Classroom Management Practices in Inclusive Classrooms

By

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Abstract

This research study is a qualitative study focused on classroom management practices for creating an inclusive classroom environment guided by the following question: How do teachers use classroom management practices and/or strategies to create inclusive learning environments for all students, including those who have been identified with exceptionalities? A comprehensive literature review was conducted to examine research that currently exists on classroom management practices and inclusive classrooms. A series of questions are comprised for face to face interviews with two consenting participants, which was used as a means to gain insight on how teachers adapt their classroom management practices to meet the needs for students with exceptionalities within classrooms. Data collected from the interviews was used to provide depth and analysis to the literature previously reviewed. There were five emerging themes found from the data: 1) effective classroom management strategies to establish within the first few weeks of school, 2) benefits and challenges in an inclusive classroom, 3) managing behaviour in an inclusive classroom, 4) prior experience and additional education play a role in managing inclusive classrooms, 5) take advantage of resources in the environment around you. This study concludes with the implications of the findings, limitations and further study opportunities.

Key Words: Inclusive, Classroom Management, Exceptionalities, Strategies
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

“Every student can learn, just not on the same day, or the same way” – George Evans

Children with exceptionalities are increasingly being educated within the general education classroom. As a result, teachers need to become more involved in and responsible for educating themselves about exceptionalities in order to understand how to meet the diverse learning needs of their students. However, student exceptionalities are not the only reason teachers should differentiate their teaching strategies. Within a classroom, there are a wide range of student abilities, and teachers cannot have only one method or strategy established within their classrooms. Just as teachers are unable to teach all their students in the same way, teachers also need to employ different strategies in developing classroom routines and classroom productivity. More often than usual, the focus is on how to adapt teaching instruction strategies to cater to student needs; however it is important that teachers look beyond teaching instruction strategies and examine their classroom set up, their daily routines and the general environment of their classroom. Because each student is different in their own way, it is important to explore what works for each type of student within a classroom. Understandably, it is not reasonable to expect a teacher to teach a classroom of 21 students individually. However, understanding behaviours of groups of similar children will help develop strategies and practices that meet the needs of these students. If students feel that they are being respected and treated appropriately according to their behaviour, they build a sense of trust with their teachers. This mutual respect strengthens the teacher-student relationship and as a result it is a step toward a safe environment where students feel they belong. Thus, teachers need to adapt their classroom management practices to address
the needs of individual students, which will in turn create a safe and welcoming environment for all students.

**Purpose of the Study**

There are so many different ways teachers manage their classrooms, implementing different rules and different physical set ups. Most often, as new teachers we fall back on what we know, from our personal experiences of what our teachers used to do. However, with the change in dynamics of classrooms, there are more diverse ranges of student abilities and student needs. Therefore, it is not beneficial for students in today’s classrooms, for teachers to be implementing traditional methods when managing their classroom. For example: traditional teachers usually expect students to simply sit quietly on the carpet with no movement or discussion. However, in today’s schools, some students have proven to learn better if they are fidgeting with something or walking around. Certainly students cannot be expected to sit for long periods of time without being able to move. As teachers we need to examine our management strategies and techniques to create inclusive classrooms while creating a safe environment for all students.

The purpose of this study was to identify how teachers implement their classroom management practices in order to address the needs of students with exceptionalities and students without exceptionalities within the same classroom. It is essential to understand the practices and strategies teachers use to include students with exceptionalities within their classrooms while creating a safe environment for all students. Since classrooms are comprised of students with wide range of abilities and exceptionalities, I believe it is important to learn how teachers can implement different classroom management strategies to attend to the specific abilities and individual differences of all students within a classroom, especially for students with exceptionalities. I wanted to explore what current teachers are doing to meet the needs of all their
students within their classrooms and identify the specific strategies that beginner teachers may implement in their own classrooms because I was intrigued to learn about the strategies they use to be able to meet the needs of so many ranging abilities all in the same classroom. Therefore, I chose to further explore classroom management strategies in inclusive classrooms, at it is an area of interest for me as a beginning teacher.

**Research Questions**

The primary question that I focused on within my research was: How do teachers use classroom management practices and/or strategies to create inclusive learning environments for all students, including those who have been identified with exceptionalities? In addition, my research aimed to also further explore three sub questions: 1) What classroom management practices or strategies address the needs of both typically-developing students and students with exceptionalities? 2) What challenges do teachers have when implementing classroom management practices/strategies to meet the needs of all students? 3) How do additional courses in special education play a role in the way teachers manage inclusive classrooms?

**Background of the Researcher**

While pursuing an undergraduate degree in psychology, I was greatly interested in developmental psychology and abnormal psychology. Within these branches of psychology, we discussed the range of exceptionalities that people face during their lives, ranging between behavioral, psychological, emotional and physical. I was able to get my feet wet during my undergraduate years exploring these topics and I was fascinated to witness the theories and statistics that I learned were a reality in schools. I learned that children were being diagnosed from a very young age. It was not until I was in a kindergarten class volunteering that I realized how many children were struggling in school because of their diagnosed exceptionalities. Additionally, there were those still waiting diagnosis and those still unclear what wall was
blocking their learning. I also witnessed that all students were placed together in a general education classroom. Students who needed the extra help or attention had to wait to get it from the same teacher teaching the other 20 something students. Education and classroom dynamics seemed to have changed from when I was in school and are now very different from what I remembered. Students were more varied in their abilities of what they could do and how they could learn but also teaching strategies were more flexible and dynamic rather than structured and rooted in textbooks.

My experiences working with children have taught me how diverse children are; diversity is not limited to culture, but also includes ethnicity, behaviour traits, intellectual capabilities, and learning abilities. I have learned children are unique in their learning habits and behaviours, thus it is not possible to categorize them into one or a few homogenous groups. Within my experience volunteering in a kindergarten classroom, I have acquired the skills to communicate and teach children with emotional, physical, and psychological exceptionalities. For instance, I worked closely with a student diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome, a student who was deaf and students who were English Language Learners (ELL). From these experiences, as a teacher, I learned teaching comes in different forms and children learn in different ways. However, I also learned that students behave and act differently than their peers when in the same situation. Because students are so diverse within a classroom, I believe it is fundamental for teachers to, not only differentiate their instruction, but also to organize their classrooms to cater to children’s learning styles and learning abilities.

Subsequently, at my first practicum I was placed in a grade two classroom. This class was comprised of a student diagnosed with Down Syndrome, a student with Autism, two students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder and four students functioning at a grade one level (below grade level). I was blown away with the number of students with
exceptionalities within the same class, and how many, but not all, of these students were on Individual Education Plans (I.E.P). I was interested to see the inclusive environment of the classroom where students had excellent behavior habits. They were engaged in lessons and worked well with their peers. Having such a range of exceptionalities in one classroom, I was curious as to how the teacher implemented rules and procedures to have her students be respectful of each other and run a class smoothly throughout the day.

My research interests were sparked with my educational background stemming in psychology, my experiences working with children, and my experience in my first practicum. Prior to these experiences, I had not realized how conventional it was to have children with exceptionalities included in general education classroom.

Overview

Chapter One of this research paper includes an introduction to my topic and the purpose of this study. It also contains my research questions and how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter Two provides a literature review of a variety of scholarly journal articles that relate to the topic of Classroom Management, Significance of Effective Classroom Management, Inclusive Classrooms, Benefits of Inclusive classrooms, Criticisms of Inclusive Classrooms, and Classroom management within a Inclusive Classroom. Chapter Three explains the overall methodology aligned with this research study, which includes the procedure, instruments of data collection, participants, data collection and analysis, ethical review procedures, and limitations. Chapter Four identifies the participants in the study and describes the data as it addresses the research question. Chapter Five includes limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further reading and study. References and a list of appendices follow at the end.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There is an extensive body of literature examining effective classroom management strategies and inclusive class environments, separately. For the purpose of this research study, this literature review was conducted with my main research question in mind: How do teachers use classroom management practices and/or strategies to create inclusive learning environments for all students, including those who have been identified with exceptionalities? Thus, the reviewed literature addresses three main aspects. The first aspect introduces classroom management and why it is important to have effective classroom management strategies. The second aspect examines inclusive classrooms. Inclusive classrooms is further divided to understand what it means to have an inclusive classroom, a definition for students with exceptionalities, what is the importance of inclusive classrooms, the levels of inclusive education for students, and the praises and criticisms of inclusive classrooms. Lastly, the challenges of classroom management within inclusive classrooms are addressed.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is an umbrella term which incorporates all the duties within a classroom that a teacher must enforce to keep the class running smoothly and with minimal disruptive behaviours. In the article Effective Classroom Management, Mansor, Eng, Rasul, Hamzah, and Hamid (2012) talk about learning outcomes being directly related to the learning environment within the classroom created by the teacher. A qualitative research study done by Richardson and Fallon (2001) found that classroom management is interconnected with the goals and beliefs of the teacher and with their manner. Manner referred to the teachers’ character traits as revealed within a classroom and is believed to be important for student learning (Richardson & Fallon, 2001). Thus, classroom management encompasses the overall learning environment
where students are able to foster their learning. Content expertise appears to be a factor that plays a role in creating effective classroom learning environments. Barrie Bennett, an expert in teacher education, “instructional intelligence,” and pedagogy, stated, “Students have a low tolerance for teachers who do not understand their content area and who do not enjoy teaching that content” (Bennett & Smilanch, 1994, p.14). Hence, it is also important for teachers to reflect on their own characteristics and knowledge they bring into a classroom. A teacher’s presence has a huge influence on students and their behaviour within a classroom. Good classroom management allows teachers to work with students in a positive and encouraging way as well as allow teachers to use preventative measures to avoid unnecessary interruptions (Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2013). Therefore, classroom management is everything from the physical appearance and the setup of the classroom, the routines and rules of a classroom, student responsibilities to the teacher, student relationships, disciplinary actions, teaching strategies and the teachers’ displayed personality.

**Significance of Effective Classroom Management**

It is important to look into effective classroom management because it helps students be engaged, display positive behaviours, increase self-esteem and enrich their learning. “Classroom management is a critical and complex component in the creation of effective learning environments” (Bennett & Smilanch, 1994, p.14). Richardson and Fallona (2001) found that student learning is directly related to the classroom control established, however they believe the most important aspect is the classroom management established within the first week of school. Similarly, Soodak (2003) discusses in her research study, *Classroom Management in Inclusive Settings*, the overall quality of a classroom environment allows students to feel welcome, safe and supported. When these factors are present then misbehavior and discipline issues are minimized and learning is increased. Wentzel (2003) notes in *Motivating Students to Behave in*...
Socially Competent Ways that a strong sense of belonging can result in positive outcomes, including academic motivation, a sense of efficacy, and a sense of emotional well-being. “As well, a strong sense of belonging has been associated with a desire to learn and an increase in understanding, whereas a lack of belonging has been associated with negative academic outcomes such as truancy and withdrawal from school” (Mansor et al., 2012, p.37). Thus, effective classroom management is deemed important not only for the success of a stable classroom, but for the success of students’ wellbeing, students’ learning and for promoting positive behaviour.

Inclusive classrooms

It is important to understand that all children, those with and without special needs, thrive in a classroom environment that enables them to develop their abilities and skills. Inclusive classrooms are equitable classrooms where students are accepted for who they are and their individual needs are met. Students are not treated in an identical way but rather the needs and interests of each and every individual student are met, providing them with the necessary tools, conditions and assistance to achieve success and reach their potential (Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2013). In this paper, students with special needs or with any emotional, social, behavioural or psychological uniqueness straying away from the typically-developing students, will be referred to as students with exceptionalities. In recent years, the number of students with exceptionalities being taught in general education classes has increased.

Statistics Canada reports approximately 200 000 children between the ages of 5-14 had some kind of disability in 2006 (4.6% of all Canadian children in this age range). Recent data from British Columbia and Ontario Ministries of Education indicate that students with designated special educational needs comprise close to 9% of the primary and secondary school population. (Canadian Council of Learning, 2009, p.2)

In provinces across Canada, public schools are encouraged to adopt an inclusive environment for students, ensuring that all students receive free and appropriate education (Canadian Council of
Learning, 2007). In other words, all Canadian schools must include all students coming from various backgrounds, religions and abilities, including students with exceptionalities. For example:

In Quebec, fewer than half of all children with a reported disability are educated in regular classrooms, nearly one quarter are educated in separate special-education schools, and the remaining students are educated in special-education classes within regular schools. In contrast, nearly three quarters of children with disabilities in Prince Edward Island are educated in regular classrooms and virtually none are in special-education schools. (Canadian Council of Learning, 2007, p.2)

With teachers having more diverse ranges of student abilities in their general education classes, it is important to note the change needed in management and instruction. Soodak (2003) states that inclusion is not just about student placement, but rather it is focused more on creating an environment that supports and includes all learners. It is about how the student is accepted in the classroom, the students' participation, and the educational and social success of students (Brown, Fortain, & Von der Embse, 2011). An inclusive school community must be supported by policies and practices at the classroom level and also at the whole school level (Jordan, Schwartz & McGhie-Richmond, 2009).

**Benefits of Inclusive classrooms**

Inclusive classrooms have been criticized but also praised by various researchers. *Making the Social Visible within Inclusive Classrooms* is a study by Katz and Galbraith (2006), who believe that inclusive classrooms are beneficial for students. It is believed that inclusive classrooms provide opportunities for both typically-developing students and students with exceptionalities to develop positive social relationships with each other (Katz & Galbraith, 2006). Similarly, Odom and Baily (2001) note in *Inclusive Preschool Programs: Classroom Ecology and Child Outcomes*, that children with exceptionalities participate in more social interactions with their peers and exhibit more advanced forms of play when they are in
classrooms with typically-developing students compared to segregated classrooms. In addition, it is also believed that inclusive classrooms provide students with a “sense of belonging to a community of learners where their ability to achieve their full potential is not limited by societal barriers that might stifle growth” (Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2013, p.27). Based on these studies, there is a clear argument that inclusive classrooms can be a great base for students with exceptionalities and typically-developing students to develop their social interactions and a sense of belonging. Jordan et al. (2009) documented that in the United States of America students with exceptionalities who spend more time in regular classrooms have higher scores on achievement tests, are absent less, and perform closer to grade level than their peers who are withdrawn for instruction. In Canada, the Canadian Council of Learning (2007) states that there seems to be a favour towards inclusion—“that students with disabilities fare better both academically and socially when placed in regular classrooms than when placed in special-education classrooms” (p.3). Thus, these studies suggest that having students with exceptionalities placed within inclusive classrooms, students have the opportunity to possibly perform academically and socially at a higher level.

Criticisms of Inclusive Classrooms

On the contrary to the aforementioned literature, there are criticisms as to why inclusive classrooms are not beneficial and students with exceptionalities should in fact be placed in segregated classes. Experiencing an 'Inclusive' Education: Parents and their Children with 'Special Educational Needs', is a British study of parents who have children with identified exceptionalities who are in general education classrooms. Within this study, parents had conflicting experiences with inclusive education and had no positive experience of inclusive classrooms (Rogers, 2007). In addition, Rogers (2007) found in her research that the older the child with exceptionalities the less likely placing them in a general education classrooms will
work or be helpful for the child. Jordan et al. (2009), found criticisms about inclusive education in that there was a popular opinion that students with exceptionalities reduce teachers’ instructional time with students who are more likely to perform at grade level, and that teaching students with special needs requires specialized teaching skills. However, these criticisms are often disputed and the practice of inclusive education is still being adapted across the country to be the only form of education offered, with belief that inclusive classrooms may have more benefits than shortcomings. The Canadian Council of Learning (2009) said it best, “while inclusive settings are generally preferable, factors other than classroom setting (instructional quality is the most immediately obvious factor) are probably more important determinants of SEN [special educational needs] students’ academic success” (p.7). Teachers play a very important role in student achievement and academic success, for both students with exceptionalities and typically-developing students. Thus, even though the philosophy of inclusion may be supported and encouraged, the only way to determine its’ success is to ensure teachers are prepared to instruct and teach students with a wide range of abilities within the regular classrooms.

**Classroom Management within an Inclusive Classroom**

Following the examination of literature on classroom management and inclusive classrooms separately, it is imperative to explore the literature on classroom management within inclusive classrooms. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of research or lack of access to such research within this area of study. However, there were two studies found that were related to this topic and had some importance. The first is a study conducted on classroom management and inclusion effectiveness in elementary level physical education by William Vogler. This study revealed that the way time is allocated within a class has been an indicator of how effective the class will be (Vogler, 1999). In fact, transitional behaviour had a negative effect on student
learning and conduct. By having many transitions within a school day, it can “slow down the pace of the class and reduce opportunities for learning” (Vogler, 1999, p.20). In addition, within the inclusive physical education class, students with exceptionalities needed more time to respond to the rapid changes in transition from one task to another (Vogler, 1999). Similarly, the second study Behaviour Management in Inclusive Classrooms reveals some findings in regards to classroom management within inclusive classrooms. Carpenter and McKee-Higgins (1996) found educating students with exceptionalities within an inclusive classroom was challenging when “(a) the numbers of students in classes are increasing, (b) behavior management procedures are taxed by the range of unacceptable behaviors exhibited by students without disabilities, and (c) supports for using new teaching practices are minimal” (p.202). On the other hand, “the instructional methods used, class climate created, individuality supported, and collegiality practiced by educators” can significantly influence the behavioral and achievement outcomes for children (Carpenter & McKee-Higgins, 1996, p.203). This study has extensive research in behaviour management within an inclusive classroom, although, it does not provide much information on other aspects of classroom management practices within inclusive classrooms. This is where my research study is believed to provide further insight on the topic of classroom management practices within inclusive classrooms.

It is important to conduct further research on classroom management practices within inclusive classrooms, because classrooms are increasingly including students with a wide range of abilities, including students with identified and non-identified exceptionalities. Hence, it is important to understand and learn how best to cater to the needs of all students in order to foster their learning and help them reach their potential. Students should all be given opportunities where they can be the best they can, and should not be held back because of ineffective classroom management. Classroom management is believed to have great influence on student
achievement and inclusion can be effective upon good practice of classroom management (Vogler, 1999). Therefore, this research study was focused on how teachers use classroom management practices and/or strategies to create inclusive learning environments for all students, including those who have been identified with exceptionalities. In addition, this study also investigated the following questions: What classroom management practices or strategies address the needs of both typically-developing students and students with exceptionalities? What challenges do teachers have when implementing classroom management practices/strategies to meet the needs of all students? How do additional courses in special education contribute to the way teachers manage inclusive classrooms?
Chapter 3: METHODS

Procedure

This research is a qualitative research study that is comprised of a comprehensive literature review and primary data collection, which was done through face-to-face interviews. The literature review was conducted to gain insight into the current research that exists relating to classroom management practices and inclusive classrooms. As well, it provides background knowledge of recommended strategies and a platform for future comparison to my research findings. The literature review was comprised of scholarly journal articles that were peer reviewed and focused on classroom management practices, inclusive education or both. The primary source of data was two face-to-face interviews, which were comprised of 20 interview questions and were broken down into four sections: Participant’s Background Information and Introduction to Topic, Classroom Management Practices, Benefits and Challenges, and Conclusion (see Appendix A). Shortly after the interviews, I transcribed the interviews and analyzed them for common themes. The transcribed interviews were coded to mark commonalities between all the responses of the participants. These commonalities were categorized into main themes and were then used to make connections between my findings and the reviewed literature.

Instruments of Data Collection:

For this study, data was collected through informal interviews. Turner (2010) reveals that interviews provide detailed information about participants’ experiences and viewpoints on a particular topic. He also mentions that interviews are often paired with other methods of data collection, which allow the researcher to develop a comprehensive collection of information for analysis (Turner, 2010). In this study, interviews were conducted following an in-depth literature review, for the sole purpose of gathering extensive data to analyze. During the
interviews, participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to classroom management practices and inclusive classrooms. Some examples of interview questions are: Do you have any additional education or qualifications in special education? In your professional opinion, how would you define inclusivity? What strategies do you use when students with exceptionalities exhibit negative behaviours in the classroom? (See Appendix A for a full list of interview questions).

Participants

For this research study, I chose two participants who are Ontario certified teachers. This choice was made because the research collected was used for a case study based on Ontario teachers, making it imperative that my participants were Ontario certified. As well, both participants were primary teachers who have had experience ranging from kindergarten to grade 6, as this was the cohort that I was focusing on in my teacher education practice. I was also seeking a participant who has taken more classes on special education compared to the typically trained teacher, or one who has received a Special Education Specialist through additional qualifications offered by Ontario College of Teachers. For my second participant, I was looking for a teacher who had the general education provided by a faculty of education, with no additional courses in special education rather simply having gained experience working with students with exceptionalities within their classrooms. The reason for having one participant more educated in special education and one participant with more special education experience was to help answer my sub question in this research study, which was meant to determine whether additional special education classes play a role in how teachers manage inclusive classrooms. I found my participants through word of mouth within my Master of Teaching program and my practicum placements.
Lisa, my first participant is a fairly new teacher, teaching full time for three years. She has taught grade one, grade two and is currently the librarian at her public school. With fairly limited teaching experience, Lisa attended college for a youth and child worker program and then attended university for geography. She later went to a faculty of education to obtain her teaching certificate. In addition, Lisa has also taken all three special education additional qualification courses offered through a faculty of education, becoming a special education specialist. She also has her English as a Second Language (ESL) correspondent one and two and has taken the intermediate course (additional basic qualification). Prior to Lisa’s teaching career, she has had experience working with adults with autism in a group home and working as a behavioral teaching assistant in a school board.

Jen, my second participant, has been teaching for 13 years in the public board and has experiences in kindergarten, grade one and grade two. She has her Bachelor of Education in Sociology with a teaching certificate, her Early Childhood Education diploma from college, and her Masters of Education. She has not completed any additional qualifications through a faculty of education. However, through her 13 years of teaching, Jen has taught two students with global development delays, I have had three students with Asperger’s Syndrome, two students with Autism, one student who was deaf, and two children with fetal alcohol syndrome. Although she has not taken any additional qualifications in special education, she has many years of experience working with students with various exceptionalities.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Following the interview process, I transcribed the questions and responses for each of my interviews. The purpose of transcribing the interviews was to analyze my data and to find common themes. However, before beginning my analysis, I began by coding my data. This coding required me to read over the transcribed script several times, focusing on reoccurring and
consistent ideas that were found within my participants' responses. Using different coloured highlighters, I highlighted each common idea in one colour. By the end of this practice, I had about five different colours, which meant five different common ideas. These five ideas formed my themes which are: 1) establish classroom management strategies within the first week of school, 2) managing behaviour in an inclusive classroom: the good and the bad, 3) the challenges with inclusive classrooms, 4) prior experience and education in special education plays a role in managing an inclusive classroom, 5) take advantage of the resources in the environment around you. The data within each theme is what is used to answer my main research question and sub questions. I have made it a point to note key points that that my participants' shared as quotes in my study.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

Prior to collecting research, the ethical review approval procedures were followed throughout the duration of the research study, as laid out by the Master of Teaching program. Participants were given an informed consent letter which was explained and allowed participants to ask any questions or concerns that they may have had. Participants signed the consent form only if they agreed to participate in the interviews (see Appendix B for the copy of the consent letter). Signing the consent form ensured that participants were aware of the purpose of the interview and research study. As well, participants were also made aware of the fact that the interviews were being recorded and if they chose to, they were able to withdraw themselves from the research study without any penalty at any time or they were able to refrain from answering questions if at any time they felt uncomfortable. Participants were also informed that they were able to review and change their answers to any questions as they wish and if desired, a copy of the transcribed interview was available for them. In order to establish a basis of trust between my participants and myself, I ensured them that their contributions, names and identifiers would
remain anonymous throughout the research study. Participants are acknowledged for all their contributions through the use of pseudonyms.

**Limitations**

This research study faces three key limitations. The first limitation is having a limited number of research participants to interview. By having only two participants to interview, information collected will be limited. Having a greater number of participants would further enhance the data collected and further discoveries and observations could have been made. The results of this research study are not to be applicable to the general population, but instead it will provide insight on two case studies on Ontario teachers and how they accommodate their classroom management practices to create an inclusive classroom. The second limitation of this study is the limited time given for the completion of the work. Completing this research study under a time period of a year, limits the scope and depth of the research, as more time would provide a deeper analysis into the changes of classroom management practices within inclusive classrooms. The last limitation in this study is the lack of student perspective. Because my research is focused on primary and junior grades, conducting research on the student perspective would require me to have consent from the university I am affiliated with, the school board, the student’s parents and possibly the classroom teacher. This would require more time, which as already mentioned, is limited. Therefore, research collected is only based on teacher perspectives within a classroom, and therefore, student perspectives remain an area for further study.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present findings based on data collected from two face-to-face interviews with a Special Education Specialist teacher, Lisa, and an experienced teacher, Jen, who has approximately 13 years of teaching students in a general education classroom. The findings from these interviews discussed the different challenges and benefits these teachers have experienced within inclusive classrooms and the different classroom management strategies that they have implemented to contribute to creating inclusive environments for all their students. From the analysis of the data, five prevalent themes emerged as a result of my participants’ education, experiences, insights, advice and values. These themes (as discussed in previous chapters) closely align with the literature review discussed in Chapter Two, offering new information to the area of study and confirming already established information.

Effective Classroom Management Strategies within the First Few Weeks of School

Set up of the Classroom

Classroom management begins even before school starts for students. As teachers, it is very important to create a safe and welcoming classroom environment where students feel like they belong. The way teachers design and organize the physical environment in a classroom plays an important role in determining how students will respond, learn and relate to one another and to the teacher (Schwartz & Pollshuke, 2013). Both of my research participants discussed the significance of setting up a classroom during the first couple days of schools. This goes hand in hand with the research done by Richardson and Fallona (2001) who also believe the classroom management established within the first week of school is critical. However, both participants focused on different aspects of the physical environment in a classroom. Within the first week of school, Lisa discussed how it is very important to create visuals for everything in your
classroom; having labels with pictures and words displayed. She explained, “Have a lot of visuals for all types of learners. Thinking about ESL [English as a second language] students, special education students, even the ones that are just slow and aren’t reading or whatever it may be” (Field notes, 2013). An example she gave was about having a visual schedule. She believed a visual schedule allowed her students to be independent throughout the day, avoiding having to answer repeated questions such as “What are we doing next? When is recess? What will we do after lunch?” Having a visual schedule, allowed her students to know what to expect for the day. Lisa was a strong believer of creating independent learners in her classroom, so she tried to keep a classroom where everything was consistent. She explained:

I keep materials in the same area so they know where to go to get something, so they aren’t always asking. Throughout the year I don’t usually change that. If I do, it causes us all to get a little unsure of where things are. And I also have them, always, usually anyways, in groups and they have materials where they have to share. I make sure we don’t have enough materials, so then sharing does have to happen, which then helps with group work and things like that. (Field notes, 2013)

Alternatively, Jen discusses the importance of really getting to know your students beforehand and their exceptionality, then only can you determine how to set up your classroom. She stated:

So if you had a classroom where you had a child with say social issues, children with Asperger’s or autism, then you would make sure you really fostered and had extra time for experiences where they could socialize. Having dramatic centers, you would focus on enhancing that so that they could fit in. So if you had a child, for example, who was deaf, then you would have lots of labels and pictures and symbols around the room. (Field notes, 2013)

Thus, Jen’s classroom set up is more catered to the individual needs of students with exceptionalities whereas Lisa focuses more on developing independent learners by implementing visuals and consistency around the classroom.

**Class Rules and Discussions**

Another aspect of classroom management that is believed to be important to establish during the first few weeks of class is classroom rules and discussions with students. Jen
described what she does with her class during her first week:

I think right off the bat from the beginning of the year I do a lot of group problem solving, united making of the rules, talking a lot of how we are different and how we are the same. So if you have a child with physical disability you can talk a lot about emotions and how they feel the same and how they are the same. So that not only is the child with special needs benefiting from the experience of being with their peers, but the rest of the class mates are benefiting because they are learning to be empathetic and they’re learning to be considerate of people of different needs. So you need to involve everyone in the beginning. If you have a child who needs a particular amount of space, so for example, one of my children who had a global development delay used to rock and swing his arms forward. So he needed a designated space in the classroom where he could go so he wouldn’t danger other children. So you need to look at those needs as well. (Field notes, 2013)

Similarly, Lisa also explains how during the first few weeks she thinks:

It is important to start off creating the class rules together. I’ve done that and then have them all sign it and post it, just making them aware. It’s really big that you don’t focus on the DO NOTs. You’re not stating the negative, you’re making it positive. I think that’s really key, too. (Field notes, 2013)

In Chapter Two, a lot of the literature review was focused on how teachers’ beliefs, personality and knowledge affect the students’ learning. It can be seen here where Jen and Lisa both bring their personal beliefs into their classroom. Both participants focus on the positive side of creating rules with their students. Lisa takes more of a collaborative strategy, having students develop the rules together and then having them sign it. “It really makes them accountable for their actions. If they act out, or start misbehaving, we always go back to our contract, and they see that they signed it. They know the expectations” (Field notes, 2013). Jen further explained an important strategy she uses with her classrooms:

One of the most important strategies for classroom management for your whole class is always taking into consideration how you approach them as a whole. So for example, if you are calm, and you are talking to them with a soothing voice and you are not coming at them with tons of energy even if they are coming at your with tons of energy, it is really effective to keep that in mind. You should approach them in a calm, collected matter, even if you have a child who is really upset. If you let them raise your energy to meet their energy, it’s not going to go well. But if you can remain calm, you can bring their energy back down. It’s important. (Field notes, 2013)
This data really demonstrates how a teacher’s personality and mannerisms directly affect students. In addition, Jen really spends her time having students understand the similarities and differences between each other. “It’s about equity rather than being equal” (Field notes, 2013). This comment reiterates the same notion elaborated on in Chapter Two, by Schwartz and Pollishuke (2013) who mentioned inclusive classrooms are equitable classrooms and all students will not be treated in an identical way but rather the needs and interests of every individual student will be met.

**Transitions**

Transitions are another important aspect of classroom management that is established during the first couple days and is then continued throughout the year. When students change from one activity to another, or from one class to another, this moment or period of change is referred to as transitions. Having students really respond to transition strategies is imperative in order to manage a smooth program. Lisa restates her appreciation for having visual schedules helping students know where to go following each period. Interestingly, both Jen and Lisa agree on the success of using music or catchy phrases to bring students together. Lisa shares:

> There are different ways. But I like using “Sponge Bob”. I would say Sponge Bob, and they [students] would reply Square Pants. They usually like that and it works well. All of this is important to start right at the beginning and be very strict about it. I find something they like. It works better. (Field notes, 2013)

Comparably, Jen shares, “When you are teaching younger children, in which I am, you would use something that would catch their interests and their attention and that’s how you would bring them together. So singing songs, doing poems, doing chants, to get everybody’s attention and bringing them together (Field notes, 2013). However, interestingly enough, Jen adds:

> Also teaching children sometimes if you were focus on something, you mind need a reminder from a friend. So it’s okay to go up to a friend and say oh we are lining up now. So teaching children how to adapt and how to help other children as well, is really
important. Also the strategy you use to do this, I think varies depending on the grade you are teaching. (Field notes, 2013)

The literature review conducted was not focused on the different transitions used in classrooms or the success of the different types of transitions to use. However, my research participants provide sufficient amount of data on the success of using musical transitions to engage student and capture their attention. I felt it was, therefore, important to include. However, Vogler (1999), did mention that having many transitions within a school day, slowed down the pace of the class and reduced opportunities for learning. This experience was not evident in either of the classrooms of my participants.

Classroom Carpet Space

In an inclusive classroom, it is important to take into account student community space when doing whole group discussions or activities. Jen shared a strategy she uses in her class to encourage an inclusive classroom:

I find that many children with exceptionalities really benefit from having their own space if they need it. So I think pretty much for every child with an exceptionality that I’ve taught, whether its drawing a spot on the carpet, so if they wanted to sit in that spot they could, and it’s big enough so they aren’t being, the sensory input from other people, touching or talking, is not interfering with them. It’s not that they have to sit there but if they want to they can. So I think space within the classroom is very important, and it’s something to take into consideration. (Field notes, 2013)

Corresponding to Jen’s response, Lisa also believes in students with exceptionalities needing certain spaces for themselves.

Depending on the need of the students, I would have designated areas. Some students might need alternative work space to be able to concentrate or complete work. When I would do group talks I would have them sitting as a group, but the students who need to be moving or fidgeting have the option to do that. But they know if they chose to do that, they cannot disrupt the class otherwise I take away their option of choice. (Field notes, 2013)

Jen also mentioned:
Sometimes those students [with exceptionalities] just need a break. It’s just too much to be included in everything that everyone else is doing. You could also have it so that they have a card or a signal, so that if they need to leave the room or if they need a break then they can. But then you also tie it back in when dealing with the other children with why that child can just get up and go. If you look at all the wonderful things that you can teach a child about understanding and empathy, really those are the skills, listening, cooperation, collaboration, those are the skills that make a successful individual when they get older. So if you can foster that in your class, it’ll be great. (Field notes, 2013)

Jen offers a great opportunity for teachers to discuss empathy and teach students the 21st century skills that will help students in their futures. Both participants really offer ample opportunities for all their students to feel safe and welcomed, allowing them to be in an environment that helps cater to their learning style and needs.

**The Benefits and Challenges of Inclusive Classrooms**

*What is “Inclusive”?*

It is important to understand what inclusive means when focusing a research study on inclusive classrooms. So I questioned both my participants to see what “inclusive” meant to them. Lisa believed the term “inclusive” focused on making children with different learning needs who may work and think differently feel accepted, not just within a classroom, but school wide with the other teachers. She narrowed in on making students with exceptionalities feel like they are included. Interestingly enough, Jen believes:

> Every child’s right to come to school and learn and socialize with their peers in a classroom that meets the needs of everyone’s ability. As a teacher, I see inclusive classroom not just including children with special needs, but also for children who are at different levels developmentally. (Field notes, 2013)

Both participants believe in the right of including students, who have exceptionalities, however Jen, extended her definition to include other students who may not have exceptionalities but are still different from other students. This belief is similar to what Soodak (2003) mentioned where inclusion is not just about student placement, but rather it is focused more on creating an environment that supports and includes all learners.
Benefits

The aforementioned literature review explains many of the stated benefits of having inclusive classrooms. However, my participants both discuss how to incorporate all students to develop an inclusive classroom that is beneficial for all students. Jen explains a strategy she likes to use with her class:

What I like to do is to have experts because we are all good at different things. So if we have someone who is really good at tying shoes, or zippers. Making everyone feel special. You can even post that on the wall with their pictures. That’s a really good way of having everyone and showing something special that everyone can do. (Field notes, 2013)

On the other hand, Lisa strongly believes in developing independent learners. She describes how she likes to do that in an inclusive classroom;

We don’t need to talk so much, or be in charge all the time. We need to be able to get kids to think. If they have a problem outside, instead of us being the ones doing all the talking, why not, try to get them to talk to each other to try and figure it out. (Field notes, 2013)

Lisa supports the idea of students using each other as resources, and solving their problems out together, collaboratively. Whereas, Jen continues to highlight differences in her classroom through a positive light, making all her students feel accepted. Both participants foster social experiences for students to shine and further develop their social skills with their peers. This supports the notion stated in the literature review, where students with exceptionalities and typically-developing students have opportunities to develop social relationships with each other within a general education classroom (Katz & Galbraith, 2006).

Challenges

With an increasing number of students with exceptionalities being admitted into general education classrooms, inclusive classrooms are growing. Teachers who are both experienced and educated still encounter various challenges with inclusive classrooms. Both my participants have
stressed the challenge of planning a day for students with exceptionalities. Jen stated “A typical
day with a child with special needs is a day that doesn’t always go as you planned” (Field notes,
2013). Similarly, Lisa stated “You could think that you can have it all planned and think that this
is going to work and it totally doesn’t” (Field notes, 2013). From this data it is apparent that
sometimes as a teacher you may spend time and put effort into a lesson but with a student with
exceptionalities who may be having a bad day, the lesson might not work. Lisa offered some
words of hope for a frustrated teacher experiencing this. She describes:

You always have to be ready to make changes and reflect on things, you can’t think you
always do this, this always works and this is how it’s going to be. Every class is different
and all the kids are different. It’s just always trying to figure out what will work if
something is not working or how I’m going to get the behaviours that I want or how I’m
going to get this done. Classroom management is ongoing thinking. (Field notes, 2013)

Lisa continued discussing how her belief that teachers need to teach students how to think.

“Students need to learn how to solve their own problems. If something is not working for
students, teachers should teach their students to voice their emotions” (Field notes, 2013). In
addition, Jen outlined a challenge she faces in her kindergarten classroom. She shared how she
finds it difficult to explain to her children why her expectations are different for some students
compared to other students. She stated, “If you have a child who doesn’t understand that, and
hasn’t reached a level of empathy or maturity so if you’re dealing with a kindergarten or grade
one student, they get really hung up on the fact that why does he have to do that when I have to
do all of this” (Field notes, 2013). Explaining to younger students the concept of equality and
equity seems to be a struggle for Jen with her students who still lack higher maturity levels. This
lack of maturity seems to be a challenge, not for students with exceptionalities, but can be
extended to typically-developing students who are just at a different development stage than the
average student. One of challenges outlined by Jordan et al. (2009), was that within inclusive
classrooms, students with exceptionalities reduce teachers’ instructional time with students who
are more likely to perform at grade level, and that teaching students with special needs requires specialized teaching skills. However, after discussing with my participants, both Lisa and Jen explained that within their classrooms they do not see teaching students with exceptionalities as a separate entity but in fact they are a part of the class and require the same amount of attention as a typically-developing student who may not understand a concept. Managing this situation would be reflected on the teacher’s ability to teach students with exceptionalities and how well they are able to develop an integrated program catering to a variety of needs within a classroom.

Managing Behaviour in an Inclusive Classroom: The Good and the Bad

Children will be children. There will always be one day when children misbehave, whether it was intentional or not. It is important for teachers to know how to manage the unwanted behaviour as well as prevent such behaviour in the future. For prevention, Lisa developed a positive reinforcement system with her class. “So when you see someone showing good behaviour, or behaviour that you want, I would say ‘caught you being good’. They can go up and submit their name for a draw and then there’s a chance that they can win a prize at the end of the week, the Friday” (Field notes, 2013). This system is used to promote positive behaviour focusing only behaviour that Lisa wanted and expected from her class. Depending on the behaviour of the students, if they are acting up a lot more, she would call on more students or she would change it up and do a prize draw every day. It is really flexible and dependent on how a teacher wants to implement it in their class. In addition, Lisa further explained that rather than telling students not to do something, she would focus on good behaviour that is being demonstrated by other students and give them a “caught you being good”. She also discussed that there is the possibility of doing group point systems. However, Lisa felt that when doing group point systems, if there is one student who cannot complete the task, the rest of the group is brought down. So instead, she would rather do individual points to make sure each student is
accountable for his/her actions. Thus, when doing the ‘caught you being good’ she states, “They love the simple things and they really focus on it. I’m so surprised. Even in a grade five class, they were excited to get stickers” (Field notes, 2013).

On the contrary, Jen claimed, “that point systems don’t work, from experience” (Field notes, 2013). However, she continued to clarify that point systems are well used to highlight the good things, the positive behaviour. But using such a system to highlight negative behaviour, has only backfired in her experience. When questioned how they would use the point system for students with exceptionalities, Lisa replied that she would use it the same way, but the behaviours she looks for would be different. She expanded:

I had a student with Down syndrome so when it was carpet time, if he was able to come and sit on the carpet quietly I would give him a ‘caught you being good’. But the other students would know if they sat on the carpet nice and quietly, I would not call on them. They knew that is already expected of them. (Field notes, 2013)

The literature reviewed does not specify whether point systems are beneficial for managing behaviour, however, from these interviews, both participants seem to agree that they can be beneficial when implemented properly, to highlight positive behaviour for students with exceptionalities and typically-developing students, creating an inclusive environment.

When managing behaviour in her classroom, Jen believes that as teachers, it is our job to catch misbehavior before it happens. For example:

A child with autism is going to have sensory issues. So if you are going to do an activity that is really loud, don’t expose them to it, and wait for them to have a melt down and then respond to that. You want to flip it around. Give them another job; deliver something to the office, so that negative behaviour that they have, which is a means of coping, is avoided. Because most of the children with special needs, their behaviour difficulties is how they cope. (Field notes, 2013)

Jen understood that her student with autism will have sensory issues and that negative behaviour
is a coping mechanism for them. However, not all teachers would know that. It is really important for teachers to understand their students and their exceptionalities. Greene (2008), mentions that if kids could do well, they would do well because kids do well if they can. If they cannot, then something is getting in their way (Greene, 2008). In other words, just because a student misbehaves does not mean that the student has a goal of misbehavior (Bennett & Smilanch, 1994). In addition, Lisa shared that even students with exceptionalities know their right from wrong; they know what they should and shouldn’t be doing. It is up to the teacher to determine how to make sure all the students are safe. She stated “but it is really important to remember to focus on the good behaviour. Don’t forget to talk about all the good things students are doing, not just about the things they should not be doing” (Field notes, 2013). Kounin stated that the way a teacher responds to a class as a result of student misbehavior helps win students over and communicates a message to the rest of the class (Bennett & Smilanch, 1994).

Continuing with the focus on positive behaviour, Jen expressed that she would play games with her students to build a community with the classroom so that all the students can feel like they are a part of something bigger than they are. “That’s what a classroom is. It’s teaching skills for learning, not just learning. Play games that build classroom community, include children in solving problems, and teach children ways of helping one another, that’s going to promote positive behaviour” (Field notes, 2013). Another suggestion Jen offered when managing behaviour, is to meet with parents and talk to parents about some of the strategies they use at home. It is important for teachers to know beforehand so that when they are in a situation in the classroom and are trying to promote positive behaviour, then they are able to draw on some of those strategies that the parents have informed them about (Field notes, 2013).

For students with exceptionalities, it is important to include them in the same way as the rest of the class. However, sometimes their days progress differently. Jen expressed that it is
important to provide students with exceptionalities with lots of breaks. She also added that teachers should pair students with someone who you know is going to give them praise if they are doing a good job, someone who cares about them and what they are doing. “If you can do that, modify the work, give them the work, you can avoid the negative behaviour from occurring. You also have to look for clues and cues within children with special needs to sort of prevent the behaviour from before it occurs” (Field notes, 2013). However, Lisa really stressed the idea of routine and how routines helps students with exceptionalities, as well as the rest of the class stay on task and follow a smooth classroom program. Both of these participants offer suggestions and strategies that coincide with the reviewed literature. It is not only the instructional methods, but also the climate created in the classroom and the support students get individually that significantly influences the behavioural and achievement outcomes for students (Carpenter & McKee-Higgins, 1996)

**Prior Experience and Additional Education Play a Role in an Inclusive Classroom**

Both my participants have their teaching qualification in the primary/junior division. When asked whether their education influenced their ability to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities, I received mixed responses. Jen, who has more experience but no additional qualifications in special education, believed that education has not helped her rather it was her experience that was valuable to her. She said, “When I look at the amount of research that I have had to do as an individual teacher, so I had a child with fetal alcohol syndrome, I had done a ton of research to try and help me help that child, on my own. But formal education, I would say hasn’t [helped]” (Field notes, 2013). Conversely, Lisa believed it had been both her education and her experience that has made an impression on her teaching with students with exceptionalities. She added that it was really the additional qualification courses that she had taken that have really helped her, as well as the free workshops that her board offers. Lisa is a
specialist in special education, which translates to having taken three additional courses in special education. Interestingly enough however, Jen mentioned that she plans on taking her special education additional qualification courses (probably level one and two) and believes that it will help her in the future with student with exceptionalities. It had not been an area she previously focused on, but Jen is certain that the additional courses will make her more qualified to teach students with exceptionalities.

**Take Advantage of the Resources in the Environment around You**

After interviewing my participants, one reemerging idea was that a teacher has many resources available within the school to utilize throughout the year. Both participants insisted that teachers to get to know the other grade teachers and to get to their neighbouring teacher. Other staff members are a great resource when it comes to students, especially if they have had the same student in previous years. As well, they both agreed that the Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) is a great resource for teachers who have students with exceptionalities and need a little bit of support and guidance. Teachers who have students with exceptionalities in their classrooms will have to continuously update and revisit the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) of these students. So even in creating and revisiting the expectations for the IEPs, teachers should seek out help from the SERT. Teachers should just make the effort to pursue others for the help. Some students who have exceptionalities will have teaching assistants (TA), so Lisa suggests, even working with the TA in the classroom will really help meet the needs of that particular student. In the surrounding environments, teachers are able to further extend their resources through parents and technology. As Jen mentioned earlier, parents are a great resource. They are the expert of their child, so meeting with them to engage in conversation on how to better help their children will only help both the teacher and the student. So take advantage of that opportunity. Furthermore, both Lisa and Jen discuss the wonders of
technology. Lisa explains how special education is her passion so she chooses to do her own research online, reading different articles and studies trying to understand the different exceptionalities better and how she can cater her lessons to best meet their needs. Similarly, Jen discusses the benefits of technology and how teachers should really do their research. Students with the same exceptionality will not function in the same way, so it is really important for teachers to do research and really find different strategies that will work for that student. Both participants stressed that teachers should not be afraid to ask for help. Lisa said “just don’t be afraid to admit to not knowing something. It’s a big problem that teachers feel like they have to know everything. You don’t. You just have to be willing to learn” (Field notes, 2013).
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this research project was to determine how teachers use classroom management practices and/or strategies to create inclusive learning environments for all students, including those who have been identified with exceptionalities. As well, to further investigate what classroom management practices or strategies address the needs of both typically-developing students and students with exceptionalities. What challenges do teachers have when implementing classroom management practices/strategies to meet the needs of all students? How do additional courses in special education play a role in the way teachers manage inclusive classrooms? By seeking answers from experienced and educated Ontario teachers, I have gained new insight and reinforced prior understandings on the topic of inclusive classrooms and classroom management. My participants, along with the literature review, have clearly presented different classroom management practices that create an inclusive classroom for all students as well as the challenges teachers face with inclusive classrooms and how to overcome these challenges. Within this chapter, I essentially outline the implications for this research study as a researcher and as a teacher, as well as providing recommendations for new and experienced teachers. I conclude by discussing the limitations and remaining questions leading to possible future studies.

Implications/Recommendations:

As the findings of this study show, teachers use varying classroom management strategies in their classrooms. However, a commonality between the strategies is that teachers always focus on the positive, whether it is positive behaviour or positive space and energy. Another commonality found is the inclusion of students in the decisions being made for the class, especially those students with exceptionalities. Additionally, it is important to incorporate class
discussions on what transitional songs they would like to use, or what should be expected of the students, rules and routines. Developing a common understanding of the differences and similarities with a class, allows students to be more empathetic and to build social skills. Having students included also makes them more accountable for their behaviour and actions within the classroom. Students appreciate when they feel like they have a say, they feel like they belong. In addition, inclusive classrooms are highly beneficial for students with exceptionalities, but the success is highly dependent on how the teacher addresses the needs and incorporates for these needs as part of a class program instead of an additional aspect a teacher must simply complete.

As a researcher, these findings have really heightened my awareness on how different teachers from different schools manage classrooms with a wide range of student abilities and learning styles. However, from these findings the notion of having classrooms with students with no exceptionalities was brought up in a conversation with my supervisor, Dr. Jackie Eldridge. We discussed that students are all unique, even in the absence of exceptionalities; teachers should be mindful and implement inclusive strategies to embrace all the students in the class (J. Eldridge, personal communication, March 13, 2014). However, most often teachers only associate being inclusive when integrating students with exceptionalities. The truth is that every student has an exceptionality, something that makes them exceptional and different from others. Thus, as a researcher I have witnessed the necessity to move away from traditional ways of teaching and managing classrooms and instead explore newer inclusive strategies and practices.

As a teacher, I have learned a lot about what really goes into managing a classroom. From the physical environment of a classroom to my personality and aura that I bring into my class, all affect how my students develop, learn and perform. There is no right way to do it. However, as a teacher you should always have a bag full of tricks. If one strategy does not work, I have learned it is important to be able to immediately try another strategy and another. I will
certainly implement all that I have learned from this study into my own classrooms.

During this study, the importance of additional education in special education has become apparent. Teachers have the choice to take additional qualification once they are certified teachers. However, many teachers do not choose to take special education as one of their AQs. As a result, I believe it would be valuable to integrate special education courses in pre-service teacher colleges and programs. Mentoring programs for first year teachers are effective, yet in most districts in the United States they don’t exist (Bennett & Smilanch, 1994). In Ontario, teachers do participate in the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) but its effectiveness is not entirely apparent (J. Eldridge, personal communication, April 3, 2014). Research is ongoing and beyond the scope of this paper. However, I believe if pre-service teachers are more prepared with the knowledge about different exceptionalities and catering to different needs, they will feel more confident in their own diverse classrooms. The OISE Masters of Teaching program did a wonderful job of teaching their teachers about special education and how to address the needs for students with exceptionalities. However, this does not seem to be the same across other Bachelor programs. As Jen mentioned, she did not believe her Bachelor of Education program prepared for students with exceptionalities at all. Thus, focusing on special education should probably a next step for teacher educational programs.

For the new and the experienced teachers, some recommendations to take away from this research study are as follows:

- Always keep an open mind when working with students with exceptionalities.
- Students with the same exceptionality are not the same student. You will have to work with each student to learn what works for them each time.
- Do your research. As a teacher, you need to continue to learn and teach yourself.
- Use your resources. Boards offer special education resource teachers who are always
available for support. As well, other staff members are great to turn to for new ideas and sharing of ideas.

- Talk to parents. Parents know their child the best. Talk to them and find out what strategies work for their child and that you can apply into the classroom

**Limitations**

While this study has provided beneficial information for teachers, it is not without its limitations. Previously mentioned in Chapter three there were three limitations related to the methodology of this research study. However, the limitations with regards to the data collected coincide with the methodology limits. The data collected has only barely scratched the surface of information that teachers have about classroom management strategies they use to implement inclusive classrooms. By increasing the number of participants, and including teachers with varying backgrounds, would really shed new light on whether the suggested strategies are effective. Gathering information from students would provide great insight into understanding how students feel when teachers implement certain strategies in the classrooms. Students are their biggest advocate, so it can really prove beneficial to hear what they have to share. In addition, having parents provide input on strategies used at home would also be an interesting source of data. As well, the data from this study is mostly focused on the primary grades in school. Extending data collection to include more junior and even intermediate/senior would be interesting to analyze. With inclusive classrooms still being accepted across schools in the country, with an extended amount of time, a more detailed and comprehensive study can be completed, including a wider range of sources of information.

**Further study**

Following the completion of this study, there have only been more unanswered questions that I would love to further investigate. A sub questions I addressed in my study was determining
whether additional education makes a difference in an inclusive classroom, and found that the additional courses are beneficial for teachers. It would be interesting to extend this research and determine how well the Special Education AQs prepare teachers for an inclusive classroom, and whether classroom management strategies are a focus. As well, students are all unique, and most often teachers get caught up with the idea of inclusive meaning including students with exceptionalities. However, teachers fail to see that in a classroom students still range in their learning styles, they cannot be taught in the same way. Exploring how teachers manage an inclusive classroom where students do not have any exceptionalities but still range in their abilities and learning styles, would really provide significant information for teachers.

Furthermore, within this study I focused on teaching strategies, however it would be valuable to examine the different strategies parents use for their children at home, and whether these strategies continue to work within an inclusive classroom. This would shed some light on whether a social environment with peers’ changes how students behave compared to being at home with family, especially if there are cultural traditions, beliefs and values in raising a child with exceptionalities.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research study provides an outline of different classroom management strategies for teachers who have students with exceptionalities within their classrooms. Through the research collected through interviews and the literature review, classroom management should be considered as a powerful collection of techniques and strategies in terms of creating meaningful learning experiences for all students including students with exceptionalities. Teachers use varying classroom management strategies to create an inclusive environment for all their students, with a positive outlook. They use the same strategies for students with exceptionalities, except the behaviours and tasks that teachers expect vary, which has teachers
modifying their strategies slightly. The biggest challenge that was found for teachers when implementing classroom management strategies was that a planned day never goes as planned. So teachers should just be flexible and prepared to accommodate for any changes during the day. Lastly, additional courses in special education appear to be beneficial for teachers when managing inclusive classrooms with students with exceptionalities. Having effective classroom strategies has proven to be valuable for both teachers and students. With these strategies, teachers are able to better address the needs of their students, creating safe and welcoming environments where students are able to develop their social and academic skills, reaching their full potential.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

Participant’s Background Information and Introduction to Topic
1. I would like to get to know a little more about your experiences as an educator. For how long have you been teaching?

2. What grades have you taught previously?

3. What is your educational background?

4. Do you have any additional education or qualifications in special education?

5. What experience do you have working with students with exceptionalities? (Prompt: What are the exceptionalities that you have worked with?)

6. In your own words, how would you define inclusivity?

Classroom Management Practices
7. Please explain how you set up your classroom from the beginning of the year to foster inclusion? (Prompts: physical set-up, table/desk groupings, walls, classroom environment, Tribes, other)

8. Are there specific areas or resources for students with exceptionalities? Please explain. (Prompt: Do you use a specific program? Books? Technology? Human resources such as Special Ed teacher, psychoeducational consultant, librarian, principal, other?)

9. Please describe a typical day in your classroom and the classroom management strategies/practices that you have in place. (Prompt: How do students transition from one class to the other? From one activity to another? What routines or rules do you have in place? How were these introduced to the students?)

10. How might a typical day in school differ for students with exceptionalities?

11. What strategies do you use when typically-developing students exhibit negative behaviours in the classroom? How does this differ for students with exceptionalities?

12. How do you promote positive behaviour in your classroom? What strategies do you use for students with exceptionalities?

Benefits or Challenges
13. What challenges do you face, if any, with respect to classroom management in general?
14. What problems or obstacles have you experienced, if any, with trying to implement classroom management practices for students with exceptionalities?

15. In your opinion, what classroom management strategies are most beneficial for the class as a whole?

16. What classroom management strategies are most beneficial specifically for students with exceptionalities?

Conclusion

17. Do you think your education has influenced your ability to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities? Please explain.

18. What other education or professional development may have been helpful to you as you learned to be a teacher of all students?

19. What advice would you give to a beginning teacher who has students with exceptionalities in their classroom?

20. Would you like to add anything else in respect to inclusivity, classroom management strategies or students with exceptionalities?
APPENDIX B: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ___________________

Dear Participant,

I am currently a graduate student enrolled in the Master of Teaching Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). As part of the requirements of this program, I am completing a Major Research Paper in a specific area of interest, which in my case is “Classroom management practices implemented in inclusive classrooms.” I believe that your insight would be an important contribution to my research.

My data collection consists of an approximate 20-minute interview at a time and location that is suitable to you. The interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and analyzed for common themes. The content of the interviews will be used for a final research paper, informal presentations to classmates and potentially at a research conference or for publication. Your identity will remain anonymous and only my research supervisor Jackie Eldridge and I will have access to this data.

Please be assured that your participation in this project is completely voluntary. In addition, you may decline to answer any question during the interview, stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the study for any reason. Should you have any questions or require further information, you may contact my research supervisor or myself.

If you agree to be interviewed, please sign below. Please retain a second copy for your records.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Yamani
Principal Researcher
yamanisa@mail.utoronto.ca

Dr. Jackie Eldridge
Research Supervisor
Jackie.eldridge@utoronto.ca

Consent to Participate:

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty. I have read the letter provided to me by Sarah Yamani and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Participant Signature: __________________________________________
Participant Name (printed): ______________________________________
Date: ______________________