion into the lived experience of the participants (Wertz, 1984).

## Establishing the Context for Inquiry

### Gaining Entry

Following is a chronology and description of the process of gaining entry and establishing effective rapport with the participants of this study.

The researcher gained approval to conduct research from the school district on March 01, 1993. Shortly thereafter, the school principal was contacted with the researcher and the principal meeting on March 18, 1993 to discuss the research proposal. The research proposal itself was presented to the teaching staff on March 20, 1993. During this meeting, the research project and its purpose were explained, the interview formats were discussed, and ethical issues were addressed. In addition, the other methods of data collection (observations and school data), data analysis, and use of information gained through data collection were discussed. Although the school administrator was favorable towards the research proposal, she clearly left the decision up to the staff whether to become involved in such research as a group or as individuals. All individuals present at the meeting responded favorably to the research purpose and design. One teacher was highly concerned about the confidentiality of both the school and the individual teachers involved. All teachers were assured that both the identity of the school and the individuals would remain confidential and their identity anonymous.

At this meeting, the support staff were not present as the study originally intended to focus on the teaching staff. In hindsight, it would have been appropriate to have all school staff present as every staff member was eventually included in the study. It became evident to the researcher that this school, which had defined itself collaboratively did so with the inclusion of all staff members, not just professional teaching staff members. The researcher remained to answer questions and returned on March 25, 1993 to respond to any further questions and concerns.

The researcher gained entry to the school on April 08 and began to establish herself as part of the school by informally visiting with staff members, attending meetings, spending time in the staffroom and so forth. This time facilitated the establishment of rapport and trustworthiness with the staff. On April 25 in-depth phenomenological interviews of participants began. Formal observation of classrooms began May 05 and continued until June 20, 1993. Interviews for verification, clarification, and elaboration with all individual participants began June 10, 1993. The researcher remained in the field

approximately two or three half days/week from April 08 to June 30, 1993 at which time data gathering was complete.

Selection of participants.

Within the naturalistic research paradigm it is important that the design be fluid and allowed to emerge as a response to the researcher's attempt to procure a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation. When the researcher began this inquiry, it was intended to examine collaborative working relationships between educators in schools, particularly between regular and special educators who work collaboratively to meet the needs of special needs students. The source of data, therefore, was intended to be regular and special education personnel who defined their working relationship as collaborative, who were willing to explore the meaning of this collaborative experience, and who would be able to provide rich descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. Through engagement in the research process, it became apparent that limiting the inquiry to these individuals could not provide a rich and meaningful description of the experience of collaborative working relationships as defined by these participants. It became clear that the meaning of the collaborative working relationships of the teachers was highly intertwined with the other school personnel including administration and support staff; that these individuals contributed significantly to the meaning of collaboration for the teachers and without their descriptions of experience, the study would be incomplete. Their experiences, therefore, were sought out through in-depth phenomenological interviews.

The Development of Collaboration

It is important here to discuss how the concept of collaboration developed at this school as it has a major bearing on the framework utilized by the participants in this study when they discussed their experience of collaborative working relationships. As was stated in the introduction, the integration of students with special needs had become a major goal of Alberta Education in the late 1980's and early 1990's as was articulated through several Government of Alberta publications. Districts and schools began to develop action plans that would address the goals of inclusion. The staff at the study school examined the issue of inclusion within the framework of what types and structures of teacher interaction would best facilitate this process. In doing so, they developed the concept of a high level of interaction and on-going support between teachers; facilitating the needs of all students through the collaborative efforts of both regular and special educators and related support

personnel. This staff, therefore, decided that the collaborative format would be the best vehicle for introducing an inclusive education philosophy and practices into their school. It is interesting to note, however, that the development of this collaborative philosophy did not focus around the word "collaborative" or "collaboration", but instead around a set of beliefs and practices that the stakeholders used to define ways of being and ways of interacting in their school that would best facilitate the inclusion of all students into the regular class program to the greatest degree possible.

Description of Setting

The study school is set in a middle socio-economic residential area in a north-central Alberta city. Student population was 150 at the time of the study with a higher-than-district average of students with special needs enrolled at the school. The school has the capacity to facilitate almost twice as many students and previously had a population of 300 or more students, but due to the building of a new school in the area, this school's student population had been significantly reduced and staff reduced accordingly. In total there were six regular classroom comprised of one classroom for each of grades 1 through 6.

All participants in the study were teachers, administrators, or support personnel at this school and have experienced working in collaborative relationships with one another and could provide descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. The staff at this school had developed a model of interaction which encouraged collaboration between regular and special education teachers, between regular educators, and between educators and support personnel which assists our understanding of how collaborative working relationships physically occurred in this school.

Staff at this school had developed a set of beliefs regarding the education of all students in their school. These belief statements focused on the right to an appropriate education for all students, the belief that all students can grow and learn in an environment that is positive and open to them as individuals, and the development of an atmosphere conducive to personal growth for both staff and students who are encouraged to work together in a caring atmosphere of mutuality.

At the time of this study, staff at this school had worked towards the implementation of these beliefs for approximately three years, following a multi-dimensional service delivery model which focuses on developing a collaborative approach to planning and programming for students with special learning needs. This model was developed at the district level (Willis, 1990) and was being implemented in schools on a

voluntary basis. This model is composed of four distinct components; each one having its own purpose, emphasis, and function. In its entirety, the design of the four components is intended to create a continuum of support and services for the regular classroom teacher and the special needs student. Each component is also intended to be dynamic and flexible; responsive to the needs of the teachers and students.

The four components of this model consist of a school based program development team, a resource facilitator service, a supportive teaching component, and an adapted instruction component. The school-based program development team is modeled after Chalfant and Moultries' (1979) description of teacher assistant teams, with its purposes being to assist staff in programming for students with special learning needs. The function of the team is to facilitate shared ownership for programming of these students, to generate the exchange of professional expertise and resources in devising appropriate intervention strategies, and to facilitate the adaptation of programming within the regular classroom.

The resource facilitator component of the service can be equated to what Huefner (1988) describes as the consulting teacher model. Within this component one or more school-based teachers are to be trained to function as consulting teachers in providing support service to regular classroom teachers. The purpose of this service is to provide assistance to the classroom teacher on a one on one basis which will facilitate modification in programming within the mainstream environment.

Supportive teaching is designed such that the resource facilitator can team with the regular classroom teacher and participate in classroom instruction and lesson planning when necessary. The purpose of this component is to assist regular classroom teachers in accommodating diverse student ability levels in their classrooms, and to provide direct in-class support to students with special learning needs.

Finally, the model is composed of an adapted instruction component which is focused on providing students with special learning needs with differentiated instruction. Adapted instruction may occur inside or outside of the regular classroom setting, on an individual or small group basis, by the classroom teacher or by the resource facilitator depending upon the needs of the student and the composition of the regular classroom environment.

It must be made clear that this study is not intended to be an evaluation of the implementation of this model in any way. It is important to understand, however, that participants in this study lived within a context in which the aforementioned model is being implemented and further developed. Since the adoption and implementation of this model

created a structure in which collaborative working relationships were developed and supported, recognizing the existence of this model as part of the lived world of the participants is critical.

## Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was through in-depth phenomenological interviews of the participants. These interviews and their analysis form the essential elements of this study and act as the primary tool to forward a rich and meaningful description of the participants' experience of working within a collaborative school environment. Further data were collected through observation and related school documents to assist the researcher in developing a understanding of the context in which the participants were functioning and in order to provide a opportunity for further inquiry into the lived experiences of the participants.

### Role of Researcher in Data Collection

The primary role of researcher in this study was that of interviewer during the course of the in-depth phenomenological interviews. The most important consideration in phenomenological study is the development of good rapport between the researcher and the participants (Osborne, 1990). Without rapport and an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, participants are unlikely to provide genuine descriptions of their lived experiences (Osborne, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1981). Therefore, by developing an atmosphere of trust in which no judgments are made of the participant, he or she can be free to communicate the fullness of his or her lived experiences of the phenomenon. Phenomenological researchers cite empathy, sensitivity, transparency, care, responsiveness, genuineness, playfulness, and curiosity as qualities which interviewers should possess (Becker, 1986).

The role of the researcher during informal and formal observations was viewed as being flexible and varied according to the method of data collection being employed and the comfort level of the participants. Due to the flexibility inherent in this approach the researcher was able to pursue research oriented questions when necessary, which, at the same time, provided the researcher with unsolicited information, and the freedom to participate or withdraw from activities at her discretion.

Interviews

This qualitative study used the phenomenological approach to gain meaning and understanding of participants' individual experiences of working in collaborative relationships with other educators. The phenomenological approach uses first person description of experience and may therefore provide a greater understanding of the participant's experiences in collaborative working relationships. Minimally structured, in-depth interviews were conducted to avoid directing the participants' thoughts or asking questions that supported the researcher's bias.

All staff members at the school were involved in in-depth phenomenological interviews including one administrator (principal) who also served as a resource facilitator for grades one and two, one administrator (vice principal) who also served as the grade four classroom teacher, one full time resource facilitator, one part time resource facilitator, six full-time classroom teachers, and five support personnel including three teaching/classroom assistants, the school secretary, and the school custodian.

The interview process was composed of three components or phases of interviewing. The first interview was conducted with the total school staff and allowed the researcher to provide a structure or framework for the research study in that the nature and purpose of the research could be openly discussed while at the same time building rapport with the participants. During this initial exchange I had the opportunity to share my personal background and interest in collaborative working relationships in schools with the participants in a general sense. This was conducted in a manner as to not influence their responses in such a way as they would seek to please the researcher. In addition, issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, and participant right to withdraw were discussed and questions were addressed. Agreement for participation was secured from the participants at that point.

The second interview involved gathering data regarding the participant's experience of the phenomena. All interviews took place at the school in a quiet room such as the medical room or the counselor's room away from the everyday distractions of school life. Interviews with the administrators occurred in their personal offices. An open-ended, minimally structured interview format was used to avoid both directing the participant's thoughts and asking questions which supported my personal biases. The interview guide provided topic areas within which the interviewer was free to explore and probe in a conversational style. The advantages of this method for this study were that the interviewer

was prepared with areas to probe if necessary, and could explore relevant topics that emerged during the process of the interview. This assisted in creating interviews that were more systematic and comprehensive across a number of interviewees than a totally open-ended interview style would allow (Patton, 1990). The interview guide approach, at the same time, allows the interviewer to be open and flexible so that the phenomenon can be explored in more depth and breadth that could be foreseen in a structured interview style and is therefore more likely to yield aspects of the phenomenon which might otherwise have been missed (Osborne, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1981).

The research question posed to each participant was, "Describe your experience working in a collaborative relationship with others at your school." Participants freely conversed with the researcher seeking clarification when needed. Additionally, participants were prompted when they no longer appeared to have anything to say or were asked to describe areas of experience highlighted in the research that they might have eluded to in their response. Becker (1986) states that during phenomenological interviews, the researcher must perform several paradoxical roles simultaneously in order to gather the richest description possible from the participants. Becker (1986) describes the researcher's role as one of being "prepared, yet receptive; task-focused, yet personable; knowledgeable, yet naive (p. 115).

Data gathering interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each interview was tape-recorded and then later transcribed word for word. The third phase interview then involved having the participants read over their transcripts and make points of clarification. The researcher also sought verification and extension of certain topics. The paraphrased accounts or first-level analysis of the transcripts were shared with each participant at this time in order to assess the researcher's interpretation of the participant's experience as it had been analyzed to date. These interviews typically lasted from 20 to 30 minutes. Since the third phase interviews were not tape-recorded, extensive notes were taken.

Observations

Supporting data were also gained through the use of both formal and informal observations. Formal in-class observations occurred in every classroom for a minimum of one class period. These formal in-class observations allowed the researcher to observe educators (regular and special education teachers) and support personnel working collaboratively in the classroom environment. The researcher specifically observed for indicators of role functions, communication patterns, and interaction patterns.

Observations were also made of special and regular education students' interactions with each other and regular and special educators interaction with students who have special needs, in the regular class setting. Information gained and interpretations made from formal observations were shared with the participants for their input, verification, and personal reflections.

Informal classroom observations also occurred on many separate occasions over a two month period. At times, the researcher was asked by the participants to join in a class project or lesson and, at other times, the researcher would drop by and visit classrooms without a specific invitation to do so. The researcher also involved herself in instructional periods when special assistance was being provided to students identified with special needs, and to others. During informal observations, the researcher took on a varied role between observer-participant and participant-observer depending on the particular classroom circumstances and teacher comfort level. These informal classroom observations allowed the researcher to interact with students, educators, and support personnel alike to gain insight into their beliefs and behaviors regarding the collaborative environment at this school.

Informal observations also occurred at two regular staff meetings and many informal staff meetings at the school. As well the researcher engaged in many informal staff discussions at the school with teachers, parents, support personnel and school visitors. Finally, the researcher engaged in participant-observation during three school-wide special events days which included a volunteer appreciation day, a guest theatre production, and the annual track and field day.

Related Documentation

Information was gathered regarding the school, the community, and the school population during the course of this study. School related information was collected in the following formats: school demographics, school policy manual, school mission statement and other materials, such as staff memos and handouts to teachers that were reflective of the school philosophy, policy or practice. Information regarding students identified with special needs was also gathered, including the number and type of identified special needs students and, where permission was granted, the content of student files to identify the changes in program orientation over time (i.e., the shift from traditional pull-out model of service delivery to in-class support). In addition, the school district assessment of community demographics was also collected. Where possible, documentation was

collected and added to the research file. Where necessary, information was viewed at the school and noted in the researcher's field notes. Finally, biographical information on each interviewed participant was gathered that, for example, contained information such as age, teacher training or other training experiences, number of years teaching (or doing present job), and number of years at this school.

Fieldnotes

The researcher keep a collection of fieldnotes during the time in the field. In these field notes records were kept regarding all types of observations, both formal and informal. As well, participant input resulting from observations, and researcher notes regarding impressions, interpretations, and further questions were included.

Reflective Journal

During the time in the field, but especially during data analysis and writing, the researcher kept a personal reflective research journal. The purpose of this journal was to allow the researcher to keep an on-going record of her thoughts, feelings, questions and impressions during the course of research. By recording these personal reflections, the researcher was able to record and act upon tacit knowledge while conducting analysis and writing and was better able to determine the extent to which her personal biases were interfering with the interpretation of the data.

## Data Analysis

There are several approaches to analysis in phenomenological research, each having specific characteristics and advantages and disadvantages. Wertz (1984) outlines three phenomenologically-oriented approaches to psychological research: the comprehensive theoretical, the phenomenal, and the reflective empirical. The comprehensive theoretical approach is almost purely conceptual and attempts to integrate existing psychological theories into a more comprehensive theoretical framework through the use of lived-world descriptions and phenomenologically oriented reflection. The major shortcoming of this approach, however, is its lack of procedures for analyzing lived experiences.

The phenomenal approach strives to abstain from any presuppositions and to understand phenomena solely through their expression in empirical data. No interpretation is used and data analysis is confined to explicit statements in the description, with the result

that the researcher's involvement is minimal. The phenomenal researcher simply presents the full range of reported constituents of the phenomenon without assessing their meaning or relative importance. As a result of the researcher's inability to "make sense" of the data, the descriptions appear quite sterile and "are therefore far from faithful to the phenomenon" (Wertz, 1984, p. 31).

In contrast, the reflective empirical approach is interpretive and goes beyond the phenomenal approach by explicitly using the researcher's capacity to reflect on the data. The reflective empirical researcher strives to disclose the meaning of the constituents of the phenomenon and their relationship to the essential structure of the phenomenon. However, it should be stressed the researcher does not impose meaning because:

> reflection is not speculation but genuine finding, requiring the most rigorous grasp of the essence of the phenomenon. The researcher thereby grasps the whole of the phenomenon through the part expressed by the subject, making explicit the implicit root of the matter. (Wertz, 1984, p. 32)

The reflective empirical approach, because of its emphasis on reflection and disclosure of meaning, seemed the most appropriate for revealing the essence of the phenomenon under investigation in this study.

Procedures for Analysis of Interviews

As was previously stated, there is no single way in which to conduct a phenomenological data analysis. The reflective empirical approach to phenomenological data analysis emphasizes reflection and disclosure of meaning, but is not tied to any one procedure for handling the data. The specific procedure which is adopted depends upon the researcher's purposes. This study utilized the process of phenomenological analysis of descriptive data discussed by Colaizzi (1978) and Giorgi (1975). The phenomenological analysis of the participant's protocols followed the general pattern established by Colaizzi and included the following steps:

1. The protocol was first listened to and read through simultaneously to get a feel for the language and the perspective of the participant. Particular attention was paid to the participants' rate of speech, tone of voice, and those experiences that receive repeated emphasis.

2. Phrases or sentences were extracted from each transcript which were revealing of an aspect of the person's experience of the phenomenon. Redundant phrases and those statements which did not speak to the question were eliminated.

3. Significant statements were re-read, this time for the purpose of ascertaining the meaning behind the words. Two levels of interpretive abstraction where then applied to each excerpt in formulating its meaning. First, statements were paraphrased to put the participant's experience into clear psychological language.

4. Second level interpretive abstraction involved formulating a theme which captured the essence or meaning of that particular excerpt.

5. These themes were then clustered into more highly abstracted second order themes. These thematic clusters were validated by referring them back to the original transcripts. This involved determining where the thematic clusters suggested anything which was not implied in the original transcripts and whether any aspect of the original transcript was not accounted for in the thematic clusters (Colaizzi, 1978).

6. Each participant was presented with the analysis of his/her experience to determine if he/she agreed with the interpretation of the data. Any relevant modifications suggested were discussed and appropriate changes made to the analysis.

7. The results of the analysis were then synthesized into a comprehensive description of the person's experience of the phenomenon. This synthesis was written to state the fundamental experience of the participant as unequivocally as possible. This synthesis for each participant is presented in Chapter 5.

8. The final thematic clusters for each participant were compared in order to identify those themes which were shared by all three participants. If a majority of participants experienced a particular aspect of a phenomenon, those participants who had not alluded to this aspect were contacted in order to determine if it was indeed a valid part of their experience. This procedure was necessary as some aspects of the phenomenon may not be revealed during the initial data gathering interviews due to oversight or time constrictions. This data was then integrated into the shared structure.

The shared structure was then integrated into an overall description of the phenomenon. It is this shared structure of experience which is most important in phenomenological research. The shared experience of the participants is included in Chapter 6.

Dealing with the Interview Data

The use of in-depth phenomenological interviews produces a significant amount of data for each participant. In the course of this study a total of 15 initial data gathering interviews were conducted producing a total of 220 pages of typed transcription and 110

pages comprised of participant description and phenomenological analysis. This amount proved to be too cumbersome to present in the completed thesis document. A decision was made then to encapsulate the presentation of the findings based on the following criteria:

1. All participants were equally considered for inclusion in the presentation of the phenomenological analysis.

2. Information rich cases were sought that had most fully illuminated the phenomena and that expressed the participant's experience, uncluttered with speculation and analysis.

3. All stakeholders should be represented, that is, analysis should be presented for at least one participant in each stakeholder "category"; i.e., special educators, regular educators, administrators, and support personnel.

4. Negative cases were sought out and explored, that is, the researcher did not enter with the intent of limiting inclusion to only cases which supported a preconceived notion of collaborative working relationships.

5. A "template" of shared experiences was then created and utilized to further examine the experiences of those not highlighted through phenomenological analysis as presented in this document. This template was utilized to seek out both congruence and incongruence with the experience as expressed by the information rich cases selected. Again, negative cases were explored and included in the shared experience.

6. Finally, a comprehensive template was created that was utilized to reflect again upon all the participants' experiences to ensure that the researcher was being true to the constituents of the data as experienced by the participants.

Analysis of Secondary Data Sources

Data gathered through in-depth phenomenological interviews comprised the core of this study. The researcher also engaged in secondary methods of data collection through the use of formal and informal observations, analysis of related school documents, and the keeping of fieldnotes and reflective journaling for three main reasons. Firstly, these methods allowed the researcher to understand the context of the participants' experience of collaboration. Secondly, they provided the researcher with additional information that could be utilized to further probe during the actual interviews. Thirdly, the information gathered through these methods was utilized to facilitate increased trustworthiness of the study.

The presentation of data gained through these secondary sources is not presented in this document in a formalized manner, but instead was utilized by the author during the acts of data gathering, analysis and interpretation, to question and extend her understanding of the phenomena. Although there are few direct references to these secondary sources of data, these sources assisted in the establishment of a context for this study and provided a "sounding board" for much of the analysis and interpretation that occurs in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the phenomenological data analysis and description of experience for the participants. For each of the eight individual descriptions provided, the data will be presented in the following format. First, a brief personal description of the participant will be presented. Second, an analysis of each participant's experience of working in collaborative relationships will be presented in tabular form. These tables contain excerpts from the transcribed interviews which enhance understanding of the phenomenon in the first column, paraphrases of those excerpts in the second column, and first order themes derived from those paraphrases in the third column. Third, higher order thematic clusters are gathered from the first order themes and presented in tabular form. In the next section, generalized descriptions derived from the higher order thematic clusters are presented in tabular form. Finally, an overall synthesis of the individual's experience is presented in narrative form. The chapter ends with two tables. The first presents definitions of all the themes generated by the participants. The second presents a summary, by participant, of the themes derived from the phenomenological analysis of his/her interview.

The individual descriptions are presented in the order in which the original interviews were conducted. Table 5.1 provides an overview of roles of the participants in the school. All of the 15 initial interviews were given equal consideration for inclusion in this chapter. The eight that were chosen met the criteria of providing a rich description of the data with negative cases searched out, and also being representative of a school role category.

It is important to note that the participant "Ann" is represented in two interviews here. Ann presented a unique case to the researcher in that she performed two distinct functions in the school: administrator and resource facilitator. The author recognizes that Ann, as an individual, can not be separated into the roles she performs, nor was that the intent by representing her twice. Ann was unique in that she was very deeply involved in the formulation of the collaborative model utilized in this school and was also actively engaged in enacting it both as an administrator and a resource facilitator. As a result, Ann was able to provide a unique description of experience that was both rich and meaningful. The researcher found that it was impossible to deal with all of Ann's experience in a meaningful way in just one interview and that the time constraints of the school day forced

a time limit on the interview sessions. Consequently, Ann participated in two initial data gathering interviews. In the first one, she was asked to reflect upon her experience primarily as a resource facilitator. In the other she was asked to reflect upon her experience primarily as an administrator. Both these interviews proved to be very rich in their description of the phenomenon and provided an enlightened understanding of the experience of working in collaborative relationships. However, the interview protocols proved to be to lengthy to place together as one single interview and, therefore, needed to be presented seperately. Since the purpose of this research is to provide a rich description of the phenomenon and given the fact that there is no "weight" attributed to the amount of data in phenomenological analysis, both of Ann's initial interviews are included in this chapter as both contained rich descriptions of the phenomenon of collaboration in schools.

Table 5.1

Summary of Participants' Roles

| | Division I | Division II | Regular Ed. | Special Ed. | Admin. | Support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vicki | • | | | • | | |
| Shannon | | • | | • | | |
| Ann | • | | | • | | |
| Clara | | • | • | | | |
| Lorna | • | | • | | | |
| Julie | | • | • | | • | |
| Ann-admin. | | | | | • | |
| Elsie | • | | | | | • |

## Vicki

Vicki is an educator who has been teaching special needs children for twenty years. She has worked in her present school for the last nine years. Vicki has experience teaching special needs children in segregated special classrooms, resource rooms, and regular classrooms. Vicki is now responsible for working with other educators in the regular classroom, providing for both direct and indirect services to students with special needs and others. Within this new model, Vicki is primarily responsible for providing services to the grades three and four classrooms. Vicki is also the mother of a learning disabled child. Vicki, therefore, has experienced working relationships with educators as a teacher and a parent, both within and outside of the regular class setting or mainstream.

In the interview, Vicki displayed a great amount of interest and animation in the subject of collaboration. She leaned into the interview space to make her points and her voice frequently quivered with emphasis. She spoke often of the process in terms of outcomes for special needs students. These statements reflected Vicki's belief that the ultimate goal of the collaborative relationship between teachers is the success experienced by the children they serve.

Excerpts from Vicki's transcribed interviews, the paraphrases of those excerpts, and the first order themes are included in Table 5.2. The second order thematic clusters of Vicki's experience are included in Table 5.3. The thematic descriptions of Vicki's experience are included in Table 5.4. Following is a summary of Vicki's lived experience as a resource facilitator (special educator) working within a collaborative school environment.

Table 5.2

Thematic Abstractions of Vicki's Experience

| Excerpts from transcribed interview | Paraphrases | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| V1: My role is as varied as the experiences I go into. It depends what the teacher needs and the needs of the students. | Sees role as multi-faceted and dependent upon the needs of others. | Role ever-changing<br>Flexibility in role |
| V2: I also teach and we reverse the roles, where she will be the observer and helper where I'm teaching so we do team teaching things together. Basically I'm there to be a support to the teacher and the student that needs extra help. | Recognition of role sharing and interchange with teacher that supports both the teacher and the special needs student. | Interchangeable roles<br>Support of teachers |
| V3: I also help other students if I'm not needed by the special needs students, I'm willing to help anyone in the classroom, so there are fringe benefits to the other members of the class, 'cause they do get extra help so there's more one on one teaching in the classroom while I'm in there. | Willingness to assist all students. Sees role and flexible and broad enough to include meeting the needs all students. | Flexibility to meet student needs |
| V4: Unfortunately, it's only for one period of the day for each classroom, when I'm in the classroom with the regular teacher. | Concern over lack of time with individual teachers. | Time constraints |
| V5: I have to be totally flexible. I have to walk in and fit in to an existing classroom, and also I have to be a lot more diplomatic in how I approach material, or I talk to a teacher. I have to realize that I am coming in to her space and do it in a way that is non threatening | Awareness of sensitivity of role. Recognizes that she must share teacher's space and do so with diplomacy and flexibility in order to be accepted and for a relationship to begin. | Flexibility in interest of being diplomatic<br>Sensitivity to others |
| V6: I have to maintain the fact that I'm there to act as ... an advocate for the child, to make sure he is being, his needs are being met. So, I have to balance those roles. | Duality of role. Primacy of responsibility to child requires a balance between the needs of the teacher and the needs of the special needs student. | Role clarification |
| V7: As a resource facilitator, you have to be ready to modify anything that you're going to do at any time .... Now my day depends on what is happening in the classroom and I must bend to those roles. | Sees role as requiring openness to every situation requiring continual flexibility and a willingness to take on different roles. | Flexibility in role<br>Role defined by needs |

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| V8: Well, the teacher has to be aware that there's another person coming in and she has to discuss things with me and plan with me in order that I can be of assistance, so they have to be flexible as well in accepting me in the classroom. And they have to be willing to allow me to work. | Recognizes that in order for collaborative relationship to work, the receiving teacher must be accepting of her, demonstrate a mutual desire to work, and be flexible. | Acceptance by others<br><br>Reciprocity in function<br>Flexibility of receiving teacher |
| V9: Sometimes when you first go into a classroom, that isn't happening. It's basically that they are just letting you in and say, okay, you're here, I'm doing my thing, you do your thing. That was what it was like when I initially went in. | Experienced incomplete collaborative relationship at first. Realizes the real acceptance and change take time. Transition from static to flexible role takes time. | Acceptance over time<br>Time for transition<br>Initial resistance |
| V10: Then after they see the value and they start to say, well, let's do this together and ... they do a lot more team planning. Before, it's you plan, I plan and then we'll somehow the two will mesh, but after a while you can discuss more and you start thinking on the same lines and really functioning as a single unit together. .... So their mind set becomes one of, yes, I can modify and I can program with this child. | As teachers begin to see value in the collaborative process, they build the confidence that they can meet the needs of the special needs child. Teachers then begin working in harmony with one another. Team concept is being formed. | Building of team<br>Functioning as equals<br>Process becomes valued |
| V11: A lot of times it's just supporting the teacher by letting them know that what they are planning is a good idea, and just sort of being a support and a sounding board for them. They come up with some excellent suggestions, 'cause they all want the best for the child. I think my role is mainly making them aware, more aware that they have a child that has a problem and supporting them in the belief that the child can make it in their classroom and that they as a teacher can make it if they have the support to do so.. | Acts as a support to the teacher, so that the teacher becomes aware of child's needs and gets the sense that what they are doing is of value to the child. | Support for teacher<br>Demonstrates trust<br>Buy-in |
| V12: I remember one instance when I mentioned this child has an attentional problem, and the teacher kind of said, "what is that?" I got the feeling that the teacher was really apprehensive about having the student in her classroom. Then a couple months later that teacher came up and said, "now I really understand what you meant by attentional problems" yet, there was understanding and acceptance in the way she said it. She wasn't just talking out of frustration. As the teachers become more aware of the specific needs as the child, they are more open to meeting those needs. | Witnesses changes in teacher's level of understanding and acceptance. As teacher's knowledge increases the teacher becomes more open to the diversity of needs in the classroom. | Open to student needs<br>Change requires time<br>Acceptance over time |

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| V13: Together, however, we can reach these kids. Knowing that I've had a role in allowing these kids to be accepted and understood by the regular class teacher and ultimately by the other children makes me feel very proud. | Sense of truly being able to meet the children's needs through collaborative process gives this educator a sense of pride and fulfillment. | Shared responsibility<br>Job satisfaction |
| V14: Now, it's, "there's the child we're working with, he has a problem, how can we help him?" .... Before it was, someone else will deal with that problem, and that's where the biggest thing I've seen change, is that the teacher's realize that they have ownership of that problem. | Ownership of student problem by regular class teacher seen as a major change. | Shared Responsibility<br>Personal fulfillment |
| V15: Before it was so frustrating because you know you couldn't fix them and you felt rather powerless to help them in other subject areas. You knew they would be having difficulties for the majority of the day, but you only saw them for a few periods and usually weren't involved with the rest of their programming. Now it's not the resource facilitators problem, it's the problem of the teacher with the resources facilitator. | Previous feelings of frustration and powerlessness over not being able to "fix" the special needs child is replaced with a joint ownership of problem and a shared commitment to helping child. | Shared responsibility for students<br>Empowered by shared responsibility |
| V16: She (the administrator) is willing to give us time to meet by bringing subs so that we can have time to discuss and spend time together to plan. They (the administrators) have to be willing to give me the time to go into the classroom, and also the time to, the freedom to make the modifications that we want. The administrator has to be there, totally behind the project. If the administrator doesn't believe in it, it's not going to work. | Views role of administrator as central to collaborative process. Administrators must demonstrate belief in process, provide time, arrange for flexibility, and encourage the freedom for teachers to make their own decisions as to what is best for the children. | Administrator as backbone<br>Administrator buy-in<br>Administrator provides time<br>Administrator supports risk-taking behavior |
| V17: Well everyone in the school has to basically buy-in to the philosophy that we are going to help the special needs students. | Philosophical "buy-in" is seen as essential. | Buy in |
| V18:... we all need to be open to the way each teacher operates and how the kids can function in that class with that teacher. If I accept a student in my room who has a special need, another teacher may teach him a different subject, so there has to be sharing between teachers. | An openness to both teacher and student needs and a willingness to share knowledge and responsibility between teachers who deal with the same children. | Open to teacher and student needs<br>Sharing between teachers |

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| V19: there has to be a great coordination and cooperation when it comes to total school planning. And again where the administrator came in 'cause they, before any timetables were made in this school, the resource facilitator timetables were put in, so that I would be available at the time when their language arts would be taught... | Need for administration to coordinate total school programs so that collaborative process is seen as a priority and is facilitated. | Administrator as master coordinator<br>Timetabling a priority |
| V20:...there has to be preparation time, and if it can be combined with the teacher's time ... that would be ideal. .... But if there was more time in school it would be much easier to be able to do planning 'cause it has to be a team effort. One can't do it on his own. | Time is viewed as critical element. Expressed need for greater planning time so that team concept can be established. | Time for process |
| V21: Sometimes I just take over where the teacher is. The teacher then takes the remediation on and develops that ownership and confidence in meeting the needs of the special needs students, "it's my child, I am doing remediation". So I think a resource facilitator can go either way as the remediator or as the support to allow the remediation to occur by the teacher. | Interchange of roles with teacher develops ownership and builds teacher confidence in meeting needs of students. Sees flexibility within role as facilitating this ownership and confidence in the receiving teacher. | Interchangeable roles<br>Shared responsibility for students<br>Flexibility in roles |
| V22: This way it's part of the classroom and also the way they view the resource teacher. When I went into the classroom, the first comment I had was: "You're a teacher? a regular classroom teacher?" They didn't look at it as I was a regular teacher 'cause I was doing pull out, and they were really surprised that I was a teacher and that I could teach a regular classroom. | Viewed as a "real teacher" now by students who previously saw her role as detached from what real teaching was defined to be. | Perceived as an insider |
| V23: And I feel connected now too. I feel part of the regular classroom, not like just some appendage to the regular program. .... And it was very difficult when I was a separate resource teacher, to find out what they're doing in the classroom and relate it to the student's needs and then try to have it make sense again so they could use it in the regular classroom. I would pull out and they would be doing something else (in the regular classroom), and often there was no connection at all. | Feels connected to the mainstream now and equal in status to other teachers. | Feels equal<br>Identifies with mainstream |

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| V25: ...every child has a special need and try to modify and fit the program for every child. I think it becomes more child centered than curriculum centered teaching and that there are ways to make things suit the children, that it's possible to change a particular item and teach it in a different way, and that will meet the needs of different students. | Teaching becomes child-centered in that teachers are cognizant of the diversity of needs in their classroom and are willing to change their methods in order to meet the needs of the child. | Child-centered teaching<br>Flexibility in order to meet student needs |
| V26: And I think it stretches the teachers to think of innovations. .... You need to find different ways of doing different things and I think it makes for more exciting teaching. | Sees teaching as becoming more dynamic as teachers are required to learn and change in order to meet the needs of the students in their class. Stretches teacher to make innovations (take risks). | Teachers becoming innovative<br>Skill development |
| V27: ...as a resource facilitator, I'm learning, too, because I'm learning from them because the more teachers I work with, more different ways I see of doing things. I've been teaching for a long time, and this is the most excited I've ever felt about teaching because I really believe we are doing more now for the kids then we ever did before. | Values what she is learning from other teachers. Is excited about teaching because she believes the students are benefiting. | Empowered by student success<br>Learning from others<br>Enthused by teaching<br>Skill development |
| V28: There is a real sense of togetherness and team work. Teachers are not only opening their doors to one another, but opening their minds as well. Even if you are dealing with the most frustrating child, you never feel like you are in it alone. Teachers are teamed, we communicate, we listen, and we feel supported by the administrator. This way we can really focus on the student's needs and not just our frustrations with doing our job. Not to say that there aren't frustrations. No, but those frustrations are shared and your concerns are heard and your ideas are supported. | Is experiencing the development of a true school team where there is openness and trust between the members that create a sense of collegiality. Feels supported and understood by others. | Openness of minds<br>Sharing the burden<br>Mutual support<br>Communication improved |
| V29: Oh, barriers are inflexibility. If persons are not willing to be flexible it's not going to work and there has to be a desire to work with another person. If you say, I don't want to, if there's not that commitment to work together, it's not going to go anywhere. There has to be a willingness to let me in, first of all. So once I'm in, then it is a willingness to try something new, and to be flexible. | Sees a major barriers to the collaborative process as inflexibility, unwillingness to commit to the process and to take risks. | Inflexibility a barrier<br>Commitment to process<br>Willingness to take risks |

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| | | Time constraints |
| V30: But one of the biggest barriers, too, is time. The planning time, the time to make the modifications. Without the time to do actually collaborate, just saying we're collaborating is no good. You need the time to actually do it and do it well. | Sees insufficient time to plan and modify as a barrier to the collaborative process. | |
| V31: You'll hear a comment, like, "I don't know how I could have done this lesson without you in the classroom." "It's so nice to have an extra body helping when I'm trying to teach a particular subject." "I can get to the children on a more on one to one basis because I have that person helping me." | Is experiencing positive regard from other teachers who are communicating the need for her role in their classroom. Reinforcement of function increases self-esteem | Increased self-esteem |
| V32: I think the teachers are very, very pleased with the whole process. I don't have them saying, I don't want to have a resource facilitator. They're all willing to have it. I feel accepted and needed and I feel that they see the value of what I'm doing. I think the attitude has totally changed, and it takes time sometimes, but it gets there once they see the value, they're willing to accept it. | Is feeling accepted and valued by teachers in role. Feels teachers have confidence in what she is doing and have accepted her into their classrooms. | Acceptance over time |
| V33: When the teacher is new, that makes it more difficult, and if the teacher is probably returning, new into the assignment, that would make it more difficult. Time again becomes a problem if you are working with someone new. You need the time to develop your relationship together. | Realizes that collaborative relationship takes time to develop with new staff members. | Time for process |
| V34: Sometimes I feel I don't know enough, that I wish I had more background and knew more about certain problems. I feel, sometimes I think I'm, feel limited no matter how many times you've gone through a situation, you come and say, what can I do? You know, since you're working with other teachers, I really feel that I need to stay on top of things. I can't just let things drift by because other teachers are counting on me. | Feels limited in her knowledge at times. Feels need to stay current as others are counting on her. | Commitment to role<br>Role demands<br>Need for training |

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| V35: Sometimes I find that I'm not fully, always being used to the maximum. I feel like sometimes I'm kind of relegated to almost a teacher aide role where I'm just a supporting role, but I know that's part of the job, but I sometimes feel like I need to be more involved. But I know that total involvement only comes as the teachers are willing, as much as they're willing to collaborate and involve me in the planning, but sometimes I feel I'm not quite in enough and that's frustrating. I'm confident that as the role develops, we, the teachers and I, will find new ways to make it work to the maximum. | Is experiencing some continued resistance to her role. Recognizes that her role is not yet fully developed and is disappointed by this, yet also realizes that a fully developed role will only come with time as teachers continue to show a willingness to collaborate and involve her. | Role utilization<br>Resistance to role<br>Time for role development<br>Openness to joint involvement |
| V36: Yes, I think that's part of my role, where I'll get information and pass on information. .... Or sometimes she can go and bring it back to me. I think, this way I think the ownership would be more if the teacher was involved in the inservicing. I think it's just not the resource facilitator that should be inserviced, I think it could, should be both. | Sees ownership and mutuality developing if teachers have equal responsibility for obtaining and sharing information. | Reciprocal involvement<br>Sharing of information |
| V37: we have a duty to teach that child from where he is and bring him along, and that all children have the right to learn, and can learn, and that they all have a right to be taught in a way that will help build their self esteem and their self worth, and develop them into responsible adults. And I think with this inclusion and the resource facilitator I think we can achieve that by giving each child success at what they're doing, and eliminating the frustrations and all the things that knock that self esteem down. | Believes that school's philosophy supports the collaborative process and the child-centered approach. | Belief in process<br>Child-centered approach |
| V38: ...I see it, too, with students hating a subject and then with modifications starting to love it and say, I can do this. And that just, hearing that words, "I can", instead of "I can't" is very, very rewarding. | Sees students' attitudes toward learning and themselves change and finds that rewarding. | Personal fulfillment through student success |
| V39: Flexibility is number one, I think. Being able to be flexible to be able to say, I can do it a different way, that, just because I've done it this way for 10 years, it, I don't have to do it that way again, I can be flexible. | Views flexibility in attitude as being the primary characteristic a teacher needs to make collaboration work. | Flexibility in approach |

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| V40: Willingness to change and willingness to accept the child. To accept children for what they are and not have unfair expectations ....Be willing to look for other reasons why this child is not achieving success because it could be many, many reasons for him not doing it, and be willing to look for a solution and not giving up. | Views an open response to change and children as critical combined with a commitment to keep trying until solutions are found. | Openness to change<br>Take risks to find solutions<br>Preservation in efforts |
| V41: I think you have to be willing to make mistakes, and admit that you've made a mistake. I think that if you think that you can't, everything has to be always right, you wouldn't survive, because it's, a lot of it is trial and error, where you try something and it works or if it doesn't work be willing to try again, and stickwithitness. | Teachers must be willing to make mistakes and to keep trying until something is found that works. | Willingness to make mistakes<br>Preservation over time |
| V42: When I first started teaching, if somebody had come into my classroom and worked with me, I think I would have felt totally nervous and worried and I wouldn't have been able almost to function, and now I'm in the classroom with other teachers and thinking that this is some of the best teaching I've ever done. | Can relate to how receiving teacher might feel. Recognition that collaboration takes trust and self-confidence on the part of the receiving teacher, but feels it is worth it and truly rewarding. | Trust is essential<br>Finds working relationship rewarding |
| V43: And to be able to work with someone else present and work as a team, is something that has to develop because, before we used to close our door and we taught and that was our classroom, now it's more of an open door policy. That's where the flexibility and the willing to make mistakes come in because if you were afraid of making mistakes, you don't want somebody there when you make a mistake, and as a teacher that happens all the time. You learn that something works well for one class, it may not work well for another class so you just go with it and accept things as they are and look forward to the next day. | Realization that collaborative process takes time to develop, requiring trust, flexibility, risk-taking, openness to new ideas. | Development of trusting relationship<br>Willingness to make mistakes |

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| V44. I think it's the most beneficial thing they have ever come into schools with, as a parent and as an educator, in that it allows children who are slipping through the cracks, who were destined to live lives that were not fulfilling, I think they're being given a chance through inclusion and collaboration in modifying these programs for these kids so that they can learn and feel part of society and not be, feel like the outcasts. | Belief that the collaborative process is extremely valuable because it is meeting the needs of children whom otherwise may not be reached through the traditional means. | Belief in process<br>Satisfied that effort worthwhile |

Table 5.3

Higher Order Thematic Clusters of Vicki's Experience

| First Order Themes | Second Order Thematic Clusters |
|---|---|
| 1. Role ever-changing | Role Function |
| 6. Role demands | |
| 7. Role defined by needs | |
| 34. Role demands | |
| 35. Role utilization | |
| 1. Flexibility in role | Flexibility |
| 3. Flexibility to meet student needs | |
| 5. Flexibility in interest of being diplomatic | |
| 8. Flexibility of receiving teacher | |
| 21. Flexibility in role | |
| 25. Flexibility to meet student needs | |
| 29. Inflexibility a barrier | |
| 39. Flexibility in approach | |
| 2. Interchange of roles | Reciprocity |
| 8. Reciprocity in function | |
| 10. Building of team | |
| 21. Interchange of roles | |
| 27. Learning from others | |
| 36. Reciprocal involvement | |
| 2. Support for teachers | Support |
| 11. Support for teachers | |
| 28. Mutual support | |
| 4. Time constraints | Time |
| 9. Time for transition | |
| 12. Change requires time | |
| 16. Time provided by administrator | |
| 19. Time-tabling | |
| 20. Time for process | |
| 30. Time constraints | |
| 33. Time for process | |
| 35. Time for role development | |
| 5. Sensitivity to others | Acceptance |
| 8. Acceptance by others | |
| 12. Acceptance over time | |
| 32. Acceptance over time | |

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| 9. Initial Resistance<br>35. Resistance to role | Resistance |
| 10. Teachers function as equals<br>23. Feels equal | Parity |
| 10. Process becomes valued<br>11. Belief in process<br>16. Administrator believes in process<br>17. Philosophical buy-in<br>37. Belief in process<br>44. Belief in process | Buy-in |
| 11. Demonstrates trust in teachers<br>42. Trusting relationship develops<br>43. Understands trust required | Trust |
| 12. Open to student needs<br>18. Open to teacher and student needs<br>28. Open minds<br>35. Open to involvement | Openness |
| 13. Sharing responsibility for student<br>14. Sharing responsibility for student<br>15. Sharing responsibility for student<br>18. Sharing of knowledge<br>21. Sharing responsibility for student<br>28. Sharing the burden<br>36. Sharing of information | Shared responsibility |
| 13. Pride and fulfillment<br>27. Enthused by teaching<br>38. Personal fulfillment through student success<br>42. Working relationship rewarding<br>44. Effort as worthwhile | Personal fulfillment |
| 15. Empowered in new role<br>22. Received as an insider<br>23. Identifies with mainstream<br>27. Empowered by student success<br>31. Increased self-esteem | Empowerment |
| 16. Administrator as backbone<br>19. Administrator as master coordinator | Administrator's role |

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| 16. Administrator supports risk-taking behavior | Risk-taking |
| 26. Teachers become innovative | |
| 29. Willingness to take risks | |
| 40. Take risks to find solutions | |
| 41. Willingness to make mistakes | |
| 43. Willingness to make mistakes | |
| 25. Child-centered teaching | Child-centered |
| 37. Child-centered approach | |
| 26. Skill development | Skill development |
| 27. Skill development | |
| 29. Commitment to process | Commitment |
| 34. Commitment to role | |
| 40. Reservation in efforts | |
| 41. Preservation over time | |
| 28. Communication improved | Communication |
| 34. Need for on-going training | Training |

Table 5.4

Higher Order Thematic Description of Vicki's Experience

| Thematic Clusters | Generalized Descriptions |
|---|---|
| 1. Role Function (Excerpts from Table 5.2: 1, 6, 7, 34, 35) | Role is defined as ever-changing and dependent upon the needs of others (teachers and students), with the primacy of the responsibility to the child. Role is demanding in that there is a need to stay current in her knowledge. Recognizes that the role is not yet fully developed, and that the extent to which it becomes developed is dependent upon the receiving teachers' willingness to include her. |
| 2. Flexibility (1, 3, 5, 8, 21, 25, 29, 39) | Role is multifaceted and "as varied as the experiences I go into" requiring flexibility, and recognition that she must be "ready to fit into the existing classroom". Being flexible in the interest of being diplomatic allows her to be accepted. Sees that it is essential for the receiving teacher to be equally flexible meaning that either teacher can take on the other's role. Willingness to be beyond static roles and assist all children is an important component. Inflexibility is viewed as a major barrier to the collaborative process. |
| 3. Reciprocity (2, 8, 10, 21, 27, 36) | Sees collaborative relationship as one where teachers are willing to interchange roles and share responsibility for teaching, including mutual planning and decision making. Reciprocity in roles means that she can "just take over from where the teacher is" at. Team concept is formed after teachers start to "discuss more" and "think along the same lines". Feels she is learning from other teachers through their modeling for her and through exchange of information. |
| 4. Time (4, 9, 12, 16, 19, 20, 30, 33, 35) | Collaborative relationships take time. Time is required to do job directly. Time is needed in order for role transitions to occur and for the role to fully develop. Time is needed for teacher understanding and acceptance to occur. Sees administrative provision of time as critical. Insufficient time to plan and modify hampers the collaborative process; "just saying we're doing collaboration is not good - you need time to do it and do it well". |

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| 5. Acceptance<br>(5, 8, 12, 32) | Acceptance is dependent upon her being sensitive to other teachers, recognizing that she is "coming into their space". Diplomacy is required. Other teachers need to accept her in her role, being "willing to allow me to work". Acceptance occurs as knowledge increases and understanding of process develops, but only over the course of time. |
| 6. Support<br>(2, 11, 28) | Sees a major function of her role is to provide support for the receiving teacher, "being a sounding board" for her ideas. Giving support and feeling supported by others allow her to focus on student needs. |
| 7. Resistance<br>(9, 35) | Her new role in the collaborative model was met with some initial resistance. Feels anxiety about possibly being under utilized in role, feels a need to move beyond just a supporting role. |
| 8. Buy-in<br>(10, 11, 16, 17, 37, 44) | Through supporting the teachers, she believes that they develop a belief that what they are doing is of value to the child. As teachers begin to see the value of the collaborative process, they buy-in to the belief that they can meet the needs of the special needs child through it. Administrative buy-in to the process is critical as, "if the administrator doesn't believe in it, its not going to work". In addition, "everyone in the school" needs to buy-into the philosophy. |
| 9. Parity<br>(10, 23) | Feels that team members in collaborative relationships begin to act as equals, "functioning as a single unit together". Feels that she is equal to and part of the regular program and is recognized by others as such. |
| 10. Openness<br>(12, 18, 28, 35) | Openness and involvement to the collaborative relationship is seen as part of the process itself. As the teachers' awareness and knowledge increase, they are more open to meeting diverse student needs.. Recognizes that she must be open to the needs of the teachers in various situation. Openness is physical "open doors" and psychological "open minds". |

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| 11. Shared responsibility (13, 14, 15, 18, 21, 28, 36) | All team members working together is viewed as needed in order to "reach these kids". Views ownership of student problems by regular classroom teachers as a major changed that is accomplished through the collaborative model. Feelings of powerlessness are reduced as she is able to share responsibility for meeting student needs with other educators. Feels that teachers need to be willing to share knowledge as well as responsibility, building both involvement and confidence. Shared responsibility means "you never feel like you are in it alone"; others are sharing the burden with you. |
| 12. Personal fulfillment (13, 27, 38, 42, 44) | Acquires a sense of pride and fulfillment when goal of collaborative process is met in her eyes, that is, having the children accepted and understood in the regular classroom. Feels enthused by teaching because she really believes the students' needs are being met. This provides for "very, very rewarding" and stimulating teaching. Finds that the working relationship with others has increased her enthusiasm for teaching. Overall, she expresses satisfaction that her efforts are worthwhile as she views the ultimate goal of the collaborative process as meeting the needs of the children she serves. |
| 13. Administrator's role (16, 19) | Views administrative role as central to the collaborative process by providing time for planning and modifying, while encouraging an atmosphere where flexibility, risk-taking and sharing are the norm, and where the administrator demonstrates an overall belief in the process through positive actions that support it. |
| 14. Trust (11, 42, 43) | Believes that all teachers ultimately "want the best for the children" and through supporting them in their efforts to do so a bond of trust between teachers develops. Recognizes that the receiving teacher must be able to trust her in her new role and that a trusting relationship must develop if teachers are going to "teach with someone else present" and "work as a team". |
| 15. Child-centered (25, 37) | Teaching becomes child-centered in that teachers are cognizant of the diversity of needs in their classroom and are willing to change their methods in order to meet the needs of the child. Believes that the collaborative process supports the school's philosophy of having a child-centered approach. |

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| 16. Risk-taking (16, 26, 29, 40, 41, 43) | Views the creation of an atmosphere where risk-taking is valued and accepted as an administrative responsibility. Collaborative relationships required the teachers to be willing to try new things, be innovative, and take risks in order to find solutions for students. A willingness to make mistakes and learn from them is essential because "if you always had to be right , you wouldn't survive". |
| 17. Empowerment (15, 22, 23, 27, 31) | Previous feelings of powerlessness are replaced with feelings of accomplishment. Empowered by the fact that she is being perceived by other as an insider, a "regular teacher". Feels connected to the mainstream; no longer just "some appendage to the regular program". Feels empowered by the success she is witnessing in her students. As she is reinforced by others for her role function, her self-esteem increases. |
| 18. Skill development (26, 27) | Sees team members learning and changing within the collaborative model. Values what she learns from others while working in various classrooms. |
| 19. Communication (28) | Experiences staff members communicating better than they had previously. |
| 20. Commitment (29, 34, 40, 41) | A commitment to work together is essential, part of which is the perseverance that is needed in order to reach students and to keep trying new methods until the right formula is met. Also, a commitment to her role is required as it is demanding of her time and energy. |
| 21. Training (21) | Feels limited in her knowledge at times and realizes she needs to stay current in her information in order to serve the needs of others well. |

Summary of Vicki's Experience

Vicki initially experienced resistance to her new role, it was the experience of "I'm doing my thing, you do your thing" with little actual collaboration occurring. Over time, however, acceptance by the other teachers developed. This acceptance occurred through Vicki being sensitive to the newness of her role and the potential threat this may be to the other teachers. She recognized that she was "coming into their space" and that she would need to proceed slowly and with diplomacy. The receiving teacher also must show a willingness to work with her in her new role. Vicki views acceptance of her new role as part of the whole collaborative process occurring only as knowledge increases and understanding of the process develops over the course of time.

Giving a definition of her role was difficult for Vicki to pin down as she viewed it as being "as varied as the experiences I go in to," ever changing, and dependent upon the needs of the teacher and the students. This dynamic role requires Vicki to be "totally flexible" and "ready to modify anything . . . at anytime." She feels she must be "ready to fit into the existing classroom" and must "bend to those roles" defined within that space. Conversely, she expressed that the receiving teacher must be equally as flexible, meaning that either teacher can take on the other's role if required or desired.

This interchange and sharing of roles defines the substance of the collaborative relationship for Vicki. Mutual planning and decision making, teaching in the same space, and sharing of information and ideas means that Vicki can "just take over from where the teacher is" and that the "teacher can just take over the remediation" of the special needs students. The roles become blurred as a new philosophy of mutual support and valuing replaces the old situation where Vicki felt "like just some appendage to the mainstream." A "team" concept is born when teachers begin "to think along the same lines" and support one another in their newly defined roles.

Vicki expressed her contribution to the building of this team concept by initially being a "support" to the teacher by "letting them know their plans were good ideas" and by being "a sounding board for them." In doing so she believes that the teachers grew in their "belief that the (special needs) child can make it in their classroom and that they as a teacher can make it." The support, over time, develops from a one way channel to a two way interaction where she feels as if she's never "in it alone," being supported by the other team members and administrator.

Administrative support is viewed as absolutely crucial to the collaborative process. The administrator must support the collaborative process by providing adequate time for

modifying and planning, while encouraging an atmosphere where flexibility, risk-taking, and sharing are the norm, and where the administrator demonstrates an overall belief in the process through positive actions that support it for "if the administrator doesn't believe in it, it's not going to work."

In fact, from Vicki's experience, "everyone in the school has to basically buy-in to the philosophy." Vicki has clearly bought into the belief system that establishes the basis for the collaborative process at her school. Throughout the interview, Vicki verbalizes the belief that through the collaborative process, the needs of students are being met "better than they ever have before." As Vicki works with teachers she sees their "mindset" change. The team members "become more aware of the specific needs of the (special needs) child" and become more "open to meeting those needs," therefore, essentially developing an "ownership" for the special needs children.

In fact, teachers' realizing that they have ownership of the special needs student's problems is "the biggest change I've seen," declares Vicki. Before Vicki felt "rather powerless" knowing that she couldn't be there for the children while they were in the regular program and that the needs of the special needs students were considered hers alone. Now, sharing responsibility for the these students means that "together we can reach these kids." Sharing responsibility for the students is also expressed through the team members sharing knowledge and resources.

In order for this expressed shared responsibility to develop, Vicki experienced the growth of other behaviors in herself and in other team members. First, a trusting relationship slowly develops as teachers support each other in their efforts. Vicki trusts that the teachers ultimately "want the best for the children" and recognizes that her new role requires the teachers' trust if they are going to "teach with someone else present" and "work as a team." Having a trusting relationship allows the teachers to "take risks" and "be willing to make mistakes." Within the collaborative process, risk-taking is extremely valued for it makes for "exciting" and "innovative" teaching as teachers are encountered with the challenge of meeting diverse student needs. Vicki feels that a willingness to make mistakes and learn from them is essential because "if you always had to be right, you wouldn't survive."

A willingness to try new methods, be innovative, and take risks in order to find solutions for student needs are seen as part of the commitment required to make the collaborative process work. Perseverance or "stickwithitness" is seen as part of that commitment. Vicki finds a real need to "stay on top of things" as she feels other teachers

"are counting on me" and therefore expresses a commitment to the demands of her role. This commitment has paid off in terms of teaching becoming more child-centered in that team members are more cognizant of the diversity of needs in their classrooms and more willing to change their methods in order to meet the needs of the student.

Vicki makes it clear, however, that every aspect of the collaborative process requires time. At the beginning of the process, time for the development of a philosophy or belief system is needed. As new relationships develop, one must recognize that acceptance, role development, and mutual valuing take time. Within the process, Vicki states that time is needed for planning and modifying to meet student needs. Insufficient time to do so hampers the collaborative process; "just saying we're doing collaboration is not good -- you need to do it and do it well."

Overall, however, Vicki displays an enthusiasm to "make it work to the maximum." Part of this renewed enthusiasm for teaching experienced by Vicki is the feeling that within this working framework she is viewed as an equal, as a "real teacher." Feeling part of the regular program or "mainstream" and being recognized and valued for her function within that structure adds to a feeling of empowerment. Not only does she feel empowered by her own success within her new role, but also by the fact that she is witnessing success in her students.

Having the special needs children "accepted and understood in the regular classroom" is viewed as the ultimate goal of the collaborative process by Vicki. She feels that teaching is now "very, very rewarding" and that working with other teachers has made for stimulating teaching. Overall, Vicki feels that her efforts within a collaborative working relationship with other team members are worthwhile as the ultimate goal, that of meeting the needs of all students, is being met in her eyes.

## Shannon

Shannon is a teacher with ten years experience, primarily in the areas of grade one and French Immersion. Shannon is teaching on a half time basis and had not yet been teaching at this school for one full year at the time of the interview. Shannon, therefore, was not in the school when the collaborative model was first discussed and introduced. Her primary responsibilities are to function as a resource facilitator for grade 6 and as the grade 5 and 6 French language teacher.

Shannon does not have any previous experience working with service delivery to special needs students, either as a resource teacher or a teacher receiving resource room services, although she is trained as a special education teacher.

Shannon appeared somewhat nervous and unsure during the interview process even though good rapport had been established. Her comments often began with "I think" or "I guess", giving the impression that she may not have a total understanding of the collaborative model or process.

Excerpts from Shannon's transcribed interviews, the paraphrases of those excerpts, and the first order themes are included in Table 5.5. The second order thematic clusters of Shannon's experience are included in Table 5.6. The thematic descriptions of Shannon's experience are included in Table 5.7. Following is a summary of Shannon's lived experience as a resource facilitator (special educator) working within a collaborative school environment.

Table 5.5

Thematic Abstractions of Shannon's Experience

| Excerpts from transcribed interview | Paraphrases | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| S1: You know, does the student need help at the moment within the classroom, or is the problem and the difficulty that the student is experiencing, does that the student need to be pulled out at that time. So, it's kind of like on, on, thinking on your feet, and making that decision at that time, at that moment. | Recognition that role requires quick decision making and flexibility. Decisions are based on the needs of the child. | Flexibility in role<br>Child-centered decision-making |
| S2: the other aspect to it was not just helping those students who had a lack of skills, but . . . need extra or something different to keep them going. So, it wasn't just helping the lower students, it's inclusive education. | Willingness to assist all students. Role includes providing for the needs of all students | Flexibility to meet student needs<br>Child-centered approach |
| S3: we believe that all students have a right to education, have, we believe that all students have a desire to learn and are motivated to learn, some of them more self motivated than others. And so, and I think we believe that we, teachers and our staff, if you want, are here to just facilitate that process. So, I guess the philosophy of collaboration is that let's all try to work together and find out what each student needs, and what we can do for each student, and how we can deliver that, whether it be in a small group, or if it's in the classroom, or one on one, a combination of all three. | Belief that the school's philosophy of a student's right of an education is supported in action through the collaborative process. Collaboration means working together to find ways to deliver services to students. | Buying into philosophy<br>Child-centered decision -making<br>Flexibility in service delivery |
| S4: I'm there for, to facilitate, maybe make the process easier for them, maybe break through and help them learn certain concepts. | Primary role is to assist children in the learning process. | Role function |
| S5: I also see it as facilitating the classroom as a whole, so if I can help the classroom teacher in his or her role, in any way shape or form, then I'm there for the teacher as well. And as I said before, it's not just the group of special needs students who'd in the classroom that I work with. I'm there for all of them. | Role includes supporting the teacher in order that they can work to meet student needs. | Support of teacher<br>Duality of role |

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| S6: I don't limit myself to the special needs students at those times, and I can't say to Betty, well, gee Betty, I can't help you, you're not one of MY students, you know, you just can't do that. . . . I think I am the resource facilitator for that classroom of students and that classroom teacher. | Sees role responsibilities as inclusive of all students and the classroom teacher. | Role function<br>Support of teacher<br>Student need versus label |
| S7: We discuss when we can grab a minute, throughout every day, and it begins first thing in the morning when we, you know, before classes start. You have a concern, we talk about it. If we, you know, need to come to an agreement on something, we talk about it before it happens. | Communication is viewed as essential, but is restricted by lack of scheduled time to meet. | Communication essential<br>Lack of time |
| S8: two heads are better than one sort of thing, and so we brainstorm together and we get our ideas together and, I guess that's how I view my role. If he needs the help, if he needs different ideas from his own, then that's what I'm there for. | Sharing of ideas and information in a team unit viewed as a way to support the classroom teacher. | Sharing of ideas<br>Support of teacher |
| S9: I started the year off that way, saying I'm open to anything. . . . I guess it's team work in a way. It's like we don't stand alone. If you're stuck on something, say something because that's what I'm there for. | Openness to the process in beginning leads to a sharing in responsibility. | Openness to process<br>Sharing of responsibility |
| S10: Maybe not so much the role has changed as their ideas, or maybe not their ideas or style of teaching, but they have to, if they're open to it, they need to kind of open up their classroom to another teacher, and a lot of us aren't used to that. We had our classroom, we ran the ship, we made the decisions, and now, well, for instance this year, I'm catching the classroom teacher will say something, and two seconds later realize that it affects me too, and that I should be maybe in on this decision or should have this information, and you know, so it's, not that he doesn't want to seek me out, but it's very different for him to have someone, another teacher in the classroom. | Receiving teachers must be open to the process. Understands that having their classroom open to another educator may be unfamiliar to teachers. Feels that teachers may not be totally familiar with her role and how their decisions affect her | Openness to new role<br>Sensitive to teacher's position<br>Role acceptance over time |
| S11: Open to working, working with someone else and saying, I'm going to do this with my students, but there's another teacher in this classroom and (it is important) for her to know what is going on, I need to let her know and we need to agree about the process and come to an agreement | Important for teachers to know what they are doing and why, communicating with each other and creating what they believe their working relationship should be. | Openness of communication<br>Acceptance requires openness |

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| S12: Okay, you have to agree that you want to collaborate. . . . you have to come to an agreement as to, okay look at the philosophical base, why you're doing it, what you're doing, and do it. First of all, do we want to work that closely together. | Teachers need to come from the same philosophical position and agree to participate in the collaborative process with each other. Mutual planning and decision making creates a base to work from. | Buying into philosophy<br>Reciprocity |
| S13: Setting aside the time for the resource facilitator to work in the classroom and for the teachers to meet collaboratively should be a first priority. | Time to work within the classroom and time to meet collaboratively with classroom teacher seen as critical. | Time for process |
| S14: you need a district that supports collaborative education or inclusive education and a district that supports your philosophy and where you're headed, what that staff would like to do within their school | Recognizes need for a district that support philosophically the direction and goals of the collaborative process within the school. | Support from district<br>Philosophical buy-in |
| S15: Students are receiving an education that is very specific to them and not just a general sort of education because we're helping them with their specific difficulties or specific talents and gifts, that they're almost getting an individualized education. | Feels that all students are able to benefit from the model because teachers are able to provide an education more specific to their needs. | Child-centered approach<br>Satisfied with process for students |
| S16: I think we're also accomplishing team work. I think as a staff we grow that way. We learn more and more how to work as a team rather than stand on my own and try to do this on my own. I know I've experienced it. | Is experiencing the building of a team concept in her school where all teachers contribute to the process. | Team concept formed |
| S17: I've done and I've tried to do it on my own and it hasn't worked and I know why, it's because I didn't seek out, maybe not so much help but just emotional support or different resources or whatever that would help me out. | Has experienced the need to seek out others for assistance and found it beneficial when feeling supported by others. | Support from others<br>Need for input from others |
| S18: the staff working together as a team is a role model for the students and I think maybe we're accomplishing that. That maybe their seeing team work in action, and hopefully, eventually, it'll come into their lives and they'll, or they'll maybe years from now look back and say, yeah, elementary school was great because those teachers were really together | Believes that the collaborative process between teachers create a model for the children that is worth emanating. | Satisfied that process is worthwhile |
| S19: teachers who don't want to collaborate or work as a team, or work that closely together, you know, have a resource facilitator in the classroom. Okay, a closed mind, I guess, would be a barrier. | Resistance from teachers in terms of not being open to the process or to the role of the resource facilitator is viewed as a barrier. | Resistance to process |

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| S20: The problems come with just not enough time. | Expresses a lack of time to do job as the central creator of difficulties with the process. | Lack of time |
| S21: there are times when, you know, information is passed between the classroom teacher that I work closely with, information is passed very last minute and very quickly, so you have to, again as I used the expression before, really think on your feet, really jump. And I'm not used to that and it's taken a while for me to get used to that, and I think it's taken them awhile to get used to me coming up to that level. | Is concerned about the lack of time for thorough communication between teachers. Quick communication requires her to be flexible. Recognizes that both herself and the classroom teacher need time to understand and accept the new relationship. | Time for communication<br>Acceptance takes time<br>Flexibility required |
| S22: if I were here the full day, I would be getting my prep times as well, and we could schedule prep times for me that coincided with the another teacher's prep time, so there would be a built in time to sit down with the teachers I work with and do some kind of talking with them, too. | Recognizes need for scheduled communication time with teachers on an on-going basis. | Importance of on going communication<br>Time for communication |
| S23: An open mind and flexible approach to education is a definite skill needed by teachers in this process. | Feels that flexibility and an open mind are two central skills needed by teachers working within the collaborative process. | Open mind<br>Flexible in approach |
| S24: Very specifically, I think it helps if you have some of you teachers on staff who have a special education background. | Sees a need for special education trained people to be on a staff who are working within this model. | Need for training |
| S25: they (teachers) have a professional obligation to keep up on current theories and practices and so they like to go to inservices say on how to teach your students to be collaborators, and I think that falls in with the training as well, that you do, that it's ongoing and that it's not just the special education teachers that do that but the other teachers. I think they want to. Now there's a desire to. | Believes that inservice training should be ongoing and available to all educators. Believes that within this model teachers now have a desire to learn. | Need for training<br>Desire to learn |
| S26: Lets be prepared for hard work, too, because sometimes you have to dig deep, really do a lot of thinking or brainstorming, or reading up on a certain problem that a child is experiencing. So you have to be prepared to do extra outside of the hours that you're required to be at school. | Recognizes that one must be committed to this process because it is intensive and sometimes requires time outside of the classroom to make it work. | Commitment required<br>Extra time required |
| S27: getting back to the open mindedness, you have be open minded about sharing your expertise and your resources and so forth with the other teachers. | Sharing of expertise and resources with others is viewed as being open minded within the collaborative process. | Sharing of knowledge and resources<br>Openness to sharing |

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| S28: I'd like to say it's almost a hard process to describe. . . . It almost has to be observed and' even that can be hard unless you're a fly on the wall, because you, and you'd almost have to have spent the whole year with us, kind of every day, watch what happens because it is different every day, it really depends on the needs of the students. | Role is hard to describe because it is dependent upon the needs of students and therefore is constantly changing to meet their changing needs. | Role dependent upon student need<br>Role-ever-changing |

Table 5.6

Higher Order Thematic Clusters of Shannon's Experience

| First Order Themes | Second Order Thematic Clusters |
|---|---|
| 1. Child-centered decision making | Child-centered |
| 2. Child-centered approach | |
| 3. Child-centered decision making | |
| 6. Student needs versus labels | |
| 3. Buying into philosophy | Buy-in |
| 12. Buying into philosophy | |
| 1. Flexibility in role | Flexibility |
| 2. Flexibility to meet student needs | |
| 3. Flexibility in service delivery | |
| 21. Flexibility required | |
| 23. Flexibility in approach | |
| 4. Role function | Role function |
| 5. Duality of role | |
| 6. Role function | |
| 10. Role acceptance over time | |
| 28. Role ever-changing | |
| 28. Role dependent upon student needs | |
| 5. Support of teacher through role | Support |
| 6. Support of teacher | |
| 8. Support of teacher | |
| 14. Support from district | |
| 17. Support from others | |
| 7. Communication essential | Communication |
| 11. Openness of communication | |
| 22. Importance of on-going communication | |
| 7. Lack of time | Time |
| 13. Time for process | |
| 20. Lack of time | |
| 21. Time for communication | |
| 22. Time for communication | |
| 26. Extra time required | |

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| 9. Team interaction | Reciprocity |
| 12. Reciprocity | |
| 16. Team concept formed | |
| 17. Need for input from others | |
| 9. Openness to process | Openness |
| 10. Openness to new role | |
| 11. Openness of communication | |
| 23. Open mind | |
| 27. Openness to sharing | |
| 10. Sensitivity to teacher position | Acceptance |
| 10. Role accepted over time | |
| 11. Acceptance requires openness | |
| 21. Acceptance takes time | |
| 15. Satisfied with process for students | Personal fulfillment |
| 18. Satisfied process worthwhile | |
| 19. Resistance to process | Resistance |
| 25. Desire to learn | Commitment |
| 26. Commitment required | |
| 24. Need for training | Training |
| 25. Need for training | |

Table 5.7

Higher Order Thematic Description of Shannon's Experience

| Thematic Clusters | Generalized Descriptions |
|---|---|
| 1. Child-centered (Excerpts from Table 5.5: 1, 2, 3, 6) | Decisions about intervention and service delivery options are based on the needs of the child with all children who have a need being serviced within the model regardless of whether or not they have a special needs classification. Belief that the collaborative process supports the school's philosophy of a child-centered approach. |
| 2. Buy-in (3, 12) | Examining "what you're doing" and "why you're doing it" are the beginnings of establishing a philosophical base for the collaborative process. Teachers need to come to an "agreement" on what the process is going to be. Understands the philosophy of collaboration to be teachers working together to determine "what each student needs, what we can do for each student, and how we can deliver it". |
| 3. Flexibility (1, 2, 3, 21, 23) | Working in the classroom to meet student needs requires her to be "thinking on your feet", making decisions quickly. Willingness to assist all students require her to be flexible in both how and where she does her job. Feels that flexibility is a "definite skill needed by teachers" to work in the collaborative model. |
| 4. Role Function (4, 5, 6, 10, 28) | Describes the role she performs as not easy because it is "different every day" and highly dependent upon the "needs of the students." Her role is not confined to the special needs children, but rather is viewed as "facilitating the classroom as a whole" which includes meeting the needs of all students as well as the classroom teacher. Feels that teachers may not fully understand or utilize her in her new role yet because of their unfamiliarity with it. |

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| 5. Support<br>(5, 6, 8, 14, 17) | Views role as supporting the regular classroom teacher in "any way, shape or form" as part of her role responsibilities. Sharing of ideas and information with teacher is an important part of that support. Has experienced the need for support from others and values it. Feels that it is also important that the school district supports the goals of the school's philosophy. |
| 6. Communication<br>(7, 11, 22) | Communication on a regular, on-going basis between teachers working collaboratively is viewed as essential, but is restricted by the lack of scheduled time to meet during the school day. Teacher need to discuss with each other the structure and function of their working relationship and agree on what it is going to be. |
| 7. Time<br>(7, 13, 20, 21, 22, 26) | Time to work within the classroom and time to meet collaboratively with the classroom teacher viewed as a "first priority." Problems with the collaborative process arise when there is a lack of time to do the job well. Acceptance of the process and of the roles occur only over time. Teachers must be willing to spend time outside of the hours of the school in order to make it work. |
| 8. Reciprocity<br>(8, 12, 16, 17) | Sharing of information and ideas leads to the development of a team concept where teachers "brainstorm" and "get ideas together." Teachers working together as a "team" allow her to give and receive support and "learn more" that if she were to "stand on my own." |
| 9. Openness<br>(9, 10, 11, 23, 27) | Being open to the process requires that one not only exhibits "open-mindedness" about the sharing of expertise and resources, but that teachers open their classrooms to one another, and open their perspectives to include the ideas of others. Recognizes that at the start of the process she needs to be "open to anything" so that the teacher would be open to sharing responsibility with her. |

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| 10. Acceptance (10, 11, 21) | In order to become accepted she must be sensitive to the teacher's perspective who is unfamiliar with having another teacher working within their classroom. Acceptance is also dependent upon the teachers taking time to openly communicate about what they believe the process is and how they will function together. Recognizes that both herself and the classroom teacher need time to understand and accept the new relationship and roles. |
| 11. Personal fulfillment (15, 18) | Feels satisfied that the collaborative process is allowing the teachers to provide for a more "individualized education." Believes that the collaborative process between teachers creates a model for the children that is worth emulating. |
| 12. Resistance (19) | Resistance from teachers who are not willing to be open to the process, work as a team and welcome the role of the resource facilitator is viewed as a major barrier to the process. |
| 13. Commitment (25, 26) | Recognizes that one must be committed to the whole collaborative process because it is intensive, requiring team members to give extra time and effort. Sees others around her expressing that commitment through a desire to learn in order to provide the best education for the students they serve. |
| 14. Training (24, 25) | Sees a need for special education trained people to be on staff when the collaborative model is employed. Believes that inservice training should be available and ongoing to all educators and not the responsibility solely of the special education personnel. |

Summary of Shannon's experience

Shannon finds that defining the role she performs is not easy because it is "different every day" and highly dependent upon the "needs of the students." Her role is not confined to the special needs children, but rather is viewed as "facilitating the classroom as a whole" which includes meeting the needs of all students as well as the classroom teacher. Shannon feels that teachers may not fully understand or utilize her in her new role because of their unfamiliarity with it. Although Shannon states that she has received no outward resistance from teachers, she states that teachers' unwillingness to being open to the process, work as a team or welcome the role of the resource facilitator as potential barriers to the process. Furthermore, Shannon expressed the need for a trained special educator to be fulfilling the resource facilitator role.

In order to become accepted in her role as resource facilitator by the regular classroom teacher, Shannon feels she must be sensitive to the perspective of that teacher who is unfamiliar with the new role and the process of collaboration. Acceptance is also dependent upon the teachers taking time to openly communicate about what they believe the process is and how they will function together. Shannon recognizes that both herself and the classroom teacher need time to understand and accept the new relationship and roles.

Shannon feels that individual teachers involved in the collaborative process must examine "what you're doing" and "why you're doing it" to establish a philosophical base for the collaborative process. Teachers need to come to an "agreement" on what the process is going to be. Shannon understands the philosophy of collaboration to be teachers working together to determine what each child needs and how to deliver what they need in order that they may experience success. She feels satisfied that the collaborative process is allowing the teachers to provide for a more "individualized education." Shannon also believes that the collaborative process between teachers creates a model for the children that is worth emulating.

Shannon feels that within the collaborative model decisions about intervention and service delivery options are based on the needs of the child with all children who have a need being served within the model regardless of whether or not they have a special needs classification. Shannon believes that the collaborative process supports the school's philosophy of a child-centered approach to education.

Shannon has experienced that working in the classroom to meet student needs requires her to be extremely flexible, "thinking on her feet," making decisions quickly. Willingness to assist all students require her to be flexible in both how and where she does

her job. She feels that flexibility is a "definite skill needed by teachers" to work in the collaborative process.

Shannon views supporting the regular classroom teacher in "any way, shape or form" as part of her role responsibilities. Sharing of ideas and information with the receiving teacher is an important part of that support. Shannon has experienced the need for support from others and values it greatly.

Sharing of information and ideas leads to the development of a team concept where teachers "brainstorm" and "get ideas together." Teachers working together as a "team" allows her to give and receive support and "learn more" than if she was to "stand on my own."

Shannon feels that all teachers must be open to the collaborative process, exhibiting "open-mindedness" about the sharing of expertise and resources. Shannon has experienced teachers opening their classrooms to one another, and opening their perspectives to include others' ideas. Shannon recognizes that at the start of the process she needed to be "open to anything" so that the teacher would be open to sharing responsibility with her.

Communication on a regular, on-going basis between teachers working collaboratively is viewed as essential by Shannon, but is restricted by the lack of scheduled time to meet during the school day. Teachers need time to discuss with each other the structure and function of their working relationship and agree on what it is going to be.

Shannon states that time to work within the classroom and time to meet collaboratively with the classroom teacher is viewed as a "first priority." Problems with the collaborative process arise when there is a lack of time to do the job well. Acceptance of the process and of the roles occur only over time. In addition, teachers must be willing to spend time outside of the hours of the school in order to make it work.

Shannon recognizes the need for teachers to be committed to the process due to its intensity, requiring them to give extra time and effort to make collaboration successful. Shannon witnesses others around her expressing their commitment to the process through a desire to learn in order to provide the best education for each student they serve. Overall, Shannon feels that the extra effort is worth it for it allows the teachers to provide for a more individualized education for all students.

## Ann

Ann is an educator with 21 years experience in delivery of service to special needs students. She has worked in both integrated and segregated special education settings as a teacher, a consultant, and as an administrator. In addition, she has taught grades 1, 2, and 4. Ann is currently fulfilling two roles in her school, that of principal and that of resource facilitator. There are three teachers sharing the resource facilitator role in her school. Ann is primarily responsible for providing service in this capacity to the grade one and two classrooms.

Ann participated enthusiastically in the interview process and appeared confident in the experiences she shared.

Excerpts from Ann's transcribed interviews, the paraphrases of those excerpts, and the first order themes are included in Table 5.8. The second order thematic clusters of Ann's experience are included in Table 5.9. The thematic descriptions of Ann's experience are included in Table 5.10. Following is a summary of Ann's lived experience as a resource facilitator (special educator) working within a collaborative school environment.

Table 5.8

Thematic Abstractions of Ann's Experience

| Excerpts from transcribed interview | Paraphrases | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| A1: My experience is that every year is going to be different. | Expresses an understanding that she is involved in a along term change process. | Change occurs over time |
| A2: I would say that there has been certainly an increase in the amount of discussion between so called regular educators and resource facilitators. There are more frequent requests by teachers that have grade responsibility for information about special needs, or bouncing off ideas relative to special needs kids. | Sees an increased interchange of ideas and information between teachers. Communication is enhanced. | Enhanced communication |
| A3: There's also a graying of the role areas. It's sometimes difficult here to talk about the resource facilitator and the regular classroom teacher because we're all sort of falling into this teacher period role, even though some of us have particular grade responsibilities, I don't see a real distinction. I see a real melding of roles. | Experiences less rigid role definitions. Even though teachers have specific responsibilities, there is a move towards the melding of roles. | Melding of roles over time<br>Functioning as Equals |
| A4: I think it's because we have a situation where we're in support units and it's not as if there's one person in the school that is the designated resource facilitator who holds the expertise and then moves from class to class fixing the kids. | The expert model is not utilized, instead, teachers are supported by smaller support units and the staff as a whole. | Teachers support each other |
| A5: what we've created is a fairly collegial relationship where your input, because you see the kids all day long, is absolutely as important or valid as my input might be holding the so called expertise in special needs or special ed. | Collegial relationship has developed where teachers have equal input into finding educational solutions for students. | Input equally valued |
| A6: what's contributed to that is the fact that we teach. We don't just do remediation or facilitation. By having to go into those classrooms and assume a curriculum responsibility and see kids in a totally different light, and get just as frustrated with classroom management, or curriculum preparation, those lines are blurring. | Views self as a teacher first. Experiences shared responsibility for curriculum with regular educator and has the opportunity to teach and manage the students in regular class settings. | Role interchange<br>Shared responsibility for students |

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| A7: Collaboration, to me, is a sharing. it is all of the parties in a school, regardless of whether you're the educator, the support staff, the custodian, all of those people in that school environment sharing responsibility of the education. And that's it. There's more that is lesser or greater. There is no grade level that is more important or less important. There is, in many ways, even no curricular area that is more important or less important. The total development of that child is a shared responsibility. That's what collaboration is. | Views total staff as part of the collaborative process which is built upon the shared responsibility of meeting the developmental needs of the students. Views all staff members as being a valued and equal member of the school team. | Shared responsibility for students<br>Equity between all school members |
| A8: My role as a resource facilitator is, I guess I have a couple, I see it as having a couple roles. Number one, I'm there for those children. I am there to increase the educational program for those kids. They may be coming from a medical deficit, they may be coming from a social deficit, they come with all kinds of problems. That is not the relevant point. The relevant point is as a resource facilitator is what are these kids needs, and what can I do to make that match between the mandate, which is the program of studies, and what the child is bringing to that particular program of studies. So that's my primary role. | Primacy of role is to meet the educational needs of the child regardless of their specific type or level of need. Role is dependent and defined by the needs of the students at any given time. | Role dependent upon student needs |
| A9: I would say my second role, but I'm not, I wouldn't say secondary, because to me it's just as important is then to know what are the needs of that teacher who's primary mandate is to carry out that program of studies and who has all of those children to deal with. . .(I need to) have a very good sense of what is happening in that classroom, the dynamics of that classroom, understand the strengths of that classroom teacher, understand the areas that I can support that classroom teacher. | Duality of role also requires that she be receptive to understanding and meeting the needs of the classroom teacher and the classroom as a whole in order to provide appropriate support. | Flexibility in role<br>Duality of role<br>Support of teacher through role |
| A10: Resource facilitating is all about process. And I resource facilitate all day long. It doesn't matter what particular role I'm assuming at that time because all day long I'm making these little checks inside my head so, (asking myself) "okay, is the learning process going on?" | Role is continually developing, a process that is not confined within a space at a given particular time. | Role ever-changing |
| A11: that observation takes place, it might be me in the classroom as a so called visitor, just to go in and observe and visit. | Awareness of needs occurs through observation in an informal manner. | Role includes observation |

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| A12: It might be case of when I am actually taking over the curricular responsibility, and teaching | Shares responsibility for whole class instruction. | Role interchange<br>Shared responsibility for instruction |
| A13: so I am making mental notes about I'm noticing this happening, I'm noticing this happening, and going to bounce this off the teacher and see what they are also see happening. | Classroom observations and sharing of teaching responsibilities leads to sh[illegible]g of information and ideas between teachers. | Sharing of ideas |
| A14: It might be a case of the teacher wanting to see me just on their own, and that, that to me is more of the consultative thing, when it's the teacher coming to me and saying, I need advice on (something). . . .The real collaboration, to me, comes when I'm in there with the person and assisting or taking over from or bouncing off when we're together in that process. | Feels that providing direct consultation to teachers participating is part of the collaborative process, but not the critical component. Views collaboration as more of a teaming process where teachers work together within the same space. | Consultation part of role<br>Collaboration as team interaction |
| A15: the long term goal in this school is that everyone is a resource facilitator. | Sees ultimate goal of the process as a complete sharing of role responsibilities in the school. | Role interchange |
| A16: and so I think that the primary role of our resource facilitator is to work themselves out of a job. And that way you have the regular classroom teacher being able to handle the kinds of situations that they do now. | Views collaborative process as a means to increase the regular educators' skills so that they are able to better provide for special needs students | Role interchange |
| A17: what I wanted then, to come to understand, which I believe they have, is that their skills are every bit as good as my skills. | Belief that teachers skills are equal in value - each contributes to the process | Equity of skills |
| A18: over the course of the last six or seven months, I've seen tremendous skills developing, skills that were there all the time, but that these people thought were held by some magic person called the resource room teacher. And it's been great! It's been wonderful. | Has witnessed teacher skill develop as teachers learn to let go of "expert" model of service delivery. | Skill development in teachers<br>Acceptance of new model |
| A19: I would say that the regular classroom teacher is becoming more focused on the child versus the curriculum. | Child-centered approach is becoming the norm for educators | Child-centered approach |
| A20: I think there is an increased ownership for total programming happening, not just within each grade, but across grades and across the whole school. | Witnesses teachers taking ownership of programming on a variety of levels. | Shared ownership of program |

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| A21: I think there is, there has certainly developed a greater commitment to the education of all children. | Believes that teachers are demonstrating an increased commitment to educating all children | Commitment to education of all children |
| A22: There has been a development away from having to look at labels. We don't think of them as a label. We, in many instances have forgotten the labels. | Children are not viewed as or tracked within the school as a certain label and this decreases the importance teachers place on such labels. | Student need versus label |
| A23: the other thing is the pride in the personal expertise that people are bringing. People that I would say typically regular classroom teachers that before would have sat back in a team meeting or a staff meeting or any of those things and listened while, perhaps the resource facilitator talked on and on about Tourettes or whatever, are coming forward and as experts and saying this is what I'm seeing. | Recognizes that teachers value the process when they are part of it and are being valued for what they contribute to it. This leads to increased participation and buy-in. | Empowered through process<br>Buy in when feeling valued |
| A24: I would say the observational skills of these teachers have absolutely sky-rocketed, because they are observing the children as process learners rather than these receptacles of information that's coming out of curriculum and that's been absolutely super. | Witnesses an increase in the teachers' ability to learn from observation of students and thus create a child centered focus. | Skill development<br>Child centered vs curriculum focused |
| A25: I would say that the relationship is becoming more and more collegial. Absolutely. And collegial, not just in the teaching situation, but in the decision making process. People are believing that their commitments and contributions are important. That they have the so called power to make changes in the service delivery model or what's happening in the classrooms or the children that need help at any given time, so those kinds of things are all happening. | Teachers are buying into the process and are feeling empowered to effect change as they experience success with the collaborative process | Empowered to effect change<br>Buy in when empowered |
| A26: To have this process happen in a school I would say number one a principal has to let go of a lot of the control that is sometimes needed to run a school. . . . and it's a very difficult task, and it's somewhat fearful, because you have to put the trust into your staff and then you have to step back and say, I hope it happens. | Recognizes that the administration must be willing to take risks, relinquishing control and demonstrating trust in the staff | Administrator demonstrates trust<br>Administrator willing to take risks<br>Importance of administrative support |

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| A27: Also as an administrator you have to keep reinforcing. . . . So, as the administrator, I think you always have to be monitoring the situation and observing as much anybody else. . . . I think also as an administrator very important for you to demonstrate leadership . . . . So, you're the facilitator of the process as an administrator. That's absolutely crucial. | Administrator's responsibilities in order to facilitate the process include reinforcing others, monitoring the situation, and providing leadership. | Importance of administrative leadership |
| A28: The administrator role has to change or there is, there's no way under the kind of administration of say 5 years ago where the timetabling ruled everything else. There is no way you can do that. . . . If you have people coming and going in and out of classrooms, and you are caught in a rigid structure of scheduling, you're going to be dead. | Flexibility on the part of the administrator is crucial, especially in the area of scheduling. | Flexibility in administrator's role |
| A29: The other thing is you have to be prepared to recognize that certain things are not going to work, and that you have to change. And sometimes you have to change in mid year or you have to change every second month. | Recognition that flexibility, a willingness to change, and a degree of risk taking is part of the process. | Openness to process<br>Need for flexibility<br>Willingness to take risks |
| A30: Time. Time is the number one because the commitment, the expertise, all of those things can be developed, but they can only be developed through time. And you have to have the time in a school to facilitate the process. Cooperative planning, very difficult to do after school. Time has to be there to do it. You want to create support units, it takes more time. | Views time as the central component to allowing collaboration to occur. Belief that other components, such as commitment, can develop as long as adequate time is allotted to the process. | Time for process to develop |
| A31: Number two, I think you need do to have the moral support of the staff, to do it. That we're going to take a risk. We're going to look at some changing things and so you need that kind of support. | Staff needs to buy-in into the process and support each other in the risks and changes that occur. | Staff support of changes<br>Staff buy-in |

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| A32: Where is this child functioning emotionally, and socially and academically and try to get a picture of what they're doing. Then we try to match, okay, are there some special needs? Where do we have to accommodate to make this a positive learning experience and also a profitable learning experience? . . . I think the worst thing that could happen in inclusive ed., is to keep kids in classrooms happy. They're sitting there happy, but they're not progressing. I mean, they're not learning, they're not moving along. | Believes that the learning experience for every child must be meaningful and meet their developmental needs. | Focus on meaningful programming |
| A33: Then, however, there is, discussion between the person doing the pull out, myself, and the regular classroom teacher. Always discussion about how are they coming along here, how are they applying what's happening back in the classroom. . . . (that) tells me what I need to work on, and it helps the regular classroom teacher in the accommodation of those children in the classroom. | Communication between the regular and special educator needs to be ongoing. | Importance of on-going communication |
| A34: And at that point, the decision was made, who could best meet their needs, and that was the regular classroom teacher. So, they do the work with those children while I take over the class for another subject. | Decisions for service delivery to students is based on the needs of the child and who can best provide for those needs, regardless of role titles. | Child centered decision making<br>Role interchange |
| A35: Then there is the consultative support that says, okay, you've tried these kinds of things when they're in the classroom, I'm noticing this in the classroom, and that in the classroom. | Sees providing consultative support as a component of her role. | Support through consultation |
| A36: I find that this type of model allows for a range of service options to be available to children, giving us movement and flexibility needed. | Feels that the consultative model allows for the type and range of flexibility needed in order to meet the needs of special needs children in the mainstream. | Flexibility of service delivery options |
| A37: just looking at kids, and just teaching kids from where they are to where you think you might like to see them go, I don't know where the regular kids are. We don't have regular kids. We don't have regular kids, so called regular kids. We just have kids. And, so it's, I would say they're benefiting as much. . (there are) no conditions on who the teacher works with | Feels that all students are gaining from model because all children benefit from it. All children have access to extra support. | Satisfaction with student outcomes<br>Flexibility in program delivery |

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| A38: It's still, "do you think it would be okay if I. . .", where I would like to see them take more ownership and put that more into a declarative statement that says, I'm going to do this now. But see that's the growth process and that's the security level of, well, I'm not really a special ed. teacher, maybe I'm not, which they have to get over. | Would like to see teachers take more initiative in and ownership of the process. Realizes that this will occur as teachers feel comfortable within the process. | Acceptance of process takes time |
| A39: The other thing I'm finding, too, is by down-playing the expert role, by assuming a collegial role where sometimes I may say to the teacher, I'm so frustrated by so and so, do you have any ideas that would help me? The teachers' self esteem in terms of being able to program for kids and to suggest strategies, etc. has sky rocketed. | As she demonstrates trust in her colleagues abilities, the teachers' efforts are validated increasing willingness to participate and skill utilization, leading to increased self-esteem. | Development of trust<br>Self-esteem increases |
| A40: We can see it in the products. Kids that couldn't write are writing. Kids that were reluctant to read are reading. Kids that were very protective of their own work or didn't like to share are sharing. | Feels the process is worthwhile as she sees it measured in the success of the students. | Empowered by student success |
| A41: The other way I'm seeing it is the children, I've seen the leadership skills in these kids. They're taking ownership of their learning process. The other real benefit that I'm seeing is these children do not believe that they're any different. | Witnesses changes in student's beliefs and attitudes about their abilities. | Student buy-in into process<br>Students are feeling accepted |
| A42: They're seeing learning happening and they're feeling it happening and they're not discriminating (between teachers). And because, everybody's coming and going, and because ( the special educator) is in there for social studies as much as (the special educator) is in or out for anything else, there's absolutely no distinction about who goes with (which teacher) | Feels she is identified as being part of the mainstream classroom, not any different from any other teacher. | Parity in eyes of students |
| A43: There is a collaboration among children. They help each other. They're very helpful because the whole point is that we all get help and we all help each other, and if that's the point the competition is not, there's certainly competition, as there always is with kids, but competition and labeling and pecking order are not there with the so called special needs kids. | Sees collaborative ethic filtering down to students. | Student buy-in into process |

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| A44: I would be surprised if the kids in this school, it would be interesting to see if they could identify a resource teacher, a resource room teacher. It would be interesting because of the kind of interchange (occurring now) in teaching. | Speculates that due to the interchange of roles between teachers that the students would not be able to distinguish between regular and special educators | Role interchange Parity in eyes of students |
| A45: I think my experience of the other model, and this model is there is a significant change in the educator. All of the educators in the school. A very significant change. A significant change in what their role is. How they view themselves. How they view each other. How they view the children. How they view the parents. . . certainly far more commitment to talk with parents. | Believes that educators perceptions of themselves and others is significantly altered through the collaborative process. | Belief that process facilitates change |
| A46: People that came from a very narrow understanding of their role as educators are now much more flexible, much more collegial, just little things like coming to the staff room more. The doors are open more...Sharing of materials, and frustrations. | Increased openness in perspective of role, sharing and flexibility are witnessed behavioral changes in teachers. | Openness of perspective Flexibility increases |
| A47:. You know, you don't come and say everything's perfect all the time. Those kinds of things certainly changed, and really a whole mentality, I would say, of, there has never ever been a statement this year by any member of this staff as to "where could we send this child. The child's not our responsibility. Where could we send them away to be fixed?" There have been many, many statements about who could we access to help us get more information. | Teachers feel comfortable enough to speak honestly about their frustrations. Teachers seek solutions to situations they now feel able to deal with. | Trusting relationship Empowered to seek solutions |
| A48: That is the classroom teachers saying, where, who could we ask for more information about this child? . . . So, they're certainly going beyond, you know, just curricular aspect. | Sees teachers accepting ownership of gathering information on student problems. | Sharing of responsibility for students |
| A49: The biggest barrier would the lack of time. And in this school at this particular time, I would say that is, that would be the only barrier, because everything else has opened up so much. | Insufficient time is considered the largest barrier to the collaborative process. | Lack of time is biggest barrier |
| A50: I think the biggest concern would be how much is going to be expected of me. Is there an expectation, as a resource facilitator, I sometimes worry that is this classroom teacher going to expect me to fix this child, because I'm not willing to do that. I'm not going to be able to send them back after my little session and work at that, and I think that's a fear. | Concerned that regular educators may continue to have role expectations for her which are not desirable or attainable. | Acceptance of new role |

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| A51. I think another barrier will be district decisions on the funding of inclusive education, the kind of support they're going to give us, those will be barriers for us. | Lack of support from the school in terms of providing adequate funding for the process is considered a barrier. | Support from school district |
| A52. Flexibility. The number one characteristic that a person would need is flexibility, because you have to change the way that you operate your classroom. You have to change the way you think about kids. You may have to change your schedule at any given point or notice. You will have to make modifications for kids. So flexibility is certainly one of the key characteristics. | The ability to be flexible in both perceptions and actions is considered to be essential. | Flexibility in thought<br>Flexibility in action |
| A53: I think another important characteristic is an openness. You have to be an open communicator with your colleague. If you're not going to talk with the person coming to facilitate with you, you're not going to get very far. | Teacher's need to be open to receiving others and be willing to communicate openly with one another. | Openness to communication<br>Communication with colleagues |
| A54: I think another thing is you have to have a commitment to kids. Kids before program, and that's crucial because these are our kids and it's the kids that we're working with. | An overall commitment to providing a child-centered focus is critical. | Commitment to children<br>Child-centered focus |
| A55: I have come to the conclusion, just in my experience this year and last year, with this process, I don't think there's any other way to teach for this time in history. I can't imagine trying to teach any other way. | Belief that the collaborative process is best able to meet the teaching demands of today. | Belief that process is meeting needs |
| A56: Because I have seen so much growth, so much change, we talked in the literature so often about catalyst for change and how do we change people, and change is the biggest stress and all of those kinds of things. I have seen, as a teacher, so much change in individuals, in individual teachers, in the dynamics of the staff, the whole staff, whether it's support or of clerical or certified, I have seen change in the feeling tone of the school. It's incredible. | Belief that the collaborative process provides a means to facilitate change. | Belief in process outcomes |
| A57: And I have also seen, because of that change, how much more quickly you can progress in goals that you set. Goals, when you work collaboratively, goals become achieved so much more quickly than when you're working either from a top down, or in your little resistive pools. It's just incredible. | Belief that the goals of the staff are being met through the process as it allows for a reduction in resistance to change among teachers. | Process decreases resistance<br>Personal satisfaction with process |

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| A58: I guess it's a value or moral change in many of the people here. The teachers will still gripe about kids, and you need that, you need to say, "John Smith is driving me crazy today", but it's kind of at this level, do you know what I'm trying to say? It never goes to that level where kids, there is no child in this school who is hated or totally disliked to the extent that, you know, you can feel it? There's none of that. There is, I would say this model has resulted in a tremendous amount of love and that may sound unusual, because a tremendous amount of love, and I think the kids are feeling it and they are responding to it. | Teachers are able to support one another through the collaborative process which reduces overall frustration for them, and ultimately for the students in the classroom. Feels supported and secure within the school environment. | Teachers support one another<br>Improved work environment |
| A59: I don't know if you felt it or not, but there is a tremendous sense of happiness and peace in the school and I really believe it's because of the collaboration, the commitment to each other. There's a commitment there, okay, this is what we're doing, but in order to do that, I have to be committed to you and you have to be committed to me, and so that tremendous commitment is there. | Is experiencing satisfaction in the process in that the school environment is pleasant to be in. Feels that this has resulted because the teachers are not only committed to the process, but to one another as well. | Improved work environment<br>Commitment to one another |
| A60: Making a mistake is actually encouraged because you learn from mistakes. | Risk-taking is encouraged so that learning can occur. | Risk-taking encouraged |

Table 5.9

Higher Order Thematic Clusters of Ann's Experience

| First Order Themes | Second Order Thematic Clusters |
|---|---|
| 1. Change occurs over time | Time |
| 30. Time for process critical | |
| 38. Acceptance of process takes time | |
| 49. Lack of time biggest barrier | |
| 2. Enhanced communication | Communication |
| 33. Importance of ongoing communication | |
| 53. Communication with colleagues vital | |
| 3. Melding of roles over time | Role function |
| 8. Role dependent upon student needs | |
| 9. Duality of role | |
| 10. Role ever-changing | |
| 14. Consultation part of role | |
| 3. Functioning as equals | Parity |
| 5. Input equally valued | |
| 7. Equity between all school members | |
| 17. Equity in skills | |
| 44. Parity in eyes of students | |
| 4. Teachers support one another | Support |
| 9. Support of teacher through role | |
| 26. Support of administration | |
| 31. Staff support of changes | |
| 35. Support through consultation | |
| 51. Support from school district | |
| 58. Teachers support one another | |
| 6. Role interchange | Reciprocity |
| 12. Role interchange | |
| 14. Collaboration as team interaction | |
| 15. Role interchange | |
| 16. Role interchange | |
| 34. Role interchange | |
| 44. Role interchange | |

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| 6. Shared responsibility for students | Shared responsibility |
| 7. Shared responsibility for students | |
| 12. Shared responsibility for instruction | |
| 13. Sharing of ideas | |
| 20. Shared ownership of programs | |
| 48. Shared responsibility for students | |
| 9. Self-esteem increases | Empowerment |
| 23. Empowerment through the process | |
| 25. Empowered to effect change | |
| 40. Empowered by student success | |
| 41. Empowered to seek solutions | |
| 18. Acceptance of new model | Acceptance |
| 38. Acceptance of process takes time | |
| 50. Acceptance of new role | |
| 18. Skill development witnessed in teachers | Skill development |
| 24. Skill development witnessed in teachers | |
| 19. Child-centered approach | Child-centered |
| 22. Student need vs. label | |
| 24. Child-centered vs. curriculum centered | |
| 32. Focus on meaningful program | |
| 34. Child-centered decision making | |
| 54. Child-centered focus | |
| 21. Commitment to education of all children | Commitment |
| 54. Commitment to children | |
| 59. Commitment to one another | |
| 23. Buy-in when feeling valued | Buy-in |
| 25. Buy-in when empowered | |
| 31. Staff buy-in | |
| 41. Student buy-in | |
| 45. Belief that process facilitates change | |
| 55. Belief that process meeting needs | |
| 56. Belief in value of process outcomes | |
| 26. Importance of administrative support of process | Administrator's role |
| 27. Importance of administrative leadership | |
| 28. Flexibility in administrator's role | |
| 26. Administrator demonstrates trust | Trust |
| 39. Development of trust | |
| 47. Trusting relationships | |

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| 28. Flexibility in administrator's role | Flexibility |
| 29. Willingness to change | |
| 36. Flexibility in service delivery options | |
| 38. Flexibility in program delivery | |
| 46. Flexibility increased | |
| 29. Openness to process | Openness |
| 46. Openness of perspective | |
| 53. Openness to communication | |
| 37. Satisfied with student outcomes | Personal fulfillment |
| 57. Personal satisfaction with process | |
| 58. Improved work environment | |
| 59. Improved work environment | |
| 57. Process reduces teacher resistance | Resistance |
| 26. Administrator willing to take risks | Risk-taking |
| 29. Need for risk-taking | |
| 60. Risk-taking encouraged | |

Table 5.10

Higher Order Thematic Description of Ann's Experience

| Thematic Clusters | Generalized Descriptions |
|---|---|
| 1. Time (Excerpts from Table 5.8: 1, 30, 38, 49) | Time is identified as the most critical factor in the collaborative process. Belief that all other components of collaborative process can develop, "but they can only develop through time." Time is needed for acceptance and implementation of the process. Since the collaborative model involves a long term change process, time is essential for its development. Insufficient time would be the "biggest barrier" to the collaborative process. |
| 2. Communication (2, 33, 53) | Communication between teachers needs to be on-going. Without a willingness to participate in open communication "you're not going to get very far" in the collaborative process. Once the collaborative process is occurring, she sees an increase in idea and information exchange between team members. |
| 3. Role Function (3, 8 , 9, 10, 14) | Role is defined by the needs of others (students and teachers). Describes primary role as making a "match between the . . . program of studies and what the child is bringing" to the classroom. Describes role as a "process," not limited within a particular space and time. Envisions the "melding" or joining of roles over time when all teachers function equally to provide for student needs. |
| 4. Parity (3, 5, 7, 17, 42, 44) | Describes teacher relations as "collegial" where all input from all staff members is "absolutely as important or valid as my input." In addition, no role responsibilities are "more important or less important." Feels that students now are not "discriminating" between teachers because they are used to dealing with all teachers and because there is a high amount of "interchange" occurring between teachers. Ultimately, there is a "graying of role areas" where all teachers just fall into the "teacher, period, role" where all members function as equals. |

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| 5. Support<br>(4, 9, 26, 31, 35, 51, 58) | In this collaborative model, one person does not "hold the expertise" and provide all the support to the others. All teachers support each other. Because of the support teachers feel, there is less frustration and more "love" expressed in the school. To create this type of system, the support of the school administration and school district is critical. The staff as well must provide its "moral support" to the collaborative ethic and be willing to support the changes that will occur. Feels that she, as an individual teacher in the role of resource facilitator, needs to "understand the strengths of the classroom teacher" so that she can "understand what areas that I can support that classroom teacher." |
| 6. Shared responsibility<br>(6, 7, 12, 13, 20, 48) | Defines collaboration as all staff members responsible for the "total development of the child." Views a shared responsibility for students, curriculum, information gathering and sharing, and instruction as a result of increased collaboration among team members. Is witnessing in team members an "increased ownership for total programming happening, not just within each grade, but across the whole school." Collaboration is viewed as complete and total "sharing". |
| 7. Reciprocity<br>(6, 12, 14, 15, 16, 34, 44) | Views the collaborative process as one in which team members, especially teachers, can assume each other's roles and responsibilities. Feels that "the fact that we [the resource facilitators] teach" has contributed to the model being as accepted as it is. Resource facilitators assume classroom and curricular responsibilities along with the classroom teacher. Collaboration is viewed as the building of a team relationship, where decisions are made jointly in the best interest of the individual child. Ultimately, the goal of the collaborative process is that there be complete sharing of role responsibilities in the school whereby everyone is a "resource facilitator." In this respect, regular classroom teachers would be able to manage most special needs children in their classroom. |

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| 8. Flexibility (9, 28, 29, 36, 46) | Must be flexible within role so that she can meet both the needs of the students and the needs of the classroom teacher. Has witnessed teachers becoming "much more flexible", letting go of "their very narrow understanding of their role as educators." Flexibility means a "willingness to change" that is lead by the administration who must let go of such things as a "rigid structure of scheduling." Moving to a more flexible approach gives the "movement and flexibility needed" to provide for an increased range of service delivery options for students in this school. |
| 9. Skill Development (18, 24) | Has witnessed increased skill development in teachers as they are willing to let go of the "expert" special education service delivery where teachers thought the resource teacher "held some magic" that they could not access. Skills being developed such things as observational abilities. |
| 10. Acceptance (18, 38, 50) | Acceptance occurs only over the course of time and is viewed as a "growth process." Total acceptance is dependent upon teachers letting go of the expectations of the old "expert model." Some fear exists that all teachers are not yet prepared to do this. |
| 11. Child-centered (19, 22, 24, 32, 34, 54) | Teachers are becoming more "focused on the child versus the curriculum" as they engage in the collaborative process. As special needs students are involved in the regular programs less emphasis is placed on labels of special needs category and more emphasis is place on creating a meaningful learning experience for each child. Decisions for service delivery are being made based on the needs of the child. A "kids before programs" approach means that the children are being viewed by teacher more as "process learners" rather than "receptacles of information." |
| 12. Commitment (21, 54, 59) | Besides a commitment to children in general, there is a commitment to the "education of all children", including those with special needs. Is experiencing a commitment in the team members to one another, not just to the concept of collaboration. This generates a sense of "happiness" and "peace" in the school environment. |

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| 13. Buy-in (23, 25, 31, 41, 43, 45, 55, 56) | Views team members as buying-in to the process as they begin to feel valued and empowered. Valued as part of the process and valued for what they contribute to it. Empowered by the fact that they "believe their commitments and contributions are important" and that they have the "power to make changes." Has experienced students buying-in to the process as well, taking "ownership of their learning process", believing that "they are equal" and showing a willingness to "help each other." Recognizes that all teachers and administrators must buy-in to the model and provide their "moral support" for the changes that are going to occur. Believes that the collaborative process itself facilitates or is a "catalyst" for change in her school. Demonstrates that she has bought into the collaborative model by stating, "I don't think there is any other way to teach for this time in history." |
| 14. Empowerment (23, 25, 39, 40, 47) | Is experiencing a feeling of empowerment through the collaborative process due to several aspects. Teachers are experiencing "pride in their personal expertise" which is more willingly shared on staff; self esteem increases as team members' efforts are validated by others; solutions are now sought for problems team members feel empowered to deal with; and, team members feel they now have the "power to make changes" within their school. Feelings of empowerment also stem from the view that the students are experiencing success through this model. |
| 15. Administrator's role (26, 27, 28) | Administrator is responsible overall for facilitating the collaborative process which includes demonstrating a willingness to change and a willingness to take risks, an ability to relinquish control, and a consistent demonstration of trust in the staff. The administrator facilitates the overall process by reinforcing others, monitoring the situation, and providing leadership. Flexibility in the administrator's role is seen as critical because "if you're caught in a rigid structure of scheduling, you're going to be dead." |

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| 16. Trust (26, 39, 47) | Trust develops between the resource facilitator and the regular educator when a willingness to learn from each other and help one another is demonstrated. The resource facilitator must be willing to "let go of the expert role." A trusting relationship develops when team members are able to speak openly and honestly about their frustrations due to the fact that there is a sharing of responsibility for theses problems. The administrator begins this process by being able to "put the trust into the staff and then step back." |
| 17. Risk-taking (26, 29, 60) | The administrator must demonstrate risk-taking behavior and "let go of the control of the school." The staff must be prepared for the fact that "things are not always going to work" and that you have to "be willing to change" as a result. In fact, "making mistakes is encouraged" because "you learn from your mistakes." |
| 18. Openness (29, 46, 53) | Staff members must be open to the process. Witnesses a physical "opening of doors" as well as increased participation in the process. A willingness to be open in your communication with others is seen as critical. |
| 19. Personal Fulfillment (37, 57, 58, 59) | Feels that all students are benefiting from the collaborative model and that the staff can "more quickly progress in the goals" they have set. Is experiencing satisfaction in the process because of the enhancement of the work environment, describing an atmosphere of "love", "peace", and "happiness." |
| 20. Resistance (57) | Feels that the collaborative process itself allows for a reduction in the resistance to change among the team members . Feels that so much more is being accomplished through the collaborative model than could be through a "top-down" approach when teachers can be functioning in "little resistive pools." |

Summary of Ann's experience

Ann is aware that collaboration is itself a process, and that this collaborative process is one of continuous change, where "every year will be different." Through this process, she has witnessed many changes in how teachers view their roles noting that teachers are beginning to let go of the previously held narrow perspective of what they believed an educator's role to be. Through the use of the collaborative process, she eventually envisions a "melding" of roles for all teachers, in which there will be less discrimination between teachers as far as strict role descriptions are concerned. She envisions a time when all teachers will function equally to provide for the needs of all students, including those with special needs.

Ann describes her role as a resource facilitator as a process; defined by the needs of her students, constantly changing, and not limited to a particular space and time. She describes her primary role function as creating a "match" between the mandated curriculum and the needs of the child. Ann was careful to state that her second role function (not secondary role) is to be responsive to the needs of the classroom teacher "whose primary mandate is to carry out the program of studies."

Within the collaborative model, Ann experiences support from other teachers and is able to provide support to other teachers. In her role, Ann searches out the strengths of the classroom teacher so that she can understand the areas in which she can best support that teacher. With teachers supporting one another in their efforts, Ann experiences less frustration and feels that more "love" is expressed in the school between staff members and staff members and students.

In this model, one person does not "hold the expertise" in special education or any other area. Therefore, the deficit-driven, medical model of special education where special educators are viewed as "experts" who took students out of the classroom to be "fixed" is not part of the collaborative model as experienced by Ann. In fact, all teachers learning to let go of the old expert model is critical if the new collaborative model is to be accepted and resistance reduced. In addition, Ann has witnessed an increase in skill development and use when teachers believe they all have abilities that contribute to the process.

Ann believes that all team members bring expertise into the learning situation and that all expertise should be valued and shared. In this manner, all team members share responsibility for the "total development of the child" including ownership of student problems, curricular needs, information gathering and sharing, and classroom instruction.

In addition, Ann is witnessing increased ownership and responsibility of team members for all students not just within their own classroom, but across the whole school.

Team members working together to share responsibility for students has resulted in what Ann describes as a more "collegial" working environment. This collegiality is demonstrated in a new sense of parity between teachers and support personnel where input from all staff members is considered equally important or valid. In addition, no role responsibilities are viewed as "more or less important" as each contributes to meeting the overall needs of the students.

When teachers view one another as equals and share responsibility for all children, they are able to assume each other's roles and responsibilities when desirable to do so. Ann shares curricular and instructional responsibilities with the regular classroom teachers she works with. She believes this contributes to the level of acceptance she is experiencing in this model. Collaboration is described as the building of a team relationship where decisions are made jointly in the best interest of the individual child. Ultimately, Ann sees every teacher in the school being capable of performing the resource facilitator role, not eliminating the need for special educators, but rather creating a situation where regular educators would be able to manage most children with special needs in their classroom.

In order for the collaborative process to be successful, all team members must be flexible. Ann must be flexible in her role as resource facilitator so that she can meet the needs of both the students and the teacher in the regular classroom. This flexibility or willingness to change must be modeled by the administrator in the school who must let go of such things as a "rigid structure of scheduling." In addition to modeling flexibility, the administrator must also model and encourage risk-taking behavior. Team members learn that mistakes are made, but that there are learning benefits from making mistakes when you have the support of others around you.

Ann believes that a trusting relationship develops between team members when a willingness to learn from each other and help one another is demonstrated. This trust means that team members will be willing to speak openly and honestly about their frustrations due to the fact that they feel there is a shared responsibility for problems as well as solutions. Again, the administrator is central in beginning this process by being able to "put the trust into the staff and the step back"; by giving the staff the power to make decisions and plan for their vision of the school.

Within the collaborative process, Ann is experiencing a new openness between teachers that is characterized in the physical opening of classroom doors as well as

increased participation of teachers in all aspects of school involvement. As well, Ann is witnessing an overall increase in idea and information exchange between all team members. Furthermore, Ann experiences a higher level of commitment between team members, generating a sense of "happiness" and "peace" in the school environment.

Ann feels that teachers are becoming more focused on the child instead of the curriculum as they engage in the collaborative process. As students with special needs become involved in the regular programs less emphasis is placed on labels of special need and more emphasis is placed on creating a meaningful learning experience for each child. Within this model, the team members are more free to make decisions for service delivery based on the needs of the child rather than on a program description. A "kids before programs" approach means that children are viewed more as "process learners" rather than "receptacles of information."

Ann is experiencing a feeling of empowerment through the collaborative process due to several changes she sees in herself and other team members. Team members are experiencing "pride in their personal expertise" which is more willingly shared on staff; self esteem increases as team members' efforts are validated by others; solutions are now sought for problems team members feel empowered to deal with; and, team members feel they now have the "power to make changes" within their school. Feelings of empowerment also stem from the view that the students are experiencing success through this model.

The fact that she believes students are benefiting from staff engagement in the collaborative model gives Ann a sense of personal fulfillment. In addition, she feels satisfied the staff as a whole can more quickly progress through the goals they have set because the collaborative process eliminates the "top-down" approach and also mitigates against teachers functioning in "little resistive pools." Personal fulfillment also stems from the feeling that the work environment is enhanced through the collaborative process.

Ann recognizes that all staff members must buy-in to the collaborative model and provide their "moral support" for the changes that are going to occur if it is going to be successful. Ann believes team members buy-in to the process as they begin to feel valued and empowered: valued as part of the process and for what they contribute to it; empowered by the fact that they "believe their commitments and contributions are important" and that they have the "power to make changes." Ann has experienced students buying-in to the process as well, taking "ownership of their learning process," believing that "they are equal" and showing a willingness to "help each other." Ann demonstrates

her buy-in to the collaborative model when she states, "I don't think there is any other way to teach for this time in history." Essentially, Ann believes that the collaborative process itself facilitates or is a "catalyst" for change in her school.

Finally, time is identified as the most critical factor in the collaborative process. Ann puts forth the belief that all other components of collaborative process, such as commitment, flexibility, and shared responsibility, can develop, "but they can only develop through time." Time is needed both for acceptance and implementation of the process. Since the collaborative model involves a long term change process, time is essential for its development. Ann clearly states that insufficient time would be the "biggest barrier" to the collaborative process.

## Clara

Clara is an educator with 18 years experience teaching all grades at the elementary level at various times in her career. She is currently teaching grade 5 and is serving students in her classroom with medical difficulties and learning problems. Clara does not currently have a resource facilitator or a support person working directly with her in her classroom this year, but has received support for herself and her students through other team support mechanisms such as teacher assistant team meetings and consultation time with the resource facilitator and administrator.

Clara presented herself as calm and confident in the interview setting. Clara's conversation gave the impression that she is quite in-tune with the staff dynamics under the collaborative model. She focused many of her comments on the new staff relations she was experiencing in this model, referring frequently to how the staff had changed and become "a very close knit staff", "relaxed", and "like a family" since collaboration had been introduced.

Excerpts from Clara's transcribed interviews, the paraphrases of those excerpts, and the first order themes are included in Table 5.11. The second order thematic clusters of Clara's experience are included in Table 5.12. The thematic descriptions of Clara's experience are included in Table 5.13. Following is a summary of Clara's lived experience as an educator working within a collaborative school environment.

Table 5.11

Thematic Abstractions of Clara's Experience

| Excerpts from transcribed interview | Paraphrases | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| C1: I think a lot of our working together is like a team building thing. A lot of the decisions we make are with the whole staff deciding. It's brought to the staff and we decide on it. | Focus of collaboration has been on the building of a team which involves joint decision making between administration and staff. | Shared responsibility through team building<br>Shared decision making |
| C2: We're set up on kind of a mentor/buddy system, where two teachers have been paired together, for instance, I've been paired together with the grade 3 teacher, and we not only exchange classes, so that we get to know each others kids, but if we have problems, we go to each other, or if I have discipline problems and I need one of my kids to have time out of my room, then the child will go to my buddy teacher's room, and things like that. Just to, it's kind of support system. | Teachers are supported through a buddy system where they can exchange ideas and find support for themselves and for their students. | Support for teachers<br>Sharing of ideas and resources |
| C3: . . . everybody kind of knows what everybody else is doing, and everybody shares all the materials. It's a very close knit staff as far as, you know, all the teachers know all the kids and, you know, we share a lot of things and a lot of ideas. It's a lot of team building that we do. | Sharing of resources and ideas common among teachers. Feels that the staff is close and highly aware of each other's students. The concept of team is built through this sharing. | Sharing of ideas and resources<br>Increased awareness of student needs<br>Shared responsibility through team building |
| C4: Oh, it's great, because you not only get to know the rest of the teachers really well, and their teaching methods and their styles, but you get to know all the kids in the school. And we have the opportunity, we do, there's a lot of intermingling, so we are building s strong communication base, and I think, too, a sense of trust has really developed. | A high level of collaboration allows for teachers to really get to know each other personally and professionally, building communication and trust | Acceptance of differences in teachers and students<br>Opportunity for increased interchange<br>Trust is building |
| C5: It's kind of nice to see, because I don't think you see that in a lot of schools and we're very laid back this year. There's kids always working in the hallways or, coming and going into different classrooms. There's always something going on where they're intermingling and same with the staff. So, it goes way beyond the staff, yeah. | Staff feeling more relaxed. Sees the collaborative ethic filtering down to the students in the amount of sharing and interchange that is occurring between groups of students. | Staff relaxed<br>Students affected positively |

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| C6: . . . we have quite a number of special needs kids in this school, and they're not treated any differently than any of the other kids, and they are involved in everything all the other kids are involved in. From [my experience in] previous schools and stuff, when we had special needs kids, they were treated differently and they were almost, you know, a lot of the times they were walked around very cautiously and carefully, and here they're not. | Sees students with special needs as having equal status and opportunity in the school. | View of special needs children changed |
| C7: They're just one of the group and they go along with the flow and they do get, you know, they do get the extra help when they need it, and there's always someone there to facilitate, and kind of watch over, but they're not treated any differently and I don't think they feel any differently. | Sees needs of special students are being meet within this model. Believes that students with special needs are afforded equal treatment in the school through teacher collaboration. | Support for students<br>Shared responsibility for students |
| C8: This school has a very high population of special needs, so over the years working here and being exposed to these kids, you, I mean we have no formal training as far as how to work with these children or what we can do for them, so it's [previously] been basically a hit and miss thing. But I find that I've become much more open minded, much more tolerant, much more creative because of these kids, because you have to continuously try to think of ways to get through to them, or ways to help them cope. . . | Finds that attitude and skills have changed as a result of having inclusion of special needs children within a collaborative format. Describes self as more open-minded, tolerant, and creative due to efforts to meet needs of children with special needs. | Attitude changed<br>Skills improved<br>Openness to process required |
| C9: [The administrator] is very well trained. And she's always been very accessible as far as helping us out with any of the things we didn't know how to cope with. With my particular situation I've had lots of help, you know, getting materials for him and getting research where I can read through it. | Having a well-trained administrator who is accessible and who shares responsibility for students has facilitated her understanding and management of students with special needs. | Support from administrator<br>Shared responsibility for students |

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| C10: If we need to have case conferences with parents, or if we just need to sit down with another teacher and discuss whatever, [the administrater] will cover for us, or she'll provide subs for us. We have kind of a resource facilitator day where about once every two months a sub will come in and that sub will go around and cover each of our classrooms and we will have a chance to sit down with [the resource facilitators] and go through our class lists and take a look at how our special needs kids are doing, and see if anybody else had cropped up in the last few months as maybe, you know, having a learning disability, or whatever, that needs to be referred or that needs special attention. | Administrator arranges scheduling, substitute teacher time, and meetings so that teachers, parents and support personnel can address student needs. | Administrator's support critical<br>Time to meet |
| C11: So there's a lot of extra effort and care and attention being given in this particular school to special needs. I find the way it's been handled is, it makes it easier for us, because as I said before some of us don't have any special training with special needs, so this is a real help to us. | Acknowledges that due to lack of training in special education, without support in the regular classroom from special need personnel, meeting the needs of special needs students would be particularly difficult. | Support required<br>Student needs being met |
| C12: . . . years ago when they first started talking about inclusive ed[ucation] and including special needs [students], it bothered me. I thought, you know, we have enough on our shoulders, they're not going to fund any sort of training for us, but yet they expect us to be able to do all this stuff. But anyway, coming into this school, because it (inclusion) is such a heavy focus here, yet it's not being pushed down your throat, it's just a part of our school culture, that's just what we do. I find it's great. | Initial opposition to inclusion of special needs children has changed to positive support because of being given opportunity for input and due to the creation of a school culture that supports inclusion. | Opposition and resistance reduced<br>Opportunity for input |
| C13: I know, from working in other schools . . .when they [special needs students] used to be pulled out for resource room, they already had it in their heads, they had a label in their heads that, I'm quite as, as good as the other kids. And the other kids labeled them as such, too. Why, you won't see that in this kind of a program, because we don't pull out, the resource facilitator comes in and works in the classroom. | Sees a reduction in the negative effects of special education services, i.e. labeling and reduced self-concept, when children are serviced within the regular classroom with support from special educators. | Students not singled out |

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| C14: It [the resource facilitator's role] is whatever is comfortable for the classroom teacher and whatever suits that teacher's, teaching style, and what's good for the kids. And, so we do a little bit of both. [The resource facilitator] tries to work mostly right there in the classroom. | Sees her role as teacher and the resource facilitator's role as being flexible and dependent upon the needs of teacher and student. | Role of resource facilitator changeable<br>Flexibility in roles |
| C15: And it changes, because I didn't need any at the beginning of the year, and now, [the resource facilitator] is coming in every so often to pull out. | Sees the model as being flexible and changing in accordance with student need. | Flexibility in process |
| C16: I think to have a program like this set up in a school, I think you have to have one person that knows what they're doing, and I mean, that's [the administrator], because if it wasn't for her expertise, we would never, we would never be doing this. | Leadership is critical if the program is going to be successful. | Administrator as collaborative leader |
| C17: And I think the administrator also has to be knowledgeable, they have to be supportive, plus they have to sell this whole idea to the staff, and do it in a way that, not coming through to the staff and saying, this is what we're going to do, and, you know, this is my baby and I, well, I don't care what you think, but presenting it to the staff and training your staff, kind of, and letting them flow into the system very slowly which is what happened with us. | Administrator's role is critical in the creation of the collaborative culture. The administrator must be knowledgeable, be supportive of the staff, allow the staff to buy-in and have ownership of the program, and allowing for time in which the program philosophy can develop. | Administrator's role in buy-in<br>Importance of administrator's support<br>Buy-in to process<br>Time for process |
| C18: . . . the way that it was brought through, was a very slow process, very, you know, step by step, and when it's done like that, you get your staff to believe in it. And then once the staff believes in it they, they work, basically they work their butts off to see that it's accomplished, but, you know, if you don't have an administrator that supports it, and if you don't have somebody knowledgeable that knows how to go about putting the system in, it won't work. | Allowing for sufficient time to understand and own the process builds staff buy-in and participation. Once staff buys-in to the philosophy, they are willing to put in the effort and time to make it successful. Administrator's level of knowledge and support is critical to this process. | Time for process<br>Philosophical buy-in<br>Commitment to process<br>Importance of administrator's role |
| C19: You have to have your whole staff believe in it because even if you just have one, one or two teachers that won't support it, your whole systems flawed. You have to have a whole staff. . . and the whole school body has to believe in the thing. | Staff buy-in to the philosophy is critical for the success of the collaborative ethic. Student buy-in is also viewed as important. | Philosophical buy-in<br>Student buy-in |

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| C20: And not that it's ever been formally presented to the kids, but just the way that it was brought into this school, the kids just accepted it, and it's just part of the school. And it's something that we don't think about and we don't question, that's just what our school's about. | Sees philosophy as filtering down to the student body due to the fact that the collaborative ethic is inherent within how the school views itself. | Students engaged in process<br>Buy-in to new culture |
| C21: I think you have to be very open minded, and I think the, the teachers in this school are very, everybody is really a hard, hard worker and will go that extra mile to try these things out or to, you know, accommodate this kind of program. And I think that, as I say, if you're not open minded and if you're not willing to accept change, and if you're not willing to learn through this change, then it's never going to happen in this school | Believes that necessary teacher characteristics in the collaborative format include open-mindedness, willingness to contribute, willingness to engage in learning and change. | Openness to process<br>Commitment to process<br>Willingness to change |
| C22: And you do, it's a lot of work, and it's a lot of extra time put in, but as I said before, if it's presented so that first your staff believes in the concept, then the extra work doesn't matter because it's, you know, it's something that all of us are working towards and we all believe in it and we all, and we've all, we've seen that it works. So we don't, we don't even consider it extra work now, it's just something that we do. | Acknowledges that collaboration does require extra work at least in the initial stages, but when all members buy-in to the philosophy and process through active engagement in decision-making, it becomes part of the school culture, and is not resented. | Time commitment<br>Shared decision-making<br>Buy-in to new school culture |
| C23: It's just a different way of approaching. . . . it's hard to explain what's happening in the school because as I say, it's just become a part of our school culture, so it's something that we don't think about. . . . we don't sit there and go, oh no, I got another 2 hours worth of work because of this. We don't think of it that way. It's just something that we do, and because of the way, as I say again, because of the way it was brought in, and the slow process, and, you know it's just part of, part of the school and that's it. | Finds collaborative format difficult to explain clearly and simply. Recognizes that it has become part of how the school defines itself, part of the school culture. | Buy-in to new school culture |
| C24: when you work in a place like this, and when the staff and the students are as close as this school is, I think that life is just that much easier. And when you come to work it's not 'coming to work', it's just like coming [together with] part of your family. I know we are being more successful with kids under this type of philosophy. | Feels personnel joy and empowerment working within this type of format due to the closeness of students and staff and the success of students. View working relationships within a caring family framework. | Personal fulfillment through model<br>Empowered by success |

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| C25: We don't have as many discipline problems. As I said before, the children are very tolerant and understanding of each other. | Sees collaborative ethic filtering down to the students in the form of increased tolerance and understanding and reduced discipline problems. | Changes in students |
| C26: The staff is very close. And it's just a nice place to work. It's very laid back. I don't want to kid you, there are a lot of high expectations in this school, as far as the staff goes, but, it's not extra stress or pressure on us because we know what we've got ourselves into, and we wanted to be in there, so none of us mind doing it. | Maintains a close personal relationship with staff members within a relaxed atmosphere. Recognizes that expectations for staff are high, but due to the personal buy-in into the philosophy of collaboration and the support received through this format, resistance is not an issue. | Personal fulfillment in work relationships<br>Resistance reduced<br>Support received from others<br>Buy-in reduces resistance |

Table 5.12

Higher Order Thematic Clusters of Clara's Experience

| First Order Themes | Second Order Thematic Clusters |
|---|---|
| 1. Shared decision making<br>12. Opportunity for input<br>22. Shared decision making | Parity |
| 2. Sharing of ideas and resources<br>3. Sharing of ideas and resources | Reciprocity |
| 1. Shared responsibility for team building<br>3. Shared responsibility for team building<br>7. Shared responsibility for students<br>9. Shared responsibility for students | Shared responsibility |
| 2. Support for teachers<br>10. Administrator support critical<br>11. Support required<br>17. Importance of administrator's support<br>26. Support received from others | Support |
| 3. Increased awareness of student need<br>5. Student affected<br>6. View of special needs students changed<br>7. Support for students<br>11. Child-centered approach<br>13. Students not singled out<br>20. Students engaged in process<br>25. Changes in students | Child-centered |
| 4. Acceptance of differences in teachers and students<br>5. Staff relaxed | Acceptance |
| 4. Opportunity for increased interchange | Communication |
| 4. Trust building | Trust |
| 8. Attitude change<br>8. Openness to process<br>21. Openness to process<br>21. Willingness to change | Openness |
| 8. Skills improved | Skill development |

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| 9. Support from administrator | Administrator's role |
| 10. Administrator support critical | |
| 16. Administrator as collaborative leader | |
| 17. Administrator's role in buy-in | |
| 18. Importance of administrator's role | |
| 10. Time to meet | Time |
| 17. Time for process | |
| 18. Time for process | |
| 22. Time commitment | |
| 12. Opposition and resistance reduced | Resistance |
| 26. Resistance reduced | |
| 14. Role function | Role function |
| 14. Flexibility in roles | Flexibility |
| 15. Flexibility in roles | |
| 17. Administrator's role in buy-in | Buy-in |
| 18. Philosophical buy-in | |
| 19. Philosophical buy-in | |
| 20. Buy-in to new school culture | |
| 22. Buy-in critical | |
| 23. Buy-in to new school culture | |
| 26. Buy-in reduces resistance | |
| 18. Commitment to process | Commitment |
| 21. Commitment to process | |
| 24. Personal fulfillment through model | Personal fulfillment |
| 26. Personal fulfillment in working relationships | |
| 24. Empowered by success | Empowerment |

Table 5.13

Higher Order Thematic Description of Clara's Experience

| Thematic Clusters | Generalized Descriptions |
|---|---|
| 1. Parity (Excerpts from Table 5.11: 1, 12, 22) | In the collaborative model, all staff members are given equal opportunity for input and share in the decision making process. Active engagement in shared decision making facilitates buy-in to the process. |
| 2. Reciprocity (2, 3) | The sharing of ideas and resources is common among teachers to the extent that "everyone knows what everyone is doing". This extensive sharing allows for greater support for the teachers and for the individual students. |
| 3. Shared responsibility (1, 3, 7, 9) | Through sharing responsibility for students, teachers can ensure that "they get the extra help they need" and that "there is always someone there to facilitate" and ensure that their needs are met. Having a administrator who also shares responsibility for students is beneficial. Through the sharing of responsibility, teachers build a sense of "team". |
| 4. Support (2, 10, 11, 17, 26) | Teacher support each other through a formalized "mentor/buddy system" and through also through informal support of one another in their learning. This support allows those who have no training in meeting the needs of children with special needs to receive help. Support is also provided by the administrator through the organizational structure of the school and by allowing the staff the staff time to learn and grow into the collaborative process. |
| 5. Child-centered (3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 20, 25) | Experiences the needs of students with special needs and others being met through the collaborative process due to the fact that teacher receive support in the classroom and share responsibility for students with other team members. Sees that the children are becoming more "tolerant and understanding of each other", have increased self concept, and are less affected by having "a label on their head". |
| 6. Acceptance (4, 5) | Team members are feeling more relaxed and "laid-back" with each other. A high level of collaboration allows team members to get to know each other better both professionally and personally. |

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| 7. Communication (4) | More intermingling allows team members to "build a strong communication base". |
| 8. Trust (4) | Trust develops as team members get to know each other well through on-going communication and spending time in each other's classrooms. |
| 9. Openness (8, 21) | Describes self as more open-minded due to efforts to include students with special needs. Believes that a necessary characteristic for collaboration is to be open-minded and open to change, for if you're "not willing to accept change and if you're not willing to learn through this change", then collaboration cannot be successful. |
| 10. Skill development (8) | Finds that her own skills and attitudes such as open-mindedness, tolerance and creativity have developed working with children with special needs in an inclusive format as "you have to continuously try to think of ways to get through to them or ways to help them cope". |
| 11. Administrator's role (9, 10, 16, 17, 18) | The administrator's role is central to the creation of a collaborative school culture. The administrator must be knowledgeable and well trained, be supportive of the staff in their efforts to learn, and be accessible to staff members. The administrator must also establish the organization structure in order to provide time and opportunities for teachers, parents, and support personnel to engage in collaborative activities. In addition, the administrator must allow the staff sufficient time for team members to have buy-in to and ownership of the model. |
| 12. Time (10, 17, 18, 22) | Having time to engage in collaborative activities and taking time through a "very slow process, step by step" facilitates the engagement in the process and establishes the framework to "get your staff to believe in it. It is dependent upon the administrator to arrange the time for this process. Team members also have a larger time commitment when engaged in collaborative activities, but due to the time taken to allow for buy-in, "we don't even consider it extra work, its just something that we do". |

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| 13. Resistance (12, 26) | Personally was experiencing initial resistance to the concept of inclusion of special needs children, but developed positive support for the concept due to the opportunity for input in the program and the time taken to create a school culture that supports it. Resistance to the collaborative process is reduced, even though staff expectations are high, due to the opportunity for personal buy-in and the experience of support from others. |
| 14. Role function (14) | Sees her role as a teacher and the resource facilitator's role as being flexible and dependent upon the needs of the teacher and the students. |
| 15. Flexibility (14, 15) | Sees the model of how teachers work together, support one another and establish role responsibilities as being flexible and changing in accordance with student needs. |
| 16. Buy-in (17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26) | Buy-in to the collaborative ethic or philosophy by staff and students is critical. Allowing for sufficient time to understand and own the process builds staff buy-in and participation. Once team members buy in to the philosophy, they are willing to put in the effort and time to make it successful. Adoption of the collaborative ethic defines the "our school culture" and "its just part of the school". Buy-in means that members all "believe in it" and is something that all members believe is worth "working towards" and are willing to "work their butts off to see that it's accomplished". The administrator is central in facilitating buy-in through being knowledgeable, supportive, and providing time for the process to work. |
| 17. Commitment (18, 21) | Individuals involved in collaborative relationships must be committed to a developing process. Commitment is enhanced through approaching the process slowly, allowing for individual input. |
| 18. Personal fulfillment (24, 26) | Collaboration allows for the maintenance of close personal and professional relationships with other team members in a relaxed atmosphere. Views collaborative working relationships within a caring family framework. |
| 19. Empowerment (24) | Feels empowered by the fact that work is an enjoyable place to be and that the staff members believe they are contributing to the success of students. |

Summary of Clara's experience

Clara describes collaboration as "team building". Within this team, individuals have equal opportunity for input and share in the decision making process, they share responsibility for students with others, and they receive support in their own teaching/learning from others in both formal and informal ways. Clara sees equality within the decision making process as facilitating buy-in to the collaborative model. The sharing of ideas and resources allows for greater support of the teachers and the individual students. Having an administrator who also takes on shared responsibility for students is beneficial to students and to the collaborative process. Clara feels that receiving support from other team members allows those who have no training in meeting the needs of children with special needs to receive help. In addition, support is provided by an administrator who establishes the organizational structure of the school so that team members have time to learn and grow into the collaborative process.

In fact, Clara sees the administrator's role as central to the creation of a collaborative school culture. The administrator must be knowledgeable and well trained, be supportive of the staff in their efforts to learn, and be accessible to staff members. The administrator must also establish the organization structure in order to provide time and opportunities for teachers, parents, and support personnel to engage in collaborative activities. In addition, Clara feels that the administrator must allow the staff sufficient time to buy-in and have ownership of the program, "selling the whole idea to the staff" in such a way that it "flows into the system very slowly". This is, in fact, how she experienced ownership of the collaborative process in her school.

Buy-in to the collaborative ethic or philosophy by staff and students is critical in Clara's experience. Allowing for sufficient time to understand and own the process builds staff buy-in and participation. Once team members buy-in to the philosophy, Clara believes they are willing to put in the effort and time to make it successful. Adoption of the collaborative ethic defines "our school culture"; "its just part of the school," according to Clara. Buy-in means that members all "believe in it" and is something that all members believe is worth "working towards" and will therefore, "work their butts off to see that it's accomplished". Clara sees the administrator as central to facilitating buy-in through being knowledgeable, supportive, and providing time for the process to work.

Clara feels that having time to engage in collaborative activities facilitates the involvement in the process and establishes the framework to "get your staff to believe in it". Clara believes that staff members must realize that they are committing to a "developing

process" over the long term. Clara recognizes that team members also have a larger time commitment when engaged in collaborative activities, but due to the time taken to allow for buy-in, "we don't even consider it extra work, its just something that we do".

Initially, Clara was resistant to the concept of inclusive education for students with special needs, however, she developed positive support for the concept due to the opportunity to provide input in the development of the program and the time taken to create a school culture that supports it. Overall, she feels resistance is reduced through engagement in the collaborative activities themselves by receiving support from others and through the opportunity for personal buy-in. In fact, Clara describes the staff as "close" and feels the staff has gotten to know each other better both personally and professionally through the collaborative model. In addition, the staff is more relaxed and "laid back" with each other even though she describes there being "a lot of high expectations in this school".

Clara also describes herself as more "open-minded" since she has worked within this model. Other skills such as tolerance and creativity have also developed since working with special needs children in the inclusive format. A "strong communication base" and a "sense of trust" is also built through increased interchange between team members. Clara believes that necessary characteristics for collaborators are open-mindedness and openness to change. She feels that if individuals are "not willing to accept change and if [they're] not willing to learn through this change", collaboration cannot be successful.

Within the collaborative framework, Clara values flexibility. The model itself must be flexible and responsive to changing student and teacher needs. Within the model, team member roles must be flexible and generally dependent upon the needs of the student and teacher at any given time. This flexibility, along with shared responsibility for students and support of teachers in classrooms, means that the needs of students with special needs and others are being met. Clara also experiences children becoming more "tolerant and understanding of each other", have increased self concept, and being less affected by labels that carry negative connotations.

Finally, Clara feels that collaboration allows for the maintenance of both close personal and professional relationships with other staff members in a relaxed atmosphere where "life is just a lot more easier". She views working relationships as being within a caring "family" framework. Finally, Clara feels empowered by the fact that work is an enjoyable place to be and that she believes that she and the other staff members are contributing to the success of students.

## Lorna

Lorna is an educator with 19 years experience, with the past 15 years teaching grade 1. Previous to teaching grade 1, Lorna had gathered experience in teaching grades 5 and 6 and junior high. Lorna has taught grade 1 for the past four years at this school. Lorna is experiencing this year, for the first time in her teaching career, support in her classroom through a resource facilitator. Previously, she "ran the show" and now describes the collaborative experience as "terrific" and expresses the desire for it to continue in the future.

Lorna enthusiastically participated in the interview. She was most excited and articulate regarding the role of the administrator in the collaborative process. It should be noted that the administrator (school principal) and the resource facilitator at the grade one level were the same person (Ann). The critical role Lorna ascribed to the administrator often referred to the manner in which she facilitated buy-in of the new model by implementing it in such a way that the staff believed "it's something that's going to help" team members do their job and not just mean extra work.

Excerpts from Lorna's transcribed interviews, the paraphrases of those excerpts, and the first order themes are included in Table 5.11. The second order thematic clusters of Lorna's experience are included in Table 5.12. The thematic descriptions of Lorna's experience are included in Table 5.13. Following is a summary of Lorna's lived experience as an educator working within a collaborative school environment.

Table 5.14

Thematic Abstractions of Lorna's Experience

| Excerpts from transcribed interview | Paraphrases | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| L1: There's a lot of on-going communication between myself and other primary teachers and the administration. . . . .I think that's why we feel comfortable with it and with each other, we're not intimidated at all, and I think that is one of the reasons probably it took so well. | Ongoing communication has lead to the acceptance of others and the collaborative process. | Communication is critical<br>Acceptance enhanced through communication |
| L2: I think [the administrator] is very, very familiar with this. She's worked a lot with it and I think she's kind of spearheading this whole idea. | Administrator provides leadership for collaborative process. | Administrator as leader |
| L3: Her [the administrator's] personality and her knowledge and her experience, probably [makes collaboration successful]. Her expertise in the area. I think it's the person that's heading it is an indicator of how well your program is going to work. She's very positive. She lets us take chances, we take risks. You can make mistakes. | Administrator's personal characteristics and knowledge base contribute to successful collaboration.<br>Administration promotes risk taking behavior in a safe environment. | Administrator characteristics<br>Risk-taking promoted |
| L4: . . .they [the administrators] clearly define to everyone what our positions are, what our jobs are. What's needed, provide you the time that's needed. Provide you the assistance that's needed. What else? I think support is the main one. | Leadership from administrators add to role clarity and arrange for teachers to be supported in their classrooms. | Administrator's role<br>Role clarity<br>Support for teachers |
| L5: I find it, like this is the first year I've ever had a person coming and working with any of my students. I ran my own show before, so I find it terrific this year. I really enjoy the support I'm getting. I've never really experienced this before and I hope it continues. | Enjoys support received from special education personnel and hopes to see it continue in the future. | Support received |
| L6: The benefits are definitely increased self esteem for the students. | Sees students' increase in self-esteem as a direct result of collaborative format. | Student success |
| L7: I just find the communication is very, very good. Like, the more you interact with other people in the school, the better the rapport is in the whole school, the better you get to know everybody, the better you get to know the students | Communication is increased, leading to an enhanced teaching and learning environment and personal closeness with staff and students. | Communication increased<br>Acceptance enhanced through communication |

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| L9: She [the administrator] is very, very positive and really encourages you to take chances and do you best, and you know, just continue working. And she's able to break things down into little bits, like rather than saying, okay, we're doing this, this year, just dumping it all on you and so you're sort of really uptight, she's able to, you know, lets try this and lets so this and lets see what's working for us. And if it doesn't work for us, or if it's not needed, why should we do it? Like, she's really able to sort out what's necessary from what's not necessary. And even for students, too | Administrator encourages risk-taking in staff members. Administrator able to break process down and include staff in the decision making so that it is acceptable to staff. | Risk-taking encouraged<br>Importance of administrator's role |
| L11: I've see my role changing [in that] probably [I've become] more of a better communicator. Before you did your own thing, and you worked at your own speed, you worked at what you, you sort of were in control of what was being taught. Now you sort of have to communicate with the other people that you're working with, and that's a positive thing, too, because if you're communicating to someone else, someone else will say, well, how about this, or why are you doing it this way, or, you know, this like that, giving and taking situations. | Communication skill is improving through process. Though interchanging with others, there is increased opportunity to learn from their input. | Communication skill improving<br>Reciprocity between members |
| L12: These students are going to need that service and the sooner we get to them, the sooner it's going to benefit them. So, I really think the sooner we get to them, the better. I find also what we do is two or three times throughout the year, we'll go through the whole class list, child by child, and discuss how are they doing, is there any difficulties. Like, I've never had that sort of on-going concentrated communication about child individually, three different times throughout the year ever before. And, you now, you need it. | Sees all students as benefiting from service delivery model. Is appreciative of the on-going and in-depth communication needed to meet student needs. | Students benefiting<br>On-going communication central |
| L13: If you've got two people's or three people's opinions and they're sort of seeing the same thing as you are, then you sort of look at the aspects, probably a problem or maybe there's something to look at or maybe they noticed something that I had overlooked, and their expertise quite often is in different areas than mine. So, they may see something that is different from mine, too. | Consultation and communication with others means that expertise is shared and students' needs can be better met. | Shared expertise<br>Student needs meet |

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| L14: . . . that's her way [the administrator's] of starting any new program. We'll start from small bits. We'll see what works, and we'll go from there. We were always part of it, but we were always not forced into it. And I think that's the way any new program has to be implemented. I don't like drastic changes. I'm quite traditional, but I like the way she implements things and I think that's the way we've got to go with little steps at once, a bit at a time till you feel comfortable with step one then you move to step two then you move to step three. | Appreciates how the administrator introduced both inclusive education and collaborative interactions through small incremental steps with an emphasis of staff input and decision making. Recognizes that such an approach reduced her resistance to and increased her comfort level with the model. | Administrator's approach<br>Resistance reduced |
| L15: And you always have to take the time to reflect. I really think we have to stop and reflect and see what we're doing. Is it benefiting or is it change just for the sake of change? And I think the more a person teaches, the more years of experience you have, I think, the more reflection is important, because you have a lot of years of experience to look back on | Taking time to reflect is a critical part of undergoing and understanding change. | Time for reflection needed |
| L16: Well, I think it's [the collaborative ethic] probably teachers and students working together cooperatively for the betterment of the individual students. Yeah, because if we don't have the cooperation, if we don't have the goals in mind, the common goals, it's not going to work. | Sees the fundamental goal of collaboration between teachers and teachers and students is increased student success. | Child-centered goals |
| L17: And we always have to keep the students in mind because it's them that we're looking at and to the, for them to do their personal best and sometimes just one person working, cannot get them to do their personal best. The more people you get involved, the more people who take responsibility for that student, the more ideas you get, the more help you get. I think the students will, in the long run benefit. | Students benefit from a multi-personnel approach to meeting their needs, therefore, teachers and others need to share responsibility for students. | Shared responsibility for students |

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| L18: . . . .[we are] getting to know one another a lot better. I find this staff is very close. We've had a number of difficult times in this school this year. One of my grade 1 students was killed this year in a car accident. My mother passed away this year. You know, I've had lots of difficult times and I found the staff very, very supportive. And that's the same with a lot of people, and teachers on the staff. This was a year where we had a lot of difficulties. We had our school painted, you know, so there's a lot of areas for tension, and time for tension. | Finds that the model allows that staff to develop closer personal relationships and support each other better. | Support in personal lives |
| L19: I think anyone that's in this model has to be willing to work. Like you can't just say, kind of say, well, there's another person helping me, make my job easier. It's not going to work that way. You have to move together. You have to work together. You have to know what your goals are, and work together towards achieving those goals. | Staff commitment to a set of goals and a willingness to work together towards those goals is critical within the collaborative model. | Commitment to goal<br>Support from others |
| L20: I think you have to be open minded. I think you have to be willing to work. I think you have to be willing to give and take. I think you have to be a good communicator. And I think you have to be willing to change. Like, I really think over the last, over the last say 5 or 6 years, I have changed more than I have over the previous 15 years in teaching. And that's good, you know, that I'm changing. | Feels that characteristics of collaborators include open-mindedness, a willingness to be reciprocal, good communication skills, and a willingness to change. Recognizes that she has changed greatly in recent years. | Openness to process<br>Reciprocity with others<br>Communication skills required<br>Empowered through change |
| L21: You try and you take chances and you are flexible and you give and you take and you help. [This modeling] comes from the top where you see the administrators are doing the same thing. Like even today [the administrator] gave up half a day of her admin. time to give us time to do something like this. This is what's done all the time. If she does it for us, we'll turn around and we'll do it for her. And that's just one area, whether it's academic, whether it's social, whatever. There's a really good atmosphere of flexibility. | Risk-taking, flexibility, and reciprocity or seen as critical and when they are modeled by the school leaders, it increases the willingness and the desire for staff members to engage in similar behaviors. | Risk-taking valued<br>Flexibility required<br>Reciprocity needed<br>Administrator as model |

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| L22: We've also had the opportunities to do a lot of professional development. We were given money to chose in-services that we wanted to attend, or professional development activities in different areas. And I specifically chose early childhood ones, to do with special needs, and it really helps you. And I think that is necessary. You can't be expected to take part in something if you're unfamiliar with it, if you're not comfortable with it, if the resources aren't there, if the support isn't there. | Professional development activities that develop the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively within the model are important for teacher buy-in. | Staff development required<br>Buy-in through staff development |
| L23: Well, you can look at this as a personal accomplishment for the staff. I know that the staff has become much closer. And because we are closer, we work better together. I guess because we work together, we're closer. It just goes together, you know. | Sees a cyclical relationship between the staff working together in the collaborative model and improved staff relations. | Improved staff relations |
| L24: I think of looking at the students first [to measure success]. It's benefiting the students because we have been able to pick up difficulties and deal with difficulties at grade one level rather than having them go to grade 2 or 3 level before these difficulties might be recognized. | Sees a quicker response time to student needs and utilizes this a measurement of success of the collaborative model. | Student needs met quicker |
| L25: I think we've got the support of parents much quicker. Parents are also realizing that maybe these students need some extra help and then the sooner that they become involved in the student's education, it's going to help the student and themselves | Feels that there is more parental support when the parents see that their student's needs are being addressed sooner. | Parental support gained |
| L26: It makes a lot of my decision making, on students, made a lot easier, 'cause I can discuss it with someone and someone can say, yes, I recognize that, too. | Decision making regarding students is easier when there is shared responsibility and support with another individual. | Shared responsibility for decision making<br>Support for decision making |
| L27: Communication to parents [is enhanced]. I know [the resource facilitator] also takes time during parent teacher interviews or any time she sees the parents, she also communicates with them. And the more communication we have the more openness you have, the more you can do for these students. | Multiple individuals taking responsibility to communicate with parents leads to increased openness and levels of communication, thereby, making programs for students more effective. | Communication with parents<br>Openness increased<br>Students benefit |
| L28: It's a working model that's working in our school that's really benefiting our students. I think the students are the winners in this situation. . | Recognizes that the model is evolving, but sees it evolving in such a way as being beneficial to students. | Openness to change<br>Students benefit |

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| L29: It's something that's got to be worked at, it's something that's got to be continuously changed or upgraded whatever is necessary, you have to be very flexible to make this model work. You can't start in Sept. and say this is exactly the way it's going to work. This is what we're going to do. This is my outline of things till the end of the year. It's not going to work that way at all | Recognizes that on-going change and development c the model is essential to it's success. Individuals working within the model must be willing to be flexible. | Openness to change<br>Flexibility required |
| L30: You have to have the whole staff that's committing to the philosophy. You have to have the whole staff that's committed to change. You can't get a timetable in Sept. and say this is the timetable we're going to follow till the end of the year. You have a rough outline of what a timetable is, and as the year progresses you change if necessary, reflect if necessary. You continue to make changes along the way. | Total staff buy-in is critical as well as a staff commitment to change, when and if necessary to make the collaborative model work. | Buy-in critical<br>Commitment to change |
| L31: I just really think it's, whoever is in charge of doing it, is really so important, 'cause the way that it comes into the school, the way it's presented to the school is very, very important. The anxiety is reduced. Like, there's so many new programs pushed into the schools right now, that teachers, as soon as they hear new program or something different, their backs are up already. So, it's got be implemented in such a way that it's something that's going to help you, rather than something that's going to mean more [unnecessary] work. | Administrator's role is critical to ensure that anxiety is reduced and buy-in is facilitated. | Administrator's role<br>Buy-in facilitated<br>Resistance reduced |

Table 5.15

Higher Order Thematic Clusters of Lorna's Experience

| First Order Themes | Second Order Thematic Clusters |
|---|---|
| 1. Communication is critical<br>7. Communication increased<br>12. On-going communication central<br>20. Communication skills required<br>27. Communication with parents | Communication |
| 1. Comfort level of staff members<br>7. Acceptance increases though communication<br>23. Improved staff relations | Acceptance |
| 2. Administrator as leader<br>3. Administrator characteristics<br>4. Administrator's role<br>9. Importance of administrator's role<br>14. Administrator's approach<br>21. Administrator as model<br>31. Administrator's role | Administrator's role |
| 3. Risk-taking promoted<br>9. Risk-taking encouraged<br>21. Risk-taking valued | Risk-taking |
| 4. Role clarity | Role function |
| 4. Support for teachers<br>5. Support received<br>18. Support in personal lives<br>19. Support from others<br>25. Parental support gained<br>26. Support for decision making | Support |
| 6. Student success<br>12. Students benefiting<br>13. Student needs met<br>16. Child-centered goals<br>24. Student needs met quicker<br>27. Students benefit<br>28 Students benefit | Child-centered |
| 11. Communication skill developed | Skill development |

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| 11. Reciprocity between members | Reciprocity |
| 13. Shared expertise | |
| 20. Reciprocity with others | |
| 21. Reciprocity needed | |
| 14. Resistance reduced | Resistance |
| 31. Resistance reduced | |
| 17. Shared responsibility for students | Shared responsibility |
| 26. Shared responsibility for decision making | |
| 19. Commitment to goal | Commitment |
| 30. Commitment to change | |
| 22. Staff development required | Training |
| 22. Buy-in through staff development | Buy-in |
| 30. Buy-in critical | |
| 31. Buy-in facilitated | |
| 20. Openness to process | Openness |
| 27. Openness increased | |
| 28. Openness to change | |
| 29. Openness to change | |
| 20. Empowered by personal change | Empowerment |
| 21. Flexibility required | Flexibility |
| 29. Flexibility required | |
| 15. Time for reflection needed | Time |

Table 5.16

Higher Order Thematic Description of Lorna's Experience

| Thematic Clusters | Generalized Descriptions |
|---|---|
| 1. Communication (Excerpts from Table 5.14: 1, 7, 12, 20, 27) | Communication leads to an enhanced learning and teaching environment and increased acceptance of other team members. "Being a good communicator" is essential to the collaborative process. On-going and in-depth communication is needed in order that student needs are met. Communication to parents is also enhanced through model as more individuals share the responsibility of communicating with parents. |
| 2. Acceptance (1, 7, 23) | Acceptance is enhanced though increased interaction with others with "the rapport of the whole school" improving. Believes that the staff is "closer" and "works better together" due to the nature of the collaborative environment. |
| 3. Administrator's role (2, 3, 4, 9, 14, 21, 31) | Administrator provides leadership for collaborative process; promoting risk-taking behavior and active participation in decision making in a safe environment. Administrator's personal characteristics and knowledge base contribute to successful collaboration. Leadership from administrators add to role clarity and arrange for teachers to be supported in their classrooms. Administrator facilitates acceptance of the process by presenting information, "sorting out what's essential from what's not essential". Administrator's role is also seen as critical to ensure that anxiety is reduced and buy-in is facilitated which is contributed to a leader who models risk-taking, flexibility, and reciprocity. |
| 4. Risk-taking (3, 9, 21) | Administrator sets up the environment where members are willing to "take chances", "make mistakes" and "take risks". Staff members are encouraged to "do their best" and "just continue working" when mistakes are made. Risk-taking behavior is more likely to occur when it is modeled from the school leaders. |
| 5. Role function (4) | Administration adds to role clarity when "they clearly define to everyone" what their positions are. |

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| 6. Support<br>(4, 5, 18, 19, 25, 26) | Recognizes that the model allows staff members to support each other better and feels she is benefiting from the support she is receiving from other personnel. Commitment is enhanced when she knows "there is another person helping me, making my job easier". Decision-making regarding student needs is also easier when support is being received from other individuals. Feels that parental support is more apparent under the model when parents see that their child's needs are being addressed sooner. |
| 7. Child-centered<br>(6, 12, 13, 16, 24, 27, 28) | Sees an increase in student self-esteem a direct result of the collaborative model. Feels that increased communication and shared expertise leads to all student's needs being met better and sooner. Views the fundamental goal of collaboration between staff members as increased student success. Describes increased communication between team members as leading to increased openness, and more effective programs for students. |
| 8. Skill development<br>(11) | Feels that she has become a "better communicator" through increased interchange with others. |
| 9. Reciprocity<br>(11, 13, 20, 21) | Consultation and communication with others means that expertise is shared and students' needs can be better met. Feels she has more of an opportunity to learn from input from others. An essential characteristic of a collaborator is the "willingness to give and take" and this needs to be modeled by the school leadership. |
| 10. Resistance<br>(14, 31) | Resistance is reduced through the administration introducing collaborative formats in small, incremental steps. Anxiety is reduced when individuals are able to see the value of the process in a non-forced manner. |
| 11. Shared responsibility<br>(17, 26) | Believes that students benefit from a multi-personnel approach to meeting their needs, therefore, making it necessary for teachers and others to share responsibility for students. Decision-making regarding student needs is easier when responsibility is shared. |
| 12. Commitment<br>(19, 30) | Staff commitment to the goals of the program, a willingness to work, and a commitment to on-going change together are critical for the collaborative process to be successful. |

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| 13. Training (22) | Engagement in professional development activities are viewed as necessary due to the fact the "you can't be expected to take part in something if you're unfamiliar with it". Opportunities for on-going learning is important in this model. |
| 14. Buy-in (22, 30, 31) | Buy-in is facilitated when individuals engage in professional development activities that support their work in the collaborative model. Total staff buy-in is critical in the collaborative model and it is the administrator's role to ensure that this buy-in is facilitated. |
| 15. Openness (20, 27, 28, 29) | Describes being "open-minded" as an essential characteristics of collaborators. Team members must exhibit openness to the evolving process, an openness to change and a willingness to engage in open communication. |
| 16. Empowerment (20) | Recognizes that she has changed greatly within the collaborative framework and views this as a positive, empowering occurrence. |
| 17. Flexibility (21, 29) | Individuals "must be very flexible to make this model work". The administrator modeling flexibility increases the likelihood others will engage in flexible actions to support the collaborative process. |
| 18. Time (15) | Taking time to reflect is critical to understanding and undergoing the continuous change required in the collaborative framework. |

Summary of Lorna's experience

In Lorna's experience, the administrator provides the active leadership necessary for the collaborative process; promoting risk-taking behavior and active participation in decision making in a safe environment. Lorna cited the positive personal characteristics of the administrator and the administrator's strong knowledge base as contributing to the success of the collaborative model. Leadership from administration added to role clarity and facilitated teachers being supported in their classrooms. Lorna believes that the administrator facilitates acceptance of the process by presenting information in a step by step fashion, "sorting out what's essential from what's not essential". Lorna is experiencing an administrator who ensures that anxiety is reduced and buy-in facilitated by the administrator modeling risk-taking, flexibility, and reciprocity.

Taking risks and making mistakes encourages staff members to "do their best" within a supportive environment. Within this framework, individuals must be "very flexible to make this model work". Lorna feels that an essential skill of collaborators in this environment is the willingness to give and take. She experiences this reciprocity when engaged in increased communication and consultation with others. As a result, Lorna feels she is learning from the input of others contributing to an increase in her communication skills.

Having support from her colleagues and sharing responsibility for students means that students' needs are met better and more quickly. In fact, Lorna views the fundamental goal of collaboration between staff members as increased student success through more effective student programming. Lorna is enjoying the increased support and the sharing of teacher expertise within the collaborative model because decision regarding students is shared, thereby making her job easier. Lorna feels that her commitment to the collaborative process and the philosophy of inclusion is enhanced when she knows "there is another person helping . . . making [my] job easier". In addition, Lorna feels that parental support is more apparent in the collaborative model when parents can see that their child's needs are being addressed sooner by a committed team who share responsibility for communicating to parents.

"Being a good communicator" is essential to the collaborative process according to Lorna. On-going and in-depth communication is needed in order that students' needs can be addressed. In Lorna's experience, communication leads to an enhanced learning and teaching environment and increased personal interaction where team members learn to accept each other and "work better together". Lorna experiences the "rapport of the whole

school improving" and the staff becoming "closer" due to the nature of the collaborative environment.

This increased communication leads to increased openness between staff members. In fact, open-mindedness is, in Lorna's experience, an essential characteristic for collaborators . Team members must not only be willing to engage in open and frequent communication, but must also be open to the ever-evolving process of change under the collaborative model. A staff commitment to this on-going change, to the goals of the program as established by the staff, and to working together are critical for the collaborative process to be successful. Lorna feels it is important to take the time to look back and reflect upon the changes being undertaken by the staff, to make sure that the change is beneficial and not "change just for the sake of change".

Lorna feels that having the total staff buy-in to the collaborative process is critical. She feels that this buy-in can be facilitated when team members engage in professional development activities together that build their knowledge and skills as collaborators. The collaborative model provides opportunities for on-going learning. Lorna feels that she has learned and changed greatly within this model, "more than [she] has over the previous 15 years in teaching", finding this to be a positive and empowering experience.

## Julie

Julie is the grade four teacher and an administrator (vice principal) at this school. This was Julie's first year at this school and, as a result, was not in the school in the initial stages of development of the collaborative philosophy and practice. Julie was, however, able to speak to the phenomenon with intensity and enthusiasm. During the interview, Julie framed her experience from both of her school roles, although the focus tended to be on her role as a classroom teacher. She frequently compared her previous experiences working in schools without a collaborative model to her new experiences in this school. She spoke often of the isolation and frustration that had been her experience before engagement in the collaborative model as she tried to meet the needs of a diverse student population. From her current position, she discussed the support and security she felt working within the collaborative framework.

Excerpts from Julie's transcribed interviews, the paraphrases of those excerpts, and the first order themes are included in Table 5.17. The second order thematic clusters of Julie's experience are included in Table 5.18. The thematic descriptions of Julie's experience are included in Table 5.19. Following is a summary of Julie's lived experience as an educator working within a collaborative school environment.

Table 5.17

Thematic Abstractions of Julie's Experience

| Excerpts from transcribed interview | Paraphrases | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| J1: What it means in this school is that we work collaboratively with the staff within the classroom. For example, we have support staff, we have a resource facilitator, so that benefits the children both on individual program plans as well as those who aren't, because when we sit down, we look at the needs of all children, the special needs as well as the individual needs of all children. And then that goes into the whole school concept where we have a team that sits down and problem solves and what not. | Teachers are supported within the regular classroom in order to meet the needs of students with special needs and others. | Support for teachers<br>All student benefit |
| J2: I'm really comfortable with my role. I don't feel like I'm a leader, and I don't feel like I'm a follower. It feels like you're really working together. It's not like one person has [all the] expert[ise]. One person has a little bit of expertise there, and another has expertise there. For example I bring with me background knowledge from all grade levels, where people I'm working with have maybe special ed. background or testing background. So, we do use the expertise of the individuals but there's no hierarchy. The support staff works well into the model. They have expertise that they bring as well. | Role is multi-dimensional. Expertise is shared among all stakeholders, thereby eliminating a hierarchy. | Role function<br>Parity in roles<br>Shared expertise |
| J3: The feeling that I have in this school, is that we're all here to work together to make the children the best that they can be, and we also work towards making the staff the best that they can be | Focus of school is on working together for the betterment of the child and the adult stakeholders. | Child-centered focus |

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| J4: ...in many schools that I've been in, you feel very isolated in that you have this group of children, and you can identify all the needs, but you're on your own to find a helper and to get them the help that they need. Whereas here you work together. And we sit down frequently and take a look at how we're doing. . . . So that you really, the difference is that I really feel that the needs of the children are being met here. And often I would feel, as an isolated teacher in another situation, knowing that kids need more but not knowing where to go or how to get it or being able to do it because I just didn't have the time. | Sense of isolation and personal frustration is reduced through support from others and shared responsibility for student problems. Frequent communication and time for reflection an essential parts of this model. | Support decreases isolation<br>Shared responsibility decreases isolation<br>Communication critical<br>Time for reflection<br>Student needs met |
| J5: ...we have to be able to trust one another so that we will be willing to take-risks, make mistakes and learn from them if this [collaboration] is going to be successful. Here it is okay to mess up as long as we learn from it and move on, you know. And the administrator has a lot to do with setting up that basis of trust and risk-taking. | The establishment of trusting relationships facilitates risk-taking and learning. The administrator has a central role in creating an environment where individuals are able to trust each other and are willing to take risks. | Building of trust<br>Importance of risk-taking<br>Administrator's role in establishing environment |
| J6: So, in terms of scheduling, she [the administrator] is trying to provide some consistency with resource facilitators in the different levels. . . . .We tried to get consistency there. We bring in subs, a couple times a year, so that the facilitators and the classroom teachers can sit down and go over the programs and make adjustments for the programs and do some team planning and that sort of thing. | Administrator provides time and resources so that team members can meet and plan for student programming. | Administrator provides time |
| J7: Part of the collaboration is having the support in the school [so] that we're able to be a collaborative team. . . . .the support is in place, the shared expertise is in place, so that you know where to go to get the help, and that sort of thing, so you're always working towards what the individual children are needing. | When teachers are supported and know that they can utilize the expertise of others, the focus can become the child and his/her needs. | Support for teachers<br>Shared responsibility for students<br>Shared expertise<br>Child-centered focus |
| J8: I can't think of any barriers. I think there's better communication when you're sitting down with the team. The teachers' in-room support personnel are willing to share information about the children that you might not otherwise have had. | Communication is enhanced through collaborative teaming. Sharing of information occurs between teachers and support personnel provides additional information regarding student needs. | Communication is enhanced<br>Sharing responsibility for information |

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| J9: You know, kids [whether they have] special needs or otherwise, they're looked at as an all around person, like socially how are they performing, or where are they fitting, what do the need? For example, some of our students didn't have a friend, so our goal for them was to at least have on friend by the end of the year or whatever. We had set up social goals for them. We set academic goals. We set expectations and things like that, so, I don't think it's any different than what I already said about the individuals who aren't on individual programs, and that's I think they all benefit in the same way that the children who do actually have individual programs done. | Sees all students as benefiting from collaborative approach, whether designated as having special needs or not. | All students benefiting |
| J10: ...in school we have resource facilitators, and that kind of support is really essential. That support allows you to do a lot of contact with parents if you need to. It allows you to take kids from the classroom, if she's in the classroom, she can carry on if you need to deal with certain things with certain with certain children. | In-class support allows for increased flexibility and breadth of roles. Teachers, resource facilitators, and support personnel can interchange roles if necessary in order to meet student needs. | Role function<br>Flexibility in roles<br>Reciprocity of roles |
| J11: So in this particular school, the leadership comes from the administration. The support comes from the administration, release time enabling staff to attend in-servicing or anything like that, and that would have to go through the administration. | Administration provides leadership through providing release time to staff members for collaborative or professional development activities. | Administration provides time |
| J12: I think it's (communication) definitely improved, because you're, you're sharing information about a child that's, hopefully beneficial to that child. In all of the meetings that I've attended, there's never been anything shared about a child that wasn't relevant to the child's overall good interests. | Communication is viewed as improved through collaborative process. Views time spent sharing information with other team members as valuable to the student. | Communication skill improved |
| J13: People have to be open [to the collaborative process] and not threatened. I was just having inclusive ed. session last evening, and many of the facilitators were speaking about how they actually got into classrooms, and I think that people have to, teachers, have to understand that the model is there to help the children and not feel threatened by it, so everyone has to be open and flexible, and that includes support staff. | Openness to the collaborative process and the philosophy of inclusive education needed in order to be successful within model. Flexibility is also needed by all team members. | Openness to process<br>Flexibility required |

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| J14: They also have to be open to doing things a little bit differently. Sometimes, and I think that's a key factor. [If] people are flexible and not threatened, then you're going to have a great deal more success with it. And so you may not, in a collaborative model, you may not have everybody on board, right off the bat, it'll take time and a great deal of trust amongst all the people. | Openness to the change process and to learning are critical. Recognizes that buy-in to the process takes time as does the establishment of trusting relationships between collaborators. | Openness to change<br>Willingness to take risks<br>Buy-in takes time<br>Trust takes time |
| J15: You have to be cautious of your personalities, the types of people that you have. Not everyone will [be ready to be] collaborative. Many people work well on their own and prefer to be on their own, and so in some ways you have to work to bring them on board, but you also have to respect the way that work best and what they want to work at in their areas. | Respect of individual differences leads to acceptance of collaborative model. Time will be needed in order for some members to buy-in to process. | Acceptance of individual differences<br>Time for buy-in |
| J16: ...if someone is resistant to working in a collaborative model, they have to see it working well and maybe just get on board bit by bit. For example, this year we're doing a newspaper, and someone who would feel ready to be part the whole working together concept, had expertise with working with computers, so that person started to come on board and say, well, gee, I can work with you on that. So it's the little steps that we have to provide time for those things to happen. | Believes resistant individuals will buy-in when they see the model working successfully. Individuals must be provided with the opportunity to feel valued within model over a sufficient period of time. | Resistance reduced over time<br>Buy-in increased over time |
| J17: I think it also depends on the commitment of your staff, but I think that if you provide the time, you're always going to have more success. . . . . So, we've built in time outside the actual school hours, but we're also bringing in some supply time during the day, so without that, then you're losing out on the communication. | Commitment of staff will occur if sufficient time is provided for buy-in. Communication decreases if time is not provided for interaction between team members. | Time increases commitment<br>Time increases communication |
| J18: I think that many, many educators would like to work together and share their expertise, but [with all the] commitments to the classroom, and time commitments, this [collaboration] allows people more time to do the idea sharing that they need, to share resources and ultimately share in order to be successful with students. So, the time factor is really essential. | A collaborative framework allows time for individuals to share resources, ideas, and responsibility. | Sharing of expertise |

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| J19: I'd say most people would be interested in working in this model but they have to be good communicators and they have to be flexible. | Good communication skills and the ability to be flexible are seen as essential characteristics for collaborators. | Communication skills<br>Flexibility required |
| J20: ...we do have a problem solving group and I think as a result of that it's more proactive. Everything's more proactive so you don't end up with big problems. In terms of the children, you're trying to assess their needs and meeting those needs before they become a major problem. | Problem solving oriented approaches within collaborative framework allows for a more proactive response to student problems. | Proactive response to student need |
| J21: In as far as decision making goes, there's a lot of input and I think that anybody who has input, and can see that the end results, feels a lot better about the decisions when they're made and that, again, that happens in this school. It's not a top down sort of decision making model. | Input from all staff members is sought out and valued. | Valuing of input |
| J22: We're provided with scheduling in such a way that when the resource facilitators in the classroom, we can pull out, but it doesn't necessarily have to be the special needs students. For example, I have 7 [students with special needs] in my classroom, but they're doing particularly well because we adjusted the program for them, so I have an opportunity to pull out for enrichment. I have an opportunity to pull out kids who are just simply having trouble getting themselves organized. If they just had a few skills, they make leaps and bounds. | Having support in the classroom allows teacher to be flexible in programming for special needs student and others. | Support allows for flexibility |
| J23: I'm actually, this year, on a real high. I'm really enjoying it because personally I feel a great deal more success. I can see the growth in the kids far easier. I have twenty children this year, but to be able to see the growth because I have an [sign language] interpreter in my classroom as well as a resource facilitator for language arts. The kids get the help that they need. And it makes me feel good that it makes them feel good. So, it's an overall growth experience. I know what we are doing is making a difference. I'm challenged this year to see the negative. | Is feeling personally successful functioning within the collaborative model due to the fact that she is seeing success in the students. Empowered by the belief that what she is doing is worthwhile. | Personal fulfillment<br>Empowered by student success |

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| J24: Now, what we do as a collaborative team is that when we do have the inservices, individually to go to professional development activities, or whatever, we always have the opportunity to share them with the rest of the staff. And that kind of sharing of expertise is really important. But that also allows people to recognize one another as equals and to be willing to ask questions and to be willing to share themselves. We're given many opportunities, . . .and it's really promoted that you get involved with professional development. | Professional development activities is viewed as being more successful and meaningful as members have the opportunity to share their expertise with others. Individuals are recognized as having equal ability and responsibility in professional development growth and sharing. | Parity of responsibility<br>Reciprocity through professional development<br>Support for learning |
| J25: I think what it [collaboration] means for me is that kids are successful, support and professional staff are also successful, and I haven't yet mentioned custodial staff, either. It's really neat to see when you sit down in the staff meeting, where everybody's involved, they each have an opportunity to speak and they work really well together. And an example is that when kids would come in from recess, things would be left all over the hallway, well that really bothered the custodian and he brought it up at a meeting, and right away you could go to any of those areas, and you knew that the teachers had addressed the problem. So, everybody has input, and everybody's respected, and the respect goes both ways. | Everyone is viewed as having equal and valuable input. See individuals as becoming empowered through the collaborative process. | Equal input valued<br>Empowerment through equality |

Table 5.18

Higher Order Thematic Clusters of Julie's Experience

| First Order Themes | Second Order Thematic Clusters |
|---|---|
| 1. Support for teachers | Support |
| 4. Support decreases isolation | |
| 7. Support for teachers | |
| 22. Support allows for flexibility | |
| 24. Support for learning | |
| 1. All students benefit | Child-centered |
| 3. Child-centered focus | |
| 4. Student needs met | |
| 7. Child-centered focus | |
| 9. Students benefit | |
| 12. Students benefit | |
| 20. Proactive response to student need | |
| 2. Role function | Role function |
| 10. Role function | |
| 2. Shared expertise | Reciprocity |
| 7. Shared expertise | |
| 10. Reciprocity of roles | |
| 18. Shared expertise | |
| 24. Reciprocity through professional development | |
| 2. Parity in roles | Parity |
| 21. Valuing of input | |
| 24. Parity in responsibility | |
| 25. Equal treatment | |
| 4. Shared responsibility decreases isolation | Shared responsibility |
| 7. Shared responsibility for students | |
| 8. Sharing responsibility for information | |
| 4. Time for reflection | Time |
| 14. Buy-in and trust take time | |
| 15. Time for buy-in | |
| 16. Resistance reduced over time | |
| 16. Buy-in increased over time | |
| 17. Time increases communication and commitment | |

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| 4. Communication critical<br>7. Communication is enhanced<br>17. Time increases communication<br>19. Communication skills | Communication |
| 5. Administrator's role in establishing environment<br>6. Administrator provides time<br>11. Administrator provides time | Administrator's role |
| 5. Building of trust<br>14. Trust takes time | Trust |
| 5. Importance of risk-taking<br>14. Willingness to take risks | Risk-taking |
| 10. Flexibility in roles<br>13. Flexibility in roles<br>19. Flexibility required | Flexibility in roles |
| 12. Communication skill improved | Skill development |
| 13. Openness to process<br>14. Openness to change | Openness |
| 14. Buy-in takes time<br>16. Buy-in increased over time | Buy-in |
| 15. Acceptance of individual differences | Acceptance |
| 16. Resistance reduced over time | Resistance |
| 17. Time increases commitment | Commitment |
| 23. Personal fulfillment in model | Personal fulfillment |
| 23. Empowered by student success<br>25. Empowered through equity | Empowerment |

Table 5.19

Higher Order Thematic Description of Julie's Experience

| Thematic Clusters | Generalized Descriptions |
|---|---|
| 1. Support (Excerpts from Table 5.17: 1, 4, 7, 22, 24) | Feels supported in the classroom by the resource facilitator and support personnel, leading to a reduction of the sense of isolation and frustration previously felt in the classroom. Through support, teachers are better able to be flexible and concentrate on the needs of the child. Also feels supported in her own professional learning through the expectation to share her expertise with others and have that sharing reciprocated. |
| 2. Child-centered (1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 20) | Believes that the focus of the school is on "working together to make the children the best that they can be" which is accomplished through teacher support, shared expertise, and shared responsibility, for students. When teachers are supported and know that they can utilize the expertise of others, the focus becomes the child and his/her needs. A problem-solving orientation within the collaborative model allows for a more proactive response to student needs, allowing teachers to "access their needs and meet those needs before they become a major problem". |
| 3. Role function (2, 10) | Feels comfortable in a multi-dimensional role where she considers herself neither a "follower" or a "leader". With support in the classroom, an opportunity is created to take on a greater breadth in one's role functions. |
| 4. Parity (2, 21, 24, 25) | Since expertise is shared among all members, there is no hierarchy of roles. Everyone is viewed as having equal and valuable input which is sought out from all staff members. Team members are recognized as having equal ability and responsibility in professional development growth and sharing. |

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| 5. Reciprocity (2, 7, 10, 18, 24) | Within this model, the staff is able to "use the expertise of the individuals, but [eliminate] the hierarchy". Teachers, resource facilitators, and support personnel can interchange roles if necessary in order to meet student needs. The collaborative framework provides an opportunity for individuals to actively engage in the sharing of resources, ideas, and responsibility. In addition, professional development becomes more meaningful when members have the opportunity to share their expertise with others. |
| 6. Shared responsibility (4, 7, 8) | Sharing responsibility for student problems reduces the sense of isolation often experienced by teachers and improves that ability of teachers to respond to student needs. Recognizes that in-class support personnel will be able to share information with teachers that "you otherwise might not have had" making the teacher more aware of "what individual students may be needing". |
| 7. Time (4, 14, 15, 16, 17) | Time for reflection an essential part of the collaborative model. Recognizes that buy-in to the process takes time as does the establishment of trusting relationships between collaborators. Believes that individuals must be provided with the opportunity to feel valued within the model over a sufficient period of time. Feels that time should be provided during the day for individuals to communicate and interact within the collaborative process. |
| 8. Communication (4, 8, 17, 19) | Communication is enhanced through collaborative teaming. Team members need the opportunity to "sit down frequently and look at how we are doing", therefore good communication skills are seen as an essential characteristic for collaborators. Insufficient time for communication reduces the effectiveness of the collaborative format. |
| 9. Administrator's role (5, 6, 11) | The administrator has a central role in creating an environment where individuals are able to trust each other and are willing to take risks. The administrator also provides the time and resources so that team members can meet and plan for student programs. |

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| 10. Trust (5, 14) | The ability for members to trust each other is essential to the collaborative process, but this building of trusting relationships takes time and the ability of the administrator to create an environment where individuals are willing to trust |
| 11. Risk-taking (5, 14) | Team members must be "willing to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them" if collaboration is to be successful. Individuals must be "open to doing things a little bit differently" and recognize that it will take time as "you may not have everyone on board, right off the bat". |
| 12. Skill development (12) | Communication skill is viewed as improved through the collaborative process. |
| 13. Openness (13, 14) | Openness to the collaborative process, on-going change, and the ability not to "feel threatened" are viewed as essential in the collaborative model. |
| 14. Buy-in (14, 16) | Recognizes that buy-in takes time and believes that individuals will buy-in to the model when they see the model working successfully for themselves. Recognizes that you may have to bring some people on board "bit by bit" over a sufficient period of time. |
| 15. Acceptance (15) | Within the collaborative model, individuals must be "cautious of personalities", respecting that some people "work well on their own and prefer to be on their own" and so it takes time and effort to "work to bring them on board". |
| 16. Resistance (16) | Believes resistance to process is reduced over time and when individuals see the model working successfully for themselves. |
| 17. Commitment (17) | Recognizes that the success of the model "depends on the commitment of the staff", but believes that commitment will occur if the staff is given sufficient time to buy-in to the process. |
| 18. Personal fulfillment (23) | Fees personally successful functioning within the collaborative model due to the fact that the students are experiencing success. |
| 19. Empowerment (23, 25) | Empowered by the belief that what she is doing is worthwhile. Experiences others becoming empowered through the model as their voices are becoming heard on staff. |

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| 20. Flexibility (10, 13, 19) | Flexibility is viewed as an essential characteristic for collaborators. Is experiencing more flexibility in the role being performed as she shares responsibility and roles with other staff members. |

Summary of Julie's experience

Julie's experiences in other schools is that she often felt isolated in her school environment; "knowing that the kids need more, but not knowing where to go or how to get it [help] or [not] being able to do it [providing more help] because I didn't have the time". However, in this school she feels supported in the classroom by the resource facilitator and support personnel, leading to a reduction in the sense of isolation and frustration. Julie also feels supported in her professional learning in that she is expected to share her expertise with others just as they reciprocate that sharing of expertise to her. Through this support, she feels she and the other team members are able to be more flexible and, therefore, better able to concentrate on the needs of the child. In fact, Julie believes that "working together to make the children the best that they can be" is the primary focus of the school and can be accomplished through teachers supporting one another, sharing expertise, and sharing responsibility for students. Julie feels that when teachers are supported and know that they can utilize the expertise of others, they are better able to focus on the child and his/her needs. In addition, Julie feels that the problem-solving orientation within the collaborative model allows for a more proactive response to student needs, allowing teachers to "access [the student's] needs and meet those needs before they become a major problem". Julie feels that this focus on student success contributes to her own feeling that what she is doing is worthwhile. In fact, Julie describes herself as being "on a real high" during this, her first year working within a collaborative framework, due primarily to the "growth in the kids".

Julie recognizes that sharing responsibility for student problems not only reduces the sense of isolation and improves the ability of teachers to respond to student needs, it also allows team members to share information that they "otherwise might not have had", making the teachers more aware of what individual students may be needing. Julie feels that the ability of team members to interchange roles, if necessary , provides for students needs as well. Therefore, engagement in the collaborative model provides Julie an opportunity to actively engage in the sharing of resources, ideas and responsibility with others in her school. According to Julie, professional development activities also become more meaningful when team members have the opportunity to share their experiences and their expertise with others.

Julie experiences a reduction in the "hierarchy of roles" at her school since staff is able to utilize the expertise of all members. Due to the support she is receiving in the classroom, Julie also experiences a greater depth in her role functions. Julie feels that

everyone on staff is viewed as having equal and valuable input which is actively sought out by the school administration. As a result, she considers herself as neither a "follower" or a "leader" within the collaborative model. Since team members are viewed as having equal ability and responsibility, Julie believes she sees others becoming empowered through the model as their voices are becoming heard on staff.

Within the collaborative model, team members must be "willing to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them" if collaboration is to be successful. Julie feels that collaborators must not be intimidated to "do things a little bit differently", being open to on-going change and the process of collaboration. The ability for team members to trust each other is essential, according to Julie, but she recognizes that this building of trusting relationships takes time and the ability of the administrator to create an environment where individuals are willing to trust. Julie has experienced that not everyone will be "on-board, right off the bat" and that these people will need to be brought into the collaborative process "bit-by-bit" over a sufficient period of time. Recognizing the collaborative model is unfamiliar to some individuals, Julie feels that administration must be "cautious of personalities", respecting individual's work preferences, taking the time and the effort necessary to "bring them on-board". Julie believes, however, that resistance to the collaborative process is reduced if sufficient time is give and when individuals have the opportunity to see the model working successfully for themselves.

Julie feels that the success of the collaborative model "depends on the commitment of the staff". Julie believes that individuals must be provided with the opportunity to feel valued within the model over a sufficient period of time. In fact, time is viewed by Julie as the primary factor necessary to ensure buy-in and commitment to the collaborative process. Time is not only needed for buy-in and commitment and the building of trusting relationships, but also for communication and interaction between team members on a regular basis. In Julie's experience, communication in the school is enhanced through the collaborative process, with insufficient time for communication reducing the effectiveness of the collaborative process. Therefore, good communication skills are essential characteristics for collaborators and also a result of engagement in the collaborative process. According to Julie team members need the opportunity to "sit down frequently and look at how we are doing", thereby making it necessary for time to be provided during the school day for individuals to interact and communicate with each other.

## Ann

Ann has had varied and extensive experience as an educator in the past 21 years, working as a teacher, a consultant and an administrator. She holds a masters degree in educational psychology and is currently working towards a doctorate in educational administration.

Ann has been the principal at this school for the past two years and has been instrumental in involving the staff in developing collaborative working relationships. As the school administrator, she has brought forward information and examples of the collaborative process while at the same time promoting the development of a model of service delivery for students with special needs. While working towards an inclusive education philosophy and practice with the staff members in the school, Ann envisioned that collaboration would provide the staff with "the power to have an effective inclusive education program ".

Ann participated enthusiastically in the interview. Even though she had already been interviewed primarily regarding her role as a resource facilitator, she was able to provide a rich and meaningful description of experience that was unique and added to understanding of the experience of collaboration. For that reason, this second interview of Ann's was included in the document.

Excerpts from Ann's transcribed interviews, the paraphrases of those excerpts, and the first order themes are included in Table 5.20. The second order thematic clusters of Ann's experience are included in Table 5.21. The thematic descriptions of Ann's experience are included in Table 5.22. Following is a summary of Ann's lived experience as an administrator working within a collaborative school environment.

Table 5.20

Thematic Abstractions of the Ann's Administrator Experience

| Excerpts from transcribed interview | Paraphrases | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| A1: . . .the collaborative process has, number one, it's involved change. The change in the dynamics of the school. It has resulted in programming implementation that's been more from the bottom, or the ground roots up, as opposed to an idea coming from the top end and directed down. It's involved participation by the stakeholders that are involved in the processes that we've tried to implement | Change in the dynamics of the school has been fundamental part of the collaborative process resulting in a higher level of participation from the stakeholders in the school in program decision making and implementation. | Parity in decision making<br>Shared responsibility for participation |
| A2: . . . collaboration has meant a shift in the way the school as a whole has been functioning, so that a lot of the decision making no longer rests just with me, or from this office, but the decision making is [now] coming from the group and that takes, that involves risk taking and trusting each other. | Collaborators take responsibility for decision making which involves a considerable amount or risk taking and trust. | Parity in decision making<br>Risk-taking needed<br>Trust needed |
| A3: It involves a lot of letting go, because sometimes when you get into a collaborative process, it doesn't mean things are going to go the way you want them to go. So, you have to let go of that control and let, let the people who are involved have some of that control. So, that's been part of the collaborative process. | As an administrator she must be willing to relinquish control over to the staff members. | Parity with staff members |
| A4: . . .it has changed from the primary decisions regarding programming originating from me, or from that role of administrator, to more of a facilitator. I can facilitate an idea, or present an idea, and then it is, it becomes incumbent upon the staff to determine where we're going to go with that idea | Views role of administrator as more of a facilitator of the collaborative process than that of primary decision maker. | Administrator's role as facilitator |
| A5: You don't have a clear picture anymore [as an administrator] of how it's going to evolve because the dynamics of different people, are all impacting on that direction. | Administrator's role involves a willingness to accept uncertainty as administrative control is lessened. | Risk-taking by administrator<br>Administrator's role involves less control |
| A6: . . people are coming forward with ideas. All of the ideas are not just coming from the principal or from this office. Other people are taking an ownership in the total school program. | Experiences others taking ownership of school program as they come forward with ideas to share. | Ownership of program<br>Shared responsibility of program |

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| A7: All of the staff, I would say, have gone beyond the limits of whatever is written in their role description, or their previous expectation of what their role might be. So, the lines are becoming blurred. It's difficult sometimes, well, in terms of a meeting that we might be having, who is the principal. Who is the administrator? Who is the certified staff person? Who is the support staff person? The roles are all becoming blurred because everyone's ownership is increasing in the total school program. | Sees a lessening of the lines between staff member roles as individuals accept increased ownership for total school program. | Role functions blurred<br>Shared responsibility for program<br>Reciprocity of roles |
| A8: [In this process] the philosophy of the school will be: How we will focus on children, right through to how will the money be spent. And so everyone now has an ownership and a responsibility in each of those decisions. | Shared responsibility is needed for all types and levels of decision making. | Shared responsibility for decision making |
| A9: I think that collaboration is an important element of inclusive education. I would go so far as to say that it would be difficult for me to envision a really good functioning inclusive education program without collaboration. Collaboration has given us the power to have an effective inclusive education program. | Believes that collaboration is the empowering agent in their effective inclusion education programs. | Empowered by model<br>Inclusion of students with special needs |
| A10: It's interesting because I think when we started, in this school the focus was inclusive education, that was the end goal. [The question was] How will we create this school environment that will be inclusive? What we discovered as we [developed] that goal, was that in order to be inclusive, it was necessary to be collaborative. So the collaboration fed the inclusion. Without the collaborative format, I don't think we could do an inclusive ed. program very successfully. Collaboration is inclusionary for staff, so it fits with the inclusive ed. philosophy for students It [the collaboration] makes it [the inclusion] strong. | Collaboration utilized as the structure or means through which inclusive education could be facilitated. The collaborative model is viewed as inclusive for teachers, thereby giving them the structure to carry out the inclusive education program for students. | Empowered by model<br>Inclusion of students with special needs |
| A11: ...for us collaboration is cooperation, it's opened doors, it's a lot more exchanging. It's a more supportive environment. And those are also a lot of the elements needed for inclusive education, so I would certainly, I can see where they would see the two as very similar. I think collaboration supports inclusive ed. but I would never use them [as] totally interchangeable. | Collaboration means an openness between staff members and a higher level of interchange in a supportive environment. | Openness between staff<br>Supportive environment created |

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| A12: I don't see a difference anymore [in role descriptions] and that's the really exciting thing about the evolution of this model, is we have gone from a situation of very distinct roles and responsibilities, to a situation where we don't know anymore [particular role descriptions]. I do not think that we really believe anymore who is the special educator, versus who's the educator. We are all educators. We trust one another enough to let go of the old role descriptors. | Roles and role responsibilities have become less distinguishable. Staff members have become more apt to interchange roles as they have grown to trust one another. | Roles less distinguishable<br>Reciprocity in roles<br>Trust developing |
| A13: [The] goal has to come first. You have to set the goal that says, what do we want to become? How do we want to work with children? And once you set that goal, then you will start to look around for the vehicles that help you to do that, and that's where collaboration came in. The process of achieving our aims, the means to that end. Now we have a clear goal and the staff has bought into a process in order to meet the goal, which is collaboration. | The establishment of a clear goal is the first step in deciding if the collaborative model will facilitate the attainment of that goal. Goal setting facilitated the process of buying-in to the collaborative model. | Goal setting first step in buy-in |
| A14: I don't think we ever, or even actually called it collaboration here. . . . . I mean, the underlying process would be termed collaboration. I think collaboration is a process and you work at it and it evolves. I would be very fearful for people to say, "oh, to become an inclusive school, we must be collaborative". And then what? | The label "collaboration" is not viewed as critical since collaboration is believed to be an evolving process that must be worked at, not just a inactive label. | Openness to process |
| A15: There has to be buying in. See the real thing about collaboration, is that you see change and you see a commitment. And you see people buying in to a process and that can't be mandated, it's got to be evolved. | In order for collaboration to be successful, the members must buy-in to the process. When individuals buy-in, they become committed to it. This process must evolve from the members and can not be mandated. | Buy-in to process<br>Commitment to process |
| A16: It just scares me to think of, that it will become another label, or bandwagon, I don't know what you'd want to call it. But I think there is a real danger there, without people understanding that what we are talking about is a process. . . . .it seems we're not ready to give it the time. | Concerned that collaboration will become another bandwagon term, if individuals do not understand that it is a long-term change process that requires time to develop. | Time to develop |

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| A17: We did a, kind of a survey of need. What are the needs in the school? ....then we met together as a school based team, and said, all right, let's allocate, based on what we have, and let's try it and we will adjust as we go through the course of the year, and that's what we've done. We have monitored and adjusted and time allocations have changed, both in certified and non-certified [staff]. | The model of collaboration was utilized to answer concerns about the meeting of student needs through the provision of support for teachers in individual classrooms. | Student needs met<br>Support for teachers |
| A18: ...that [resource facilitator role] has impacted on how the children have been served, because sometimes it has been better for the classroom teacher and the students to have the so called resource facilitator work with the children. Other times it has been far more effective for the classroom teacher to work with the children. So there's been trade offs in [those] times. That's been our flexibility. | Flexibility in roles and role assignments has been necessary under the collaborative model in order to meet student needs. | Flexibility in roles<br>Student needs met |
| A19: ...we decided [what] would ... be the basis of what we would work from to make our modifications, so we took that money and we buy sub time, because what we were not able to fit into our model, was a lot of cooperative planning time, where the resource facilitator could meet with the classroom teacher. And that [insufficient planning time] has been a real down side of the whole process. So in order to do that, we buy sub time once a month and the sub rotates through the classrooms and that gives the regular classroom teacher and the resource facilitator at least some time to sit down [together]. | Cooperative planning time for school staff members that work together is critical and needed to be scheduled for in the collaborative model. | Planning time required |
| A20: We know our, what we would call severe special needs students, and we ensure that they are being served, to what they need and what we can do, except we're also starting to come to the realization that throughout the course of the year, throughout the course of a students life, every child goes in and out of special needs situations, whether it's because of the home situation, all of a sudden a divorce happens, or whatever, so it's important to respond to every child's need. So, if someone said to me, can you serve, are you serving more children under the collaborative model? I would say, absolutely. Absolutely. | Recognizes that individual students may require special services at various times in their school life and that through the collaborative model they can meet the needs of more students better. | Student needs met<br>Flexibility in process |

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| A21: I think it would be wonderful if it [consultation time] could be built in to the timetable. I think the reality is with the cuts we're seeing in education, we're not going to get it. | Feels a need for increased consultation time between educators. | Time for consultation |
| A22: I'd do it [use a collaborative model] again, because we formed support units, because the person who is the resource facilitator, also relieves the preps, also comes in and does team teaching or whatever, they know the dynamics of that classroom so [it is] part of their lived experience during the day. Being in that classroom with those children, either by themselves, either with the other teacher or with small groups. | Feels satisfied with the collaborative model in that a support structure has built up through the collaborative process and is viewed as valuable and worth repeating. Views that resource facilitator role as one that meets a number of needs due to its inherent flexibility. | Personal satisfaction with model<br>Support through process<br>Role flexibility required |
| A 23: They're [the staff members are] picking up a lot of that [skills] simply by living the experience. I think if they came in only as a support, then it would be a different story, but they are really learning from each other as they share responsibility in the classrooms. | Teachers are actively involved in learning and developing new skills as they share responsibility for students. | Skill development<br>Shared responsibility |
| A24: I get feedback from the individual teachers about how things are going. I get feedback from the resource facilitators about how things are going. I see what's happening with kids. The excitement is that there are so many good things happening with these kids that the teachers are sharing. In so many ways I can see it's working for the kids and the teachers alike. | Feels that through seeking out feedback from staff members and students, she has a strong measure the success of the collaborative model. | Personal fulfillment through success of model |
| A25: We do a lot of reflection in this school on a monthly basis, daily basis, but very specifically at the end of the year we sit down and say what worked, what didn't work, what do we want to keep going, what do we want to change, and we'll use the whole inclusive model comes up for that as to which elements do we want to shift around. | On-going reflection an important part of the collaborative process, as model needs to be flexible to meet the needs of teachers and students. | Time for reflection<br>Flexibility required in model |
| A26: There needs to be options for kids we serve in inclusive schools. But my fear comes when that continuum of service [for students with special needs] becomes more of a containment or a place to put kids (rather) than an action that's appropriate. | Primary concern is to provide appropriate services to children. | Focus on child, not program placement |

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| A27: Because you're dealing with process, because you're dealing with change, you need a couple of things. You need time to do that and time costs money, because time is reflected in certified staff allocation or support allocation. That's the kind of time I'm talking about. So, you need that and you need just the in-servicing possibilities or the, as we talked about before, the time for teachers to get together and talk. | Time is the central factor in allowing the change process to happen. Time is needed for inservicing and for communication between members. | Time for change<br>Time for communication<br>Inservicing requires time |
| A28: For me, I see it [time for collaboration] as an investment. You know the old thing, you can replace the spark plugs now, you can continue the engine running well, or you can let them run down and then you replace the whole engine. Well, that's what I'm seeing here. The level of skill, and that's what you can't show to central office. | Time spent collaborating is viewed as an investment that is shown in the development of teacher skills. | Time as investment<br>Development of skills |
| A29: The level of skills that these so called regular classroom teachers are acquiring through this collaboration is incredible. | Sees an increase in skills of regular classroom teachers. | Skill development |
| A30: Because what's happened in the whole thing, is because it's not pull out, because it's not I rescue you. It's I work with you, we do this together. The dependency does not happen. I'm not dependent on you. . . . . And so all of a sudden, if you're not there tomorrow, [the teacher's say] oh, yeah, I can do that. And so the level of skill increases. | Due to the fact the regular and special education personnel share responsibility for students, individual teachers feel they have the ability to provide services to special needs students. | Shared responsibility for students<br>Skill development |
| A31: ...there's always a need for the knowledge base to be increasing and for finding ways to, without overwhelming you as the regular classroom teacher, increase your level of skills. You've got to change. | A willingness to change and learn new skills is an important characteristic of the classroom teacher. | Willingness to change |
| A32: ...everything we know about learning is that you learn by observing and you learn by doing. And what better place to do that then to bring someone into the classroom to do it with you. If you do it for me, I'll never learn. If you do it with me, I will learn. And then I won't need you as much, and then it won't cost as much. | Feels that collaborative model fits in with principles of learning by allowing others to observe and do with one another. As a result dependency decreases and expense decreases. | Skill development through model<br>Cost effective use of teacher resources |

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| A33: Our role is for these children to learn, so when that becomes your focus, then your PD becomes much more relevant. What we have done, what has been so exciting in this school, is regardless of the bandwagons, we are in control. We know where we want to go, relatively speaking, and we know what we want to do and so we select. We will do what fits with what we are doing in our school. . . . . And that's what people are starting to say, and because they come back and share, they make sure that this fits, when they come back to share with the staff. . . .PD has become much for focused, much more cost effective. We're not running off to random PD sessions now. | Professional development activities have become more meaningful and cost effective as the school has developed a model and a framework from which to evaluate what professional development activities fit in with their philosophy. | Professional learning enhanced<br>Cost effective use of professional development time |
| A34: I think they feel very confident here. I think they would probably feel less confident out in another group, but I think one of our most classic examples of this [was a district level training session] . . . . When we went there as a staff, and got separated, because they were into this mix everybody up philosophy for the in-service, and came back so frustrated because the of anger in the other schools and the negativity. We came back and we had a reflective session. How did it go for you? Everybody just kind of looked at each other and said, we hated it. Then we had to say, what did we hate about this? [The training content] per se, or what was happening there? And what we discovered, it was the dynamics of what was happening there. We wanted to stay together. We wanted to feed off our positiveness not all this [negativity]. | Staff members are empowered by their confidence in each other and that which they are striving to accomplish together. | Empowered by increasing confidence |
| A35: I mean, that to me was a fantastic example of when you take ownership, you set your goal, the world can bounce off you and you're not getting caught up in all of this stuff. . . . .People are basically agreed here, because, you know, it [all these bandwagons in education] worries us and it bothers us but it's not affecting us or how we feel. | Staff members are able to stand steadfast in their goals because they are committed to a philosophy and a model for enacting that philosophy. | Empowered by collective strength<br>Commitment to philosophy<br>Buy-in facilitates collective strength |

Table 5.21

Higher Order Thematic Clusters of the Ann's Administrator Experience

| First Order Themes | Second Order Thematic Clusters |
|---|---|
| 1. Parity in decision making | Parity |
| 2. Parity in decision making | |
| 3. Paring with staff members | |
| 1. Shared responsibility for participation | Shared responsibility |
| 6. Shared responsibility for program | |
| 7. Shared responsibility for program | |
| 8. Shared responsibility in decision making | |
| 23. Shared responsibility for students | |
| 30. Shared responsibility for students | |
| 2. Risk-taking needed | Risk-taking |
| 5. Risk-taking by administrator | |
| 2. Trust needed | Trust |
| 12. Trust developing | |
| 4. Administrator's role as facilitator | Administrator's role |
| 5. Administrator less in control | |
| 6. Ownership of program | Buy-in |
| 13. Goal setting first step in buy-in | |
| 15. Buy-in to process | |
| 35. Buy-in facilitates collective strength | |
| 7. Role functions blurred | Role function |
| 12. Roles less distinguishable | |
| 22. Role flexibility required | |
| 7. Reciprocity of roles | Reciprocity |
| 12. Reciprocity of roles | |
| 9. Empowered by model | Empowerment |
| 10. Empowered by model | |
| 34. Empowered by increased confidence | |
| 35. Empowered by collective strength | |

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|---|---|
| 9. Inclusion of students with special needs | Child-centered |
| 10. Inclusion of students with special needs | |
| 17. Student needs met | |
| 18. Student needs met | |
| 20. Student needs met | |
| 26. Focus on child, not program | |
| 11. Openness between staff | Openness |
| 14. Open to process | |
| 31. Willingness to change | |
| 11. Supportive environment created | Support |
| 17. Support for teacher | |
| 22. Support through process | |
| 15. Commitment to process | Commitment |
| 35. Commitment to philosophy | |
| 16. Time to develop | Time |
| 19. Planning time needed | |
| 21. Time for consultation | |
| 25. Time for reflection | |
| 27. Time for change needed | |
| 27. Time for communication and inservicing | |
| 28. Time as investment | |
| 18. Flexibility in roles | Flexibility |
| 20. Flexibility in process | |
| 22. Role flexibility required | |
| 25. Flexibility required in model | |
| 22. Personal satisfaction with model | Personal fulfillment |
| 24. Personal fulfillment through process | |
| 23. Skill development through shared responsibility | Skill development |
| 28. Development of teacher skill | |
| 29. Skill increase in classroom teacher | |
| 30. Skill development | |
| 32. Skill development | |
| 33. Professional development more effective | |
| 32. Cost effective use of teacher resources | Cost effectiveness |
| 33. Cost effective use of professional development time | |

Table 5.22

Higher Order Thematic Description of Ann's Administrator Experience

| Thematic Clusters | Generalized Descriptions |
|---|---|
| 1. Parity (Excerpts from Table 5.20: 1, 2, 3) | As an administrator in the collaborative model, one has to be willing to relinquish a lot of control in decision making and program implementation in order to ensure "participation by the stakeholders that are involved in the process". Collaborators are viewed as having equal responsibility for decision making which involves "risk-taking and trusting each other". |
| 2. Shared responsibility (1, 6, 7, 8, 23, 30) | Individuals involved in the collaborative process share responsibility for contributing input, participating in decision making, and ownership of the program. As individuals are involved in each other's classrooms, they also share responsibility for students which translate into less dependency on particular staff members to provide certain services, as responsibility for those services is shared. |
| 3. Risk-taking (2, 5) | Collaborators who take responsibility for decision making must be open and willing to take risks. At the same time, the administrator must be willing to take risks and accept uncertainty since the administrator no longer has "a clear picture" of how things will "evolve" with the contributions "of different people all impacting on [the] direction" of the outcome. |
| 4. Trust (2, 12) | Staff members must be able to trust each other in order to share decision making responsibilities. Staff members must be confident enough in each other as they learn to take on new roles, they now "trust one another enough to let go of the old role descriptors". |
| 5 Administrator's role (4, 5) | Views self as "more of a facilitator" in the collaborative model than the primary decision maker. Administrator's role involves the willingness to accept uncertainty as administrative control is lessened. |

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| 6. Buy-in<br>(6, 13, 15, 35) | In order for collaboration to be successful, the members must buy-in to the process. Buy-in is increased when members have the opportunity to share ideas and establish mutually defined goals. Goal setting is viewed as the first step in establishing buy-in to the collaborative model. Staff members are able to stand steadfast in their goals because they are committed to a philosophy and a model for enacting that philosophy. This process must evolve from the members and can not be mandated. |
| 7. Role function<br>(7, 12, 22) | Sees a lessening of lines between staff members roles as staff have "gone beyond the limits of whatever is written in their role description". As the model evolves, roles and responsibilities have become less distinguishable. Views the resource facilitator's role in this model as one which meets a number of needs due to its inherent flexibility. |
| 8. Reciprocity<br>(7, 12) | Staff members have become more apt to interchange roles as they accept increased ownership of the total school program and as they learn to trust one another. |
| 9. Empowerment<br>(9, 10, 34, 35) | Feels empowered in the use of the collaborative model as it facilitates the meeting of the goals for inclusive education programs. Staff members are empowered by their increasing confidence in each other and in that which they are striving to accomplish together. Staff members are also empowered by their collective strength in the face of situations which challenge their goals. |
| 10. Child-centered<br>(9, 10, 17, 18, 20, 26) | The collaborative model has become the vehicle through which the school can have an effective inclusive education program. Has come to the realization that "in order to be inclusive, it was necessary to be collaborative". Feels that the collaborative model can address the provision of services to students with special needs in the regular classroom in most cases. Recognizes that individual students may require special services at various times in their school life and that through the collaborative model they can meet the needs of more students better. Flexibility in roles allows staff members to better meet student needs. Overall, the primary goal of collaboration is to provide appropriate services to children. |

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| 11. Openness (11, 14, 31) | Collaboration is defined as "cooperation", "opened doors" and "a lot more exchanging". Collaboration is viewed is "a process you work at and it evolves", not as an inactive, closed label. In fact, the label "collaboration" is not important, but "the underlying process" is. An openness to on-going learning and change are considered essential characteristics of the classroom teacher within the collaborative model. |
| 12. Support (11, 17, 22) | Collaboration creates a "supportive environment" where teachers can receive support within the classroom for meeting student needs. |
| 13. Commitment (15, 35) | When individuals buy-in to the model, they become committed to it. This commitment means they can hold steadfast in their goals; "the world can bounce off you and you're not going to get caught up in all of this stuff" [educational bandwagons]. |
| 14. Time (16, 19, 21, 25, 27, 28) | Feels concerned that collaboration will become another bandwagon term, if individuals do not understand that it is a long-term change process that requires time to develop. Time for consultation and cooperative planning is needed in the collaborative model. Time is the central factor in allowing the change process to happen. Time is needed for inservicing and for communication between members. Time spent collaborating is viewed as an investment that is shown in the development of teacher skills. |
| 15. Flexibility (18, 20, 22, 25) | Flexibility in roles and role assignments has been necessary under the collaborative model in order to meet student needs. The process must also be flexible in order that changing student needs can be addressed at various times in s student's school life. On-going reflection regarding the success of the model, ensures that the model is responsive to both teacher and student needs. |
| 16. Personal fulfillment (22, 24) | Feels satisfied with the collaborative model in that a support structure for staff members has been built up through the collaborative process. Feels that positive feedback from staff members and students gives administration a strong measure of the success of the collaborative model. |

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| 17. Skill development (23, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33) | Feels that teachers are actively involved in learning and developing new skills as they share responsibility for students. Feels that the collaborative model fits in with the principles of learning by allowing teachers to observe and actively participate with others. As a result, dependency decreases, thereby allowing the classroom teachers to feel that they have the skills necessary to provide services to students with special needs. Views a willingness to learn new skills as a necessary characteristic of staff members in this model. Feels that professional development has become more "relevant" as teachers determine "what fits" with their personal needs. |
| 18. Cost effectiveness (32, 33) | Sees the collaborative model as being more cost effective in that dependency on special service personnel is reduced when regular classroom educators skills increase through collaborative activities. Professional development activities also become more cost effective as the school has developed a model and framework from which to evaluate what professional development activities fit within their philosophy which prevent staff members from "running off to random PD sessions". |

Summary of Ann's experience as an administrator

As an administrator in the collaborative model, Ann feels she must be willing to relinquish a lot of control in the decision making process. Involvement of the staff in decision making has "meant a shift in the way the school h been functioning". This change means that collaborators have equal responsibility for decision making which involves Ann "learning to let go of that control" and "let the people involved have some of that control".

This participation of the stakeholders in the decision making process requires "risk-taking and trusting each other" on the part of the stakeholders. At the same time, the administrator must be willing to take risks and accept uncertainty since the administrator no longer has "a clear picture" of how things will "evolve" with the contributions "of different people all impacting on [the] direction" of the outcome. Overall, Ann views her role as more of a "facilitator" in the collaborative process than the primary school decision maker.

Collaborators who take responsibility for decision making must not only be open and willing to take risks, but must also share responsibility for contributing i ut and having ownership of the program. Ann feels that as individuals are involved in each other's classrooms and share responsibility for students, there is less dependency on particular staff members to provide certain services since responsibility for those services is now shared. Due to the level of shared responsibility and joint ownership for students and programs, Ann has seen a blurring of the lines between staff members roles as staff have "gone beyond the limits of whatever is written in their role description". As the collaborative model evolves, Ann experiences roles and responsibilities becoming less distinguishable. The role labels are not important to Ann, for "we are all educators". Ann feels that the staff members have learned to be confident in each other as they have learned t o assume each other's roles, that is, they now "trust one another enough to let go of the old role descriptors".

This reciprocity of roles requires a great deal of flexibility in roles and role assignments and is necessary in order to meet student needs. Ann feels that the resource facilitator role is particularly suited to role interchange due to its inherent flexibility, that is, the role becomes whatever best suits the students' and teachers' needs. Flexibility is also required within the model and the process of collaboration. Ann views student needs as being dynamic, changing over time and situations, requiring the collaborative process to be flexible in response to changing student needs. On-going staff reflection regarding the

process and its success allows the model to be responsive to both teacher and student needs.

Ann believes that the primary function of the school is to provide appropriate services to students. The collaborative model has become the vehicle through which the school can have an effective inclusive education program. Ann and the school staff came to the realization that "in order to be inclusive, it was necessary to be collaborative". Within a collaborative framework, Ann feels that the school can meet the needs of more students better. Ann feels that the collaborative model can address the provision of services to students with special needs in the regular classroom in most cases. Having roles that are flexible, allows the teachers to decide how and by whom students with special needs would be served. Collaboration creates a "supportive environment" where teachers receive the support they need within the classroom in order to meet the needs of most children.

Ann used words like "cooperation", "opened doors" and "a lot more exchanging" to define collaboration. Ann describes openness to on-going change and learning as essential characteristics of collaborators under this model. Ann views collaboration as a "process you work at and it evolves". She is concerned that collaboration may become another educational bandwagon term if individuals involved in the process do not understand that it is a long-term change process the requires time to develop. Time is needed in the collaborative model for consultation and cooperative planning, for inservicing and for on-going communication between members. Without time for these collaborative activities, the changes that need to occur within the individuals themselves can not happen. In fact, Ann views time as the central factor in allowing the change process to happen. Ann believes that time spent collaborating is an "investment" that shows itself in the development of teacher skills.

Ann sees that teachers are actively involved in learning and developing new skills as they share responsibility for students. Ann views a this willingness to learn new skills as a necessary characteristic of staff members in the collaborative model. She appreciates that the collaborative model fits in well with the principles of learning by facilitating teachers to observe one another and actively participate with each other in learning how to meet the needs of students.

As a result of the increased teacher skill development, Ann sees two ways in which the collaborative model becomes more cost effective. As teachers learn these new skills, their dependency on others to provide specialized services decreases and their confidence and ability in dealing with diverse student needs increases, therefore, requiring less

specialized personnel over time. Professional development activities also become more cost effective. First, professional development activities become more "relevant" as teachers can determine "what fits" with their personal needs in the classroom. Second, school members utilize the collaborative model to evaluate which professional development activities best fit into their philosophy. This provides staff members with a focus in which they can be selective and eliminates staff members from "running off to random PD sessions" which do not address their goals.

In order for collaboration to be successful, Ann recognizes that the staff members must buy-in to the process. Ann feels that buy-in is increased when members have the opportunity to share ideas and establish mutually defined goals. Goal setting is viewed as the first step in establishing buy-in to the collaborative model. Ann believes that staff members are able to stand steadfast in their goals because they are committed to a philosophy and a model for enacting that philosophy. This process must "evolve" over time from the members and "can not be mandated". When individuals buy-in to the model, they become committed to it. Ann believes that this commitment means that the staff members can hold steadfast in their goals; "the world can bounce off you and you're not going to get caught up in all of this stuff".

Ann feels empowered in the use of the collaborative model as it facilitates the meeting of the goals for inclusive education programs. Ann believes that staff members are empowered by their increasing confidence in each other and in that which they are striving to accomplish together. Staff members are also empowered by their collective strength in the face of situations which challenge their goals. Ann feels satisfied with the collaborative model in that a support structure for staff members has been built up through the collaborative process. In addition, she feels that positive feedback from staff members and students gives the school administration a strong measure of the success of the collaborative model.

## Elsie

Elsie is an eight year member of staff at this school. She has been working as a special needs assistant for two years at the time of this study. Previously, she had worked as the out of school care director and as the library assistant. Elsie has some training as a child and youth care worker as well as some courses in early childhood. She is currently working directly with a child in grade 3 who is legally blind and providing general assistance to the grade 3 classroom. In addition, she assists in both the grades 1 and 2 classrooms on a daily basis, providing additional assistance to students who need help.

Elsie was very animated during the course of the interview. She expressed her experiences with great emphasis on the change that had occurred in the school in recent years and what that change had meant to her personally. The interviewer needed to conduct few probes as Elsie seemed confident in what she wanted to share regarding her experiences working within the collaborative model.

Excerpts from Elsie's transcribed interviews, the paraphrases of those excerpts, and the first order themes are included in Table 5.23. The second order thematic clusters of Elsie's experience are included in Table 5.24. The thematic descriptions of Elsie's experience are included in Table 5.25. Following is a summary of Elsie's lived experience as a classroom support person working within a collaborative school environment.

Table 5.23

Thematic Abstractions of Elsie's Experience

| Excerpts from transcribed interview | Paraphrases | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| E1: I feel more and more a part of the team. I feel that my opinion counts. I don't think that there's any, there's no totem pole with so and so it's up here and so and so it's down here, so that's all been taken away in the last two years. And I think now it's, everyone's opinion is valued. Your input is asked for and required. It's a good feeling. It's a really good feeling. It's like, I feel like I'm a valuable player. | Feels part of the school team and valued as an individual team member. Perceives input as being as valued as any other individual's. | Valued as individual<br>Empowered to contribute |
| E2: I can see it really working. We've had, the last year we've so many successes in this last school year. I can see so many successes in some of the kids and it's because everyone's working together. It's because of the structure. It's because, it's an effort on everyone's part. | Experiences success in staff members and students and attributes that success to the collaborative model. Views commitment from all members as essential. | Student success<br>Personal fulfillment through success<br>Commitment to process |
| E3: And, I mean, it sent me back to school again, and I had a year break taking night courses, but it sent me back, because, I mean, it's motivating at the same time, you know. You want to stay where you are, you want to see it grow. | Motivated to learn and change within the collaborative framework. | Empowered to learn<br>Personal fulfillment through learning<br>Commitment to learning |
| E4: Oh, it just makes me feel worthwhile. I feel, I feel, I get a lot of, I don't know, it does a lot for my own self esteem, I suppose, but it makes me feel like what I'm doing is benefiting, not just the kids I'm working with but other kids. I'm touching someone else's life. It makes me feel good that [the classroom teacher] and I work so well together and that it's a positive thing. | Increased sense of self-worth from seeing special needs students and others succeed under collaborative model. | All students benefit<br>Increased sense of self-worth |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| E5: [The classroom teacher] doesn't ever stand there and say, "you can't say this, or you can't do that". I have just as much control in the classroom, which I think I have to have, and he let me have that from the beginning. You know, he runs the classroom, sets up the lessons, everything else, let's me know well in advance, but he's also very flexible and I think I really enjoy that part. But we're very open that way, and we have a lot of communication. He listens to what I have to say and appreciates my input. And it's just been right from the beginning it was established that it was going to be an open communication thing, and it's been great. It really works for both of us. | Established parity in classroom with classroom teacher. Views roles as flexible and somewhat interchangeable. Open and frequent communication important part of successful relationship with teacher. | Parity with teacher<br>Flexibility in roles<br>Reciprocity of roles<br>Communication critical<br>Openness in communication |
| E6: And just having someone else in the room, I think has helped, not just me, but having [the resource facilitator] there, [the classroom teacher] with a background in special ed. and me there. We all contribute and support each other. It doesn't really matter who is dealing with which kid, we just find the best way to meet the needs of the students. We have a real safety net in the room. It's a real secure place. It's a safe place. | Team members demonstrate flexibility in roles in order to meet student needs. Team members assume each others responsibilities and support each other in various ways in order to provide a safe place for students to learn. | Flexibility in roles<br>Reciprocity in roles<br>Supporting each other's role<br>Role function |
| E7: Well, the leadership qualities she [the administrator] has are wonderful. The role of any administrator, I guess, would be to provide the environment, you know, I mean set it, set the tone right at the beginning, which I think [our administrator] done very well. She asks for input. She's included everyone in staff meetings. Before I only went to one staff meeting a month at the beginning of the month, and that was it. Now I'm involved in everything that goes on. | Administrator is seen as responsible for creating an environment in which collaborative activities can occur by seeking input from all staff members. Feels valued and on par with other staff members. | Administrator creates environment<br>Parity |
| E8: She [the administrator] touches base with everybody at any length, you know, at any time. She's always asking questions, always, and I think that, she's very approachable. You know, if there's any question that you have, she's always available. She makes herself available, even if she's not physically here, stick notes in her mailbox and she gets back to you, you know? | Administrator seeks out communication with and input from all staff members. Administrator is viewed as accessible and approachable. | Communication with administrator<br>Administrator's accessibility |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| E9: Something that she has that I think is a very important quality is she [the administrator] has a sense of humour, and she can laugh about the worst day, you know, and it carries you through to the next, and I mean, that's contagious, and it carries you through to the next day, you know. | Humor seen as an essential quality in the administrator | Administrator's use of humor |
| E10: She [the administrator] makes very definite decisions. After she gets the input, she will make a decision. If it's a decision that can be done as a group, that's fine, and she'll go with whatever the group wants. But there are some decisions that are just an administrator's decision, and she will say, you know, this is a decision I have to make and explain why and make that decision. You know, and it's, there's never any question, everything's out on the table. There's no secrets, you know. There's not any not knowing. When she knows something, you know it. | Feels included in staff decision making process. Administrator communicates clearly and succinctly with staff members. Has trust in administrator to make necessary administrative type decisions. Values the openness of the decision-making process. | Communication is open<br>Trusting relationship with administrator<br>Openness of decision making process |
| E11: And I see better things happening yet in the future. But it's just much more relaxed. There's more of a sense of trust. | Positive outlook is created. Feels relaxed within a trusting environment. | Trusting environment |
| E12: It reflects all the way down because there is organization at the top that knows where they are and where they're going. There's direction, and because there's that there, it follows through into the classroom and the kids, the behaviors are much, much better as a whole, as a group than they ever were. | Sees administration as providing active leadership to staff that can be seen in the improved behaviors of the students. | Active, clear leadership<br>Students benefit |
| E13: . . . what's happening in our classroom is great as far as reaching kids that are not so called "special needs kids", but it happens throughout the whole school, not just because I'm in that room. Its because of the atmosphere in the school, it's happening everywhere you know. Everyone believes in it and makes it happen. | Sees collaborative atmosphere as being pervasive throughout the school affecting all students and staff members in a positive way. | School buy-in to collaboration |
| E14: I really like the way this school is moving and I feel, like I say, very much more a part of the staff. I feel valued. When you feel good about yourself that, you know, it reflects on the kids. I think that for the kids it's a wonderful place to be now, and I think that I'll stay put as long as I can. | Is experiencing positive regard and acceptance in present position. Is experiencing personal fulfillment and a desire to continue to work in this environment. | Acceptance as valued member<br>Personal fulfillment in work |

Table 5.24

Higher Order Thematic Clusters of Elsie's Experience

| First Order Themes | Second Order Thematic Clusters |
|---|---|
| 1. Valued as individual<br>5. Parity with teacher<br>7. Parity with others<br>14. Accepted as valued member | Parity |
| 1. Empowered to contribute<br>3. Empowered to learn | Empowerment |
| 2. Student success<br>4. All students benefit<br>12. Students benefit | Child-centered |
| 2. Personal fulfillment through success<br>3. Personal fulfillment through change<br>4. Increased sense of self-worth<br>14. Personal fulfillment in work | Personal fulfillment |
| 2. Commitment to process<br>3. Commitment to learning | Commitment |
| 5. Flexibility in role<br>6. Flexibility in role | Flexibility |
| 5. Reciprocity in roles<br>6. Reciprocity in roles | Reciprocity |
| 5. Communication critical<br>8. Communication with administrator<br>10. Communication is open | Communication |
| 5. Openness in communication<br>10. Openness in decision-making process | Openness |
| 6. Support each others role | Support |
| 6. Role function | Role function |
| 7. Administrator creates environment<br>8. Communication with administrator<br>8. Administrator accessibility<br>9. Administrator's use of humor<br>12. Active, clear leadership | Administrator's role |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10. Trusting relationship with administrator | Trust |
| 11. Trusting environment | |
| 13. School buy-in to collaboration | Buy-in |
| 14. Accepted as valued member | Acceptance |

Table 5.25

Higher Order Thematic Description of Elsie's Experience

| Thematic Clusters | Generalized Descriptions |
|---|---|
| 1. Parity (Excerpts from Table 5.23: 1, 5, 7, 14) | Feels part of the school team and valued as an individual team member where her "opinion counts". Perceives input as being as valued as any other member's. Experiences parity with the classroom teacher in that both have authority with the students in the classroom and that the classroom teacher "listens to what I have to say and appreciates my input". |
| 2. Empowerment (1, 3) | Feels empowered to contribute to a staff where she feels like a "valuable player". Is also empowered to learn and change in order to continue to work well within the collaborative format as experienced at the school. |
| 3. Child-centered (2, 4, 12) | Attributes the many successes she sees within the students to "everyone working together". Feels like the work she is doing contributes to those with special needs and others by "touching someone else's life" in a positive way. Finds that student behavior on the whole has improved due to the filtering down of the collaborative ethic. Describes the school as a "wonderful place to be" for the children. |
| 4. Personal fulfillment (2, 3, 4, 14) | Finds personal fulfillment through the success of the students she works with, making her feel "worth while". Has an increased sense of "self-esteem" that she believes "reflects upon the kids" in a positive way. Also finds personal fulfillment in current staff relations where "she feels very much a part of the staff", respected and valued in her role. |
| 5. Commitment (2, 3) | Views commitment to the process from all members as essential, requiring "effort on everyone's part". Demonstrates her own personal commitment by a willingness to upgrade her skills in order to function better in the collaborative environment. |

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| 6. Flexibility (5, 6) | Views flexibility as a desirable characteristic for the classroom teacher. Sees the roles of teacher, resource facilitator and support personnel as being rather flexible and dependent on finding "the best way to meeting the needs of the students". |
| 7. Reciprocity (5, 6) | Has experienced a high level of sharing with the classroom teacher and a level of role interchange as team members feel comfortable assuming each others' responsibilities at times. |
| 8. Communication (5, 8, 10) | Open and frequent communication which was established early in the working relationship is an important part of a successful relationship with the classroom teacher. Having an administrator who seeks out frequent communication with all staff members, and who is open and honest with the communication undertaken is seen as essential to the collaborative process. |
| 9. Openness (5, 10) | Openness needed in communication with teacher. Openness in decision making process valued where "everything is out on the table". |
| 10. Support (6) | Team members support each other in the classroom in their various roles. |
| 11. Role function (6) | Roles are dependent upon the needs of the students, so that it really "doesn't matter who is dealing with what kid", as long as the needs of the student is met. |
| 12. Administrator's role (7, 8, 9, 12) | Administrator is as responsible for establishing an environment in which collaborative activities can occur by seeking input from all members and showing them they are valued as part of the team and through providing active leadership where there "is organization at the top" and where "they know where they've been and know where they're going". The administrator must also be viewed as accessible and approachable, and having a sense of humor in which the administrator is able to "laugh about even the worst day" which is described as "contagious" and allows the staff to carry on. |
| 13. Trust (10, 11) | Feels relaxed within the trusting environment which has been created. Has trust in the administration to make appropriate administrative decisions. |

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|---|---|
| 14. Buy-in (13) | Sees collaborative atmosphere as being pervasive throughout the school, affecting both staff and students positively demonstrated in the fact the "everyone believes in it and makes it happen". |
| 15. Acceptance (14) | Is experiencing positive regard and acceptance in present position, stating that "I'll stay here as long as I can". |

Summary of Elsie's experience

Elsie feels good about being a part of a school team where she feels valued as an individual member whose "opinion counts" and where her "opinion is asked for and required". As she looks around her, she sees that the opinions of others are also valued. Elsie appreciates that the classroom teacher and herself share authority in the classroom and that the classroom teacher "listens to what I have to say and appreciates my input". In addition, she has experiences a high level of sharing with the classroom teacher and some role interchange. Elsie feels comfortable interchanging roles and believes that this role interchange helps her and the teacher meet student needs betters. All these elements combine to help Elsie feel accepted and "very much part of the staff", creating a desire in her to "stay here as long as [she] can".

Elsie attributes her experiences of mutual-valuing and reciprocity to the environment that has been established by the administrator. The administrator has created an environment in which she feels comfortable engaging in these collaborative activities through providing active leadership to the staff. The administrator "set the tone right from the beginning" by, for example, "including everyone in the staff meeting" and including all staff members in the decision making process. The administrator is also accessible and approachable, utilizing a sense of humor to "laugh about even the worst day" which "carries [the staff] through the next day". It is important to Elsie that the administrator seeks out frequent communication with her and others, "touching base with everybody at length".

Open and honest communication is viewed by Elsie as being essential to the collaborative process and is a critical component in her successful working relationship with the classroom teacher. Elsie also values openness in the decision making process where "everything is out on the table" and "there are no secrets". This openness contributes to a trusting environment where Elsie can feel relaxed due to the fact that she believes she will be included in the decision making process when desirable, yet she also trusts that administration to make appropriate administrative type decisions when necessary.

Elsie views her role in the classroom as dependent upon the needs of the students, so that it really "doesn't matter who is dealing with what kid", as long as the needs of the student is met. Flexibility is a highly desirable characteristic of those involved within the collaborative process. Elsie sees the roles of teacher, resource facilitator and support

personnel as being mutually supporting, flexible and dependent on finding "the best way to meeting the needs of the students".

In fact, Elsie attributes many of the successes she sees within the students to this mutually supporting framework or "everyone working together". Elsie feels like the work she is doing contributes to both those children with special needs and others in a positive way. She finds personal fulfillment though the success of the students she works with, making her feel "worthwhile" and contributing to an increased sense of "self-esteem" she feels reflects upon the children she works with in a positive way. Elsie believes she sees improvement in the overall behavior of the children in the school due to the filtering down of the collaborative ethic from the staff to the students. She describes the school in the collaborative model as "a wonderful place to be" for the students.

Elsie sees the collaborative atmosphere as being pervasive throughout the school, affecting both staff and students positively. "Everyone believes in" the collaborative model and, therefore, "makes it happen" in this school. A commitment to the collaborative process from all members is viewed as essential, requiring "effort on everyone's part". Elsie is demonstrating her own personal commitment to the process through a desire and a willingness to upgrade her skills in order to function better within the collaborative environments.

## Definition of themes

A total of twenty-two themes emerged from the analysis of the eight interviews. Upon examination of the transcribed interviews of the other seven participants, no further themes could be extracted. The following twenty-two themes as listed and defined in Table 5.26 are representative of the themes as expressed by all the participants in the study. The emerged themes are also listed by phenomenologically analyzed participant experience in Table 5.27. The shared experience of working in collaborative relationships as defined by the participants will be discussed fully in Chapter 6.

Table 5.26

Definitions of All Themes for All Participants

1. **Role function**: roles were defined within the collaborative process as ever-evolving, flexible, difficult to define, and dependent upon the needs of others.

2. **Reciprocity**: an understanding that all parties must give and take in the collaborative relationship; that each have equal access to information and resources, decision making and problem solving, and as such, can interchange roles when desirable or necessary.

3. **Flexibility**: the ability to change to the demands of the situation; requiring a willingness to adjust self in terms of attitude, role, and responsibilities.

4. **Time:** that which is both needed and valued in the collaborative process; without appropriate time allotments, the collaborative process breaks down.

5. **Acceptance:** the feeling that one is being recognized and valued; that there is a welcoming place in a given situation.

6. **Parity**: a sense of equity between individuals in the collaborative process regardless of their role definition; a sense of mutual-valuing.

7. **Openness**: the ability to come into a situation with an open-mind, a willingness to learn, and a willingness to become what grows out of that experience.

8. **Shared responsibility**: a sense of balance in the ownership of problems and solutions that goes beyond mere cooperation, as it implies equivalence in commitment and action.

9. **Personal Fulfillment**: a feeling of personal enjoyment, pride and satisfaction with one's work which may lead to an increase in one's self-esteem or sense of self-worth.

10. **Administrator's role**: an understanding that the administrator's role in all aspects of the collaborative process is critical; creation of the environment, modeling of desired behaviors, and facilitation of the long-term change process are descriptive of the administrator's role in collaborative environments.

11. **Buy-in**: the establishment of a personal philosophical belief in the value of the process you are involved in.

12. **Child-centered**: the focus of the energy in the collaborative relationship between staff members is the meeting of the needs of the children under their care.

13. **Trust**: the development of a trusting, mutually defined relationships within the collaborative process where teachers feel comfortable to learn and change.

14. **Commitment**: an assured feeling that is translated into action in which the members in the collaborative relationship can make the process work even though this requires great amounts of effort and time.

15. **Risk-taking**: the willingness of those involved in the collaborative relationship to be innovative, make mistakes, and support each other in the learning process without fear of being considered failures.

16. **Support**: the need to uphold and verify other's roles so that they can accomplish their goals; the need for mutual support both within and outside of the classroom in order for the total process to work.

17. **Skill Development:** the generation of new skills as a result of being involved in collaborative interactions with others.

18: **Empowerment**: the feeling that one is being valued in their role and the belief that through the functions of one's role, one can make a real difference.

19. **Training**: the expressed need for educators involved in the collaborative process to have appropriate training to fulfill their roles and also the acknowledgment that through the collaborative process itself, educators are more able and willing to learn from or participate in "in-house" training with their peers.

20. **Communication:** the experience of increased interaction and on-going dialogue which is characterized by an higher level of openness and honesty as teachers participate in the collaborative process

21. **Resistance:** the experience of anxiety or hesitation in the collaborative model regarding new role functions and unfamiliar processes as defined within the model; resistance experienced as reduced through the support of collaborative relationships.

22. **Cost effectiveness:** a belief that the collaborative model is more effective and efficient than traditional models in terms of skill development and professional development time.

Table 5.27

Summary of Participants' Themes

| | Vicki | Shannon | Ann | Clara | Lorna | Julie | Ann - admin. | Elsie |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parity | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● |
| Reciprocity | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Shared responsibility | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| Trust | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Support | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Acceptance | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Resistance | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | |
| Flexibility | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Openness | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Risk-taking | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Commitment | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Role function | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Administrator's role | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Time | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| Buy-in | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Training | ● | | | | ● | | | |
| Empowerment | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Personal fulfillment | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● |
| Child-centered | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Skill development | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| Communication | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Cost-effectiveness | | | | | | | ● | |

# CHAPTER SIX

# THE SHARED EXPERIENCE OF COLLABORATION

## Overall synthesis of the collaborative experience

Themes shared by all participants are brought together to form the shared description of the experience of working in collaborative school relationships. In total, twenty two second order themes were abstracted from the data. These themes do not have a specified order of importance. The themes are presented in clusters, however, to represent four major areas that are descriptive of the components inherent within the collaborative process as discussed by the participants. These areas have been labeled structural components, process components, collaborator characteristic components, and outcome components. The components that provide for the structure of collaboration related by the participants are as follows: role function, time, administrator's role, buy-in, and training. The components that highlight the process of collaboration include the following: parity, trust, reciprocity, shared responsibility, support, acceptance, resistance, and commitment. Components descriptive of necessary collaborator skills and characteristics include the following: flexibility, openness, communication, and risk-taking. Finally, the themes that can best be labeled as outcome components are: skill development, child-centered approach, empowerment, personal fulfillment, and cost-effectiveness.

Each theme area will be discussed in terms of its shared meaning for the participants. It is important to note that not all participants discussed all themes during the initial interview process. If, during verification interviews, the participants acknowledged and verified the themes brought forward by others, these themes were included as part of the shared description. As it turned out, all themes were verified by all participants with one interesting exception. One participant could verify the themes of parity, shared responsibility, and risk-taking as they related to the experiences of others , that is, this individual could see these elements in the relationships of others, but could not identify them as part of her own experience. Since she could verify them as part of the experiences of others, these themes were included as part of the shared experience of collaboration. It is important, however, to examine some possible reasons why these themes were not part of the personal experience of this participant. This individual had been at this school for less than one year and, as a result, was not part of the initial introduction to the

collaborative philosophy. She was working at the school only part-time and by her own standards was less involved than she wanted to be or felt she possibly could be. These factors likely contributed to a different personal experience of the phenomenon of collaboration than was experienced by her colleagues and should be kept in mind by individuals who wish to engage in collaborative working relationships in schools.

Following are the composite descriptions of the shared experience of collaborative working relationships in schools as shared by the participants . The twenty-two themes have been organized into the following four categories: structural components, process components, collaborator characteristic components, and outcome components.

## Structural Components

### Role Function.

Roles in the collaborative process are multi-faceted or multidimensional, ever-evolving, flexible, dependent upon the needs of others, and, therefore, difficult to define. Each participant who is functioning in a collaborative relationship, regardless of his/her role title, found it difficult to define that role in specific terms, preferring to refer to the role as a continually evolving process. The experience of an expanding role that is less structured, more flexible, and more responsive to the needs of students was shared. All participants felt that their role is not limited to the needs of students with special needs only, but responsive to all students. Flexibility of roles within the collaborative model allowed participants to focus more on student needs and less on role limitations, creating a more child-centered approach to services.

The resource facilitators and classroom support personnel especially believe their role to be highly dependent on the needs of others, primarily the needs of students, but also those of the classroom teacher. These roles were considered ever-changing and not confined to a particular space and time. These participants identified their primary function as meeting the needs of the student, while balancing the needs of the classroom teacher. Those functioning in the resource facilitator role were particularly articulate regarding the time required to develop their role and have it accepted by others. Time is needed for team members to understand and become familiar with new role functions and for the resource facilitators to become comfortable with and confident within their new roles.

The nature of roles in the collaborative process as ever-evolving and changing was evident both in the discussions and the observations of the participants. Some team

members were seeking more guidance and clarity of roles descriptions from the administration. Some participants had worked out mutually-defined role functions and descriptions with other team members with whom they worked. Still others were looking beyond strict role descriptions, seeing roles as being less distinguishable and melded together in such a way that all roles could be considered interchangeable. Regardless of the stage of development in this process, participants made it clear that individuals involved in the collaborative process must be open to the possibility of role descriptions and functions changing over time.

Time.

Time is that which is both needed and valued in the collaborative process. All participants interviewed agreed that acceptance of the model and effective implementation of the process is mostly dependent upon the sufficient allotment of time. Collaboration is viewed as a long term change process that can only occur over time. Insufficient time is seen as the biggest barrier to the collaborative process as well as the largest contributor to difficulties within the process.

Time is required to do the job directly in terms of daily interaction, on-going communication, reflection, in-class support and collaborative planning between team members. Time is also needed for training and in-servicing and the development of skills. Time is needed for team members to build trusting relationships and to develop and understand new roles. Resistance is reduced and acceptance is increased over time as individuals come to feel valued within the process and empowered by it.

Time is expressed as the most critical component in the process of facilitating buy-in of the collaborative philosophy and model. Team members required time to become engaged in the collaborative process at a level that was personally comfortable. Buy-in is facilitated and commitment enhanced when school staff members have sufficient time to develop a personal philosophical belief in the model and enact the model in such a way that it meets their needs.

The administrator has a central role in providing time for the collaborative process as it is seen as the administrator's responsibility to establish the school organization and scheduling so that collaborative interaction will occur. It is also the responsibility of the administrator to provide for a sense of pacing of the collaborative process, not rushing or mandating, but facilitating staff engagement by providing time for the process. The administrator in this study viewed this time as an investment in the future as she believed

that the collaborative process resulted in increased teacher skills which eventually saves time in that teachers can function more effectively without the high level of assistance from outside experts.

Administrator's role.

There is a strongly expressed belief among the participants that administrative support in all aspects of the collaborative process is critical. The administrator's role includes creating an environment in which collaboration can occur, modeling desirable behaviors, supporting others in their engagement in the collaborative interactions, and facilitating the long-term change process. To begin, the administrator needs to be knowledgeable about the process he/she is asking the staff members to engage in and, along with this, have a well articulated vision which is shared with the staff. The staff must be able to see and feel that the administrator believes in the model him/herself. In addition, personal characteristics such as accessibility, approachability, and a sense of humor are beneficial in that these characteristics assist in keeping the lines of communication open and the atmosphere relaxed.

The administrator creates the organizational structure necessary for collaboration by providing the time and resources necessary to allow the team members to engage in collaborative behaviors. The participants also discussed the need for the administrator to create a safe environment where risk-taking, trust, openness, sharing, and participation are the norm. The administrator facilitates the creation of this environment by personally demonstrating flexibility, a willingness to change, a willingness to take risks, an ability to relinquish control, an openness to new ideas, and a consistent demonstration of trust in the staff. The administrator needs to share responsibility with the staff in goal setting, planning, and implementing the model; continually seeking communication and input from the staff in decision making. These administrative behaviors reduce staff anxiety and resistance and increase their likelihood to buy-in to the model and participant in these behaviors themselves.

The administrator creates a more collaborative environment by providing both active leadership and leadership through example. From the interviews, observations, and participation in school activities, it appeared that the leadership in this school involved a simultaneous engagement of both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Leadership was top-down in that the administrator took active responsibility for providing support for the collaborative process. Simultaneously, leadership was bottom-up in that the administrator

actively sought leaders amongst the staff and knew when to step out of the way while staff members created their own vision, goals, and methods and took responsibility for the collaborative process themselves. Through this approach the administrator in this school, in effect, became a leader of leaders.

Buy-in.

Total staff buy-in to the collaborative ethic was deemed critical by the participants. It was recognized that this buy-in takes time and that not all team members will be at the same level of buy-in at the same time. Buy-in is viewed as a process that allows team members to come into the process slowly, comfortably, and in a way that facilitates personal meaning. Buy-in requires examination of personal and professional beliefs and the communication of these beliefs with the other team members. Through this communication, team members establish a vision and common goals.

The administrator's role is central to the buy-in of the staff. The administrators demonstrate their level of buy-in both by articulation of their beliefs and through positive actions that support others who seek to buy-in to the collaborative process. The administrator who is knowledgeable about the process, supportive of others, and provides the time for the process to evolve will likely have the buy-in of his/her staff.

Participants demonstrated that they developed a personal philosophical belief in the value of the collaborative process and had many ideas as to how the buy-in process was facilitated within themselves and other team members. Primarily, buy-in is facilitated when team members take the time to communicate, share ideas, and create mutually defined goals. However, buy-in is also viewed as part of the collaborative process itself. That is, as teachers begin to feel valued and empowered in the collaborative process and as they begin to recognize that what they are doing is valuable to others, they buy-in and value the process itself. As team members support each other in classrooms and see that the increased sharing and interaction results in success for the students, they further buy-in to the model. As team members discover that throughout the collaborative process they have a equal and valued voice at the school, they further buy-in to the process. As team members participate in professional development activities which enhance their collaborative skills and support the collaborative process, they further buy-in to the collaborative process. In addition, collaboration becomes the facilitator or "catalyst" for change at the school; the tool which team members can utilize to empower themselves to engage in continuous professional improvement.

When buy-in to the collaborative ethic is enacted at the school, it is evident in the language and the interactions of the team members. When buy-in to the model is experienced, collaboration becomes pervasive throughout the school; a lens through which the team members view all that they do. In short, it becomes the culture of the school.

### Training.

Three participants discussed the need for training in the initial interview process, yet all three discussed it in somewhat different terms. In addition when input and verification was sought on the theme of training from the other participants, all had some experience or value attached to the theme of training that further reflected the diversity of this component of the collaborative process. Overall, two common threads ran through these discussions. First, the participants communicated the idea that on-going training and professional development is desirable and necessary and that collaboration is characterized by members involved in a commitment to life-long learning. Second, is the expressed belief that the school as a whole was better able to meet its own professional development needs through the sharing of expertise among team members and therefore decrease its dependence on outside experts for staff training.

Participants involved in the resource facilitator role discussed the need for a trained special educator to fulfill that role and for training in order to perform their newly defined resource facilitator role. Resource facilitators also tended to emphasize the need to train all educators and not just special educators in order to remove the perception that it is the special education personnel that hold the expertise. Some regular educators discussed the need for training in inclusive education principles and practices and training in collaborative processes. However, they also acknowledged that much more inservice training can happen "in-house" due to the nature of the collaborative ethic as teachers learn to share their expertise and skills.

## Process Components

### Parity.

Parity is a sense of equity between individuals in the collaborative process regardless of their role definition, giving each individual a sense of being mutually valued. Parity occurs when team members in the collaborative process are viewed as equals and begin to function as equals. Parity means that all input from all staff is equally welcomed

and valued and that no individual holds the expert role. Parity means that there is a shared responsibility for decision making and active engagement in the decision making process.

Individuals involved in roles that have traditionally been considered as set apart from the "mainstream" of the classroom or the school, that is, those involved in special education and support personnel roles, were especially articulate regarding the experience of parity. Frequent comparison was made to the experience of parity as being a significant and major change under the collaborative model. It was clear that these individuals had previously felt they were not part of the "in" group, but rather performed their roles on the periphery of education service delivery where they felt, at times, undervalued and powerless. Within the collaborative model these team members experienced a welcoming situation where they felt acknowledged, valued, listened to, and where they were considered to have equal input and authority with other team members.

Parity within the collaborative model is facilitated by the administrator relinquishing control and empowering staff members to become active participants in decision making and problem solving. When the administrator demonstrates the willingness to lessen his/her control and place a greater amount of trust in the staff to make and implement decisions, participants are more apt to view themselves as having equal and valued input, thereby furthering their buy-in to the collaborative process

Parity between team members results in an elimination of the typical school hierarchy. All team members are considered to have valued expertise which can be shared with others. All share responsibility and authority both within and outside of the classroom. Team members considered themselves to be leaders at some times and followers at other times, but always as equal participants in the process. All these factors lead to increased staff collegiality.

Trust.

The development of trusting, mutually defined relationships within the collaborative process where team members feel comfortable to learn and change is seen as another essential component of the collaborative process. Trust is viewed as both a condition that needs to exist for the collaborative process to develop as well as a result of increased collaborative interactions between team members. Trust needs time to develop and it requires the modeling and support of the administrator. It is the administrator's responsibility to create a safe environment where participants are willing to trust each other, trust the administrator, and trust the process they are engaging in.

Trust develops through on-going, open, honest, and frequent communication regarding the experiences of team members as they work through the collaborative process. Trust develops when individuals have the opportunity to spend time in each other's spaces, learning to understand each other's roles and responsibilities. Trust develops when team members have the opportunity to feel supported by others in their roles. Trust develops as individuals learn to share responsibility for students and programs.

Trust is necessary if individuals are to participate in taking risks, making mistakes, and learning from their experiences. Trust is needed if individuals are expected to take part in and take responsibility for decision making. Trust is also necessary if individuals are expected to take on new role functions, share roles, or interchange roles. This is especially true for the newly defined resource facilitator role which involves the special education teacher working in the regular classroom, sharing responsibility with the classroom teacher for students with special needs. Trust develops between the resource facilitator and the classroom teacher when both are willing to let go of the former expert model of special education service delivery, share ideas and information openly, and speak freely about their frustrations without feeling like they are being judged.

A level of trust must be present at the beginning of the collaborative process. This level, it appears, is greatly dependent on the administrator's skill in creating a safe and trusting environment. Trust also grows out of the process of collaboration through communication, openness, risk-taking, shared responsibility, parity, and reciprocity.

Reciprocity.

Reciprocity is a sense of mutuality between the teachers involved in the collaborative process; an understanding that both give and take in the relationship. The sharing of responsibilities, ideas, information and resources, and engagement in mutual planning and joint decision making contribute to the development of a team concept where teachers interact freely in their relationships. This interaction can lead to the interchange of role responsibilities where team members feel comfortable in assuming each others' teaching responsibilities or other school duties. To some participants, the ultimate goal of collaborative interactions is the development of reciprocal relationships in which the staff members engage in complete role sharing and interchange.

Reciprocity requires trust, time, and modeling by the administrator. Reciprocity requires that team members in any given relationship be willing to give and receive support, share equally, and engage in on-going communication. Reciprocity also requires that team

members be willing to let go of old role descriptions and expectations. For those teachers working with resource facilitators this "letting-go" is especially related to the old role of the special educator in the previous deficit-driven, expert model of special education delivery services.

Reciprocity results in increased teacher learning as teachers model for each other in the classroom and learn from taking on the responsibilities of another team member's role. Reciprocity also results in a reduction of tradition hierarchical school relationships. Reciprocity means that expertise on the staff is openly shared and valued resulting in more meaningful in-house professional development and greater diversity of teaching personnel in classrooms. Reciprocity also means that team members have increased support for one another in the classroom and are therefore better able to meet the needs of a greater diversity of students.

Shared responsibility.

Shared responsibility is a sense of balance in the ownership of both problems and solutions among team members that goes beyond mere cooperation as it implies equivalence in commitment and action. The shared responsibility or ownership of student problems and solutions is viewed as critical if the collaborative process is going to be successful. Shared responsibility is understood to mean that all staff members were responsible for the total development of every child. This means that child related problems are not viewed in isolation of the total child or the environment in which that child functions, nor are those problems assigned to the responsibility of one individual. Instead, all team members work together with the child in his/her classroom setting, sharing ideas and expertise in order to seek out the best course of action for that student. This new ownership of students with special needs by classroom teachers and others is viewed by special education personnel as the major change under the collaborative model. In addition, shared responsibility means all staff are involved in curriculum and instruction, information gathering and sharing, and decision making without restrictions due to rigid role definitions. Team members also share responsibility for contributing input, participating in decision making, and ownership of programs. Again, the administrator's role of modeling and supporting these behaviors is viewed as critical.

Shared responsibility results in an increased sense of team. Many participants described shared responsibility as resulting in an end to teacher isolation, frustration, and powerlessness due to the fact that within the collaborative model there is always at least one

other person available with whom one could share problems and seek solutions. Shared responsibility also results in an increase in teacher learning as team members interact closely with each other to seek solutions to diverse student needs, therefore creating the opportunity to share expertise. As a result, shared responsibility may also mean less dependency on certain staff members to provide specialized services to students. In addition, shared responsibility is seen as extending beyond the classroom as ownership by participants for the total school program is enhanced. Most important is the belief that shared responsibility means there is improved ability to meet student needs due to the availability of support from many school personnel.

Support.

All the participants expressed the need to uphold and verify the roles and functions of others so that each person can accomplish his/her individual goals and those goals defined by the group. This interactive type of support is viewed as a critical component of the collaborative process. The collaborative model itself is seen as creating a supportive environment for team members. Within this model individuals support one another in both formal and informal ways. The administrator establishes an organizational structure whereby teachers could support each other both inside and outside of the classroom, in small and large groups, and with a diverse mix of people. The administrator is also seen to be actively supporting the process through verbal commitment to the process, support through time and resources, and advocacy for the model to others including school district personnel and parents.

Participants experienced this support as being positive and valuable both personally and professionally. Individuals in collaborative relationships felt that they benefited from support from team members in a variety of ways. They felt that support of others enhances their professional learning and contributes to more in-house training occurring on a regular basis in both formal and informal ways. A structure that provides for support of teachers in classrooms means that expertise and responsibility could be shared, resulting in increased ability to meet student needs. When team members are supported, they feel that they can then focus their energies on student needs. Support is also valued as it leads to a decrease in the isolation and frustration often experienced by classroom teachers.

Team members credited support from others as contributing to their level of buy-in and commitment to the collaborative model. Decision making and problem solving was also viewed as easier and more effective when participants feel supported by their

colleagues. One teacher also expressed a belief that parental support for the school increased within the collaborative model due to the fact that the school was doing a better job of addressing student needs sooner. This belief was verified by other members. Finally, the support provided by the school district is valued, but a concern was raised as to the district's level of commitment to the process and the continuity of its support.

Although support was viewed by all team members as being both given and received, it was the resource facilitators who described their primary function as providing support to the classroom teacher. This support is acknowledged and valued by the classroom teachers who feel that due to that support received from the resource facilitator, they are better able to address student needs.

Acceptance.

To be accepted one must feel recognized, valued, and welcomed in a given situation. Participants discussed acceptance in terms of feeling accepted in newly defined roles, experiencing positive regard from others, feeling personally closer to other staff members, having more positive professional relationships with others, and a feeling that the total school environment was more accepting of them as individuals.

Acceptance appeared to be dependent upon several interacting components as experienced by the participants. In general, acceptance is viewed as developing over time where individuals have the opportunity to communicate about the meaning of collaborative process and their roles within that process. As knowledge and understanding of team members improves regarding the collaborative process and the new role functions, acceptance follows.

Participants involved in the role of resource facilitator were particularly articulate about the theme of acceptance. This was likely due to the fact that their role underwent the most significant change in the school and the fact that their new role typically took place in someone else's space, that is, the regular educator's classroom. Participants experienced that acceptance starts by the resource facilitator being sensitive to the other teacher's perspective, needs, and expectations while at the same time approaching the situation with diplomacy. Acceptance requires all educators to relinquish the old expert-based model and buy-in to the philosophy of the collaborative model. Acceptance occurs when the receiving teacher allows the resource facilitator to do his/her job, communicating with the resource facilitator regarding expectations for the process. As knowledge increases, understanding of the process will develop and acceptance will occur, but only over the course of time.

Acceptance can neither be rushed or forced, it must come naturally out of an increased understanding of the new roles and relationships. Participants acknowledged that individuals could be at different levels of acceptance and that every team member has a responsibility to facilitate bringing that individual into the model in a supportive way.

Resistance.

Participants did not experience or discuss resistance in a way that would have one conclude that resistance to the collaborative model was a major issue or obstacle for them. Instead, they tended to discuss the many ways they had experienced resistance and anxiety as being reduced both to the collaborative model and because of the collaborative process. Resistance was reduced due to the fact that the introduction to the collaborative model was handled in small, incremental steps by the administrator. Resistance was reduced because team members had the opportunity for input and personal buy-in over time and because the model was not forced or mandated. Participants felt that the collaborative process itself reduced resistance in some of the following ways. Collaboration created a school culture which accepted, supported, and valued individuals, change, and growth. Due to the fact that individuals become valued within the model, they are empowered through their engagement in the collaborative process. The administrator strongly believed that the collaborative model itself reduced resistance to change due to its supportive nature.

This reduction in resistance is evident in some participant stories. As an example, one participant discussed her initial resistance to the concept of inclusion of students with special needs. She was concerned about increased expectations, time and effort as well as her own lack of knowledge and experience in inclusive education. She felt, however, after engagement in the collaborative model, that she was supported in her learning and her role through collaborative activities. Over time she become empowered by the collaborative model to meet the diversity of student needs in her classroom.

Participants who discussed experiencing a level of resistance to their roles were the resource facilitators whose role had been radically redefined from previous years. Again, resistance was not discussed in such a way that it was considered an insurmountable barrier. Resistance from others was in the form of underutilization of the resource facilitator's role due, the participants believed, to unfamiliarity with the new role. Resistance was also noted when teams were not moving beyond the initial stages of role development, possibly due to insufficient time or a low level of buy-in. The resource

facilitators' stated, however, that resistance to their role was reduced over time and through their continued commitment to the model and the process.

Commitment.

When an team member has commitment to the collaborative process, he/she has bought into the philosophy and this philosophy is translated into action. This means that the team member is willing to devote extra time and effort to make collaboration work because he/she believes the outcomes of the process are worthwhile. Team members need to be committed not only to the process, but to the on-going change that is viewed as an inevitable and welcome part of the collaborative model. In addition, participants view commitment to one another as critical. This commitment to the other team members allows individuals to develop new roles and try new methods in a supportive environment. Commitment to the philosophy of education for all children is believed necessary in order that team members might address diverse student needs effectively .

Commitment by participants is demonstrated in their willingness to take the extra time and effort to improve their skills or learn new skills in order that they be better able to address student needs. Participants believe that commitment by all team members results in better services to students and the creation of a supportive and relaxed school atmosphere where team members could work towards their goal of meeting diverse student needs.

Commitment is viewed as enhanced when sufficient time is given to the buy-in phase of the process so that participants have the opportunity to enter the process and give input into the model and the process. Commitment is also enhanced when the participants viewed the administrator as being committed to the process as he/she demonstrates patience and perseverance.

Collaborator Characteristic Components

Flexibility.

Flexibility was viewed as a critical individual characteristic in collaborative working relationships. Team members need to be able to change to the demands of a given situation and demonstrate a willingness to adjust themselves in terms of attitude, role, and responsibilities. Individuals involved in the collaborative process found that they became more flexible as they learn to trust others, share responsibility, and feel supported in their efforts to adjust to a given situation.

Flexibility in roles is viewed by all participants, regardless of their particular role, as being critical. Each participant felt that he/she needed to be flexible enough to go beyond previously prescribed roles and be willing to become what was needed in a given situation. The resource facilitator, for example, typically viewed their role as being multi-faceted and constantly changing, requiring the individual to have the ability to change to the demands of a given situation quickly. The regular educators felt they must show an equal degree of flexibility, being willing to relinquish previously held concepts of their roles as educators to embrace a more variable one. Likewise, support personnel, whether working inside or outside of the classroom, felt that their roles needed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of others.

All participants found that the collaborative model allows them more flexibility in providing services to students with special needs. Several team members viewed on-going reflection as a critical component to keep the process and the model of collaboration flexible and responsive to the needs of students and teachers. The need for reflection was verified by the other participants, although time to engage in reflective activities was considered less than optimum.

Openness.

Openness is a individual characteristic that, like flexibility, is deemed by the participants as essential to engagement in the collaborative process. Openness is described in the collaborative environment as both the physical opening of doors and the psychological opening of minds. Openness is defined by these participants as the ability to come into a situation with an open-mind, a willingness to learn and change, and a willingness to become what grows out of that experience. Openness is also a requirement in communication and decision making between collaborators.

Openness to the ever-evolving process of collaboration is viewed as necessary to avoid collaboration becoming a static, inactive label. Openness to the collaborative process is discussed as a part of the process itself, that is, as the team members' knowledge and awareness increase through the process, they become more open to the process since they begin to value its benefits.

Increased openness is also viewed by some to be a result of the collaborative process. Team members became more open to the perspectives of others and more open in how they view their working relationships and their roles in the school. In addition,

classroom teachers stated that they have become more open to the diversity of student needs in their classrooms, and as such, better prepared to deal with them.

Communication.

Open, honest, frequent and on-going communication is an essential component in the collaborative process. Team members must be willing to engage in in-depth communication with others and have the opportunity within the structure of the school day to do so. Effective collaboration is found to be severely hampered by a lack of time for communication. Communication facilitates buy-in and commitment to the collaborative process by providing for opportunity for team members to establish the structure and function of their collaborative relationships. Increased communication is necessary in order to develop the teaching and learning environment that facilitates the team members' vision and goals.

The process of collaboration is viewed by the participants as enhancing both the quantity and the quality of communication and creating a strong communication base for team members. Communication is enhanced through collaborative teaming and the opportunity for team members to share responsibility for students. Once the collaborative process is in effect, the participants experience an increase in the amount and quality of information and idea sharing amongst team members.

It is important that the administrator be a skilled communicator as well and seek out communication with the staff members.

Risk-taking.

The willingness of those involved in the collaborative relationship to be innovative, make mistakes, grow and change, and support each other in the learning process without fear of being considered failures is considered essential to the success of the collaborative process. The participants felt that successful collaborative relationships require individuals to engage in risk-taking behavior. This risk-taking behavior begins with the administrator who starts the process by relinquishing control and letting go of rigid structures. The administrator must be willing to accept the uncertainty that is involved in empowering others to make decisions and share in responsibility for the total school program. The administrator creates a safe environment for risk-taking by placing a high degree of value on learning from mistakes and by modeling these behaviors him/herself.

The collaborative model was not viewed as a model that would be congruent with individuals who are very rigid or who feel that they had a need to be right all the time. Participants recognize that collaboration requires a willingness to change and this means taking risks. The collaborative process takes time to develop and, as a result, team members experience growing pains along the way. Participants were willing to take this risk, however, despite the growing pains, because they experience success within the collaborative model. Participants were also willing to take risks, make mistakes and learn from their mistakes when they observed the administrator engaging in these same behaviors.

## Outcome Components

### Empowerment.

Empowerment is the feeling that one is being valued in his/her role and the belief that through the functions of one's role, one can make a real difference. Through the collaborative process, participants discussed how feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and frustration were replaced with feelings of empowerment, inclusion and achievement. Participants related their experiences of empowerment as becoming considered "valuable players", feeling "worthwhile", feeling like an "insider", having their "voices heard", and being "connected to the mainstream".

Team members within the collaborative model feel empowered for several reasons. They fee empowered by the fact that their contribution and expertise is being valued by others. Participants felt empowered due to the fact that their experiences are validated by others through shared responsibility, reciprocity, and support. When team members feel reinforced by others in their roles, an increase in personal self-esteem and satisfaction was reported. Team members are empowered by the fact that they are given the opportunity to engage in problem solving and seek meaningful solutions. They are empowered by the belief that they had the ability to effect real change in their school and personal change in themselves. Team members are empowered by the belief that through their collective strength they could withstand obstacles and situations which challenged their established goals. Most significantly, team members are empowered by the success they see in the students. Participants believed, therefore, that the collaborative process in which they were engaged was of value to students and met the goals the group had established.

Participants related that they are empowered to work better within the collaborative model through their willingness to contribute more time and effort, engage in training, learn new skills and change old attitudes. Participants also discussed how they became empowered in professional development activities and district initiatives to make collective decisions as to what activities do or do not fit in with their beliefs and the goals they have set.

Personal Fulfillment.

Team members expressed pride, enthusiasm, fulfillment, and satisfaction due to the perceived results of the collaborative process. According to the participants, there is a felt change in the atmosphere of the school since the introduction of a collaborative model that made working there a more pleasant experience. The atmosphere was felt to be relaxed and welcoming. Collaborative working relationships are likened to a "caring family" where all individuals are supported in their uniqueness. Working relationships are also described as rewarding and stimulating. Positive staff relations made the school a pleasant and desirable place for the participants.

In addition, there was an observed a change in how students interacted with each other since implementation of the collaborative model. Participants believe that the collaborative model is one that the students found worth emulating.

Child-centered.

As expressed by the participants, the focus of the energy in the collaborative relationships between team members is the meeting of the needs of all students. The collaborative model brings into focus the unique needs of every child. Teachers become more cognizant of the diverse needs of students and more responsive to them. The collaborative process allows team members to focus less on labels and deficits and more on creating an individualized education for the students. The collaborative process also allows team members to be less curriculum or program focused and more child-focused. All participants stated that the collaborative process is in concert with the school's philosophy of providing a child-centered approach to education.

In this school, collaboration is the vehicle through which the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom occurs. In the administrator's words, the staff discovered that "they needed to be collaborative to be inclusive." Collaboration allows most student needs to be dealt within the regular classroom as teachers have support from

other educators and support personnel on a consistent, on-going basis. Due to the inherent flexibility within the collaborative model, team members found that they can be more responsive to the continually changing needs of individual children and the evolving diversity of the elementary classroom. In order to meet student needs effectively, team members must be flexible in roles and in approach, share responsibility for students and programs, support one another in and outside of the classroom, and engage in reciprocal relationships. Due to the inherent problem solving orientation of the collaborative model, team members find that there is a more proactive response to students which tends to limit more serious student problems.

Participants discussed the collaborative model in terms of both changes in themselves and changes in the student body. Team members see within themselves a higher degree of openness, awareness, understanding and tolerance toward individual student needs and an increased level of confidence in dealing with diversity. They also experienced a shift away from labels and deficits towards individual needs and student strengths. Team members believe that the children are also more tolerant and understanding of differences among their peers and are less likely to use labels to single out students who are having difficulties. Students with special needs are believed to have an increased sense of self-esteem and a higher level of participation due to the collaborative model. Overall, participants feel that the collaborative model creates a more positive learning environment for all students regardless of their level or type of need.

Skill Development.

Team members experienced an increase in their own level of skill as they participated in the collaborative process as well as witnessing an increase in the skills in others. Examples of the types of skills developed include increased observational skills, improved communication skills, and enhanced curricular adaptation skills. Team members found increased tolerance, creativity and innovation to be a result of dealing with diverse student needs under the collaborative model. Team members feel that these skills develop under the collaborative model due to the fact that student needs are continually changing and, to be effective, educators must be continually changing to meet those needs. The collaborative model allows team members to support each other in their learning of new skills as they share responsibility for students with diverse needs.

In addition, team members feel that the collaborative model fits within the principles of adult learning. That is, through collaborative activities team members are

continually engaged with others in observation, communication, modeling, and so forth, which will foster increased learning of new skills.

Participants feel that team members in collaborative relationships must be willing to learn new skills. In order to do so, they must be willing to let go of previously conceived models of service delivery and restrictive role descriptions. When they do so and feel supported in their own learning, team members develop the belief that they have access to the skills needed in order to meet student needs in their classrooms. This new belief results in a decrease in reliance on the services of specialized personnel and an increase in joint ownership and problem solving approaches to meet student needs. Team members become more aware of their personal and team needs, and therefore are able to determine more effectively which professional development activities fit with their perceived needs.

Cost effectiveness.

The theme of cost effectiveness was raised only by the administrator during the initial interviews, in the following way. As teachers learn new skills, their dependency on others to provide specialized services decreases and their confidence and ability in dealing with diverse student needs increases, therefore, requiring less specialized personnel over time. Those specialized personnel are then free to assist greater numbers of teachers and students. Better use of and less requirements for specialized personnel is a cost savings. Professional development activities also become more cost effective. First, professional development activities become more relevant as team members can determine what is needed in terms of their own professional growth. Second, school members utilize the collaborative model to evaluate which professional development activities best fit into their philosophy. This provides staff members with a focus in which they can be selective and eliminates staff members from "running off to random PD sessions" which do not address their goals.

When verification was sought from other participants, they felt that the administrator would be the best judge of cost effectiveness in term of real dollars, however, they verified that the collaborative model does make more effective use of school staff resources and time, and contributes to more meaningful and worthwhile professional development activities.

## Summary of Experience

Through the use of in-depth phenomenological interviews, insight was gained into the experiences the educational stakeholders within one school where a multi-faceted collaborative approach had been developed and implemented. Twenty-two second order themes were extracted from the experiences of the participants, and have been placed under the loosely defined categories of structural components, collaborator characteristic components, process components, and outcome components. These categories are not meant to represent a rigid structure since the components were found to be highly interrelated and in some cases cross-categorical, rather, they provide a format for organizing and summarizing the results.

Four components were revealed that provide structure for the collaborative process, especially in the initial stages of development: time, administrator's role, buy-in, training, and role function. Initially, the collaborative process must be supported through a sufficient allotment of time for both short term objectives and long term goals. Without sufficient time, the collaborative process is bereft with difficulties. The school administrator must be prepared to lead the staff through the collaborative process, by supporting the process philosophically and practically. The staff together must develop a collaborative ethic, where each individual contributes to and therefore buys-in to the meaning of the process. Individuals who are expected to participate in the collaborative model may require both initial and on-going training in both their roles and in collaborative skills and processes. Finally, teachers must have a willingness to redefine their roles based on the collaborative model they have developed together.

The participants' experiences within the collaborative process reveal that certain team member skills and characteristics are desirable. These characteristics or skills include openness, flexibility, risk-taking, and communication. Individual involved in collaborative relationships must open themselves to the process and be willing to become what grows out of that experience. All collaborators must be willing to relinquish previously held concepts of their roles as educators, administrators, and support personnel, and demonstrate the flexibility needed to respond to highly variable collaborative relationships. Within these relationships, team members must be willing to take risks, make mistakes, and learn as a result. Finally, individuals must be willing to participate in open, honest,

and on-going communication with others, sharing information and ideas that support their fellow team members.

As the collaborative process becomes activated, certain principles and behaviors are both inherent in the process and a result of the process. These process components as described by the participants include shared responsibility, reciprocity, parity, support, trust, commitment, acceptance and resistance. Sharing responsibility means that team members experience a balance in the ownership of problems and solutions. When shared responsibility occurs, team members have a sense of reciprocity or mutuality in which each team member understands that he/she gives and takes in the relationship, at times to the point where team members are able to assume each other's roles. In collaborative relationships it is important that team members have a sense of parity, where all individuals are equally valued regardless of their role definition. To achieve this, team members must be willing to support one another, upholding and verifying each other's roles while striving to accomplish the goals of the collaborative unit. As team members support one another, they demonstrate commitment to each other and to the collaborative process. Although trust needs to be present at the onset of the collaborative process, it also develops as a result of it, opening team members to new learning and sharing experiences. Development of a trusting relationship between individuals means that resistance will be reduced. Acceptance is dependent upon all the aforementioned aspects of the collaborative process and will only develop over the course of time; it cannot be forced. Resistance to new role functions within the collaborative model or to the collaborative process itself is also reduced overtime and through supported engagement in the process.

As a result of the collaborative process participants experienced the following outcomes: development of skills, a child-centered approach, empowerment, personal fulfillment, and cost effectiveness. Team members experienced an increase in their own level of skills as they participated in the collaborative process as well as witnessing an increase in the skills of others. The collaborative process also allows team members to become more aware of individual student needs and therefore become better able to meet the unique needs of all children, regardless of whether they are labeled as having special needs or not. Team members become empowered within this process as they assume new roles and become valued for their contributions to the process. Empowerment facilitates the belief that their participation can effect real change in their school and in the lives of the students. Team members working in collaborative relationships have a sense that what they are doing is worthwhile in that they see success within the students and experience a

more satisfying work environment. Finally, engagement in the collaborative model is viewed as being cost effective through the lessening dependence on specialized staff and the increased relevance of professional development activities.

Chapter 7 will discuss each of the themes in relation to the relevant literature.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# GENERAL DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study has revealed twenty-two themes related to the meaning of the collaborative experience for educational stakeholders in collaborative working relationships. The purpose of this chapter is to enter into discussion on that which was revealed through these themes and to return to the literature to further our understanding of collaboration within the larger research context. This chapter will utilize the four component areas -- structure, collaborator characteristics, process, and outcome -- identified in Chapter 6 as units of discussion.

## Summary and Discussion

Understanding the development and implementation of collaborative working relationships between regular and special educators, administrators, and support personnel in schools means delving into a complex array of interrelated conceptual and pragmatic components. The following component areas are not meant to represent a rigid structure as the components were found to be highly interrelated and cross-categorical, rather, they provide a format for organizing and discussing the results.

### Collaborative structure

Five components were revealed that provide structure for the collaborative process, especially in the initial stages of development: time, administrator's role, buy-in, training, and role function. Initially, the collaborative process must be supported through a sufficient allotment of time for the establishment of a vision and long term goals. As the process progresses, time is necessary for planning and implementation as well as direct communication and interaction. Without sufficient time, the collaborative process is fraught with difficulties. Bird and Little (1986) have observed that the most important single resource for school improvement is time for planning, analysis and collegial exchange, yet time is usually the least available resource for professional collaboration. Insufficient time has been frequently cited in the literature as one of the biggest barriers to effective collaboration (Idol-Maestas, 1986; Johnson, Pugach, & Hamrnitte, 1988; Speece & Mandell, 1980). Participants frequently discussed the value of planning together and

sharing responsibility for instructional outcomes, but this clearly is not possible if insufficient time is devoted to the process (Huefner, 1988).

Time is also an essential factor in the facilitation of staff buy-in to the collaborative ethic. The staff together must develop a collaborative ethic, where each individual contributes to and therefore buys-in to the meaning of the process. The importance of creating a collaborative ethic in a school and establishing practices that support it have been widely espoused by researchers. Idol and West (1991) discuss how important it is for each staff members at individuals school to develop a consensus on their definition of educational collaboration and it benefits and uses in their school. They recommend that once done, the staff should create a vision of expected professional behaviors to encourage collaboration in that environment. The development of a collaborative ethic also creates a sense of "ownership and pride. . . that is essential to the collaborative spirit and that is a powerful catalyst for effective change" (Idol & West, 1991, p. 78).

Phillips and McCullough (1990) advocate the development of a collaborative ethic within schools due to the fact that collaboration empowers professionals to assist each other in problem solving, offers motivation and skill enhancement, and provides a collective endorsement of the rights of teachers to assistance and support from colleagues and from the organization . Reflecting this belief, Wilson and Silverman (1991) found that collaborative interactions with colleagues in one's school are important in influencing teachers' belief systems and concluded that the establishment of collaborative school based teacher support groups might be a powerful way to influence teachers' attitudes and beliefs.

The administrator is a central player in the collaborative process at the initial buy-in stage of the process and throughout its development. The school administrator must be prepared to lead the staff through the collaborative process, by supporting the process philosophically and practically. Frequent in the literature is the examination of the role of the administrator towards changing the attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards increased collaborative consultation. Administrators have been described as the founders of culture (Nias, Southworth, & Yeomans, 1989) and as head learners (Barth, 1990) in collaborative schools. As a founder of culture, the administrator shapes and develops culture through the articulation and enactment of his/her vision. Therefore, the creation of culture and leadership are viewed as indelibly linked, that is, one can not be understood without the other (Nias et al., 1989). Barth (1990) views the effective principal as the head learner in the school. In order for the school to become a community of learners, the administrator must participate in, model and celebrate learning him/herself. In addition, the

administrator becomes a living demonstration of the replenishment and invigoration accomplished through learning and change. Both of these concepts fit well with the experiences of the participants in this study.

The administrator in the collaborative school is also one who has learned to share leadership. The administrator must be willing to share control, show vulnerability, and look for ways to involve those who are not yet open to the process (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Louis and Mile (1990) suggest five strategies for administrators to use to encourage involvement in shared leadership: power sharing; rewards for staff; openness and inclusiveness; expanding leadership roles; and patience.

The administrator in the collaborative school is also responsible for coordinating the training of stakeholders for engagement in collaborative activities. Individuals who are expected to participate in the collaborative model may require both initial and on-going training in both their roles and in collaborative skills and processes. Participants in this study discussed training needs in terms of specially trained personnel, joint training for all members, and the use of in-house training. All of these areas of training have received attention in the literature. A number of authors discuss the need for trained special education personnel to fulfill consulting teacher roles in collaborative schools (Huefner, 1988; Idol-Maestas, 1983). Thousand and Villa (1990) focus on creating common conceptual frameworks, knowledge and language through on-going inservice training for all staff members regardless of their role titles in order to facilitate the common goal of meeting diverse student needs. In-house training through educational stakeholders sharing their expertise has also been cited as desirable at the school level (Idol & West, 1987).

Participants in this study clearly had different expectations and goals in relation to training. Therefore, it would seem essential that training of staff members not be applied in a top-down administrative fashion, but rather through collaboration with the staff. Collaborative schools would seek to avoid "legislated learning" for their members and seek an integrated approach based on assessment of individual need instead of on assumptions based on role title or description, which has been common practice in the past.

Finally, an essential component for the establishment of a base or structure for collaboration is new understanding of roles and role functions. Teachers must have a willingness to redefine their roles based on the collaborative model they have developed together. The literature suggests that, within the collaborative model, roles need to be defined in ways that fit the needs of both educators and students. Birman (1988) suggests that useful collaboration should overcome the norm of self-sufficiency between teachers

and reduce the distinctiveness of classroom and specialist teachers' roles. Team members need to redefine their roles if they wish to make the shift from categorical educational programs to a single system where unified support would be available to both teachers and students (Thousand & Villa, 1989). Idol (1988) suggests that any teacher fulfilling a consulting teacher role within a collaborative framework should be viewed as a helping teacher who supports the classroom teachers with exceptional children in their classroom and that this help can be extended to all students in the class as a preventative measure. Adamson, Matthews, and Schuller (1990) state that any teacher fulfilling a consulting teacher role needs to show a genuine appreciation of the classroom teachers' role and sensitivity to their skills in order to maximize the educational benefits to the students. The key is to provide support on an on-going basis when the opportunities arise for collaborative input.

Collaborator characteristics

The participant's experiences within the collaborative process reveal that certain team member skills and characteristics are desirable. These characteristics or skills include openness, flexibility, risk-taking, and communication. Individuals involved in a collaborative relationship must open him/herself to the process and be willing to become what grows out of that experience. Openness can be related to what Friend and Cook (1990) refer to as "voluntariness" or the willingness of individuals to participate in the collaborative process. In *The Collaborative School*, Smith and Scott (1990) discuss how to reduce psychological barriers and increase openness to the collaborative process by not forcing people into the process, but by letting them come into the process based on something they value, and by making the process appealing to them. Nias et al. (1989) found that collaborative schools valued openness and that this openness allowed individuals to be honest and direct about their feelings and experiences without this openness being threatening to others or impairing relationships. Participants in this study described openness to the collaborative process, like other aspects such as trust and buy-in, as necessary at the beginning of the collaborative relationship, but also as a result of participation within the process.

All collaborators must be willing to relinquish previously held concepts of their roles as educators, administrators, and support personnel and demonstrate the flexibility needed to respond to the highly variable collaborative relationship. The need for flexibility on a variety of levels has been noted in the literature. In recognition that implementation of

this type of model involves the very personal experience of learning new behaviors and adapting to new roles, Idol et al. (1986) suggest that all participants in the process need to be sensitive to the various aspects of change as it affects the consulting teacher, the classroom teacher and the student. Idol (1988) advocates for collaborative consultation as it allows for greater flexibility in when and how services are provided to students as compared to the more traditional special education serviced delivery options.

Within that relationship, team members must be willing to take risks, make mistakes, and learn as a result. Nias et al. (1989) reported that, in collaborative schools, failure and uncertainty are not protected or defended, but shared and discussed with a view of gaining help and support. Teachers do not spend time covering their mistakes, but instead explore ways of learning from them. Collaborative schools require broad agreement on educational values, but they also tolerate disagreement and to some extent actively encourage it when it facilitates growth. Risk-taking is promoted as a necessary condition for student and teacher learning (Barth, 1990). Like the participants in the study, Fullan (1991) acknowledges that anxiety and stress will accompany innovation and improvement such as engagement in the development of a collaborative model. Also like the participants, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) believe that risk-taking will result in a greater range of skills, increased learning, and professional confidence.

One skill in which participants felt they gained improvement in through the collaborative process was communication. Communication was also seen as a critical skill in order for individuals to be successful within collaborative relationships. Individuals involved in collaborative activities need to participate in open, honest, and on-going communication with others; sharing information and ideas that support their fellow team members. Idol et al. (1986) outline the importance of several areas of communication for those involved in collaborative consultation relationship. These areas involve appropriate interviewing skills in order to garner information on the student and environment, active listening skills to minimize misunderstanding and distortions, and the use of a common language that is understood and utilized by all involved. The importance of having sufficient time for communication, as discussed earlier, is considered one of the biggest factors in the establishment of collaborative relationships.

Collaborative processes

As the collaborative process becomes activated, certain principles and behaviors are both inherent in the process and a result of the process. These process components as

described by the participants include shared responsibility, reciprocity, parity, support, trust, acceptance, resistance, and commitment. Sharing responsibility means that team members experience a balance in the ownership of problems and solutions. Shared responsibility is generally noted as an essential component of the collaborative process (Idol et al., 1986). The literature upholds the belief that most schools have within them a natural and often underutilized pool of "experts" who can uniquely contribute to a shared goal of meeting student needs. Thousand & Villa (1990) report that a key to successfully meeting the needs of all students is the development of a collaborative relationship among school staff so the expertise can be shared. Also, some researchers report that teachers will be more willing to share responsibility for students with special needs if the students come with a team of professionals to support them (Tetreault, 1988, as cited in Thousand & Villa, 1990).

When shared responsibility occurs, team members have a sense of reciprocity or mutuality in which each team member understands that he/she gives and takes in the relationship, at times to the point where they are able to assume each other's roles. Reciprocity is characteristically the same as what Friend and Cook (1990) have termed *shared participation* where each participant in collaboration is assumed to be actively engaged in the activity (Hord, 1986). Active participation enhances commitment, a sense of ownership, and acceptance of change (Berman & McLauglin, 1978, as cited in Friend & Cook, 1990). The interchange of roles was highly valued by these participants and viewed by some as the ultimate expression of a collaborative working relationship. Brookover et al. (1982) state that role titles and role descriptions determine how individuals behave within a school, unfortunately frequently limiting the use of a staff member's expertise, especially outside of his/her given classroom space. However, the loosening or increased flexibility in roles or even the dropping of role titles may facilitate the sharing of professional expertise and the coordination of services for students (Thousand & Villa, 1990).

In collaborative relationships it is important that team members have a sense of parity, where all individuals are equally valued regardless of their role definition. In their discussions of conditions for collaboration, Friend and Cook (1990) state that collaboration is not possible if professionals do not sense the existence of parity or equal value given to each person's input. Idol et al. (1983) discuss the importance that teachers involved in collaborative process avoid hierarchical relationships and that individuals strive to develop a sense of parity between themselves where individuals listen, respect, and learn

from one another. To achieve this, team members must be willing to support one another, upholding and verifying each other's roles while striving to accomplish the goals of the collaborative unit.

This sense of parity was articulated most clearly by special education personnel and school support personnel in this study. Special education personnel spoke of how they now felt like equals with the regular education teaching staff, "like part of the mainstream," no longer just an "appendage to the regular program." Within the collaborative model, even the students see them as "just a regular teacher" and not different from other educators. The literature discusses how there must be parity between the regular and special educators so that the special educator or consulting teacher is not viewed as an expert coming in to fix student problems (Idol et al., 1993), but little mention is made of the value of "integrating" the special educator into the mainstream. However, Harris (1987, as cited in Thousand & Villa, 1990) made the following statement that would support the notion of professional parity in inclusive schools. "The integration of professionals within a school system is a prerequisite to the successful integration of students. We can not ask our students to do those things which we professionals are unwilling to do." Special education personnel within this study could attest to the value of becoming integrated professionals within their school.

Support personnel also spoke passionately about parity in their experience of collaborative relationships. They spoke about having an equal and valued voice on staff, whereas previous to the collaborative model being implemented, they felt voiceless, powerless, and unimportant compared to the educators and administrators on staff. Little research has been conducted on how support personnel fit into the collaborative culture of schools, however, in this study, their presence and contributions were expected and accepted by others on staff. Support personnel demonstrated the same type of buy-in and commitment to the collaborative process as did the teaching and administrative staff at this school and attributed much of their commitment to the value or parity they were experiencing as collaborative team members.

Commitment to the process and to other team members is an essential component of the collaborative process. As team members support one another, share responsibility, treat each other with parity, and so forth, they demonstrate commitment to each other and to the collaborative process. Nias et al. (1989) provided a comprehensive case study of five primary schools noted for their collaborative culture and found that collaborative schools are places of strong and common commitment, dedication, and collective responsibility.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) see teachers in the collaborative environment as committed to "continuous improvement and perpetual learning," who will "push to create the type of learning environments they want" (p. 82). Individuals committed to collaboration expect that everybody can and must make a difference in the life of the school. This type of collegiality requires consistent and growing trust among the members.

Trust needs to be present at the onset of the collaborative process, however, it also develops as a result, opening team members to new learning and sharing experiences. Friend and Cook (1990) state that individuals involved in collaboration must initially trust colleagues enough to commit their time and energy to the process, recognizing that through successful collaboration, this sense of trust grows. Friend and Bauwens (1988) recognize the importance of nurturing a trusting relationship when teachers are working to reduce resistance, stating that "developing a trusting relationship requires keeping confidences, offering support and actively collaborating to enable mainstreamed students to succeed" (p. 559). Like our participants, Friend and Bauwens (1988) state that trust develops only over time.

Development of a trusting relationship between individuals in the collaborative model means that resistance will be reduced and acceptance enhanced. The management of resistance and the promotion of acceptance for special educators working in collaborative or consultative roles has frequently been discussed in the literature. Friend and Bauwens (1988) discuss how consulting teachers can manage resistance and foster acceptance between educators in collaborative working relationships. They highlight many of the issues brought forward by our participants, such as, enlisting administrative support, helping teachers see the value of the process, nurturing a trusting relationship and so forth. They make the point that not all teachers are going to be resistive to the process, especially if they are voluntarily entering into it. A number of authors discuss their belief that acceptance will increase and resistance will be reduced when educators engage in collaborative processes. Development of parity among professionals, trustworthiness, shared responsibility, and reciprocity are the keys to reducing resistance to change according to Idol (1988). Conoley and Conoley (1982) believe that by cultivating a collaborative problem-solving relationship between teachers, attitudes and perceptions will change and resistance will be reduced.

Collaborative outcomes

As a result of the collaborative process, participants experienced the following outcomes: development of skills, a child-centered approach, empowerment, personal fulfillment, and cost effectiveness. Team members experienced an increase in their own level of skills as they participated in the collaborative process as well as witnessing an increase in the skills of others. Research has shown that through collaborative consultation general education teachers develop strategies and skills to assist students with and without special needs (Idol-Maestas & Jackson, described in Idol, 1983). In effective schools research, evidence is growing regarding the organizational conditions necessary to promote teacher skill development and the prominent condition is the collaborative school structure (Rozenholtz, et al., 1986). Goodlad (1990) calls for schools to develop a system which provides for its own continuous renewal so that the development of teacher knowledge and skills are part of the school's on-going commitment to change and growth. Sinclair and Ghory (1990) echo this belief stating that "an effective school is a self-renewing school -- one that continually monitors its own progress, identifying and solving problems that interfere with the learning of students" (p. 138).

The continual renewal of teacher knowledge and skill is a critical component of the collaborative culture. Collaboration focuses on meeting the needs of the teacher so the he/she can meet the needs of the student. Sarason (1990) believes that school must exist primarily for the growth and development of teachers for "teachers can not create and sustain the conditions for the productive development of children if those conditions do not exist for teachers" (pp. xiii).

The collaborative process also allows team members to become more aware of individual student needs and therefore become better able to meet the unique needs of all children, regardless of whether they are labeled as having special needs or not. Collaborative processes are being discussed under the belief that heterogeneous schooling can meet the needs of all students within the regular program if appropriate support is provided to teachers (Nevin et al., 1990). According to Villa and Thousand (1990), administrators and staff members in heterogeneous schools share a philosophy or vision that reflects at least the following assumptions: (a) all children can learn, (b) all children have the right to be educated with their peers in age-appropriate heterogeneous classrooms, and (c) it is the responsibility of the school system to meet the diverse educational and psychological needs of all its students (p. 3).

The power of collaboration in meeting the needs of students with special needs is finding a strong voice in the literature. Several studies cite student related benefits to the collaborative process that allow teachers to provide for a more child-centered education. These stated benefits include: the development of teaching and management techniques which prevent classroom problems and reduce the amount of referrals from classroom teachers requesting special programs (Graden et al., 1985; Ritter, 1978 as cited in Idol, 1988); classroom teachers develop skills and strategies that assist many students with academic and social problems, not just those labeled with special needs (Idol-Maestas, 1983). Participants in this study felt both a sense of empowerment and personal fulfillment when they found that the collaborative process was facilitating their goal of meeting individual student needs.

Team members also become empowered within the collaborative process as they assume new roles and become valued for their contributions to the process. Empowerment is facilitated by the belief that the participants could affect real change in their school and in the lives of students. The literature confirms this aspect of the collaborative experience. A collaborative team provides possibilities for teachers to assume new roles and exhibit leadership (Barth, 1990). According to Leiberman (1986), a feeling of powerlessness can be transformed into a greater sense of empowerment through the collaborative experience. Similarly, Ashton and Webb (1986) found that the main benefit of collaboration is that it can reduce teachers' sense of powerlessness and increase their sense of efficacy.

Team members working in collaborative relationships have a sense that what they are doing is worthwhile in that they see student success and experience a more satisfying work environment. West & Idol (1991) suggest that working in a collaborative environment increases staff morale because teachers see that they can have an immediate impact on their environment. Collaborative cultures in schools have been reported to create and sustain more satisfying work environments by reducing isolation, respecting the individuality of teacher while valuing interdependence (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Nias et al., 1989)

Finally, engagement in the collaborative model is viewed as being cost effective through the lessening dependence on specialized staff and the increased relevance of professional development activities. The lessening dependence on specialized staff has not been investigated specifically, but is related to increasing skill development in, and empowerment of classroom teachers (Idol, 1993). Nias et al. (1989) found that school professionals involved in collaborative school cultures were better able to determine their

professional development needs based on their vision and goals and were also better able to filter out those professional development activities that they found to be unnecessary or contradictory to their philosophy. These findings have not been researched in relation to cost-effectiveness.

## Conclusions

Healthy organizations have been described in the literature as ones that have a strong sense of their own identity; the capacity readily to adapt to change; and goals congruent with the demands of the environment; and in which problem solving is pragmatic; communications are open and free; leadership is flexible; and people have a genuine sense of growing and developing as people and professionals (Coulson, 1978; Fordyce & Weil, 1971, as cited in Nias et al., 1989). Many of these characteristics were found through the themes of the participants in the study school which had defined itself collaboratively. However, the point should be made that this type of school culture did not just happen when individuals decided they were going to "collaborate". A fear of the participants is that collaboration will become "just another label" or "another educational bandwagon" due to the fact that individuals in schools and school districts will not take the time to understand the complexity of the process and the time and effort required to engage in the process of collaboration.

A recently published document from the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) entitled *Trying to Teach: Necessary Conditions* (1994) attempts to address current teacher concerns regarding educational practice by forwarding several recommendations for school boards and school system administrators (among others) of relevance to collaborative working relationships in schools. These recommendations, in part, address many of the concerns expressed by the participants in this study. The *Trying to Teach: Necessary Conditions* document outlines the following relevant recommendations for administrators and systems:

- Support schools in their attempts to focus teachers' time, and the resources of the schools, on the essential tasks of teaching and learning.
- Recognize and facilitate the right and responsibility of teachers to make decisions about the education of the children in their charge, in the light of their expertise, experience and the specific circumstances of their students and community.

- Support a model of school administration that is collegial, collaborative and facilitative and that gives staff ongoing, effective involvement in the decisions affecting them.
- Support an approach to professional development that is systematic, ongoing, school-centered, and based on teacher identified needs.
- Develop genuine consultative structures that give parents and teachers meaningful input into decisions about education at the school system level.
- Support an approach to school improvement that draws upon the expertise of teachers rather than impose solutions from above. (p. 22)

Participants in this study desire to see their collaborative school culture remain and their working relationships grow and develop. They have experienced the potential of collaboration for their own growth and development and for that of the students they serve. Participants in this study believe that for individuals to be truly collaborative, the school as a whole must be collaborative. Individuals and groups of individuals within the school must take responsibility for creating a whole improved school culture. Without this focus on the larger picture, working relationships will not improve nor will classrooms improve as forces outside the classroom will weigh heavily on the quality of teacher relationships and classroom life.

The final chapter will explore the conclusions of this study, the recommendations for various educational stakeholders, the implications for further research, and the reflections of the researcher upon completion of the study.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of collaborative working relationships in schools for the major educational stakeholders working in that environment, namely regular and special educators, administrators, and support personnel. Information was gathered from participants through phenomenological interviews in one elementary urban school who were willing to speak to the question, "What is the meaning of collaboration for you at your school?", and who were able to provide rich descriptions which illuminated the phenomenon of collaboration. Further data were gathered through observations, field notes, and relevant school documents reflective of collaborative interactions in the school. These secondary sources provided resources for further inquiry and participant verification.

Participant interviews were transcribed and paraphrased by the researcher who then searched for the higher level themes through the reflective empirical approach to phenomenological analysis. Participant verification of the analysis was sought during several stages. From all themes extracted from the data, a total of twenty-two second order themes emerged. These themes were loosely organized into four component areas: structural components, process components, collaborator characteristic components, and outcome components. The twenty-two themes are listed under these component headings in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1

Themes of Collaboration as Listed Under Component Areas

| Structural | Process | Characteristics | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| role function | parity | flexibility | child-centered |
| time | trust | openness | personal fulfillment |
| administrator's role | reciprocity | communication | empowerment |
| buy-in | shared responsibility | risk-taking | skill development |
| training | support | | cost effectiveness |
| | commitment | | |
| | acceptance | | |
| | resistance | | |

The conclusions, implications, and recommendations which follow represent the researcher's attempt to give specificity to the interpretation of the data and allow its meaning to speak to educators and other collaborators who work in similar circumstances.

The remainder of this chapter is arranged into five sections. The first part represents general conclusions about the meaning of collaborative working relationships in schools. The second section discusses recommendations for school administrators, school districts, school-level collaborators, and teacher-educators who are supportive of the development of collaborative working relationships in schools. The third section examines the limitations of the research while the fourth section contains suggestions for further study. The last section of this chapter ends in personal reflections and some final conclusions.

## Conclusions About the Meaning of Collaborative Working Relationships

The conclusions which follow are an attempt to reflect the meaning of collaborative working relationships from the participants' perspectives.

1. The development of collaborative working relationships in schools is a long-term change process that can not be forced or mandated.

2. Collaborative working relationships occur within environments or school cultures in which members have developed a collaborative ethic through reflection upon their beliefs, values and attitudes and through the creation of a collective vision and goals.

3. The role of the administrator is central to all aspects of the developing collaborative culture. Supportive administration is needed so that individuals within the collaborative model will be empowered to become leaders themselves. Administrators must create a safe environment for collaboration to occur, model desirable collaborative behaviors, and be prepared to facilitate the long-term change process from traditional structures to the collaborative model.

4. Time is central to the collaborative process. Time appears to be a required element at all stages of the collaborative process and for all collaborative activities. Without sufficient time for buy-in, for the development of personal commitment, for communication and sharing, for the formation of trusting relationships, and for direct support of teachers in classrooms, collaboration will break down.

5. Buy-in to the collaborative process is facilitated when individuals feel valued within the collaborative model, have input into its formation, and have support from their colleagues and administrator both within and outside of the classroom. Buy-in will not occur for all stakeholders at the same rate or time and must be taken into consideration for the teaming of staff members and for the planning of appropriate professional development activities which are relevant to the collaborative level of the participant.

6. The main barriers to the collaboration include the following: lack of time; lack of administrative leadership/support; lack of or limited communication; lack of openness or the inability to take risks; inflexibility in roles or inflexibility in approach to process; lack of buy-in to process or commitment to change; lack of training and/or support in learning new role functions.

7. The collaborative process depends on many complex and interrelated variables that describe how individuals within collaborative relationships define their relationships. The components of trust, parity, reciprocity, shared responsibility, support, acceptance and commitment seem to provide the framework for collaborative relationships in schools. None of these variables stand in isolation as they all appear to be highly interdependent upon the others. For example, without trust there can be no parity, reciprocity or shared responsibility; without shared responsibility, there can be no reciprocity or acceptance of each other's roles.

8. Collaboration appears to be effective in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Collaboration between stakeholders in schools can be utilized to facilitate the inclusion of students with special needs into regular programs if that is the goal of the team members. Team members feel personal fulfillment and empowerment when they see the results of their collaborative interactions in increased student success.

9. Collaboration between stakeholders in schools empowers individuals to learn, grow and change and may have major implications for both preservice and inservice teacher training and the planning of professional development activities at the school level. In addition, collaborators desire to change in order to fulfill their established collective vision and goals has implications for how school improvement and reform is approached at the school level.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for school administrators

School administrators clearly have a central role in the development of collaborative working relationships within schools according to the participants of this study. School administrators can do much to facilitate the development and maintenance of such relationships within the broader collaborative culture of the school. Following are some basic recommendations for school administrators who are working towards the establishment of collaborative working relationships in their schools.

1. Become knowledgeable about the philosophy and process of collaboration in order that you may develop your own set of beliefs. Articulate your beliefs to the staff members, demonstrating that you believe in the value of the collaborative model.

2. Engage the staff in the development of a collective vision and goals. Define with the staff how the working relationships within the school that will need to be redesigned in order to obtain those goals.

3. Provide time and space for critical reflection and examination of the current school culture and the working relationships within. Encourage interaction between staff members in order that they may articulate and share these reflections.

4. Model the behaviors you wish the staff members to engage in. The modeling of flexibility, openness, and risk-taking are especially critical.

5. Demonstrate trust in your staff by sharing responsibility with them, involving them in the decision-making process, and encouraging their input and active participation.

Be willing to relinquish administrative control in order that you may be able to share both leadership and access to resources with the staff members.

6. Continually seek ways to improve the lines of communication at your school. With the input of the staff, establish school problem solving teams, teacher assistance teams, consulting teacher formats, mentoring relationships, peer coaching formats or any number of other collaborative formats in which team members have a vehicle through which to begin to exchange ideas, information, and resources. Choose a format that is best suited to the collective vision of the staff.

7. Be continuously aware of the pacing of change towards collaborative relationships and the level of buy-in of the team members. Provide options and alternatives, not mandates and rigid timetables. Do not expect all team members to be at the same level of buy-in at the same time.

8. Value that which each individual brings into the collaborative relationship. Accept, explore, and celebrate the diversity among the staff members. Find something of value in every individual and with that person seek out ways in which he/she contributes to the overall functioning of the school.

9. Help individuals realize the value of collaborative interaction at your school. Be an advocate for the collaborative ethic both within and outside of your school. Find time to celebrate the successes in both people and process.

10. A primary function of the administrator is to create an environment where the stakeholders will feel comfortable about undergoing change, taking risks, and learning. Therefore, continuous and consistent support of those attempting to engage in collaborative relationships is critical. Seek to create a safe environment where risk-taking, learning from mistakes, openness, sharing, participation, and humor are the norm.

Recommendations to school districts

Schools looking to introduce the collaborative model are in need of both direct and indirect support from the school district and senior administrators. Although this study did not focus on the relationship between school districts and schools which define themselves collaboratively, several recommendations can be drawn for the experiences of team members who are functioning within collaborative relationships in schools. School districts can help facilitate collaboration at the school level in the following ways:

1. Avoid imposing a rigid organizational structure on schools and school administrators. Collaborative schools need to define their own organizational structures that fit in with their collective vision and goals.

2. Provide schools with an appropriate allotment of time and resources so that collaboration can occur at the school level.

3. Avoid mandating collaborative structures on schools, but instead seek to inform and train interested individuals in the philosophy and practice of school collaboration.

4. Provide active and meaningful support to schools in relation to their goals.

5. Encourage initiative and risk-taking in schools while at that same time creating a safe and trusting environment for on-going staff development.

6. Allocate resources so that professional development for school staff members is reflective of their goals with an emphasis placed on opportunities for individuals within school to observe, model, and share expertise.

7. Be prepared to examine and redefine role descriptors of stakeholders including those at the school district level. A school that moves towards collaborative relationships within the school building will have an impact on those coming from outside of the school building to work there. For example, the roles of consultants, school psychologists, and district subject heads will likely be quite different in terms of delivery of services and contributions to staff professional development in the collaborative school versus a traditionally defined school.

8. Examine current policies and practices that may mitigate against the use of collaborative models in schools such as the funding structure for specialized personnel dealing with students who have special needs.

9. Do not expect quick fixes to school problems. Recognize that the development of collaborative working relationships in schools in a long-term change process that requires consistent support.

10. Seek out the success of collaborative relationships in school and find ways to celebrate those successes. Become an advocate within the political realm and the community for the development of collaborative structures in schools.

Recommendations to teacher educators

At the present time, very little focus, if any, of most teacher education programs is on the development of collaborative working relationships for teachers. The value of collaborative school structures and collaborative working relationships is becoming more

prominent in the literature. Proponents from areas such as special education, educational administration, and school psychology are calling for the need for increased training in the area of collaboration. The need for and value of collaborative skills are being discussed for classroom teachers, special educators, counselors, administrators, school psychologists, support personnel and others who work within school systems. Although this study was not intended to develop a framework for the training of teacher/collaborators, a few general guidelines for teacher educators can be extracted from the experience of the participants.

1. Form collaborative partnerships with school and school districts so that a research, evaluation, and training agenda can be formed collaboratively between university and school personnel.

2. Encourage more action-oriented, teacher as researcher collaborative investigations with educators working in collaborative environments.

3. Provide teacher education programs that focus on a sound underlying knowledge base for both regular and special educators, including but not limited to components such as research in elements of effective instruction, effective instructional decision making, student assessment, observation and assessment of instructional environments and so forth.

4. Provide teacher education programs that focus on the general principles of collaborative interaction including shared responsibility between team members, acceptance of individual diversity, parity in decision-making, problem solving skills, communication skills, and so forth.

5. Provide teacher education programs that focus on interpersonal attitudes relevant to collaboration such as the willingness to take risks, trust colleagues, make mistakes, and learn, grow and change. Encourage teacher development in collegial skills and competencies such as the ability to be flexible, engage in collegial learning and so forth.

6. Assist beginning teachers to develop a set of articulated beliefs regarding their vision and professional goals regarding working relationships in schools, school structures, school leadership and so forth, so that they are prepared to enter into these types of conversations and even become the catalyst for these conversations at their schools.

7. Provide teacher education programs that assist school administrators to develop skills, practices and belief systems that emphasize a collaborative framework to school organization and staff relations.

8. Above all, emphasize to beginning teachers that teaching is a life-long journey in learning, reflection on practice, and personal and professional change through collegial interaction.

Recommendations for school collaborators

The results of this study do not advocate any one "right" way to engage in school collaboration. Instead, the experience of the participants points to the development of a collaborative ethic and model that best suits the needs of the stakeholders in the school. Each stakeholder must take responsibility for contributing to the creation of a collaborative culture which is reflective of his/her beliefs and professional vision. Therefore, the following recommendations are not a step-by-step "how-to" list providing instructions on how to collaborate, but instead a general framework or progression that may allow individuals about to or newly engaged in collaborative relationships in schools to reflect on their own contribution to the process. Some basic recommendations are as follows:

1. Take the time to reflect and discover what you value and believe about your school culture, working relationships in your school, your roles and responsibilities, school leadership and so forth, and then take the time to share these with other educational stakeholders at your school.

2. Join in collaborative interactions with others where you have the opportunity to share ideas, reflect on practice and philosophy, and support one another in your professional learning.

3. Seek out collaboration with and from your administrator. Support administrators who seek to increase collaborative interaction in the school. Recognize that just as you need the support and leadership of the administrator to be an effective collaborator, so to does the administrator need your support and leadership.

4. Be willing to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from your mistakes. Demonstrate that openness and trust in your school translates into real learning, appreciation, and respect.

5. Respect and seek out the diversity in your school. Celebrate diversity on staff as an opportunity for learning. Show that you value what others bring to the teaching/learning situation by accepting and celebrating them.

6. Actively seek ways to end your isolation and the isolation of others in your school. Share your professional learning with others. Invite others into your classroom space for peer observation, modeling, and sharing.

7. Seek ways in which you can expand your role to become more collaborative both within and outside of the classroom. Engage others in joint problem solving activities, seek out ways to exchange ideas and resources with others, offer to pair up with someone whose talents/expertise differ from your own.

8. Examine your own behaviors, skills, and attitudes in relation to your professional development needs so that you may more effectively collaborate with others in your school. Establish your voice in professional development activities in your school. Actively share your expertise and seek the expertise of others on staff.

9. Voice your commitment to life-long professional learning. Demonstrate openness to the learning process by becoming engaged with others in reflection and action on practice.

10. Seek support for your own professional improvement through examination of ways in which collaborative activities contribute to the quality of your instruction and the success of your students.

11. Seek out ways to celebrate the changes in yourself, your colleagues, your students, and your schools as you engage in collaborative interactions with others.

12. Be prepared to spend time and attention to developing the collaborative culture at your school. Seek out ways that you can enhance your commitment and the commitment of others on this journey. Collaboration is not a panacea or a quick fix; collaboration is that for which the stakeholders wish and work for it to become. As a stakeholder, you define what collaboration is and will be in you school.

## Limitations of the Research

It is important to reflect upon and discuss the limitations of this study in order that it can be placed within the larger scientific dialogue. The first of these limitations is that this study was restricted to one urban elementary school. It would be useful to have collected the experiences of stakeholders from a number of urban and rural schools at both elementary and secondary levels with both large and small student enrollments. It is recognized that a number of school factors such as size and geography may impact on the experience of collaboration that could not be addressed in this study focusing on a single school. However, while conducting this study, the researcher chose to sacrifice breadth in order to enhance depth and clarity. In addition, the researcher utilized the input from

individuals working in other collaborative situations to determine the extent to which the description of experience as forwarded in this study resonated with their experiences.

A second related limitation of this study was that it did not seek the direct input of all educational stakeholders at the study school. Other important stakeholders such as parents, students, district administrative and support personnel, school trustees, and community members could all potentially be included to gain a greater understanding of the experience of collaboration. The intent of this study was to focus on the experience of working in collaborative relationships in schools as experienced by those educational stakeholders most directly involved, namely the classroom teachers, special educators, administrators, and support personnel. Further study into the experiences and perceptions of other stakeholders involved in the collaborative process would provide for an increased richness of understanding of this phenomenon.

A third limitation of this study is that the data collection and their interpretation were possibly influenced by the researcher' presuppositions and biases. Although some interpretation is inevitable, the researcher has attempted to minimize such influences through the rigorous process of self-reflection and through the verification of the findings with the participants.

A final limitation involves the issue of generalizability of the findings. Just as it may be inappropriate to generalize the findings of a particular experiment to other contexts, it may also be inappropriate to generalize the findings of this study to all educational stakeholders who are experiencing working in collaborative relationships in schools. Moreover, this study did not profess to have a representative sample of all educational collaborators as it focused on one school which had defined itself as collaborative and whose members were willing to discuss their experiences of collaborative working relationships. However, as mentioned earlier, phenomenological research is concerned with empathic generalizability rather than statistical generalizability. Thus, the generalizability of this study's findings is achieved to the extent that they resonate with the experiences of other educational stakeholders in similar situations.

## Implications for Further Research

The nature of the present study and the results which were obtained have a number of implications for future research on collaborative working relationships in schools. This study provided a rich description of the experience of collaborative working relationships in

one urban elementary school with the adult educational stakeholders working within that school. Through the study, twenty-two themes were forwarded that related to four main components of the collaborative experience: structural components, process components, collaborator characteristic components, and outcome components. Further research based on these findings may explore some of the following areas:

1. Further phenomenological research could be conducted to verify or challenge the finding of the present study. Similar research could be conducted in different school settings where staff members had defined themselves collaboratively. For example, a rural or suburban school, a secondary school, or a low socioeconomic school could be researched to see if the results of this study were influenced by the type of school involved.

2. Further phenomenological research could also be conducted regarding other educational stakeholders involved in collaborative interactions in schools. Parents, school psychologists, counselors, itinerant support personnel, school district personnel, community members and so forth could be interviewed, exposing the researcher to more of the phenomenon. By including other stakeholders and exploring their experiences a more full understanding of collaboration in schools may emerge.

3. Extensive case study research could be undertaken to more fully describe the culture of a given school. This would permit the researcher to participate more fully and for a greater period of time in the field. Living the experience with the participants will provide the researcher with a greater understanding of how the collaborative process works for those involved in it.

4. Any one or group of the themes forwarded in this study could be explored either qualitatively or quantitatively to gather a fuller understanding of the meaning of that theme or its impact on the collaborative process. For example, that administrator's role in the collaborative process was forwarded consistently and strongly in this study as critical in most aspects of the collaborative process. This role could be explored more in-depth with a wider selection of administrators from various schools who define themselves collaboratively. Personal characteristics, leadership styles, belief systems, and so forth could be explored with each individual administrator, seeking commonalties and differences that affect the collaborative process being highlighted.

5. Several barriers to the collaboration were identified through the participants themes. These barriers include the following: lack of time; lack of administrative leadership/support; lack of or limited communication; inflexibility in roles or inflexibility in approach to process; lack of buy-in to process or commitment to change. Further study

could be conducted on how the reduction of these barriers is accomplished in collaborative environments. Another area could be investigation of the impact of these barriers to collaborative processes.

6. Several outcomes of collaborative working relationships were identified by the participants of this study, namely, empowerment, personal fulfillment, skill development, child-centered education, and skill development. These outcomes could potentially be operationally defined and quantitatively measured to determine if these outcomes are significantly apparent when compared to schools who do not define themselves collaboratively.

7. Successful inclusive education was highly linked to the collaborative model by the participants in this study. A further exploration of the correlation between collaborative teacher relationships and the success of inclusive education programs for special needs students is an area in need of research. Research focusing on the teacher collaboration formats that are useful for facilitating inclusion and the amount of time needed for collaboration between regular and special education personnel are two areas that could be explored. Issues related to the utilization of collaboration as a facilitator of inclusion such as rate of retainment of students in the regular program, personal perceptions of students with special needs and their peers, measurements of academic and social success under collaborative models could all be explored.

8. Meaningful professional development and improved teacher learning were also highly linked to the collaborative model by the participants in this study. Again, a further exploration of this relationship would enhance our understanding of the conditions under which professional development activities may be more or less successful given the type and level of collaborative working relationships in schools.

## Reflections

In listening to teachers, administrators and support personnel discuss their experiences of working in collaborative relationships in their school, I was struck by the depth of the caring of these individuals and the level of reflection and introspection they portrayed. The participants discussed their experiences openly and willingly. They were eager to open their classrooms for observations and their meetings and special activities to an "outsider". The participants seemed intrigued, at first, that someone was interested in researching their lived experiences. It helped that I spent a couple of days a week for

several weeks just "hanging out" before the data gathering interviews began. By that time the staff and students seemed accustomed to my presence in the school and were, I believe, quite open to the interview process.

I was in the field for three months and I collected a great deal of data, all of which I believe was relevant to the study question. The many observations and informal discussions and the resulting field notes and journal allowed me to more fully understand and appreciate the culture of the school and be a part of the collaborative experience as described by the participants. I utilized this data as a source for verification as I was interpreting the phenomenological interviews. It allowed me to question and reflect upon my presentation of the participants' experiences with greater depth and consistency. I felt, however, that I was doing an injustice to the data that I had collected and was unable to present directly in my thesis. There were so many more areas and issues to explore. Each one of the themes forwarded by the participants elicited dozens of questions, each one of which could have been developed into other sound research projects.

I have come to the conclusion that qualitative research of this nature is indeed "messy" and requiring of extreme time and effort. Time for reflection and time for collaboration with others is a critical component of qualitative analysis. The phenomenological methodology was valuable in that it provided an opportunity to develop a greater understanding of the complex interplay of psychological, structural, and cultural processes involved. It is an approach that, while both systematic and rigorous, is guided by the experience of those you wish to understand, thereby bringing to the fore all the richness of their experiences. The qualitative methodology contributed to a deeply enriched personal understanding of the experience of collaboration.

This research, I believe, provides a firm foundation for an understanding of collaborative working relationships in schools. However, if I was to explore this area further, I would do two things differently. First, I would spend more time in the field, six months to a year. I would take a participant-observer ethnographic approach, combining all the data collection methods utilized in this project, while at the same time becoming a functioning member of that school staff. This would provide a truly enriched experience as one would become part of the school culture and be more fully able to describe its functioning. Of course, the job of bringing together all that data would be a massive undertaking which is one of the reasons for my next recommendation. Secondly, I would do the research with a partner. Just as the participants in this study discussed the value of "just having someone there to share your ideas with and support you," I too see the value

of collaboration in research. I believe that in collaboration with others, the researchers would be able to develop a fuller and richer description of collaborative working relationships than could one individual alone.

## Final Conclusions

The experience of working in collaborative relationships in schools is indeed a complex one with many components and influencing variables. As a result of the findings of this study, I have come to the following final two conclusions. First, collaboration appears to be a promising vehicle through which schools can address the meeting of diverse student needs. Second, collaborative schools can be powerful forces for personal and professional change. Therefore, the area of collaborative working relationships in schools is worthwhile of further investigation and study. However, I feel that, as researchers, we must be careful not to decontextualize our study of the parts or components of collaboration from the total school culture in which these components occur. For example, you can not study collaborative relationships without examining the culture in which they exist. Without the view of the larger picture, the interconnectiveness and interdependency inherent within the collaborative process may be lost or misunderstood.

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# APPENDIX A

## Written Consent Form for Participants

To participants in this study:

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta in the Department of Educational Psychology. The subject of my research is "Collaborative Working Relationships in Schools". I will be exploring, through in-depth interviews the lived experiences of teachers, administrators, and support staff in schools where collaboration occurs.

As part of this study, you are being asked to participate in an in-depth interview. The interview will focus on your perceptions regarding the collaborative process as it occurs in your school. An interview guide approach will be used in which you will be asked to respond to general questions regarding the collaborative process in your school. After the data has been collected and summarized, it will be presented to you to ensure that the interpretation is accurate. At this time you are welcome to make further clarifying remarks and ask questions to ensure understanding. I may also be seeking further clarification on your statements and will involve you in debriefing.

The interview will be tape-recorded and then transcribed. Data obtained from the interview will then be analyzed in order to gain understanding your experience working within the collaborative model at your school.

Observations will also be conducted of the collaborative interactions between regular and special educators in your school and others who are engaged in collaborative working relationships. Descriptive field notes of these observations will be taken describing the process of collaboration between education personnel. If other collaborative activities related to the provision of services to students are occurring in your school, they will be observed as well. Participants involved in the observations will have the opportunity to discuss the perceived meaning of what was observed with the researcher.

In all written materials and oral presentations in which I use information from your interview or observation, I will not use your name (or other identifying personal

information), the names of others in your school, your school name or district. Transcripts and field notes will be typed with initials or pseudonyms only. Data presented in the thesis document will refer to role descriptors only, that is, the category of participant (special educator, regular educator, support staff, administrator). I may also wish to use the information gathered through the interview for journal articles or presentations to interested groups, or for instructional purposes in university courses. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed at all times.

You may at any time withdraw from the interview process. You may request that certain excerpts be removed up to the time that clarification and debriefing has occurred. If I were to use interview information in any form other than that which is stated above, I would ask for your additional signed consent.

I, _____ have read the above statement and agree to participate under the stated conditions.

_____ _____

Signature of interviewer Signature of participant

_____

Date

# APPENDIX B

## General Interview Guide for School Personnel

Roles
- -description of
- -role change with coll./con.
- -perceived roles of others
- -professional relationships

Student Needs
- -interventions -type and level
- -services available to students
- -responsibility for students
- -follow through
- -evaluation of needs met

Outcomes
- -use of interventions
- -changes to teacher strategies, skills
- -changes to teacher attitudes
- -accomplishments
- -benefits
- -barriers
- -problems
- -concerns
- -staff development needs

Other
- -coordination of services from outside
- -parental involvement

Philosophy and Policy
- -development of
- -statement of
- -implementation of
- -supports for

Framework
- -time allotment
- -scheduling and time tabling
- -supports available
- -decision making
- -caseload
- -coordination of services
- -funding
- -evaluation of process
- -accountability

Team Process
- -composition of team
- -problem solving
- -teacher attitudes
- -consultation skills
- -communication skills
- -clarity of roles
- -responsibilities team members
- -coordination of process
- -sharing
- -parity
- -reciprocity
- -trustworthiness

# APPENDIX C

Sample Probe Questions for Participants

**Philosophy**

Describe the collaborative philosophy as you understand it as implemented at your school.

**Framework**

Describe what framework has been established in you school in order for collaboration to take place, for example, time allotment, scheduling, etc.

Describe what supports you think are necessary for the collaborative process to work at you school.

**Roles**

Describe your role.

Describe if and how your role is different from or has changed since collaboration has been in place.

Describe the roles and responsibilities of other individuals involved in the collaboration process.

Describe the professional relationship between yourself and the special/regular educator/support person/administrator.

Describe the role of the administrator in the collaboration process.

**Team process**

Describe the process of decision making and problem solving as related to the collaboration process in your school.

Describe what skills or characteristics are necessary in educators for the collaborative process to work at your school.

Describe the basis for a working relationship between regular and special educators for the collaboration process to work.

**Student Needs**

Describe how the needs of special needs students are met through the collaboration process.

Describe at what type and level of intervention in collaboration used to meet the needs of the special needs students in your school.

Describe what services are available for special needs students at your school.

How does this fit into the continuum of services available to special needs students at your school.

Describe how the needs of non-special needs children are met through the collaboration process.

**Outcomes**

Describe what you think is being accomplished through the collaboration process. Tell me why you think these things are being accomplished.

Describe changes in the functioning of your school since collaboration has been in place.

**Benefits and Barriers**

Do you feel there are benefits or barriers to collaboration at your school?

Describe what you think are the benefits of collaboration in your school for yourself, for other teachers, for students, for parents, for support staff, for the administrator.

Describe what you think are that barriers to collaboration at your school.

Describe the problems you are facing in implementing collaboration.

Describe what your personal concerns are about the process of collaboration.

# APPENDIX D

## Transcribed Interview with Vicki - April 15, 1993

J: Please describe your experience working in a collaborative relationship with other educators in this school. What it means to you and what your experiences have been.

V: Okay, I used to work with the resource room teacher and I used to pull out kids to do remedial work, now we're doing it in the classroom, and my role is as varied as the experiences I go into. It depends, what the teacher needs and the needs of the students. I help plan programs. I help modify expectations and program materials. I also teach and we reverse the roles, where she will be the observer and helper where I'm teaching so we do team teaching things together. Basically I'm there to be a support to the teacher and the student that needs extra help. And I also help other students if I'm not needed by the special needs students, I'm willing to help anyone in the classroom, so there are fringe benefits to the other members of the class, 'cause they do get extra help so there's more one on one teaching in the classroom while I'm in there. Unfortunately, it's only for one period of the day for each classroom, when I'm in the classroom with the regular teacher. We need to discuss program plans, IPP's, and I help them write them out, and then review them on occasion and see where the children are going. And I also sit in on the interview with the parents, and act as liaison with the school nurse or the parents or other teachers.

J: I get the impression that your role has changed from the traditional resource room teacher role. How has it changed and what does that change mean to you?

V: The change is that I have to be totally flexible. I have to walk in and fit in to an existing classroom, and also I have to be a lot more diplomatic in how I approach material, or I talk to a teacher. I have to realize that I am coming in to her space and do it in a way that is non threatening, and also I have to maintain the fact that I'm there to act as a sort of, I don't know what you'd call it, the child is my prime responsibility, to make sure his program is, an advocate for the child, to make sure he is being, his needs are being met. So, I have to balance those roles. Whereas a regular teacher, you can plan your curriculum and know where you're going. Now what I'm teaching, and working will depend basically almost the day to day, and month to month on what is happening in the regular classroom. As a resource facilitator, you have ready to modify anything that you're going to do at any time, and it's not as structured as what it was when I was in the traditional role. I could structure my day and say, this is what I'm going to do. Now my day depends on what is happening in the classroom and I must bend to those roles.

J: Do you feel then that this has changed how you and the regular educator work together?

V: Well, the teacher has to be aware that there's another person coming in and she has to discuss things with me and plan with me in order that I can be of assistance, so they have to be flexible as well in accepting me in the classroom. And they have to be willing to allow me to work. Sometimes when you

first go into a classroom, that isn't happening. It's basically that they are just letting you in and say, okay, you're here, I'm doing my thing, you do your thing. That was what it was like when I initially went in. Then after they see the value and they start to say, well, let's do this together and they become, they do a lot more team planning. Before, it's you plan, I plan and then we'll somehow the two will mesh, but after a while you can discuss more and you start thinking on the same lines and really functioning as a single unit together. I've had the teachers say, well, I know this is going to be a problem, I thought we could do that, and they come in with suggestions on how they themselves could modify. So their mind set becomes one of, yes, I can modify and I can program with this child. Before it was, I teach to the classroom and they (the special needs students) will have to do whatever everybody else is doing. The fact that I'm in there has changed their philosophy and their mind set as to how they have to deal with these children. A lot of times it's just supporting the teacher by letting the know that what they are planning is a good idea, and just sort of being a support and a sounding board for them. They come up with some excellent suggestions, 'cause they all want the best for the child. I think my role is mainly making them aware, more aware that they have a child that has a problem and supporting them in the belief that child can make it in their classroom and that they as a teacher can make it if they have the support to do so..

J: Right, so you mentioned that they're changing, not only in accepting, is that correct, I also thought I heard you say that the regular educators are showing some initiative in making changes? What does this make you feel?

V: Right. Umm

V: I believe that they(the regular educators) see the children in a different ligh' 't they become aware of health problems and learning problems, whereas before they were not aware. I remember on instance when I mention· J this child has an attentional problem, and the teacher kind of said, "what is that?" I got the feeling that the teacher was really apprehensive about having the student in her classroom. Then a couple months later that teacher came up and said, "now I really understand what you meant by attentional problems" yet, there was understanding and acceptance in the way she said it. She wasn't just talking out of frustration. As the teachers become more aware of the specific needs as the child, they are more open to meeting those needs. The teacher on her own does not always have the time an energy to become totally aware and then to plan for all the diverse needs in the classroom. Together, however, we can reach these kids. Knowing that I've had a role in allowing these kids to be accepted and understood by the regular class teacher and ultimately by the other children makes me feel very proud. So basically, I think I have an educational role in that I help the teachers learn about the child's problems and point out different things to them and then as they see them and accept them, then they are willing to change and do things to modify for these children.

J: Do you see that your professional relationship, the professional relationship between regular and special educators has changed, developed in a different way since a collaborative model was implemented?

V: Oh, yes, before the resource room teacher was told, "here's a kid, they have a problem, you fix them". Now, it's, "there's the child we're working with, he has a problem, how can we help him?" And there, it's now their problem and not my problem. There's an ownership coming to the teacher of the child's problems. Before it was, someone else will deal with that problem, and that's where the biggest thing I've seen change, is that the teacher's realize that they have ownership of that problem. Before it was so frustrating because you know you couldn't fix them and you felt rather powerless to help them in other subject areas. You knew they would be having difficulties for the majority of the day, but you only saw them for a few periods and usually weren't involved with the rest of their programming. Now it's not the resource facilitators problem, it's the problem of the teacher with the resources facilitator. They have to make the modifications together, and although they cannot fix a child, through modification you can help him learn and he will grow and become a better person. But before teachers seemed to have the idea that given some remedial work, the student will learn it and then he will be like every other child. And that has changed. That perception has changed dramatically with the teacher in the classroom with the facilitator.

J: I get the felling from you that understanding and accepting a change of roles for the regular and special educator is a large part of the collaborative process.

V: Right.

J: Have you also experienced a role change on the part of the administrator? And if so what is the meaning of that role change to you.

V: Well, with B., we have basically the best that we can have in that she is so supportive. She is willing to give us time to meet by bringing subs so that we can have time to discuss and spend time together to plan. They (the administrators) have to be willing to give me the time to go into the classroom, and also the time to, the freedom to make the modifications that we want. The administrator has to be there, totally behind the project. If the administrator doesn't believe in it, it's not going to work.

J: Okay, that's like a part of the framework that makes it work. Do you feel there are other parts of the framework that have to be there in order for this process to work?

V: Well everyone in the school has to basically buy into the philosophy that we are going to help the special needs students. You have teacher exchanges, where we move from one classroom to the next classroom. With that can of interchanging, we all need to be open to the way each teacher operates and how the kids can function in that class with that teacher. If I accept a student in my room who has a special need, another teacher may teach him a different subject, so there has to be sharing between teachers. Then the parents are also a big part of this. They have to be aware and they have to be willing to accept the modifications we make, and to be willing to do the referrals or whatever. Plus you need the school board

and the psychologist and different people that we can refer to for testing for more information. So there has to be a network of things in place within the community and within the family and the schools. It's, all three of them have to work together.

J: So the collaborative process, you feel, has to go beyond the school building.

V: Beyond the school, oh, yes. If you modify and get a child start feeling good about himself, but the parent knocks it down because he's not doing what the other kids are doing, you've lost the child because he's not building that confidence or self-esteem to keep moving. And that's number one, the child has to have confidence in himself, and if the parents isn't supportive, you're fighting a losing battle.

J: Anything else?

V: Another thing is there has to be a great coordination and cooperation when it comes to total school planning. And again where the administrator came in 'cause they, before any timetables were made in this school, the resource facilitator timetables were put in, so that I would be available at the time when their language arts would be taught so that, and that area was basically the, which is the most important, I was available and to be in the classroom and help the teachers. So timetabling is number one, and number two is that there has to be preparation time, and if it can be combined with the teacher's time so that my prep time and the teacher's time are the same, that would be ideal. Unfortunately it doesn't happen in this case but then she(the administrator) has made arrangements for subs to come in at various times so that we can sit down and plan. And, but now, because there isn't time, I spend more time after school being available to discuss with the teachers what is happening and do the planning then. But if there was more time in school it would be much easier to be able to do planning 'cause it has to be a team effort. One can't do it on his own.

J: Let's turn our attention towards student needs, then. How do you feel student needs are being met through the collaborative process?

V: Sometimes pull-out instruction is the best way to do deal with a situation if the assignment is too difficult, you can do a similar assignment but maybe do it in a quieter area of the classroom or go into another room where they can be more one on one. It's less structured and the child can feel more confident or you do it, a different program because the one that is, it's just too difficult so that the child can still receive success and the thing is, I think, he as the child has to experience success. And sometimes I will do the regular classroom, and the teacher may do the pull out and herself do the remedial, some remediation or more explanation, while I supervise her. My role becomes that of the regular class teacher. Sometimes I just take over where the teacher is. The teacher then takes the remediation on and develops that ownership and confidence in meeting the needs of the special needs students, "it's my child, I am doing remediation". So I think a resource facilitator can go either way as the remediator or as the support to allow the remediation to occur by the teacher.

J: Finding a way to meet the needs of the students seems to be a central idea coming through in what you are saying. Describe how the needs of students with special needs are in your experience being met through the collaborative relationship.

V: Okay, the ways we have met with some of them is sometimes just changing the nature of what the assignment was. If some are doing a written report, maybe, the special need may do a smaller report, a couple of sentences or a picture. Other times, maybe the form in math, for example, is just writing in the book rather than writing on a separate sheet doing, modifying the number, the amount of the exercise. It could be just changing from location to another location where it's quieter where the child can function better. It depends on the situation. It's, every situation is different, but the needs...

J: I just want to interject, does it allow you to individualize to what the needs are of the student?

V: Well, the student is individualized in the way that the program is brought to what level that he can do. He is still doing basically the same material that the kids in the classroom are doing, in most cases. If they're working on adding, he will be working on that but he may be at a lower level or it may less amount, but the child feels that he is part of that classroom in that he is doing what the others are doing, that he's not singled out being, I, having to have a total different program.

J: Do you want to elaborate on that a little bit in terms of what you feel this may mean for the child?

V: The child feels he is part of the class, in that he is learning what the others are learning and that's very important to children to feel that they are in with the others, they're not out of step. And also that he can be contributing to the class, that he is not always behind, for example in report, one child who cannot write well was done, he did the map work, so that his group, he contributed to the group with the map while the others were doing the written work. But together they presented a report so that his was modified so that he felt like, "I'm contributing to the group, I am a member of this group and I'm valuable". And I think that children need to feel that they're part and that they contribute. We had the child, D. working in his own book doing just a fraction of the problems the other children did, we allowed him to work at a level that he felt comfortable and could experience success. Then when he felt comfortable and was ready to move closer to what the larger group was doing, he told us he wanted to do every second problem. Then he said, "I can do every question", so we allowed him set his own limits and then after a while he says, "I think I can copy it down into the exercise books like the other kids". So we allowed him to proceed and now he's basically doing what the other kids are doing but with less expectations. If he gets less right, that's fine, but he is still doing what the other kids are doing. He's feeling very successful at it and through this he went from not wanting to do anything at all to doing what the other kids, by just a few modifications and lower expectations. And he wanted to progress and move with the class and he just basically increased his expectation of himself. Before he didn't expect much of himself, now he's expecting a lot of himself, and

he's feeling so much more content with himself that he is doing very well. And he's not frustrated, and yet if we had said to him "you have to do it" at the beginning, he'd have been totally frustrated.

J: Do you feel that it is comparable to look at that sort of situation as opposed to our traditional pull out type situation?

V: What would happen in the pull out, I could work on a problem but it's not necessarily related to what they're doing in the classroom, so the child does not see the connection. What I'm doing here and what they were doing there had no connection. Especially with students with learning disabilities, they can't make the connection. I could teach phonics, and they would know all their short "a" sounds and then go and do spelling and they wouldn't put it in there 'cause it wasn't connected to what they were doing in the classroom. They didn't see the relationship. This way it's part of the classroom and also the way they view the resource teacher. The first, when I went into the classroom, the first comment I had, "you're a teacher?" "You're regular classroom teacher?" They didn't look at it as I was a regular teacher 'cause I was doing pull out, and they were really surprised that I was a teacher and that I could teach a regular classroom. And I feel connected now too. I feel part of the regular classroom, not like just some appendage to the regular program. So even their view of the help is different. And it was very difficult when I was a separate resource teacher, to find out what they're doing in the classroom and relate it to the student's needs and then try to have it make sense again so they could use it in the regular classroom. I would pull out and they would be doing something else (in the regular classroom), and often there was no connection at all. I wasn't using in the same stories. I wasn't using the same math book. Everything was different. Now it's the same and they can just see that relationship, that it's there and they don't feel, also, that they are different from the other kids because they have to be pulled out, especially at the 4 and 5 grade level. I used to get, "oh, I don't want to go 'cause it's embarrassing to be pulled out of the class". "I'm dumb because I'm going." This way none of those stigmas seem to be attached to the child. He's in the classroom and he's working with the rest and it's amazing how much the others are learning by teaching them. You'll have a lot of peer teaching grouping where you'll put a good one with another one. Or paired reading where you group a good reader with them and they're learning together and there's teaching which helps the top student because he is teaching what he has learned and he really internalizes it.

J: Describe the relationship in the classroom between those children who have special needs and those children who don't. What do you see happening?

V: The children have become much more tolerant of them and they see the talents that they have much more, 'cause they can see that they are doing the same but maybe doing it in a different way. And they also feel ownership, they need to help each other that they become a group, if one's not working, then I should help him along and they seem to. It becomes more of a family type of relationship where one feels that I'm responsible for him, too. I can help him. It's much more of a classroom unity between the children.

J: Let's move on to outcomes in terms of this process. What do you feel is being accomplished through a collaborative process at your school?

V: I think the biggest is what the children have gained. I think the children have gained in their own worth. They feel that they are worthy, they are better than they used to be. Like, for example, A. had very little self confidence in himself. He didn't feel that he belonged to the group. Now he has that feeling, I belong and I can learn. And it takes a while to develop it and he's developing the responsibility for learning and contributing. He's now willing to come up in front of the class and contribute and read what he has done in the classroom. The class has accepted him and they will praise him for the steps he has taken, even though his report may not be as good as the other students, they will say, you have improved in these areas, and they are supporting him in his improvement. And that's very nice to see that growth and self esteem that these children have and that they say, I can learn. They are taking responsibility for their own learning. I found that the resource room gives the idea you(the resource teacher) must spoon feed me, you must tell me what I have, whereas in the classroom, it's not spoon feeding. The child learns that he will get assistance when needs, but the ultimate responsibility for learning is his.

Before, in the resource room, where it's one on one, I was always there to help you when he's doing the work and he doesn't, he becomes dependent on me. Whereas in the classroom, I'm not always there. He becomes more responsible for his own learning and, for example, in the classroom with spelling words, the child must first try it and then we'll help you. The special needs students were so used to being just fed the answers that it's taken almost 6 months for them to accept, yes I have to make an attempt first and then I will get the help. He wanted the help immediately because that's the pull out resource room type thing used to be. It's feeding. It's just like spoon feeding. I'll give you all the answers and all the way, and he didn't get as much of, it's my responsibility to learn. I have to make an effort. And I think that's where the child benefits the most is that he becomes, he learns responsibility for his own learning. That they're there to help, but I have to put an effort too, because it's not come in, come out, it's an all day thing. And another thing I do, too, as a resource facilitator, maybe I didn't mention this, I do oral testing in other subjects. For example, if they're a test in science, I will read the test orally with them so that we're testing content and not reading ability in other subjects like social or science. That's kind of out from where, somewhere.

J: That's okay, the order doesn't matter.

V: But I think that's very important in that they can be allowed to see that they know things even though they may not be able to read it or write it down, but they still have the knowledge and that their marks, that they are knowledgeable in other subjects like science, and it's made quite a difference to their attention and the way they try to learn the material by having a chance to do it orally.

J: Yes, you talked about what you felt is being accomplished for the students, how about the staff, or the school as a whole? What, do you feel there's benefits for the staff? For you as an individual teacher, and if so, what might those be?

V: I think they become more aware of the needs, special needs and modification. I think it has to have an effect on even the gifted. They all have special needs even though they're not, through the fact that they're not behind, every child has a special need and try to modify and fit the program for every child. I think it becomes more child centered than curriculum centered teaching and that there are ways to make things suit the children, that it's possible to change a particular item and teach it in a different way, and that will meet the needs of different students. And I think it stretches the teachers to think of innovations. It's also a way that they teach, like if I'm in there and I'm doing a particular thing, by modeling they learn a different way of doing things. Also, as a teacher in your regular classroom, you can do the same thing year after year, but if there is a special needs child then it makes you aware that you have to change and you're not going into that rut of everything being the same. You need to find different ways of doing different things and I think it makes for more exciting teaching.

J: So the teachers are learning as well?

V: Right. I think there's, and as a resource facilitator, I'm learning, too, because I'm learning from them because the more teachers I work with, more different ways I see of doing things. I've been teaching for a long time, and this is the most excited I've ever felt about teaching because I really believe we are doing more now for the kids then we ever did before. There is a real sense of togetherness and team work. Teachers are not only opening their doors to one another, but opening their minds as well. Even if you are dealing with the most frustrating child, you never feel like you are in it alone. Teachers are teamed, we communicate, we listen, and we feel supported by the administrator. This way we can really focus on the student's needs and not just our frustrations with doing our job. Not to say that there aren't frustrations. No, but those frustrations are shared and your concerns are heard and your ideas are supported. And really that just means that teachers can do their jobs better. So it's a benefit to the resource facilitator, it's a benefit to the teacher both. I think everybody gains, the student, the teacher and the resource facilitator.

J: Okay, now you talked about the benefits, do you feel there are barriers to this collaborative process, and if so what? What may they be?

V: Oh, barriers are inflexibility. If persons are not willing to be flexible it's not going to work and there has to be a desire to work with another person. If you say, I don't want to, if there's not that commitment to work together, it's not going to go anywhere. There has to be a willingness to let me in, first of all. So once I'm in, then it is a willingness to try something new, and to be flexible. But one of the biggest barriers, too, is time. The planning time, the time to make the modifications. Without the time to do actually collaborate, just saying we're collaborating is no good. You need the time to actually do it and do

it well. Sometimes material might be a problem, obtaining material. But if you look around enough, you can find something. But, I think lack of time and a negative or inflexible attitude are the biggest barriers to making this work.

J: Have you experienced a positive change or a negative change in teacher's attitudes?

V: Oh, a positive change. I think the teachers are great. You'll hear a comment, like, "I don't know how I could have done this lesson without you in the classroom." "It's so nice to have an extra body helping when I'm trying to teach a particular subject." "I can get to the children on a more on one to one basis because I have that person helping me." There is, if you say, well, I'm not going to come in, I think they'd say, "I don't know how I'm going to do it next year without having that person." I think the teachers are very, very pleased with the whole process. I don't have them saying, I don't want to have a resource facilitator. They're all willing to have it. I feel accepted and needed and I feel that they see the value of what I'm doing. I think the attitude has totally changed, and it takes time sometimes, but it gets there once they see the value, they're willing to accept it. I think I'm off topic.

J: No, you're not at all. You're doing wonderfully. Are you facing problems implementing this model? If so...?

V: Last year was more difficult in that I had a first year teacher, and being the fact that she was a first year teacher, she was very unsure of herself, to begin with. So she was a little more self conscious and it was a little harder to get into the classroom. And also I had a teacher who came back from a sabbatical, and so they, both of them were so overwhelmed just coming into the classroom that it was difficult to put in another aspect into it that it took a while. Basically my role was more of a pull out thing for a lot of times because they weren't quite ready yet to accept me. What was it again?

J: I was just asking if you were facing any problems implementing the model?

V: Okay, those were the two things. When the teacher is new, that makes it more difficult, and if the teacher is probably returning, new into the assignment, that would make it more difficult. Time again becomes a problem if you are working with someone new. You need the time to develop you relationship together. Sometimes I feel I don't know enough, that I wish I had more background and knew more about certain problems. I feel, sometimes I think I'm, feel limited no matter how many times you've gone through a situation, you come and say, what can I do? How can I deal with it, my own limitations sometimes it makes me feel like there has to be a way to deal with it. I feel that I need more inservicing on different things that come up, like even on Tourettes or, you can look around for information but to be with other teachers that have dealt with that and receive ideas from them, would be very helpful to be able to brainstorm with other facilitators. The resource facilitators need time to brainstorm together, but with our busy schedules, we don't all have time to get together, but I think it would be valuable for, as resources facilitators where we can share ideas and we can really be inserviced more as to different situations and

different, new things that happened, that are coming out, new research, new ways of dealing with special needs. That, I find, is my biggest thing, is that I feel I lack information and the time is not always there to go out and get it and by yourself through conferences and things, and reading books. It's nice if we could have inservicing. You know, since you're working with other teachers, I really feel that I need to stay on top of things. I can't just let things drift by because other teachers are counting on me. That's why more inservicing or times to get together to share for resource facilitators would be beneficial. Sometimes I find that I'm not fully, always being used to the maximum. I feel like sometimes I'm kind of relegated to almost a teacher aide role where I'm just a supporting role, but I know that's part of the job, but I sometimes feel like I need to be more involved. But I know that total involvement only comes as the teachers are willing, as much as they're willing to collaborate and involve me in the planning, but sometimes I feel I'm not quite in enough and that's frustrating. I'm confident that as the role develops, we, the teachers and I, will find new ways to make it work to the maximum.

J: You were talking about how you sometimes feel you lack information and that's frustrating. Are there other areas that there are needs that are not you being met through this model?

V: I think there are needs. I think both the teacher and the resource facilitator need to be inserviced. I think even to have the teachers who deal with the resource facilitator get together and exchange ideas as how they work with their students. That would be good or to have them learn about the special needs, a certain special need, attentional deficit, have an inservicing on them, I think would help them, too, in that they would, they would have a different point of view from my point of view what attentional deficit is. I think it would, if they knew more about the problem they'd be, they would see more ways of dealing with that special need, I think.

J: Do you see yourself fulfilling that role at all, or in part?

V: Giving information?

J: Yes.

V: Yes, I think that's part of my role, where I'll get information and pass on information. I've done it about attentional deficit. I've done it about Tourettes. I've gotten information for the teachers but sometimes I think I don't have enough to pass on and it would be more, if I had more access to material that I could use to bring to the teacher and say, this, okay, here it is, or different ways of modifying. It would be good for me to know to be able to bring it to the teacher. Or sometimes she can go and bring it back to me. I think, this way I think the ownership would be more if the teacher was involved in the inservicing. I think it's just not the resource facilitator that should be inserviced, I think it could, should be both.

J: What do you feel the collaborative philosophy is at this school and what does that mean for you as an individual working in this environment?

V: I think in this school we feel that we have a role in educating all students where they are. I think this school's philosophy comes very well with that in that we, no matter where the child is at, we have a duty to teach that child from where he is and bring him along, and that all children have the right to learn, and can learn, and that they all have a right to be taught in a way that will help build their self esteem and their self worth, and develop them into responsible adults. And I think with this inclusion and the resource facilitator I think we can achieve that by giving each child success at what they're doing, and eliminating the frustrations and all the things that knock that self esteem down. As a parent of a learning disabled child, I really feel that schools have come a long way in the last few years in dealing with it. I've seen my child totally frustrated and giving up on herself and totally negative about her self image and with some program modification, I can see the tremendous growth that occurred and the positive attitude she developed to herself and to the subject matter when modifications were made to her program, which were not difficult to make. It was just lessening the amount she had to do, putting it on a different way and I could see the child going from the bottom of the class to going to near the middle to the top class in that subject and enjoying it. And this as a teacher, I see it, too, with students hating a subject and then with modifications starting to love it and say, I can do this. And that just, hearing that words, "I can", instead of "I can't" is very, very rewarding.

J: Do you feel that you as an educator, need particular characteristics or skills that make this collaborative process work?

V: Flexibility is number one, I think. Being able to be flexible to be able to say, I can do it a different way, that, just because I've done it this way for 10 years, it, I don't have to do it that way again, I can be flexible. Willingness to change and willingness to accept the child. To accept children for what they are and not have unfair expectations, I think is another one that is very important. To think that every child, just because he is not doing something is not just lazy, but may have special learning needs. Be willing to look for other reasons why this child is not achieving success because it could be many, many reasons for him not doing it, and be willing to look for a solution and not giving up. I think you have to be willing to make mistakes, and admit that you've made a mistake. I think that if you think that you can't, everything has to be always right, you wouldn't survive, because it's, a lot of it is trial and error, where you try something and it works or if it doesn't work be willing to try again, and sticktiutiveness. Be able to stick to it and say, okay, I know I'm having a problem but, let's, we can work it out. I think it's very, it's important. And I think just a general love of children. Accepting children for what they are. And we should, teachers, I think, do that, 'cause when you teach you have to love children. But I think you have to love all children 'cause some of those special needs require a lot of patience.

J: Yes.

V: And they're a little bit harder to put up with, yeah. And, when I first started teaching, if somebody had come into my classroom and worked with me, I think I would have felt totally nervous and worried and I wouldn't have been able almost to function, and now I'm in the classroom with other teachers and thinking that this is some of the best teaching I've ever done. And to be able to work with someone else present and work as a team, is something that has to develop because, before we used to close our door and we taught and that was our classroom, now it's more of an open door policy. That's where the flexibility and the willing to make mistakes come in because if you were afraid of making mistakes, you don't want somebody there when you make a mistake, and as a teacher that happens all the time. You learn that something works well for one class, it may not work well for another class so you just go with it and accept things as they are and look forward to the next day.

J: I would just like to open it up, are there any reflections, comments, examples, anything that you'd like to put forward that would help us understand what this process means to you and how you have experienced working collaboratively with other teachers at this school.

V: I think it's the most beneficial thing they have ever come into schools with, as a parent and as an educator, in that it allows children who are slipping through the cracks, who were destined to live lives that were not fulfilling, I think they're being given a chance through inclusion and collaboration in modifying these programs for these kids so that they can learn and feel part of society and not be, feel like the outcasts.

J: Thank you.