Reintegrative Education for Students in Conflict with the Law

By

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Abstract

There are many views around the issue of individuals in the youth criminal justice system and their access to certain rights and freedoms. This qualitative study examines teachers’ perspective on the importance of providing equal access of education to students in conflict with the law. Using a qualitative research methodology, semi-structured interviews with one Ontario secondary teacher and one Ontario vice-principal, this study highlights the challenges teaching at a school that specifically work with students in conflict with the law, but also strategies that are implemented within the classroom and school to reintegrate these students back into society, through academic support, community resources and support, and mentorship and positive role modeling.

Key Words: reintegration, right to education, youth in conflict with the law, suspensions, and expulsions.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to Research Study

Rights and freedoms are a fundamental component of Canadian citizenship and under numerous charters, bills, and legislations; every single individual in Canada must peacefully and justly adhere to those without violating others’ rights and freedoms but simultaneously are protected themselves. In 1947/48 Canada played a central role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which led to vital negotiations of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). This piece of human rights treaty defines the civil, political, social, health, economical, and cultural rights of children. Specifically, Article 28 of the convention declares:

*States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:*

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Article 28, 1990).

This particular article states that Canada is legally responsible to provide equal access to education to anyone under the age of eighteen, regardless of any circumstances. In the province of Ontario, under Section 21 of the Ontario Education Act, education is compulsory up to the age of 18; however, concerns about the status of individuals arise regarding access to their rights.
Under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (Y.C.J.A.) of Canada, individuals between the ages of twelve to eighteen who violate criminal law or the Criminal Code of Canada may be subjected to correctional discipline. Depending on the violent nature and severity of the criminal offense, even fourteen to seventeen year olds may be tried and sentenced as an adult for the purpose of harsher and punitive penalties (Department of Justice, 2013). Under this Youth Criminal Justice Act, a judge may sentence a youth to “intensive rehabilitative custody and supervision order” for the following reasons:

1. the young person has been found guilty of a serious violent offence (murder, attempted murder, manslaughter or aggravated sexual assault), or an offence in which the young person caused or attempted to cause serious bodily harm and for which an adult could be imprisoned for more than two years and the young person had previously been found guilty at least twice of such an offence;
2. the young person is suffering from a mental or psychological disorder or an emotional disturbance;
3. an individualized treatment plan has been developed for the young person; and
4. an appropriate program is available and the young person is suitable for admission (Department of Justice, 2013)

The stated reason for incarceration is to provide what is best for the convicted youth in a supervised setting away from their home or community environment that otherwise may not be accessible. The court trial process is not as smooth and transitional as one imagines. The gap between court hearings and sentencing may force youth to wait long periods, and occasionally in custody centres, let alone imprisoned in correctional facilities for a longer sentenced duration of time. However, according to the Youth Correctional Statistics in Canada, 2010/2011, the rate of youth under correctional supervision has decreased (Munch, 2012). Regardless of the incarceration rate for youth in Canada decreasing every year, there are still youth being admitted into sentenced custody for an average term of “more than 1 month to 6 months” (Munch, 2012). Although twelve year olds are admitted into custody centres or correctional facilities, the rate of
youth admitted into the correctional services increases with age; 17 year olds are the majority in the youth correctional system (Munch, 2012). Thus, incarcerated youth are simultaneously conflicted with two pieces of legislations: Youth Criminal Justice Act and the Ontario Education Act, which mandate youth to attend schooling while stigmatized with their status as “incarcerated.”

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my proposed study is to understand the delivery of the Ontario educational system within a correctional/custodial environment, and to learn how a sample of teachers working in Section 23 programs, specifically providing equal access to education to youth in conflict with the law as their non-conflicted peers. I am also interested in learning how these teachers perceive the implications of the quality of education in these programs for successful reintegration into the public school system and ultimately society.

Each school board district in Ontario has a program that provides educational needs to students that require it in specialized settings outside of the regular school system called “Section 23 Programs” (T.D.S.B., 2014). The Toronto District School Board (T.D.S.B.) works in partnership with three corrections/detention programs in providing education to students: Fernie House Child and Youth Services; Turning Point Youth Services; and Operation Springboard (T.D.S.B Resources, 2013). These locations are all open custody centres, which allow the youth to still remain in the community without the full security restrictions as it is in correctional facilities operated directly by the Ministry of Children and Youth. In Ontario, there are 6 secure custody and detentions (Youth Justice Regional Offices, 2011).

For Ontario youth in custody, two ministries collaborate to provide education within a custodial or correctional environment: the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the
Ministry of Education. Students who are admitted into government-approved facilities for “care and/or treatment purposes” (which include custody/detention facilities), are still allowed to receive suitable educational programs by the school board within the facilities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). The Provision of Educational Programs in Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional Facilities (Ministry of Ontario, 2006), outlines the “guidelines designed to provide direction to school boards regarding the approval and delivery of educational programs for students who are clients of a government approved Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional (CTCC) facilities” (2006). The purpose of this collaborative planning and multi-disciplinary team is to ensure consistent and continuous support for students during their learning, care, treatment and/or rehabilitation journey (2014). The reality that some Ontario students will have to complete part of their education in a correctional facility is inevitable, and ultimately teachers will have to adapt to teaching in different environments fulfilling different duties.

Teaching is a difficult professional because teachers must accommodate students from various backgrounds, but also because we may have to teach in settings exclusive of the traditional classroom setting, but in other spaces with much less resources and support. The purpose of the study is to investigate an ostracized population of students who may not have access to equal education, even though it is the legal responsibility of Canada, in state-run facilities, and shed light on an issue that is publicly unknown. Furthermore, the pedagogy that these teachers use is important in students’ development in engagement and citizenship. By learning from these teachers, I hope to gain knowledge and understanding of the importance of providing equal access to education to all students.
1.3 Research Questions

The principal question guiding my proposed research study is: How are teachers working in the Sectional 23 correctional/reintegrative program able to provide youth in conflict with the law with equal access to education as their non-conflicted peers, and what are the perceived implications for students’ reintegration into public school classrooms and/or society?

- How are teachers working in correctional/reintegrative Section 23 program teaching the formal Ontario curriculum? What is included / excluded?
- What challenges do these teachers face providing conflicted youth with equal access to education?
- How much of the programming is geared toward preparing students for reintegration into public school classrooms and/or society?
- How do these teachers perceive the impact of the education these youth receive on their reintegration and transitioning into public school classrooms and/or society?

1.4 Background of the Researcher

As a teacher candidate in the Masters of Teaching program at OISE, I firmly believe in the equal and equitable access to education for all students, regardless of their background and present status; every single individual has the right to an education including those formally in the criminal justice system. My undergraduate degree in criminology and my Masters of Teaching reflects my passion and curiosity to learn both Ontario’s youth justice system and educational system, and how as a future teacher, I may have the prospect of working with students in conflict with the law. Regardless of whom I am teaching with, it will still be my responsibility to provide access to quality education.
My experience working with “at-risk” children and youth reflect how important positive role models are to the development of active citizenship, especially educators. From my observations and interactions, these children and youth often come from low socio-economical backgrounds, are minority race/ethnicities in underserved or “priority” neighborhoods and schools, and confront a range of personal barriers that mirror the demographics of those formally in the youth criminal justice system. I volunteered and worked with various organizations that specifically serve these communities, especially the children and youth, to give them community building and problem solving skills and attitudes, in hopes of removing the “at-risk” stigma; however, I am well aware some of these youth will unfortunately end up in the youth criminal justice system. It is inevitable that all youth will be successful but a positive educational experience can reduce the possibilities of reoccurrence and recidivism. Obviously, I believe that society should work to eliminate anyone from entering the correctional system but realistically, that will not happen. Nevertheless, teachers and educators can still help their students reintegrate back into society as a positive and active citizen with the right knowledge, skills, and values, by understanding that every student is at different levels in their citizenship education.

I am an avid believer in the importance of community building and problem solving, and one can only develop and build their skills from learning with and from others. All students, not only those in the correctional system, need that education and guidance throughout their childhood and adolescence.

**1.5 Overview**

In Chapter 2, I review the literature in the areas of the Rights of the Child and Right to Education; Rights of the Rule/Law Breaker; Programming and Services; and Challenges to Teaching Correctional/Reintegrative Education. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology and
procedure for my study including information about the sampling criteria and data collection instruments. Chapter 4 describes the participants in the study and reports the data as it addresses the research question. In Chapter 5 I discuss the questions raised by the research findings, identify the limitations of the study, and articulate conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further reading and study.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

There is an extensive amount of published articles on education within the youth criminal justice system; however, relatively few articles focus on an Ontario context or Canadian context as a whole. I have examined the scope of literature that focuses on education as a right, even those who break the law, and the research about education delivered in a correctional/reintegrative environment. I will address relevant subtopics that are pertinent to my research question: How are teachers working in the Sectional 23 correctional/reintegrative program able to provide youth in conflict with the law with equal access to education as their non-conflicted peers? I will also identify the disconnect that exist within the relevant body of literature, and how my research will supplement the existing knowledge on reintegrative education for youth in conflict with the law.

2.2 Rights of a Child & Right to Education

From personal experience, living in Ontario as a child and youth was not a struggle in comparison to many stories from countries around the world: compulsory education until eighteen (Service Ontario, 2012); and anti-child labour and exploitation laws (Commission for Labor Cooperation) are only a couple of laws that protected my right as a child but there are many other laws that protected me.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child (1990) defines 41 articles pertaining to the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of all children. Most countries have signed this human rights treaty and they are legally responsibly to abide by this
treaty, although administering to varying degrees. Canada is one of those countries who agreed and signed it.

In Canada, youth have a separate criminal justice system from adults. Replacing the former Young Offenders Act, the intentions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act was providing youth with “the right to be protected, through a separate juvenile justice system respectful of their procedural rights and vulnerable status, from abuse of due process and unfair treatment,” outlined in articles 37, 39, and 40 of the UN Conventions of the Right of a Child (Howe and Covell, 2001). Focusing more on non-prison alternative sentences, the purpose is to involve the community in the offender’s reintegration and rehabilitation, and avoid simply locking youth in correctional facilities unless for serious offences and deemed necessary if the services and resources were unavailable in the community. As a result, the Y.C.J.A. would lower recidivism because they are receiving the community support needed for these individuals to become a law-abiding citizen. Studies have shown that crime would increase with incarceration sentences because it was breeding repeat offenders and having no significant deterrent effects (Covell, 2010). Harsh punishments, sentences in youth correction centres, boot camps, and transfers to adult courts were common strategies that increased recidivism rather than decrease crime. Nevertheless, if youth are sentenced to incarceration, they are housed in facilities specifically for youth and with other youth, while provided with basic economic and social needs including “economic welfare (article 27), health care (article 24), education (article 28), and obviously the right to programs of rehabilitation, treatment, and reintegration (articles 39 and 40[4])” (Howe & Covell, 2011).

This community-based youth justice system has received mixed reviews from the public about the effectiveness of handling crime in Canada (Howe & Covell, 2001; Moon et al, 2000;
Roberts, 2004; Sprott, 1998; Tufts and Roberts, 2002). Public outcries have been voiced about the Y.C.J.A. as excessively lenient and as a result, not deterring youth from committing crimes (Covell, 2010, Sprott, 1998, Tufts & Roberts, 2002). This misconception is caused by mass media creating moral panics for sensationalizing youth-related crimes such as school shootings, gang violence, bullying, and other major violent incidents. This has falsely convinced the public that Canadian youth are increasingly violent and uncontrollable, and hence need harsher punishments (Roberts, 2004, Covell, 2010). With these events as a basis, many lawmakers and the public want a ‘get tough’ harsher punitive sentencing, disclose the names of the offenders, and lower the age of criminal responsibility from the current 12 to 10 years (Sprout 1998, Covell, 2010, Moon et al, 2000). However, the discourse between what the public knows about youth crime rate and what the Youth Criminal Justice Act actually does has caused this criticism because they are uninformed or uneducated in either or both subjects.

Understandably, the combination of decreasing rates of youth under correctional supervision (Munch, 2012) and moral panics of violent and uncontrollable youth have caused public misconceptions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and Canada’s correctional system. However, according to Statistics Canada, by 2010, police-reported crimes have been steadily decreasing, both in volume and in severity of the crimes (Brennan & Dauvergne, 2010). In fact, property-related crimes, violent crimes, and other Criminal Code offences have generally decreased, “reaching its lowest level since the early 1970’s,” and the seriousness of crime, measured by the Crime Severity Index, has also dropped to its lowest point since it was first measured in 1998 (Brennan & Dauvergne, 2010). Simultaneously, the overall youth crime rate in 2006 was 6% lower than it was in 1996 and 25% lower than in 1991, where non-violent youth crimes total 75% of all youth crimes, and homicides and serious crimes are very rare (Covell,
Amongst the violent crimes, the majority are minor assaults charges, including offences such as “sexual assault acts which describes acts that are non-injurious such as unwanted touches, which typically occur around or in school, and charges are brought as a result of zero-tolerance policies” (Covell, 2010). Statistics have shown that youth are indeed less violent and committing less crime as the years progress.

While there are those who believe the Youth Criminal Justice Act aligns with the Convention of the Rights of a Child with its greater emphasis on “treatment, reintegration and rehabilitation, and reduced use of custody,” concerns about the excessive use of punishment and prison and inadequate attention to support the special needs of youth is an issue that advocates raise (Denov, 2006). While the rate of youth placed in detention has decreased, child advocates suggest that the juvenile justice institutions are characterized by “racism, bullying, and violence” (Denov, 2006). Although the YCJA is a federal system, each province and territory implements them in different ways, creating unequal treatment of children and youth. Thus, ensuring the privacy of youth offender, and detaining youth with adult offenders occasionally occurs, which hinders the access of resources and services, and the transition back into the community, ultimately failing to adhere to the Convention. Denov (2006) and Covell (2010) both agree that to eliminate public misconceptions about youth who offend and about the Youth Criminal Justice Act, public education is needed to bring awareness that punishing youth harshly does not indeed decrease criminal offending but rather increase it. These children and youth need to be raised in families, schools, and communities that respect their rights rather than legislations or punishments to reduce youth offending (Denov, 2006 & Covell, 2010).
2.3 Rights of a Rule/Law Breaker

2.3.1 Suspended/Expelled from School

Similar to Canada’s System of Justice, under Bill 81 “Safe Schools Act” of the Ontario Education Act, Ontario students may be suspended and/or expelled from schools depending on the specific incidents that jeopardize the safety of students and school. Depending on the incident, principals and/or school board administrators must consider the severity of the incident, the individual student, and the mitigating factors that may have led to the incident before finalizing any decisions (Ontario Ministry of Education – Safe Schools, 2014).

Ontario schools have changed from entirely “zero-tolerance” discipline policies to considering mitigating factors before deciding on appropriate actions, however, suspensions and expulsions are options principals and school boards still consider and implement. According to the Safe Schools Act, suspensions vary from a period of one to 20 days, and a “long-term suspension” is considered more than five schools days (Ontario Ministry of Education – Safe Schools, 2014). During a student’s suspension, students are intended to follow their “Student Action Plan.” School boards must develop a “Student Action Plan,” which outlines an academic program based on the student’s needs that will assist them to continue learning, and “additional supports to promote positive behaviour,” such as anger management or substance abuse counselling for suspensions between 11 to 20 school days (Ontario Ministry of Education – Safe Schools, 2014). These action plans will be developed based on their needs, length of the suspension, the nature and severity of the behaviour, and other mitigating factors. In their plan, it identifies the objectives for the student, an academic component that follows the Ontario curriculum and provides the opportunity for students to continue their education regardless if students have special education needs and an Individual Education plan; the board must provide
necessary supports consistent with the student’s IEP (Ontario Ministry of Education – Safe Schools, 2014).

After students return from their suspension lasting more than five school days, various school staff including the principal, teacher, and student and, where possible, the parent will hold a re-entry meeting. This meeting’s objective is to: “make the student’s transition back to school easier;” “identify any extra academic or other supports to promote positive behaviour the student may need when returning to school;” and “community agencies that have been working with the student are also encouraged to attend the re-entry meeting” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

If the incident is extremely severe and the school board decides to expel a student, two decisions are available: the student can be expelled from their own school, or the student can be expelled from all schools in the board (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Expulsions from their schools require boards to make supports and resources available to the student at their new school, while expulsions from all schools in the board require the principal to hold a planning meeting with the student and include school and board staff as well as parents or guardians if possible (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). The objective of the planning meeting is to identify the “student’s needs,” “student’s risk factors,” and “types of services and supports requires to help the student continue learning” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

The framework of suspensions and expulsions mirror that of the criminal justice system. First, a student is punished for their action and given a “sentence.” Then, students are offered various programs and services during their sentence, which for school suspensions is the continuation of their education. Finally, students are able to successfully reintegrate back into the
[school] community because they were provided with the academic and social programs. Within the educational system, even students who temporary withdraw themselves from the classroom are allowed to continue their education but in reality, that access to equal education between both groups of students is merely figurative. Similar to custody sentencing, suspensions and expulsions remove problematic individuals from the community to prevent future misbehaviour (Blomberg, 2004). Research has proven that these out-of-school suspensions are ineffective and misapplied in reducing and eliminating student misconduct. In reverse, suspensions have left students feeling it was of little use and even predicted they would be suspended again (Blomberg, 2004). And rather than feeling remorse for their actions, students felt angry at the person who had suspended them. Therefore, Blomberg’s study suggests that suspensions and expulsions may not meet the special needs of students. Hence why many may think that suspensions are simply vacation for students and view the same for youth correctional facilities, where they are housed, fed, and even paid. This is costing taxpayers an average of $110,000 a year to house one male inmate (Brosnahan, 2013).

2.3.2 Education in Residential Facilities

The difference between education in a classroom and residential facilities is the overall structure of the classroom and facility. Young, Phillips, and Nasir (2010) investigates schooling in a U.S. youth prison by interviewing the youth and observing classrooms to understand the practices and tensions of schooling in a prison, the processes of schooling that affect the conditions of learning, and ways that a prison context affords or constrains student learning opportunities. Young et al conclude by identifying five factors for impacting learning: physical context and classroom setting; institutional emphasis on safety and control; stigmatization of students; student transience due to movement through the legal system; and the
disconnection between incarceration schools and schools before imprisonment. If teachers and schools are unable to support students in dealing with these extrinsic factors affecting learning, then students in youth correctional facilities will struggle in transitioning back into the community (Young et al, 2010).

2.4 Programming and Services

2.4.1 Transitional Services

A major component of youth sentences includes the rehabilitation and treatment of youth for easier transition back into the community through programs focusing on anger management, violence prevention, alcohol and/or substance abuse counselling, mental health counselling, and others (Covell, 2010). Cole and Cohen (2013) investigated the perspectives of various juvenile justice personnel that assist with youth transition from prison back into schools (sometimes referred to as the “school-to-prison pipeline” phenomenon), and the barriers which youth encountered when re-entering the school system from the juvenile correctional system. Through interviewing these personnel, Cole and Cohen learned that some of the barriers that youth experience when leaving the prison and re-entering the school are school leadership concerns; regressive labelling and stigmatization; and lack of access to information.

2.5 Teaching Correctional Education

Students in youth correctional facilities have the right to access the formal curriculum, according to the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Children and Youth Services (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). Typically, the Ontario public classroom body is composed with students of similar age and grade level. Exceptions are made such as special needs and split level grade classrooms but this basic component creates a structurally homogenous group of students for teachers to teach the formal curriculum specific to the grade. Because youth sentences are
shorter than adults, the cyclical student transience within the correctional system changes classroom dynamics quickly (Young et al, 2010, Koyama, 2012). This creates an extremely heterogeneous classroom of mixed ages, grades and ability that change on a constant level, thus making it nearly impossible for teachers to follow any curriculum (Young et al, 2010). Teachers and correctional facilities must implement meaningful and creative methods to teach necessary curriculum material.

Simply delivering the formal curriculum is challenging because the literacy levels of youth offenders are substantially lower than the general public (Harris et al 2009; Bhatti, 2010; Oesterreich, 2009). Harris et al. (2009) investigated the reading achievement of incarcerated youth in three US regions, by analyzing areas in “word identification”, “word attack\(^1\)”, and “passage comprehension”. Through this research, they concluded that incarcerated youth were overall in the low to average range but significant differences by ethnicity and special education status. The majority of incarcerated youth are roughly two years behind their peers in public schools with a low reading achievement; ninth graders were at a fourth grade level and it was especially lower if they were incarcerated for “severe, aggressive offenses” (Harris et al, 2009). Another finding is the significant differences by ethnicity and special education status, specifically amongst minority ethnicities that were over-represented in youth correctional facilities scored much lower (Harris et al, 2009). Individuals who enter the correctional system are already behind on their literacy skills, and will continue to fall behind during their admission.

Knowing that traditional delivery of curriculum materials may not be effective, Jacobi (2008) investigated alternative literacy practices in youth prisons that effectively supplement conventional educational courses by engaging youth through creativity, critical self-awareness, 

\(^1\) phonetically-based nonsense words to assess the youth's phonic skills (Harris et al, 2009)
and a shift in how audience and authorship is understood. The case study of various alternative literacy educational programs outlines specific pedagogical approaches and practices, and concludes five core education and life skills outcomes that emerge. As a result, alternative literacy:

1. improves reading, writing, and thinking skills, and create opportunities for employing alternative assessment methods
2. promote heightened sense of identity, confidence, and motivation
3. allow juveniles to develop strong rhetorical communication skills
4. encourages juvenile to interact with each other and writers from around the world and to emerge with publishing industry
5. enable juveniles to participate with peer and public community in new ways as they imagine themselves beyond their crime and confinement (Jacobi, 2008).

But this type programming is an anomaly in the correctional system, and commonly, the curricular feature of prison school education is to earn “easy (high school) credits” for students to progress and collect credits to earn their high school diploma (Young et al, 2010). Although correctional teachers may want to teach creative and engaging lessons, students on the other hand appreciate this easy work to obtain the reward of a high school diploma. Nevertheless, this may be of disservice to the students if this achievement provides them a false sense of their ability in relation to their progress through their academic career (Young et al, 2010).

### 2.6 Challenges of Teaching Correctional Education

#### 2.6.1 Federal/Provincial Legislations and Policies

Morris and Thompson (2008) investigated the discourse of federal legislations regarding the right to special education programs for eligible youth, implementation by detention centres or correctional facilities, and overall challenges and difficulties faced by juveniles. Morris and Thompson argue legislations and case laws demonstrate these policy implementation issues and inconsistencies due to a lack of sufficient personnel; lack of certified special education teachers;
and other challenges and barriers that public schools experience in implementing special education services.

Every student in the United States who is eligible for special education must receive their specific programming under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act [2004], regardless of their educational placement including correctional facilities (Morris & Thompson, 2008). Ontario has similar regulations in the Education Act that specifically outline the mandates that school boards must fulfill for special education and programs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Thus school boards and teachers must adhere to these policies in providing the same quality education to students with special needs as everyone else.

2.6.2 Learning Disabilities and Special Needs

Youth entering the correctional facilities experience exponential issues that are also prevalent in the educational system, which the justice system and educators need to consider and support, before transitioning back into society. Most often, these youth have various learning disabilities or mental health issues that otherwise would not be diagnosed and/or treated without the assessment of the justice system (Bhatti, 2010; Harris et al, 2009). Quite often, adult offenders’ learning disabilities or mental issues are not commonly identified in their childhood, which is believed to have contributed to their delinquency (Bhatti, 2010). Highly problematic, it is estimated that approximately 75% of youth in prisons have some type of disability; for example significant learning problems, or emotional or behavioural disorders (Covell, 2010). Other common characteristics of youth in the justice system are history of parental abuse and neglect, parental substance abuse, and parental criminality (Howe & Covell, 2001). As a result, many of these children have been in contact with the children’s aid system and/or justice system before arrival.
Disproportionately, Aboriginal youth are highly overrepresented in the criminal justice system and this frequency can be linked to legacies of colonialism and residential schooling, racism, poverty, and cultural upheavals (Covell, 2010). Typically, these youth have an extensive history of family struggles, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and drug and/or alcohol abuse problems (Covell, 2010, Munch, 2012). Aside from the Eurocentric treatment programs provided by the system that have mixed results benefiting Aboriginal youth, they also heavily rely on holistic approaches and culturally relevant intervention programs such as sweat lodges, healing circles, and counselling from elders (Public Safety Canada, 1994). However, as Morris and Thompson (2008) recognized, the inconsistencies of policy implementations for students with special needs in detention centres and correctional facilities are similar to those present in the Canadian prison system. Both systems lack in delivering culturally relevant programs for minority groups, such as African-Canadian or First Nations/Aboriginal groups, and yet they are overrepresented in the prison system but have no access to programs that are effective to them.

In essence, children and youth in conflict with the law commonly grew up in environments where their rights were infringed upon. As Covell (2010) elegantly states,

They may have been exposed to toxic substances, such as alcohol, in utero, or their development has been compromised by the toxic experiences of parental rejection, neglect, abuse, or harsh corporal punishment. They are children with little impulse control, with heightened aggression, with low self-esteem, and with impaired reasoning and decision-making skills. They are children in need of help.

Thus, correctional educators in youth facilities must consider all of these factors when interacting and teaching youth. The extent of what teachers work with is overwhelming, raising questions about what kinds of training and support they receive to effectively teach students in the youth justice system.


2.6.3 School Board and Facility Relations

For successful educational and transitional reintegration, correctional educators must provide the necessary access to equal education as possible. However, a major challenge these teachers experience is the lack of student background information because they do not have access to their academic records (Morris 2008; Koyama, 2012, Young et al, 2010). Without these student records, teachers are unable to provide the individualized resources such as accommodations or modifications needed for their learning. The reason for this backlog is the communication between school boards and the correctional facilities that delay the delivery of the academic records to its rightful destination (Young et al, 2010). Although the school boards and care/treatment facilities have to abide by the same provincial policies of providing education to youth regardless of their location, the time it takes for those academic records to arrive to the facilities is arduous. In addition, the combination of student transience makes this delivery pointless because by the time the records arrive, the youth is no longer at the facility (Koyama, 2012). Thus, teachers are limited to what and how they teach because they do not know what is suitable for the individual student. Teachers may provide work that is too easy or too difficult for them. This helps to explain why teachers working the youth justice system typically give textbook questions and worksheets to be worked on independently and they act more as moderators or tutors than teachers (Young et al. 2010, p.214). The major suggestions that these teachers have made include more effective inter-agency communication for better student records sharing, provision of class materials, and enrollment and credit processing (Koyama, 2012). Without solving this communication problem, teachers will continue to experience challenges in the classroom.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide a thorough explanation of the procedures that were carried out for the purposes of this phenomenological qualitative research study (Creswell, 2013): the instruments of data collection, descriptions of the participants, ethical review procedures that were followed, and the strengths and limitations of this qualitative study.

3.1 Instruments of Data Collection

I conducted informal semi-structured interviews protocol (see appendix B), which I will recorded and transcribed verbatim using an audio-recorder. I formulated these questions based on my literature review and research questions. I coded and analyzed the data from the transcripts to develop key findings.

The strengths with interviewing participants are the quality detail that I can obtain from my participants. Collins (1970) describes how first-hand experience of the interviewee can provide rich information through questioning and probing for those answers. As well, participants may bring up information that was not discussed in the literature review due to the open-ended nature of the interviews (Collin, 1970). This evidently may lead my own research to uncover new and unexplored topics that are insightful and relevant. Lastly, Collin (1970) explains how this is an opportunity for the participants to share information and experiences that they otherwise would not be able to share to the public. Although there is information regarding Section 23 programs provided, the accounts of teachers’ first-hand experience can provide useful insight to information unknown to the public and as research educators, we can take this knowledge and share with the rest of the education field.
3.2 Participants

My research participants were Ontario teachers working in Section 23 programs, specifically focusing on correctional/reintegrative education. These participants are certified by the Ontario College of Teachers working under Policy/Program Memorandum #85: Educational Programs for Pupils in Government Approved Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional Facilities with the youth facility and mandated school board. They have been teaching in these facilities for at least 3 years, while having previously worked or currently working at a public school for at least 2 years. I am specifying 3 years is because I want my teachers to have experience in both the Section 23 programs and traditional classrooms to provide contrast on their teaching career. I will contact Ontario school board Section 23 custody/detention programs to ask if they know any teachers working at these facilities. I will also contact various youth justice related services for any referrals.

3.3 Ethics Review Procedure

The ethics review approval procedures for the Masters of Teaching program approved by the University of Toronto stipulates that I will be conducting face-to-face interviews with consenting adults. I provided my participants with a letter of informed consent prior to the interview, which they will sign to indicate permission. The letter of informed consent is attached as Appendix A. The letter of informed consent stated the time and place of the interview that is convenient for the participant and the use of an audio-recorder to record and transcribe the interview and filing the transcripts on my password protect computer. During the interview, they were allowed to stop and/or withdraw at any point, as well as withdraw from the research at any point, and keeping them updated with my progression. While updating my participants, I allowed the retraction and removal of any information they do not want published. To ensure
confidentiality, I used pseudonyms. I sent a letter of appreciation to all of my participants, whether they continue with the research or not, for their contributions to my study.

3.4 Limitations

There are several limitations to my research project. The first limitation is their perceived impact of “education” on incarcerated youth provided by the participants. Although the various policies in Ontario state that teachers must provide various educational programs to students in custody centres and detention facilities, the quality of educational programming will differ depending on the teacher and their access to the resources. Thus, some teachers may not be able to judge whether their teachings are impacting their students. No data will be collected to show the success rate of incarcerated students.

The second limitation was conducting only interviews to gather primary data. Because these will be the teacher’s point of view, I only relied on their perceived impact of providing access to equal education with no other data such as observations in the classroom or interviews with the students to support or refute their views. Due to the small sampling size, a generalization of the educational system within a youth correction environment will not be made. I will also not interview other important stakeholders such as social workers or correctional officers responsible in helping reintegrate the students back into the society to gain their insight.

3.5 Strengths

There are limitations to my short-term phenomenological study but there will most definitely be strengths that will benefit educational research. Firstly, not many teachers nor the general public are aware of the educational programming that is delivered in Ontario youth correctional facilities. Therefore, interviewing Ontario teachers working in these facilities will
provide firsthand account their experiences and perspectives on the impact of educational programming for incarcerated youth.

The second strength will be focusing on teachers working in facilities directly operated by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services rather than transfer placement agencies or open custody residences. Because both education and youth corrections are provincial mandates, teachers working under both ministries’ policies should have the resources that support the UN Convention of the Right of a Child Article on right to education because that is within the duty of Canada to provide to children. Therefore, interviewing these publicly funded teachers will provide insight as to whether they are providing equal access to education to incarcerated youth theoretically mandated by the provincial government and international law.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The findings of my research in this chapter are based on two face-to-face interviews that explored inclusive education for students in conflict with the law in reintegrating them back into society and the challenges these teachers experienced. The chapter is organized into two main themes with related subthemes: a) Challenges to reintegrative education; b) Academics and school supports; c) Mentorship and positive relationship building; d) Community support and resources; and e) Changes in student attitude. The first part of the chapter describes my participants in more detail. Each theme is then explored from the perspective of the interviewees and their opinions are presented or cited directly.

4.2 Participants

4.2.1 Amy

Amy was the first participant interviewed. She is the vice-principal at an alternative secondary school in Ontario for 6 years. Before being the vice-principal, she was a public elementary teacher for 18 years and always felt connected working with students with behavioral issues or students who were at-risk.

As a classroom teacher, I loved working with my behavioral kids. And those kids that felt school was challenging and did not want to be at school and what not. And I was always seeming to have those kids in my class, so the class was kind of hand-picked for me. (Interview, Dec. 19 2015)

She became the role of vice-principal when the board one day called and decided to transfer her from the elementary school, where she was the vice-principal, to the alternative secondary program working with suspended and expelled students simply “based on her strengths and where the need was at the time” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Although she was nervous at first, after having a conversation with her superintendent, who was also a colleague with her at the
elementary school, reassured and reminded her that this was something she always wanted to do earlier in her teaching career.

4.2.2 Tina

Tina is a public secondary teacher in Ontario teaching English, art, and religion for a total of 21 years. She is finishing off her 7th year at the alternative secondary school working with students who are suspended or expelled, or for whatever other reasons cannot attend the mainstream public schools. She was one of the pioneers who started teaching at this school, when her principal invited her to work at a school that she was going to start up working with students who cannot be in the traditional learning environment, which is still the current school she is working in and she was one of the prominent contributors for the design and success of the school.

4.3 Challenges of Reintegrative Education

4.3.1 Alternative Student Population

Working in this environment presents various challenges but Amy and Tina indicated working with these students as the most challenging in providing reintegrative education because they do not attend school on a frequent and consistent basis for various issues. According to Amy, the school provides the necessary resources to attainment a diploma or certificate but some students choose to shut them out completely, and ultimately, “Just getting them in the building and getting to stay. That is a challenge” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Therefore, for both of these participants, the academic aspect of the school is actually secondary after building a relationship and trust, so that these students trust them enough to stay. Amy says, “Some days there are 13 kids in the building, there are some days we have 60. There are some days we have maybe 80 that go through the building and not 80 at the same time, so the attendance is a real struggle.”
REINTEGRATIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

(Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). The reasons for the non-attendance include but not exhaustive to: family situation; mental health issues; learning difficulties and disabilities; family situations; criminal background; and/or apathy towards school and adults. Regardless, the main objective for this school is to provide an alternative educational program for these “Alternative students.”

Amy explains,

The typical “Alt” learner is a learner who is a non-attender, for whatever reasons. It could be mental health issues. It could be running with the law. It could be family situations, it could be academic, and they are just finding curriculum not accessible for whatever reason. It could be like, the kid whose fallen through the cracks and may not have a diagnosis or has never been brought up for psych-ed assessment, so these kids are kids who struggle, and most of these kids do have some type of learning disability. (Interview, Dec. 19 2015)

Both Amy and Tina are well aware of what issues and burdens are entering the classrooms and Tina reassured me, “None of their stories are fluffy” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). It creates an additional issue for the participants in trying to understand where these students come from and how they can support their needs. Amy says,

The academic piece, I can get my head around that no problem but the issues that some of these kids come in with just trying to manage the family dynamics, the difficulties they have living on the street, the difficulties they have with couch-surfing, the difficulties they have with drugs and addiction issues. (Interview, Dec. 19 2015)

This becomes “emotionally challenging” for both of these teachers worrying what might happen to their students living on the streets or couch surfing and trying to survive. On the last day before the winter holiday break, most teachers and students are usually excited about a two week break spent with friends and family, but Tina feels more stress and concern than excitement for these students because they are without proper homes or shelters. Ultimately, she worries about their safety and nourishment, especially in the harsh weather conditions.
Today is a really hard day for us because we have to say goodbye to them for 2 weeks. We do not know what is going to happen to them, but we will get them back. But they will be thinner, they will be starving. And some of them will have slept on 12-14 different couches when we get them back. Do you know what I mean? It is a hard thing to for us let them go. It is easier in June, which seems weird, because we are letting them go for 2 months, but it is warmer. They can, they can exist better in the summer than at this time. During the ice storm, many of us were very anxious. Because we did not know where our kids were during the ice storm. (Interview, Dec. 19 2015)

These students experience more violence, poverty, and trauma than these teachers do but regardless, Tina emphasizes the importance of leaving any of her personal issues outside the classroom or else it will affect her teaching and the way she interacts with students.

You need to be clear-headed. You have to leave everything at your home and in your car. You come in, be there for these kids. Be sharp for these kids. Then go back, pick up your crap in your car and head home. That is how it has to be. If you cannot do it, you cannot be here. And we have had many teachers come and go. Because if you cannot be here 100% for these kids and you cannot put your crap away, you are no good. (Interview, Dec. 19 2015)

There are incidents that arise when students need their teachers as strong support systems. Tina was telling me how a student watched his best friend get shot and die, and the very next morning at eight o’clock, he showed up to the school without going home. After providing him with the appropriate support, Tina describes him as “a train wreck. An absolute train wreck” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). These unexpected events that otherwise may not occur in most schools, are frequent occurrences with these students and teachers, and Tina reinforces how difficult it is to stay strong but it is needed. There are days when she does not like coming to work because it is hard and frustrating, but she also says how much she loves her job.

Amy and Tina explain the overall shift in attitude of apathy towards teachers and school, to determination to graduate, as the years move on. However, both participants explain that it is not an easy journey in motivating these students. According to the trend, the students who enter
their first year into the program, known as “first years,” are challenging because they especially do not attend school more than the second year students do. They enter the program with a pompous attitude of “we know everything better than you do; we know the system better; you are all fools, naïve, and ridiculous” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Amy mirrors that view by saying she saw students were physically there but mentally disengaged and “not ready for change. They thought their life was, ‘I’m not doing anything wrong. It’s you guys’” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Both agreed that “first years” are more challenging because they do not trust adults for the continuous misguiding and hurting throughout their life. Amy expresses how she feels the “firsts years still have a hate on for administrative, they have a hate for teachers, they have a hate for school” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). When I asked Tina what is one thing students could take away from her class, what it would be, and she replied,  

All adults are not idiots. And that has been their experience until now. Adults can be a good helping force in your life and that you can trust them. There are trustworthy adults in the world. Some of these kids have been physically abused, emotionally abused, sexually abused, post-traumatic stress disorder. When they see an adult, there is no trust there. Adults have harmed them. And you are an adult, and the mere fact that you grew up, you’re an idiot. (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015)  

As a result, for the hate towards adults, they do not trust teachers and act defiant towards them. Amy adds another reason why the first years are defiant, which is simply maturity. Because the first years are entering the program as young as fifteen or in grade 11, they are young and immature. “They come in young as well, because we do take kids in grade 11, but some of our grade 11 kids are just still fifteen. So they do need that extra maturity piece” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).  

Other issues that Amy and Tina mentioned as a challenge unique to this population are involvement of the criminal justice system. Neither specified what kind of criminal activities are
involved but both Amy and Tina mention probation officers, and how many students break their probation appointments, so they are reprimanded and a warrant for their arrest notifies the school staff.

Therefore, it makes it difficult for Amy and Tina to deliver what is needed for students’ successful reintegration, when they do not come to school or have apathetic attitude, but for legitimate traumatic reasons.

4.3.2 Lack of Resources

Both participants discuss the challenge of delivering the necessary tools for successful reintegration with a lack of resources inside and outside the classrooms that may otherwise be present in other mainstream schools. Many students are working towards completing their secondary diploma or certificate by taking the necessary “college-level” and/or “university-level” courses, but from the administrative perspective, Amy realizes that the school cannot accommodate all students’ interests or needs because specific courses are not provided.

We are doing a big disservice to those kids who are earning a certificate because we do not have enough hands-on in our program; we do not have a shop; we do not have woodworking; we do not have drama clubs. We do not have all of that. We do not have a food and nutrition room with a kitchen with where the kids can cook. We make do with what we have, but I find that for those kids who are in that first percentile, who maybe mild intellectual delay, we just cannot accommodate them, the way we would like to accommodate them. (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015)

Amy discusses about how the school facility itself raises some challenges for students and teachers that Tina did not discuss. Amy discusses both physical space and social stigma associated with the school building. The current building that the school is in lacks the proper facilities in providing the optimal hands-on and skills/trades-based learning space for these students.
They need to be able to manage themselves in a community. I think the building itself is an issue. Just bringing in more hands-on opportunities for our kids: bringing in a cosmetology, and food and nutrition that I mentioned before, that definitely needs to be changed so that they are not always with pencil and paper because these are not the kind of kids who do paper and pencil. (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015)

According to Amy, the building is secluded from the rest of the community in an industrial neighborhood, and its limited rooms inside that cannot accommodate the hands-on learning such as tech shops or kitchens. “We need a different building. It would be nice to be in a building where we are in a community because our students need to learn how to behave in a community” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). With these infrastructural issues, Amy feels that the students struggle to even arrive at school based on the distance from everything else, but also the sense of isolation and seclusion away from the community. The school also has an intensive security protocol for these students to enter the building, such as metal detectors, and security checks of their belongings for any contraband and/or weapons similar to airports or correctional facilities. Therefore, students refer to the school as a “mini-jail” but Amy feels hurt by that description because “it is a very, very welcoming and warm environment” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Nonetheless, there is a stigma attached to the “alternative” school that the students do not want to be associated at first. However, Amy and Tina reassure that gradually, they gradually see that change in perspective as they progress through the years.

Based on the school facility itself and lack of qualified teachers to teach a variety of courses, it hinders students from choosing courses that may interest them or even receive the necessary accommodations for students with special needs. Unlike at the traditional high schools of tiered support, Tina is the only secondary English teacher at the school, which makes it her sole responsibility to accommodate all of their students and puts the pressure on her to be focused every day, which she says is mentally exhausting.
We certainly do not have like the educational resources that you would have in a traditional high school but we have the social resources. We give up something for the other. We do not have departments. There is no English department. I am the English department. We do not have collaboration. We do not have a community of teachers here. There are only 6 of us. We do not have that community thing that you would have in a regular high school. (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015)

Therefore, Tina mentions the importance of collaboration that is needed with other support staff such as Child Youth Workers, Social Workers, and administrative; however, although there are several of these support staffs, she discusses how there is simply not enough for the demand of her students. Currently, there are moments when she needs a Child Youth Worker but because the vast number of cases he/she has to deal with has backlogged his/her workload, it delays providing the necessary needs for the students.

We need more support. Our CYCs, when she is in, runs the full day. She has sticky notes on her door all day. We are all texting her saying, “emergency here” and she goes, “Well I have 4 emergencies ahead of yours.” We call in our social worker as back up but the problem is you cannot just bring in a CYC from another school because they do not trust them. They do not trust adults as a whole. I am talking about 70% of the kids have a real adult thing. You can’t just bring in another CYC. They trust Susan*, but she is just one. We need another constant around. That would best for these kids (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Both Amy and Tina are concerned with the lack of social resources, but discuss the importance of these individuals and how they contribute to students’ successful reintegration, working alongside with teachers.

The objectives of providing both academic content and life skills are hindered because the lack of funding and social resources, but the two participants are optimistic in using what resources they do have in an effective manner while providing the tools for a successful reintegration back into society for these students in conflict with the law.
4.4 Academics and School Support

4.4.1 Secondary Certificate or Diploma Attainment

As discussed as a part of the challenges of providing reintegrative education, both participants emphasize how important it is for students to work towards attaining their secondary diploma as a key success to reintegrating back into society. Whether the students are working towards an Ontario Secondary School Certificate or an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, both participants do their respective roles and responsibilities in providing the necessary course work or resources for a successful completion of a credit, so that these students are closer to attaining their certificate or diploma. As painstaking it is for students to persevere and work, Tina presents the harsh yet obvious truth that “the only cure for high school is graduation” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). She puts into perspective for her students, “Do you want to be 30 years old in your parent’s basement, attending your friend’s weddings? Eew!” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Nevertheless, both of these participants reassures that simply because this student population is “alternative”, does not mean any expectations are modified as a high school. Amy discusses, “Alt does not mean that we do not have rules either we do have rules because that is important. We are trying to reintegrate them back into society, were trying to make them into good citizens etc. so that piece is important as well” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Amy praises about the school, “Our classroom teachers, qualified high school teachers, will make sure we had math and science guy, and an English/history teacher so that they could have them divide up the kids, and we always taught English and math” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). She presents the fact that the school offers the core credits needed to graduate in Ontario and how it is all accessible to the students. “We provided curriculum for them, so they had access to the curriculum, as you would in the mainstream, but we had the great privilege of so
few students in the classroom, so it was almost one on one instruction between students and teacher” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Tina adds that the school structure is a “full bubble wrap system.” Although the resources may be scarce and the students are challenging, the school provides an array of staff support, each fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in helping the students the best way possible to ensure collaboration and trust between the staff and students, while still giving the expectations on the students.

We have a student success teacher that helps them get out there. We have a fulltime guidance counselor that helps them. Find the program that will work. We take them on tours for colleges. We show them what is out there for their future. We are always focused on individual student planning. “What’s your individual student plan? How can we help you be successful in the future? How can we give you the tools to make that happen? That is what we do. (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015)

Amy also adds to talk about the school structure, knowing that the students do not learn similarly as those in mainstream traditional high schools but there are still components similar to it. She describes that the school is still set up with a timetable schedule of four periods a day but rather than all of the periods focusing on academics, the last period is shortened because that is the period for life skills education.

[That] third period was shortened a little bit and that was their non-academic time. That non-academic time was with myself, the child youth counselor and the social worker, not the classroom teachers. That non-academic time was their social skills time, their life skills time, where they would do resilience, anger management, or awareness of violence, relationships. (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015)

Amy also caters to the students in providing as many breaks to evenly disperse the workload throughout the day, and providing healthy food for them such as a breakfast program or snacks.

Not all of the appropriate courses are offered due to the lack of subject-trained teachers and facilities to host these courses. Amy realizes that even the “University-level” courses are
difficult to offer because there is not a high demand for it but there are still student who wish to take it. “[It is] very challenging for us to provide those U level courses, though they are done independently” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). But both Amy and Tina are confident with what they do have as an effective tool for success, through culturally responsive pedagogy and overall passion to support their students.

4.4.2 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Both Amy and Tina know their students do not learn the same way as traditional high school students, as these students have an array of social issues, learning difficulties, and different attitude towards schools and adults. Right from the beginning, Tina immediately clarifies that, “75% of my day is teaching self-regulation and life skills, and then 25% is academic” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). However, considering all of these intersectional factors of students, the school still focuses on providing the necessary means of learning and successful reintegration.

According to Tina, differentiated instruction is a key to successful academic completion. Both participants know that the needs of students need to be considered when delivering their lessons, and traditional methods of teaching cannot be implemented in their classroom. Tina plans her lessons with her students in mind and knowing that attendance is the main challenge for student learning, so she creates individual workbooks for each student.

When I design a unit, I break it into 20 lessons. Each course is 20 lessons. Each unit is 5. You have to create your lesson plans so that they can be done individually. The kids not in the room. So you are teaching to it but also it is something that they can understand on their own, because of our attendance issues. Nothing is give and take. It is all, “Here is all the lessons, and you guys can do everything in workbooks.” They can work out of their workbooks. And if they call in saying that they’re not coming for 4 days for hospital, we have a lot kids who travel back and forth out of the hospital or *rehabilitation clinic. I can tell them, “We’re working through lesson 12.” Everything is done in kind of a take home
as well as a class style. Then I supplement it in the classroom. But it can also be done on your own. Because of the attendance; the anxiety; some kids are switching homes. Lots of things are happening. It’s all about inclusion of every kid. And making your course material accessible (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Amy provides an example of how students with special needs are accommodated through classroom management skills.

You do not fit that model of “bum in the sit and listening to the classroom teacher.” You fit the model of “up and walking around” and hands on, and if you need to stand up for the whole time that you are doing your work, you can do that here. You cannot do that in a mainstream school. Teachers always tell you sit down (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

When asked about accommodations and modifications, Tina provides me with specifics on how she differentiates on summative evaluations,

You read the IEP (Individual Education Plan). You see what needs to be accommodated, what their strengths are. And I always have for culminating tasks. There are always 2 completely different tasks: something that would be more creative for the creative kid, and something more mechanical for the mechanical kid. Just to try to allow them to show me their strengths (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Then I asked her how she assesses and evaluate her students.

Same criteria to graduate. What point would it be to lower our criteria and they get to college and get killed? Exactly same criteria. We do a 70/30 split. 70 is their term work, and 30 is the culminating task. It is the exact same criteria. We do not lower because that is a harm to them. That is not helping them in any way (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015)

Even though traditionally in high school English classes, Shakespeare is taught, Tina knows that her student will not be able to grasp the content and therefore would disengage them entirely. “Shakespeare is my passion, and we can’t do that here. Because again, that would be something they can’t access on their own” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Instead, she chooses literature that is relatable, engaging, and accessible to her students outside the classroom. She describes how she read Catching Fire by Suzanne Collins, and plans different assignments around this novel study unit.
It is all differentiated. It is making up a music list for Katniss from Catching Fire. If she could wear her ear buds, what would be playing and why? Draw the love triangle, and that is for the girls. And for the boys, we talk about, who’s stronger? Peeta or Gale? Who would win in a fight? Why would you say that? (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015)

Afterwards, Tina took her students to see Mockingjay Part 1 in the movie theatres as an opportunity to leave the classroom but also “bringing the outside in.” Clarifying what she meant by that, Tina discusses how she chooses literature that reflects her students, but also exposing her students to current events to educate about citizenship and being socially aware about the world around them.

Whatever is happening in the world. They do not know. The other [day], we explained what happened in Pakistan [Peshawar School Massacre in Dec. 2014]. They were devastated. They did not know. They have no idea. They do not listen to the radio, they do not have cable and they do not read the newspaper. They are completely protected from [global issues], in their own world. They do not have parents. There’s no one talking about it. When they come here, we make them socially aware because they need to be socially aware. That’s part of our lesson too. It is just talking about that. This is what is happening in the world. I teach world religions. When I mentioned “Islam”. “Oh well they’re all terrorists.” Well no, they are not. 98% of people who follow the Islamic tradition are not terrorists. I had to explain that. You have to start from scratch (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

From a teacher’s and vice-principal’s perspective, both indicate that education is one of the key successes to reintegration back into society, and reflect on the challenges associated with providing education to this student population but also how they adapt with what they are given while effectively teach their students the necessary knowledge and skills.

4.5 Community Support and Resources

4.5.1 Community Organizations

Amy and Tina indicate that the school and students heavily rely on the community supports and resources as an integral factor to successful reintegration. As mentioned, these students are experiencing social and mental health issues that the school cannot accommodate by
itself, and need external resources and supports to best handle these situations. According to Amy, community organizations and programs that support drug and alcohol rehabilitation, anti-gang violence, youth justice services, youth homelessness, or mental health issues either come into the classroom or the students have access to these resources, in order to better themselves. And some of these are services these students or their families may already be using, and so it becomes a great opportunity for students to give back the services.

Our school was at *Hope House yesterday, preparing [food] baskets for the families that needed them and it was very emotional, because some of the kids that went were recipients of those baskets. And no one would never say while they were there, but they were able to pack for other families, and they had that experience and it was extraordinary (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Tina also adds some professional development for teachers, such as destigmatizing mental health issues or mindfulness and yoga as activities that the school provides for students. However, Tina does raise concern that as much as these resources are available, the school does not have enough funding to access even more.

We just need more money. Everyone needs more money. We need the community resources to be more available. And that is what the government is moving towards. Of course with all the mental health money they are putting in, but it is not there yet. And certainly in this community, we need more of that to be available. It is just about the community resources in synch with what the kids need (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

While there is increasing awareness for mental health issues and provincial funding for schools, Tina still feels as though funding for important services are lacking and is a major part of her students barrier to success if appropriate measures are not taken.
4.5.2 Collaboration with Child Youth Workers, Social Workers, and Other Support Staff

According to Amy and Tina, teachers alone cannot provide the necessary resources and support for their student’s reintegration back into society, simply because they are not trained nor certified to handle certain tasks or situations, and heavily rely on child youth workers, social workers, and other support staff such as probation officers to support students. Child youth workers and social workers have better access to community resources through their connections that they can refer students. Amy describes the role of these support staff,

Our student services people have their connections; they know which agencies to refer the kids to. And they know how to work through the system and they help those kids. When they help those kids have to go apply to Ontario Works, they have to apply for social insurance number, they have to look for housing, our CYC and the social worker can help them with that. And help them navigate all that red tape and what not (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Tina also agrees with the important collaborations between teachers and support staff that they can do with their roles and responsibilities but also her own job limitations as a teacher.

Every single day we have either a child youth worker or social worker on site. And we have to know our limitations as well. I do not know the community supports. I cannot hook them up with those and I do not have time too either. We have other people who do that. The CYCs and social workers set them up with that. They are allowed to drive them in their cars. Once you get hired, you realize that unions will not allow to drive kids in their cars. Because these kids have mental health issues too. They can turn around and say something that is not true and I would lose my job. We have to protect ourselves as well. So the CYC and social workers are in a different place in that they can drive them to their appointments, they can go to the appointments, they have consents to know what the doctors are saying but we don’t have those consents at all. Kids will regularly tell us stuff but we do not have the consents to go further with it (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

With these different supports having the abilities to fulfill various duties that the others are not able to, Amy and Tina both agree that their relationship with these support staff are incredibly positive collaborative. Tina mentions how the child youth workers and social workers
also have excellent relationships with the students, and they are there for the Monday morning meetings when they discuss any updates regarding students. According to the Amy, she finds that the CYCs and social workers at her school have a much better relationship with the students than other support staffs dispersed across the board because the CYCs and social workers are assigned to less students and more frequent interactions.

Amy and Tina also mention the relationship with probation officers as a supporting role in student’s reintegration. Many of these youth have probation sentences for various criminal activities and require the need to consistently update their probation officer. However, Amy and Tina both know that these students cannot manage their time because meeting up with a probation officer is not a priority to them. The consequences of missing an appointment with a probation officer can result in further intake into the criminal justice system and that is not something Amy and Tina want for these students. Therefore, Amy discusses the relationship between probations and the school as an important resource that prevents further criminalization.

We also stayed in close contact with probation officers. When the kids were coming in and again, where we were located was awesome because probation was right across the street. When our kids had probation appointments, we knew where they were going because we can watch them go right across the street to see their probation officer. Of course we had consent working both ways so that they can do that and the odd time the probation officer would actually come into the building and meet with them. And here in this building, probation often comes in and meets with the kids. And it is great that they do that because our kids are not very good at keeping their appointments (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

4.6 Mentorship and Positive Role Modeling

Throughout the interview, both Amy and Tina radiate the importance and significance of mentorship and positive role modelling as the most successful tool for reintegration. Because the situation most of these students experiences outside of school, especially with the absolute
distrust of adults, both participants feel the only way to get the students to finish school is by earning their trust.

4.6.1 Inclusive and Caring School Environment

When Amy begins to tell me how the school has a rather intense security procedure when admitting students, it does sound like this school is a “mini-jail” but she counters that by saying, “once they’re through the metal detector, we call that ‘being in community’ and that’s where we want our kids; we want them to be ‘in community’ with us” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015), and it becomes apparent that the school is trying to be as welcoming as possible to combat the non-attendance issue. She also mentions the use of restorative practices, specifically starting and ending the day in community circles, and discussions of feelings in a safe and inclusive environment. And once students realize that the school is providing a welcoming and warm environment, as Amy describes it, she notices the students buy into the program as well.

4.6.2 Relationship Building

When both were asked what the difference between the alternative program and traditional high schools, they both answered the importance of “getting to know their students” and as the determining deterrence of non-attendance school and potentially graduate. Because of the smaller student population, both teachers feel they are able to build relationships easier than mainstream schools, which then helps with supporting them academic. “Here, I can say ‘hello’ and talk to each one for the kids in the building every single day” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015), as Amy says. Similar to Tina, Amy also knows that she cannot teach academic content before earning their trust.

Definitely have to get to know the student and build a relationship with the students. I’m not saying the academic is not important, but at first the academics is kind of on the
backburner until you can learn a little bit more about the students to see how we are going to help that student out and how to get that student to be successful (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Throughout the year, as Amy and Tina are getting to know their students, they sense a bond with their students. Tina enjoys being a positive mentor for her students both as a teacher but also a caring individual. She shares her story about some staff members chipping together to buy some of the highest needy students some gifts for Christmas and privately presenting to them, and seeing their reaction of joy, or paying to fix a phone for one student because she did not have money to do so and it was her only means of communication. “It is the taking care of these kids when no one else is able to do it. And it is having them trust us” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Out of the kindness of their heart but reflecting on their own privileges, Tina knows that earning trust through gifts is a strategy used for the students at her school. Because some of these students’ family situations leave them without positive role models, on occasion Tina is accidently called “mom” because of her role. “And they will go ‘mom, stop it!’ and I am like, not again. It has got to be Mrs. Tina” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Through her nurturing role as a teacher but also a concerned and positive role model, she becomes very attached with her students and a sense of joy working with them.

Some of it is overwhelming and mostly it is amazing. You should come to graduation, then you would see parents watch kids graduate that they had would never have hoped would do it. Regular [high school] graduation would be 400 kids. Boring as hell. Wait until your future starts it is awful. You would sit there and know, maybe really well, 80. And that is if you are an extremely involved teacher and that is if you did extracurricular. I worked on the prom, and I knew a lot of kids who graduated but 80 out of 400. It is like “really, is it going to end?” Here, our graduation is about 60, and we would know every one of them personally, and it is emotional, because you see them suddenly believe in themselves. And when they are holding that piece of paper, it is like “holy crow, I did it.” And then you go downstairs and their parents are like, “How did you do it?” Our director comes to our graduation every year. Because it is insanely incredible to watch. We get
the students success teachers from the other high schools that come, guidance counselors from other high schools, and teachers from other high schools come to watch their kids, reach that point they never thought. It is insane, it is amazing, and it is a cool time (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Ultimately, both participants want to see their students graduate and attain a secondary diploma or certificate but also lift the expulsion for students wanting to reenter mainstream schools if they have demonstrated the appropriate and consistent behavior. In Amy’s role as vice-principal and often as the disciplinarian of the school, her objective is not to suspend students if they do misbehave. “I do not suspend kids at the drop of a hat. I do not suspend kids for swearing. We are more, we work with them, ‘how could have handled that situation better?’ Get them to reflect on what has happened” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Therefore, her students have another reason to work with her but strengthen those relationships.

**4.7 Change in Student Attitude**

As Amy and Tina work through the challenges and provide the necessary and appropriate supports and resources both academically and socially, they notice the change in attitude as motivated individuals wanting to better themselves. Amy says,

There is a huge change. When kids buy into the program, and realize that they are not here as a punishment, there is a huge buy in and a huge change. You see kids, who start coming every day, they start earning credits, they do not seem to be quite as angry, they are not as defensive when you are talking to them. You do see the changes. We got some huge success stories in here. And kids have come back to tell us how well they have done. It is good. It is very, very rewarding. Not immediately [chuckle]. Got to be patient from times; a full 2 semesters (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Tina also comments on the gradual change in attitude between first years who think do not accept the program and are disengaged, to the second year students who are determined to excel
because they realize the benefits of graduating more than staying in school for longer period of time than needed.

[The first years] go home and come back in September the following year, and then they will say, “Where are all my friends? We were all joking around last year.” They were joking around with you but handing me work. And they all graduated. And then there are second years. They are the ones who sit down and say, “Well I want to get out of this place” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

As the students progress through the school year, Amy and Tina gradually introduce them to future options that they might have never considered, given their circumstance, such as post-secondary education. By hosting college information sessions, Amy notices a spark in their eyes. “They love it. Because it opens their eyes to possibilities they did not think could happen” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). Both Amy and Tina realize the potential in all of their students and the gifts and talents each possess but the inability to showcase them for various social-economic, political, racial, or academic reasons. Through this program, Amy feels that they are providing them with an alternative way of achieving success;

I believe that [this program] is so important for our kids; the kids that do not fit into mainstream. And again particularly those who are criminalized or marginalized or vulnerable. I would like them to take away the fact that they can do anything that they want to do, so as long as they can access the resources they need, they are given the chance that they need, and that they can speak up for themselves, and say, “Hey you know what? I can do this, I’m a person, and I need to be validated as a person.” They can do anything they set their minds to, and we have seen some of the kids do that here, so believing in themselves, and getting them to see that people do believe in them as well (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015).

Obviously, both participants realize the complexity these students’ experience and the inevitable unsuccessful stories they encounter in the process of their teaching career. Amy reflects, “You cannot save them all. You have the odd few that we just we lose but the majority of them, it is good. It is always a good change” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). And Tina also admits
that it is perfectly fine to have those feelings of guilt but also remembering that not every student needs your support. “Accept the fact that kids are going to come into your classroom and leave your classroom and never have a struggle and you will never get to know them and that is okay too. Because they are okay. They have supports at home, they have the proper things in place” (Interview, Dec. 19, 2015). At the end of the day, Amy and Tina know what they are capable of doing with the resources and supports they have and the much needed improvements to better help their students, but through their efforts they feel they are empowering students in becoming engaged citizens once again when it seemed that everyone lost hope in these students.
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The goal of my research is to investigate how teachers within Ontario are providing equitable and reintegrative education to students in conflict with the law, and therefore successfully reintegrating these students back into mainstream public school systems but also society. My research questions focused on the academic components, programming and services, challenges, and implications for student success. Both of my participants shared their insightful thoughts, experiences, and suggestions. In this chapter I review the relations to my previous literature; the possible implications of this study for me as a researcher and teacher; the limitations of my research; and further study that stem from my research.

5.2 Relation to the Literature Review

5.2.1 Rights of a Rule Breaker – Suspensions and Expulsions

There is a strong relationship between the research in my literature review and the themes presented throughout my interviews but also new findings that are not present in my previous literature. Firstly, the parallel is drawn regarding teachers role in providing the right to education for suspended and expelled students (Blomberg, 2004; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Education – Safe Schools, 2014). According the policy document, schools and school boards are required to provide the appropriate supports and resources for suspended and expelled students in order for them to transition either back into the school they came from or graduate (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Both of my participants were well aware the circumstances these students came from and provided them with academic support through differentiated instruction, and collaborated with various community resources and staff members, such as child and youth workers and social workers. When students are suspended for more than
five days, the school is required to create a “Student Action Plan”, which outlines an academic program based on the student’s needs that will assist them to continue learning, and “additional supports to promote positive behaviour,” such as anger management or substance abuse counseling for suspensions between 11 to 20 school days (Ontario Ministry of Education – Safe Schools, 2014); and my findings were that every student at the school has their own individual plan for success, but the teachers modifying it based on their own interactions with the students and meeting their needs.

5.2.2 Transitional Services

Ultimately, the goal of correctional or reintegrative education, as the name indicates, is for students to reintegrate and transition back into society. The literature discussed the importance in providing these transitional services alongside with the academic education (Covell, 2010; Cole and Cohen, 2013). However, as the literature mentions, there are challenges for students to reenter into society due to the stigmatization and labeling (Cole & Cohen, 2013), which Amy mentioned as a demotivation for students’ graduation and pursue for post-secondary education because they felt that colleges, universities and employers would not accept or admit anyone graduating from an “alternative” school program. To compensate for these challenges, both of my participants expressed the importance of mentorship and positive role modelling as a form for students to succeed and transition back into society.

5.2.3 Teaching Correctional Education

The previous literature focused more on residential correctional education and teachings in youth prison system, which my participants did not teach in but there are still parallels with the students they taught. The challenges with correctional education was the turnover rate with students entering and exiting the program (Young et al, 2010, Koyama, 2012). Similar to this
issue, both participants’ main challenge was the unpredictable non-attendance of the students. Again, similar to correctional education, the literacy levels of the students were substantially lower than the general public (Harris et al. 2009; Bhatti, 2010; Oesterreich, 2009), which forced Tina to create her lessons based on her students levels by using *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins rather than Shakespeare literatures, even though she loved it, because it was more relatable and accessible for them. This also provided what Jacobi (2008) mentioned about engaging youth through creativity, critical self-awareness, and a shift in how audience and authorship is understood, and both participants agree that the alternative program allows for these benefits because it is so individualized for students and the certified and trained social resources were available to support these students. By the end, they both felt that students were able to graduate with a new sense of confidence and redemption.

5.2.4 Challenges

There are some relations between my literature and findings based on the challenges of reintegrative education. Morris and Thompson (2008) argue legislations and case laws demonstrate that special education policy implementation have issues and inconsistencies due to a lack of sufficient personnel; lack of certified special education teachers; and other challenges and barriers that public schools experience in implementing special education services. Both participants expressed they were providing many necessary courses for students to successfully attain their Ontario Secondary School Diploma or Certificate but severely lacked hands-on courses and resources that would benefit the students because they did not have the teachers nor the facilities. The literature also focuses heavily on students with special needs, whether academically with learning disabilities, or socially with interacting within a structured educational system, and the lack of specialized attention given to these students by teachers due
to the lack of resources and supports (Covell, 2010; Thompson, 2008; Howe & Covell, 2001). Although the lack of sufficient resources and supports is a challenge for both participants, they strongly expressed how they feel they are doing with what they have. They shared how they utilize the community resources and supports such as anger management, youth homeless, alcohol and drug rehabilitation; and mental health support, and introduce their students with these services. Also, both Amy and Tina consistently talk about the importance of building positive relationships with their students as a catalyst for successful reintegration.

5.3 Implications/Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined in Chapter 4, a number of implications for future research and recommendations for teaching students in conflict with the law emerged, which are also practical for students in general. First, both participants are well aware of their students and the need to balance the academic education and life skills education that the literature mentions is problematic for the system to effectively provide due to the lack of resources and support. As emerging educators and being in practicums that heavily focus on the academic delivery, it is important to realize that not all students are ready for the academic component because they have not developed the life skills or the mind frame of learning. Therefore, it is important for teachers to put aside the immense pressures of curriculum delivery and focus on the child in a holistic manner. By knowing each student’s level and abilities, then I am able to reflect and provide the academic components by creating the lessons appropriate for the students.

Second, this research reaffirms the importance of mentorship and positive role modelling, and the differences teachers can make when time and support is given to students. Both participants passionately shared their love for these students despite the challenges associated with them but throughout the year, they observed the change in attitude towards adults and
learning as a whole because the consistent trust and relationship they built in the caring environment. Because sometimes teachers may be the only positive role model in students’ lives, it is extremely important to get to know the students but also remembering that it is acceptable for teachers to not feel bad if they personally felt they were not able to “save” them all. Remembering that teachers are working in a system that might a tremendous amount of time and effort is important when reflecting on the relationships built with students.

Lastly, both participants mentioned the importance of collaborations with community resources and support staff as a success for students, which is important for teachers. Teachers cannot do it alone because that will be physically and mentally exhausting, which will cause teacher burnouts, especially with students in conflict with the law. Researching the community supports is important because they can be a great asset to both teachers and students in successfully attaining the appropriate means of reintegrating back into society. Both participants discussed child and youth workers and social workers, but any other support staff such as special education and resource teachers and child psychologists may be available for teachers to work alongside with to provide the necessary supports.

When I asked my participants for any recommendations for emerging teachers, immediately Amy suggested doing a practicum in this sort of environment because it truly does provide another perspective of teaching that is not taught in pre-service education. It tests teachers’ patience, adaptability, and risk-taking abilities working with students who do not care formal education and distrust towards authority. Quite often, teachers forget that they might have to work with students who are “at-risk”; maybe not in an alternative program but there may be some in integrated classrooms and can be problematic for teachers if they do not have the experience in working with these students.
As a primary and junior qualified teacher, I will not work with as many students formerly in conflict with the law because the Ontario Youth Criminal Justice Act cannot sentence anyone under the age of 12 years, there will be at-risk students close to entering the criminal justice system and as a preventive measure, I will incorporate these implications to hopefully reduce their likelihood.

5.4 Limitations

This research has two major limitations. The first limitation was the sample size of two participants, both from the same school. Although both of my participants shared with me with their insightful experiences, thoughts, and suggestions, this research only reflects the views and experiences of these two individuals, and therefore cannot be generalized to a larger population. This research is location and school specific. If I interviewed more teachers from a variety of different schools and areas, I would be able to represent a wider population and thus reflect the views of a greater number of educators. The second limitation of my study is my personal knowledge in the subject area of secondary education. Because I am a primary and junior qualified teacher but the research is heavily focused on senior level students, the likelihood of my research missing components pertaining to general secondary education is high because I am not aware of the secondary education system in general, aside my own limited experience as a secondary school in the past. Therefore, if I was senior level trained, I would have a better understanding of how this system works to better further my research in providing new perspectives.

5.5 Further Study

In general, there is a lack of research in the intersectionality of the Ontario criminal justice system and education system servicing students in conflict with the law. Most of the
literature I reviewed was American, due to their criminal justice system being more overt and prevalent to the public. Therefore, there needs to be further research on how Canada provides reintegrative education for youth in conflict with the law from a provincial perspective of Ontario, especially with the over-representation of minority ethnicities such as First Nations/Inuit/Metis and Black populations in the criminal justice systems and the underrepresentation of teachers in these communities.

In addition, it may be insightful to interview teachers who do interact with younger students in conflict with the law, and how their experiences are similar and differ from their secondary teacher counterparts. I would personally like to know what resources and supports are available for this younger demographics and what challenges teachers may experience. This information would be more applicable to the age range of students I would be teaching, and therefore would be pertinent to my professional knowledge.

Finally, interviewing the students’ perspectives would provide insight about how they feel about the educational system working alongside the criminal justice system, and how reintegrated they feel through schooling. Ultimately, these youth are the firsthand individuals that have to endure this, and it would be important to ask whether they feel they are succeeding in reintegrating with society.

5.6 Conclusion

It is unfortunate that students will make decisions that enter them in the criminal justice system, and for many, have difficulties reentering back into mainstream society because the supports and resources are inaccessible for them and further prevention of reintegration. But because these students are still young, the province is still mandated to providing the education
they are entitled to because it is still part of their rights. My findings have shown that teachers are challenged with providing reintegrative education, mainly due to the students background and attitude, but nonetheless, teachers are still providing it through academic courses, community-based resources and supports, and mentorship and positive role modelling.

I believe in second chances and many people underestimate and ostracize young people, especially those in conflict with the law. But as educators, I believe it is our duty in providing the same quality education that we would for any other student because we are not simply delivering the curriculum but also the essential life skills that develop them into engaged citizens. For these students, teachers might be the only positive role model in their life and we let them down, they will never be able reintegrate back into society.
REFERENCES


REINTEGRATIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW


REINTEGRATIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW


Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Informed Consent

Date:

Dear ____________,

I am currently a graduate student in the Masters of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (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 “Inclusionary Education for Youth in Conflict with the Law.” I believe that your insight would be an important contribution to my research.

My data collection consists of a 30-45 minute interview of a time and place suitable to you. The interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for common key themes. The content of the interviews will be used for my final research paper, informal presentation to colleagues and other educators, at a research conference, and potentially for publication. Your identity will remain anonymous and only my research supervisor, Nick Scarfo and I will have access to this data. The audio recording of the data will be deleted immediately once transcribed, and the text files will be stored on my password-protected computer, in a password-protected file.

Please be assured that your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Also, you may decline to answer any question during the interview, stop the interview at any point and withdraw from the study for any reason. In addition, I will forward you the transcript of the interview for review, at which point you may redact any part of the interview. 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 and have a wonderful day.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Ken Nakanishi
Phone number, email: (416) 986-5296, ken.nakanishi@mail.utoronto.ca

Instructor’s Name: Mary Lynn Tessaro
Email: marylynn.tessaro@utoronto.ca

Research Supervisor’s Name: Nick Scarfo
Phone #: (416) 978-0078 Email: nick.scarfo@utoronto.ca
Consent Form

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 Ken Nakanishi and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ________________________________

Name (printed): ___________________________

Date: ______________________
Appendix B: Interview Sample Questions

Goal: To understand how teachers are providing equal access to education to youth in conflict with the law as their non-conflicted peers, and their perceived impact of students’ reintegration back into the traditional public school system or community.

Background Information

1. When did you start teaching, and what inspired you to teach?
2. Where else have you taught previously? How long have you taught there?
3. How did you start teaching at an alternative school?
4. What kind of students do you service?
   a. General family background, school history (i.e. suspensions/expulsions; transfers etc), students with exceptionalities and IEPs

Inclusionary Education

5. What is a typical day teaching in an alternative school?
   a. How much of a focus is on character education than literacy and numeracy
6. What curriculum do you use with your current students?
7. What do you enjoy about teaching in alternative environment?
8. How do you plan your lesson?
9. What kind of textbooks and resources do you use?
10. What curriculum have you used in the past?
11. How do you corroborate with other resource persons such as social workers, community members etc?
12. What differences do you experience working in an alternative environment and the traditional classroom setting?
13. What are the challenges you experience in the classroom with students?
14. What other challenges do you experience that you may not experience at public schools?
   a. How do you accommodate students in such a limited amount of time?

Implications for Student Success

15. Do you believe students entering the alternative school are able to access resources that will help benefit them when they reintegrate back into society?
16. What can they not access while they are in youth facilities?
17. What and how do you assess and evaluate your students?
18. What would your ideal classroom look like?
19. If students take away one thing from your class, what would you like that one thing to be?

For the Future
20. What changes or improvements are needed to effectively impact these youth?
21. If you could give one piece of advice to teachers wanting to work in this type of environment, what would it be?