Inclusive Teaching Practice in the Jewish Day School:

General Studies Teachers’ Experiences

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Abstract

Little research has been done on inclusive education in the context of the Jewish day school general studies classroom. This qualitative case study research examines the inclusive teaching experiences of 2 general studies teachers in their respective grade 4 classrooms in 2 traditionally structured dual curriculum Jewish day schools. Data analysis of qualitative open-ended interviews, classroom observations, postobservation discussions, and school and formal curriculum documents yielded understandings about the participants' inclusive practice and the challenges of the traditional Jewish day school structure. Eight themes that emerged related to understandings and questions about time limitations, an emphasis on efficiency, the day school structure, inclusion models, the need for increased teacher collaboration, and tension between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. Discussion of the findings suggests the need for further research in inclusion and integrated curriculum in order to better understand possible restructuring of the traditional Jewish day school from the time efficiency constrained dual curriculum structure to a more flexible structure conducive of a meaningful and dynamic lived curriculum.
Acknowledgements

The writing of this thesis has been a remarkable journey for me. Only a few years ago the experience of studying as a graduate student in education and conducting academic research was a dream. It was the encouragement, kindness, and sharing of expertise of several special individuals along the way that brought me to this place of thesis completion. I am so thankful for the opportunity to study at the Faculty of Education at Brock University and to develop skills in qualitative educational research.

My first thanks is to my thesis advisor Dr. Susan Tilley, who remained forever confident that I was up to the challenge and so knowledgeably guided me through the process from start to finish. I am grateful to Susan for her expertise in both curriculum and qualitative methodology, and her strength in truly being a teacher’s teacher. I thank my committee members, Dr. Sheila Bennett and Dr. Merle Richards for their wise questions, assistance with resources, and thoughtful feedback. Whatever shortcomings may exist in the final version of this work are all mine.

I am forever thankful to my husband Joel who is always supportive of my undertakings and shares his wonderful optimism and belief in tomorrow with me. His confidence in my ability to complete this very long-term project made all the difference for me. My children, Rebecca, Samuel, and Hava have been so patient with my seemingly endless hours in my study and so encouraging of my academic pursuits. Their pride in my efforts and encouragement along the way has meant so much to me. I also thank my dear and loving mother Theresa, and wonderful mother-in-law Elva for their sincere interest and warm support.

My colleagues at the Academy gave me the flexibility I needed to carry out this research and I thank Rivka Shaffir and Sharon MacAulay in particular for their warm
support and the generosity of time needed to help me get the job done. Thanks goes as well to Vicky Bach and Adele Reinhartz whose friendship and knowing guidance from the sidelines has helped me to work through logistics and whose wisdom I so greatly value. To my many family members and friends whose frequent inquiries of “how is it going?” inspired me to keep working and thinking, thank you.

Above all, I am grateful to the school administrators, teachers, and students at Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy (pseudonyms) for the privilege of conducting this case study research in their classrooms. The teachers shared their time and stories so generously with me and I am indebted to them for their participation.

This thesis was enabled by all who encouraged, mentored, listened, and gave of their time along the way. Thank you.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter One provides important background to this qualitative case study research. It begins with a description of the professional experiences that led to my interest in this little studied area in Jewish education. I then introduce background on the field of inclusive education and on inclusive education in Jewish day schools and outline the problem statement, research questions, and purpose of the study. I provide description of the Jewish day school setting in general and explanation of key terminology related to student exceptionalities. The literature that I review in Chapter Two is introduced, as is the methodology, which is developed in detail in Chapter Three. I end Chapter One with an outline of Chapters Four and Five, which explore the findings and conclusions of the study.

My Professional Journey

In 1997, as an experienced Jewish day school general studies classroom teacher with a keen interest in programming for individual student needs in my grade 4 classes, I was asked to join the school Special Needs Planning Committee. As a result of parental demand for differentiated curriculum to meet the learning needs of children with exceptionalities in the areas of learning disabilities, giftedness, and behavioural difficulties, the school began to examine the possibility of establishing an in-house Special Needs Department. The department was established later that year, and I became the enrichment specialist on the Special Needs Team. Remedial teachers, an ESL (English as a second language) teacher, and the enrichment specialist, under the direction of the special needs co-ordinator, became support staff to the general studies classrooms, providing resource withdrawal and in-class support to students recommended for
services. Within a few years, remedial specialists for Hebrew language study also became part of the team.

Over a 4 year period I developed an enrichment programme designed to provide challenging activities and projects for students who are gifted or high achieving. The programme extended the skills and concepts of the Ontario curriculum taught in the general studies classroom. My model of in-class enrichment, in which curriculum was designed in collaboration with the classroom teacher, was informed by reading of research literature on inclusion and gifted education (McGrail, 1998; Sapon-Shevin, 1994; Tomlinson, 1994; Westberg, 1995). This enrichment model closely paralleled the Resource Consultation Model in Gifted Education (Kirschenbaum, Armstrong, & Landrum, 1999) which was developed to provide effective gifted programming within the inclusive classroom setting. It was a challenging and exciting professional experience to work collaboratively with colleagues in curriculum planning and then to implement new activities and projects with students in an extension of the general programme. During those years of enrichment programming, I became acutely aware of the difficulty that many of my general classroom colleagues experienced in addressing the needs of students with exceptionalities in their classes while teaching the rigorous standards-based curriculum in the half day demanded by the Jewish day school dual curriculum. I was instrumental in facilitating a more inclusive style of teaching practice and aware of the many challenges it presented in my setting.

In 2003, having moved cities, I shifted roles from enrichment specialist to that of vice principal at a small Jewish day school near my new home. This Jewish day school has a philosophy of inclusion in that it strives to address the needs of students with exceptionalities within the context of its general education classes. The resource teachers
and the volunteers who work with them provide both in-class and pullout support to students with exceptionalities. As an administrator, my role is to facilitate identification and effective programming for students with exceptionalities and to support both classroom and resource teachers in that effort.

My professional journey in the roles of classroom teacher, enrichment specialist and Special Needs Team member, and vice principal and my graduate study focus on inclusive education provide me with extensive experience and a growing knowledge base in the challenges and rewards of inclusive practice in the general studies classroom.

Background on Inclusive Education

Over the past 30 years, government-legislated policies for inclusive education of students with exceptionalities have been established in the school systems of many countries (Rubinoff, 1996). The inclusion movement has presented classroom teachers with the challenge of differentiating curriculum to address the individual needs of students with exceptionalities within the already complex dynamic of the general education classroom. Across Canada, the policies of provincial and territorial ministries of education reflect the expectation that the needs of most students with exceptionalities can be effectively met in the general education classroom (Hutchinson, 2002). The availability of resources and special education staff to support inclusive practice in the general education class setting and teacher training and attitudes about inclusion have been identified as critical factors in effective inclusive practice (Corbett, 2001; Sapon-Shevin, 1994; Tomlinson, 1994). The Jewish parents who have become aware of the inclusion policies in public schools and of the potential benefits of inclusion have begun to demand that Jewish day schools also establish policies for inclusion of students with exceptionalities (Rubinoff; Simon & Fishman, n. d.).
Background on Inclusive Education in the Jewish Day School

As indicated on their websites, many Jewish boards of education in large North American metropolitan areas have established departments for special education and policies for inclusion, and a range of services to support the efforts of individual schools and classroom teachers exist. For example, such information is available on the websites for the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (2006), the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Los Angeles (2006), and the Toronto Board of Jewish Education (2006). Jewish day schools in Ontario and through much of North America are privately funded. They face considerable financial and logistical challenges in providing special education services and support to inclusive practice. Parents choose to educate their children in the Jewish day school setting and expect their tuition dollars to yield a comprehensive education that reflects their values and responds to the needs of their children. In previous generations, the challenging dual curriculum of the Jewish day school was directed towards academically strong students and did not accommodate the needs of special education students (Ross, 2000). Special education was sought primarily for students in settings outside of the Jewish day school system. The current focus on developing services to address special learning needs represents a significant shift in curricular emphasis and allocation of very limited resources and reflects changes that have occurred in public education which expect inclusion as the norm.

In its extensive review of special education in the Jewish day schools of Greater Toronto in 1998 to 2000, the Toronto Board of Jewish Education identified several challenges to inclusion at the school level. Lack of resources, limited teacher training and professional development opportunities relating to inclusive practice, teacher stress, and curricular demands were identified as challenges to effective inclusion (Toronto
Board of Jewish Education, 2001). A committee to oversee professional development and improvement of services for students was established in 2001, and some inroads in these areas have been made (Toronto Board of Jewish Education, 2004). Though the expectation of inclusion has become the norm in the Jewish day school setting and the need for improved practice has been identified, little research has been conducted on the experiences and challenges of teachers in the inclusive Jewish day school general studies classroom.

The Study

This qualitative case study research explores 2 teachers’ experiences in teaching students with exceptionalities in their grade 4 general studies classrooms in two Jewish day schools. The strategies they implement in differentiating the curriculum, the role of resources and support staff in facilitating their inclusive practice, teacher perceptions role and responsibilities, and characteristics of the setting that facilitate or impede inclusive practice are examined.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

On-site research is needed to contribute to the limited research on inclusive teaching practice in the dual curriculum structure of the traditional Jewish day school. My research questions include:

1. What aspects of the traditional Jewish day school structure facilitate or impede effective inclusive practice?

2. What role do resources and special education support staff play in facilitating curriculum differentiation and enabling inclusive practice for classroom teachers?

3. How do teachers perceive their role and responsibilities in inclusive practice?
4. How do teachers differentiate curriculum in the traditional Jewish day school setting?

Purpose

Through my research, I hoped to gain a deep understanding of the inclusive practice experiences of 2 classroom teachers in the general studies component of the Jewish day school programme and to identify characteristics of the dual curriculum setting that impact on inclusive practice. These understandings are applicable to my own practice as a Jewish day school administrator and have the potential through dissemination to enlighten the practice of other Jewish day school teachers, support staff, and administrators.

Though a significant body of literature exists on inclusive practice and strategies for curriculum differentiation in public school settings (Corbett, 2001; Hutchinson, 2002; Johnsen, Haensly, Ryser, & Ford, 2002; McGrail, 1998; Tomlinson, 1999; Westberg, 1995), my search for studies on inclusion conducted in Jewish day schools yielded limited results. My search included face-to-face and email contacts with Tikun Chaim staff (the special education resource team at the Toronto Board of Jewish Education) and a contact in Israel as well as literature searches and visits to the libraries at four universities. I continued through the process of writing this document to search further and found few additional references. Ross (2000) confirms my search findings in her study of special needs students in one Jewish day school, stating that very limited academic research has been done in Jewish schools and that in that body of work, few studies have examined issues relating to special education or inclusion.

Case study findings can lead to improved practice (Bassey, 2003; Merriam, 1988, 1998). It is my hope that insights and recommendations emerging from my research lead
to improved inclusive practice and that teachers reading my study, by virtue of the depth and detail of description it provides, will discover findings transferable to their own inclusive practice context. Many differentiation strategies are presented in the literature (Choate, 1997; Hutchinson, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999) and in government curriculum documents (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2004a). In my study, differentiation strategies that are effective in the general studies classroom are identified in document, interview, and observation data. My research questions are specific to inclusive practice in the Jewish day school setting. Thus, it is my hope that the findings of the study will be of interest to Jewish day school teachers, support staff, and administrators in light of the limited research that has been done in the setting and the need for improved inclusive practice (Toronto Board of Jewish Education, 2001).

In my position as a vice principal in a Jewish day school, I am reminded daily of the challenges that classroom teachers face in attempting to differentiate curriculum and effectively teach students with exceptionalities while running a busy general studies classroom on a half-day schedule. Through this study I hope to gain a greater understanding of the challenges that general studies teachers face in inclusive practice. Greater understanding of these challenges and of aspects of the setting that effect inclusion will inform my administrative role.

Description of the Jewish Day School Setting

Elementary level Jewish day schools in North America typically have dual language programmes in which part of the day is spent in Hebrew language and religious studies classes and part is spent in secular study based on government curriculum guidelines. The schools where I conducted my research follow the traditional Jewish day school structure and deliver the general studies programme in a half-day time allotment.
Students have general studies in the morning or afternoon session and Jewish studies in the remaining half of the day. These schools follow the guidelines of the Ontario Curriculum, kindergarten through grade 8, and the general studies teacher is responsible for teaching this formal curriculum in a half-day programme. A teacher specialized in Hebrew language and Judaic studies teaches each class for the other half of the school day. General studies teachers are members of the Ontario College of Teachers and have certification equivalent to that of their public school counterparts. Though government curriculum documents are followed for general studies, policies for special education services are developed at the school level with potential input and support from local boards of Jewish education.

Understanding the Terminology Related to Exceptionalities

Students exhibiting a range of learning and behavioural exceptionalities are frequently taught in the general classroom in elementary level Jewish day schools. *Students with exceptionalities* are those students requiring accommodation or modification of the curriculum in order to meet their individual learning needs (Winzer, 2002). *Accommodations* are changes to teaching strategies, equipment, or the setting that enable the student to participate effectively in the regular curriculum. These changes do not alter the grade level expectation but rather change the methods or environment in such a way that the student is able to achieve the grade-level expectation (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2004a). The curriculum expectations themselves are changed in a modified programme. *Modifications* entail altering the number or complexity of the grade level curricular expectations for the exceptional student (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2004b, pp. 15-16). Like the term *accommodations*, the term *adaptations* also appears in the literature and tends to refer to instructional
changes that do not alter the level of curriculum expectations but rather the methods by which they are taught (Winzer).

Students are often deemed exceptional through the process of formal identification. Formal identification occurs when a student has had a psycho-educational assessment that identifies specific exceptionalities in the child's learning and behavioural profile. Teacher observations and assessments of student progress and needs may also be the basis for requiring accommodations and modifications to the curriculum.

Exceptionalities exhibited by students in the inclusive general studies classroom include but are not exclusive to learning disabilities, giftedness, behavioural disorders, physical disabilities, and speech/language disorders.

As parents have gained awareness of the inclusion movement, they have advocated for accommodations and modifications that enable children with milder exceptionalities to be educated effectively in the Jewish day school. Because Jewish day schools tend to be unable to provide the resources required for inclusion of students with more severe exceptionalities, the needs of students with more severe developmental and physical exceptionalities continue to be addressed in specialized settings within both the Jewish and wider community.

For the purposes of this study, the term students with exceptionalities refers to students who display learning or behavioural needs that require curricular accommodations or modifications in order for the student to learn and function effectively within the context of the general education classroom. Accommodations and modifications may be provided by the general studies classroom teacher or in conjunction with support staff.
The Research Literature

The body of research on inclusive education is extensive. Educational policies in North America and many European countries as well as in some Asian countries favour placement of students with exceptionalities in the general education classroom as a first choice whenever possible (Hutchinson, 2002; Leong & Kooi, 2004; Peetsma, Vergeer, Roeleveld, & Karsten, 2001; Rose, 2001). Current research from public school settings yields a number of findings. Teacher attitudes and training have impact on teachers’ abilities to differentiate curriculum and make effective accommodations for students with exceptionalities (Bennett, Deluca, & Bruns, 1997; Corbett, 2001). The roles of support staff and school leadership can facilitate teacher efforts in inclusive practice, as can collaborative teaching opportunities with colleagues (Espin, Deno, & Albayrak-Kaymak, 1998; McGrail, 1998; Tomlinson, 1994). As well, a range of inclusive delivery models (Daack, 1999; McGill Inclusive Education, 2001) and strategies for differentiating curriculum (Hutchinson, 2002; Sapon-Shevin, 1994; Tomlinson, 1999) are areas of current focus in the literature.

In the context of the Jewish day school setting, the Toronto Board of Jewish Education (2001, 2004) has conducted research on the needs and services available in the Toronto Jewish education system. Some best practices have been highlighted in their reports, and some strengths and weaknesses of the system of service delivery have been identified. The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education publishes a regular newsletter and has annual conferences at which issues pertaining to inclusion are discussed. The challenges of educating students with exceptionalities within the general classroom in the Jewish day school are being acknowledged, and the need to provide support for classroom teachers is referred to in
newsletter articles. The establishment of an in-service course for classroom teachers on special education in the Jewish school system at York University in Toronto (2004) also attests to the need for professional development and guidance for Jewish day school teachers.

Methodology

The participants of this qualitative case study are 2 grade 4 general studies teachers in the classroom context of two Jewish day schools in a large metropolitan city. Six classroom observation sessions were conducted in each of two classrooms. School documents pertaining to special education were analyzed over the course of the research period as they became available at each site. Taped open-ended qualitative interviews were conducted with each participant prior to and following the series of classroom observations. As well, taped discussions with the participants were conducted following each observation session. An additional discussion was conducted with the resource programme co-ordinator at one school.

Data were collected in the form of audiotaped interviews and conversations; field notes on interviews and discussions; classroom observation notes; school documents pertaining to special education; and my research journal. I transcribed interview tapes and analyzed transcripts, observation notes, field notes, research journal, and documents, coding with a priori and then emergent codes and constructing categories and overarching themes. This range of data sources is characteristic of case study research (Merriam, 1998) and allowed for triangulation and the establishment of the trustworthiness of my qualitative data. It is hoped that the breadth and depth of the data and my time spent in its analysis have yielded the thick description characteristic of qualitative research and essential to any transferability of findings emerging from this study.
Outline of the Remainder of the Document

Chapters Two and Three develop more fully the ideas presented in this introduction. Chapter Two focuses on the literature and discusses key aspects of inclusion and Jewish day school education that pertain to this case study research. Chapter Three explores the qualitative case study design of my research and develops in detail its methodology and methods. In Chapter Four, the themes that emerged from the data analysis are explored in detail for both classroom settings. Chapter Five concludes this thesis with a discussion of recommendations, reflections, and concluding thoughts on my analysis of the data presented in Chapter Four.
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In its extensive review of special education in the Jewish day schools of Greater Toronto in 1998 to 2000, the Toronto Board of Jewish Education identified several challenges to inclusion at the school level. Lack of resources, limited teacher training and professional development opportunities relating to inclusive practice, teacher stress, and curricular demands were identified as challenges to effective inclusion (Toronto
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Purpose

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Though a significant body of literature exists on inclusive practice and strategies for curriculum differentiation in public school settings (Corbett, 2001; Hutchinson, 2002; Johnsen, Haensly, Ryser, & Ford, 2002; McGrail, 1998; Tomlinson, 1999; Westberg, 1995), my search for studies on inclusion conducted in Jewish day schools yielded limited results. My search included face-to-face and email contacts with Tikun Chaim staff (the special education resource team at the Toronto Board of Jewish Education) and a contact in Israel as well as literature searches and visits to the libraries at four universities. I continued through the process of writing this document to search further and found few additional references. Ross (2000) confirms my search findings in her study of special needs students in one Jewish day school, stating that very limited academic research has been done in Jewish schools and that in that body of work, few studies have examined issues relating to special education or inclusion.

Case study findings can lead to improved practice (Bassey, 2003; Merriam, 1988, 1998). It is my hope that insights and recommendations emerging from my research lead
to improved inclusive practice and that teachers reading my study, by virtue of the depth and detail of description it provides, will discover findings transferable to their own inclusive practice context. Many differentiation strategies are presented in the literature (Choate, 1997; Hutchinson, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999) and in government curriculum documents (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2004a). In my study, differentiation strategies that are effective in the general studies classroom are identified in document, interview, and observation data. My research questions are specific to inclusive practice in the Jewish day school setting. Thus, it is my hope that the findings of the study will be of interest to Jewish day school teachers, support staff, and administrators in light of the limited research that has been done in the setting and the need for improved inclusive practice (Toronto Board of Jewish Education, 2001).

In my position as a vice principal in a Jewish day school, I am reminded daily of the challenges that classroom teachers face in attempting to differentiate curriculum and effectively teach students with exceptionalities while running a busy general studies classroom on a half-day schedule. Through this study I hope to gain a greater understanding of the challenges that general studies teachers face in inclusive practice. Greater understanding of these challenges and of aspects of the setting that effect inclusion will inform my administrative role.

Description of the Jewish Day School Setting

Elementary level Jewish day schools in North America typically have dual language programmes in which part of the day is spent in Hebrew language and religious studies classes and part is spent in secular study based on government curriculum guidelines. The schools where I conducted my research follow the traditional Jewish day school structure and deliver the general studies programme in a half-day time allotment.
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Understanding the Terminology Related to Exceptionalities

Students exhibiting a range of learning and behavioural exceptionalities are frequently taught in the general classroom in elementary level Jewish day schools. Students with exceptionalities are those students requiring accommodation or modification of the curriculum in order to meet their individual learning needs (Winzer, 2002). Accommodations are changes to teaching strategies, equipment, or the setting that enable the student to participate effectively in the regular curriculum. These changes do not alter the grade level expectation but rather change the methods or environment in such a way that the student is able to achieve the grade-level expectation (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2004a). The curriculum expectations themselves are changed in a modified programme. Modifications entail altering the number or complexity of the grade level curricular expectations for the exceptional student (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2004b, pp. 15-16). Like the term accommodations, the term adaptations also appears in the literature and tends to refer to instructional
changes that do not alter the level of curriculum expectations but rather the methods by which they are taught (Winzer).

Students are often deemed exceptional through the process of formal identification. Formal identification occurs when a student has had a psycho-educational assessment that identifies specific exceptionalities in the child’s learning and behavioural profile. Teacher observations and assessments of student progress and needs may also be the basis for requiring accommodations and modifications to the curriculum.

Exceptionalities exhibited by students in the inclusive general studies classroom include but are not exclusive to learning disabilities, giftedness, behavioural disorders, physical disabilities, and speech/language disorders.

As parents have gained awareness of the inclusion movement, they have advocated for accommodations and modifications that enable children with milder exceptionalities to be educated effectively in the Jewish day school. Because Jewish day schools tend to be unable to provide the resources required for inclusion of students with more severe exceptionalities, the needs of students with more severe developmental and physical exceptionalities continue to be addressed in specialized settings within both the Jewish and wider community.

For the purposes of this study, the term students with exceptionalities refers to students who display learning or behavioural needs that require curricular accommodations or modifications in order for the student to learn and function effectively within the context of the general education classroom. Accommodations and modifications may be provided by the general studies classroom teacher or in conjunction with support staff.
The Research Literature

The body of research on inclusive education is extensive. Educational policies in North America and many European countries as well as in some Asian countries favour placement of students with exceptionalities in the general education classroom as a first choice whenever possible (Hutchinson, 2002; Leong & Kooi, 2004; Peetsma, Vergeer, Roeleveld, & Karsten, 2001; Rose, 2001). Current research from public school settings yields a number of findings. Teacher attitudes and training have impact on teachers’ abilities to differentiate curriculum and make effective accommodations for students with exceptionalities (Bennett, Deluca, & Bruns, 1997; Corbett, 2001). The roles of support staff and school leadership can facilitate teacher efforts in inclusive practice, as can collaborative teaching opportunities with colleagues (Espin, Deno, & Albayrak-Kaymak, 1998; McGrail, 1998; Tomlinson, 1994). As well, a range of inclusive delivery models (Daack, 1999; McGill Inclusive Education, 2001) and strategies for differentiating curriculum (Hutchinson, 2002; Sapon-Shevin, 1994; Tomlinson, 1999) are areas of current focus in the literature.

In the context of the Jewish day school setting, the Toronto Board of Jewish Education (2001, 2004) has conducted research on the needs and services available in the Toronto Jewish education system. Some best practices have been highlighted in their reports, and some strengths and weaknesses of the system of service delivery have been identified. The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education publishes a regular newsletter and has annual conferences at which issues pertaining to inclusion are discussed. The challenges of educating students with exceptionalities within the general classroom in the Jewish day school are being acknowledged, and the need to provide support for classroom teachers is referred to in
newsletter articles. The establishment of an in-service course for classroom teachers on special education in the Jewish school system at York University in Toronto (2004) also attests to the need for professional development and guidance for Jewish day school teachers.

Methodology

The participants of this qualitative case study are 2 grade 4 general studies teachers in the classroom context of two Jewish day schools in a large metropolitan city. Six classroom observation sessions were conducted in each of two classrooms. School documents pertaining to special education were analyzed over the course of the research period as they became available at each site. Taped open-ended qualitative interviews were conducted with each participant prior to and following the series of classroom observations. As well, taped discussions with the participants were conducted following each observation session. An additional discussion was conducted with the resource programme co-ordinator at one school.

Data were collected in the form of audiotaped interviews and conversations; field notes on interviews and discussions; classroom observation notes; school documents pertaining to special education; and my research journal. I transcribed interview tapes and analyzed transcripts, observation notes, field notes, research journal, and documents, coding with a priori and then emergent codes and constructing categories and overarching themes. This range of data sources is characteristic of case study research (Merriam, 1998) and allowed for triangulation and the establishment of the trustworthiness of my qualitative data. It is hoped that the breadth and depth of the data and my time spent in its analysis have yielded the thick description characteristic of qualitative research and essential to any transferability of findings emerging from this study.
Outline of the Remainder of the Document

Chapters Two and Three develop more fully the ideas presented in this introduction. Chapter Two focuses on the literature and discusses key aspects of inclusion and Jewish day school education that pertain to this case study research. Chapter Three explores the qualitative case study design of my research and develops in detail its methodology and methods. In Chapter Four, the themes that emerged from the data analysis are explored in detail for both classroom settings. Chapter Five concludes this thesis with a discussion of recommendations, reflections, and concluding thoughts on my analysis of the data presented in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A large body of literature exists in the area of inclusive education. My challenge was to distill a wide range of studies relating to inclusive practice into a meaningful framework that provided a foundation for my own research and in turn informed my data analysis. I have organized my review of the literature under the themes: inclusive practice, inclusive education and student exceptionalities, curriculum and inclusion, and inclusion in the Jewish day school setting. The first theme, inclusive practice, is further organized under the subheadings history of inclusive policy, factors affecting inclusive practice, and delivery models for inclusive education. The theme of inclusive education and student exceptionalities examines literature on students with learning disabilities and students who are gifted and talented. Curriculum and inclusion focuses on key terms in discussing curriculum, curriculum differentiation, and integrated curriculum in the Jewish day school. Inclusive practice, inclusive education and student exceptionalities, and curriculum and inclusion explore areas of the literature that form a general context for understanding inclusion. The literature on inclusion in the Jewish day school setting illuminates some aspects of inclusion particular to the traditional Jewish day school setting. I have used both Canadian and international sources in the literature to provide a context for my work.

Inclusive Practice

This area of the literature is reviewed under the headings history of inclusive policy, factors affecting inclusive practice, and delivery models for inclusive education.

History of Inclusive Policy

This overview of the history of inclusive policy explores change in the directives of boards of education. These policies reflect changes in the thinking of some educators
and policy makers but do not necessarily reflect actual change in every classroom in each jurisdiction affected. As much of the subsequent sections of this literature review indicate, change in practice has not been uniform across schools and individual classrooms, and many factors affect the success of attempts at inclusion.

In 1982 in Ontario, the passing of Bill 82: The Education Amendment Act made it obligatory for school boards in the province to provide special education services for students with exceptionalities (Weber & Bennett, 2004). Prior to Bill 82, school boards in Ontario were permitted but not mandated to offer special education services for students requiring them. Services beyond those provided by the classroom teacher were made obligatory with the passing of Bill 82.

In the 1970s and 1980s special education policies moved from supporting segregation of students with exceptionalities into separate classes for those with particular disabilities to mainstream or integration policies that encouraged educators to integrate the education of students with exceptionalities into mainstream, general education classrooms (Hutchinson, 2002; Snyder, Garriott, & Aylor, 2001). The terms mainstream and integration implied that students with exceptionalities would reenter the mainstream setting from segregated classes when they were able to function within the parameters of the general classroom curriculum and expectations. Segregated classes were maintained throughout these decades for students whose needs could not effectively be met in the general education classroom.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s parents pressured educational institutions and government educational policy makers to allow children with exceptionalities to participate more fully in the general education environment of their nonexceptional peers. The inclusion movement gained momentum in the 1990s, and further legislation was put
in place in jurisdictions throughout North America, Great Britain (Rose, 2001), Europe (Peetsma et al., 2001), Israel (Rubinoff, 1996), and Australia (Slee, 2001). As well, inclusive policy is currently emerging in some countries in Asia (Leong & Kooi, 2004).

Currently in Canada policies across the country reflect the expectation that the needs of most students can be met in the general education classroom setting, with access to special programming and facilities as well as segregated classes when required for student needs to be adequately addressed. Winzer (2002) cautions that:

Schools are not fixed entities with determinant characteristics. We can rarely characterize a school as unequivocally inclusive or not inclusive and there is not an indisputable “best” form of provision. Across Canada, the amount of integration into the regular classroom depends on provincial policy and the individual school district. Therefore, the implementation of inclusionary practices varies widely from province to province and even among neighbouring school boards. (p. 49)

Despite the range in approaches to inclusion across the country, the majority of students with exceptionalities in Canada today are placed in the regular classroom (Weber & Bennett, 2004). Though this general philosophy of inclusion is characteristic of the placement policies across Canada, most jurisdictions do not use the term full inclusion which means that students with exceptionalities have access to placement in the general education classroom only. A full inclusion policy would eliminate the possibility of placing a student with exceptionalities in a segregated programme that might more effectively address that student’s particular needs than any services that could be provided within a general education classroom even with support from additional staff within the class.
The range of terms used in describing the inclusive policy in each province and territory in Canada (see Appendix A) reflect a commitment to inclusion in the general classroom as a first placement choice. The terminology used also reflects the availability of alternate placements such as general classroom with resource support or separate special education classes when deemed necessary. It is important to note that placement of students with exceptionalities is at times a controversial matter. Debates over whether or not inclusive placements lead to greater student achievement than placements in segregated classes for students with exceptionalities are evident in the literature (Espin et al., 1998; Hutchinson, 2002). Despite the predominance of inclusive placement, segregated classes still exist as an option for students whose needs are not effectively addressed in inclusive general classrooms.

The individual education plan (IEP) is a tool developed to assist educators in working with students with exceptionalities. In the United States the use of the IEP for identified students is federally mandated, and in Canada the IEP is standard practice in most jurisdictions (Winzer, 2002). The IEP or its equivalent is used to communicate the student’s strengths and needs and the curriculum modifications and accommodations to be made. Weber and Bennett (2004) describe the IEP as a roadmap that “provides specific guidelines for the student’s program, but always allows for the day-to-day adjustments required for any teaching-learning situation” (p. 198). It is intended to be a document that provides practical information on goals and strategies particular to the student’s learning profile and is regularly reviewed, updated, and modified to reflect progress and changing needs. Standard IEP forms, such as those used in Ontario, are often lengthy and potentially onerous for the classroom teacher to write and maintain independently. The use of an in-school team to work collaboratively on developing and
reviewing the IEP is one approach that can support classroom teachers and ensure that the IEP is developed, utilized, and reviewed (Weber & Bennett).

Factors Affecting Inclusive Practice

Inclusive policies have created an educational reality in which most classroom teachers are expected to address the needs of all students within the general education classroom (McGill Inclusive Education, 2001). Teacher beliefs about inclusive practice and preservice education and professional development on inclusive pedagogy are of critical importance in facilitating effective inclusion (Bennett et al, 1997; Corbett, 2001; Hutchinson, 2002; Snyder et al., 2001). Hutchinson states that “when we work in schools that value inclusion, we do a better job of including students with exceptionalities and that our beliefs about these students are closely related to our teaching actions” (p. 19). Teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive practice are affected by several factors including professional training in differentiating curriculum, access to administrative support, quality of support provided by special education teachers, class size, and opportunities for teacher collaboration (Salend, 2001). Corbett found that attitudes towards inclusion, teacher quality, and professional development appear to be essential factors in effective inclusive practice and identified the classroom teacher as the key agent of change in classroom practice.

In addition to availability of professional development for practicing teachers, the literature suggests that inclusive pedagogy needs to be a part of preservice teacher training. To foster skill development in running an inclusive general education classroom and positive attitudes towards inclusion, student teachers need to experience practicum placements with effective inclusive educators who can act as mentors (Hutchinson, 1994). As well, specific training in student exceptionalities and in strategies for
modifying and adapting the general curricula to address the needs of students with exceptionalities has become a desired component in preservice teacher education (Lombardi & Hunka, 2001; Rose, 2001; Slee, 2001). Slee goes so far as to suggest a restructuring of preservice teacher education to include integration of inclusive pedagogy across courses in faculty of education curricula.

In addition to teacher attitudes and training for inclusion, a number of factors are identified in the literature as important to effective inclusive practice. Westberg and Archambault's (1997) multisite case study of successful teaching practices for high-ability students in general education classrooms identified six recurring themes in settings with successful inclusive practice. These included teacher training and professional development; teacher's positive attitudes towards change in practice; teacher collaboration; differentiation strategies; school leadership; and support provided to teachers as well as teacher autonomy in the classroom. Research studies by Espin et al. (1998), McGrail (1998), and Tomlinson (1994) support Westberg and Archambault's findings. These studies identify the significant role special education staff can play in supporting classroom teachers in planning and implementing differentiated curriculum.

Rose (2001) interviewed 20 elementary school teachers in Britain about their perceptions of conditions necessary for successful inclusion of students with exceptionalities. Teachers identified the importance of additional in-class support staff, concern about the additional planning time required and the additional teaching time given to special needs students, and the need for professional development opportunities to provide training in teaching students with specific exceptionalities. Johnsen et al. (2002), in their study of the Mustard Seed Project for ongoing professional development in curriculum differentiation in gifted education, identify additional planning time for
teacher collaboration and the need for teacher mentoring and support from school leadership as important factors affecting inclusive practice. These studies point to the importance of allotting time for teacher collaboration in planning, for implementing differentiated programming and interacting with students with exceptionalities, and for teacher mentoring, guidance from administrators, and professional development.

Corbett’s (2001) case study research on one elementary school in East London, that had a reputation for excellence in inclusive practice and a 15-year history of working on inclusion, contributes further to the literature on factors affecting inclusive practice. Corbett made 12 half-day visits to the school over the course of one term examining inclusive teaching practices of teachers and support staff in their day-to-day teaching. Data included interviews with teachers and support staff and field notes on classroom teaching observations, assemblies, and staff meetings. Corbett’s findings describe highly skilled teachers who incorporate a range of strategies in their teaching styles and who seek the active and successful involvement of each student in the learning experience. She states that “so many skilful strategies have been learnt and adapted by the teaching team that it is hard to say where mainstream teaching ends and specialist teaching begins” (p. 58). In the study, teacher quality, professional development, and attitudes towards inclusion are identified as essential factors in effectively creating and delivering the differentiated curriculum characteristic of inclusive practice. Corbett describes daily team meetings for staff, an ethos of collective responsibility, and a proactive approach to student behaviour problems in which no one teacher is seen as solely responsible for a given child’s behaviour. This successful inclusive setting is characterized by a quiet and calm school atmosphere which is child-centred and promotes the use of nonconfrontational approaches to student behavioural challenges. Corbett also
encourages the use of financial resources to maximize the number of teaching and support staff and the access to additional consultants from outside of the school.

It is evident in the literature on factors that affect inclusive practice that effective practitioners are skilful teachers and strong communicators. Factors affecting inclusive practice include: teacher attitudes to inclusion; preservice teacher education and inservice professional development on inclusive practice; teacher collaboration with special education staff and general education colleagues; knowledge of differentiation strategies; support from school leaders and special education staff; issues of time for collaboration and for interacting with students with exceptionalities; and an ethos of collective responsibility for all students in the school.

*Delivery Models for Inclusive Education*

Choice of delivery model for a given school often depends upon the availability of support staff, complexity of student needs, and the philosophy of school administrators and policy makers with regard to inclusion. Commonly used approaches are the consultation model, team teaching model, in-class support staff, and pullout resource programme (Daack, 1999; McGill Inclusive Education, 2001).

In the consultation model, the special education teacher acts as a consultant providing guidance and resources for the classroom teacher to use in implementing individualized instruction for students with exceptionalities. In the team teaching model, two or more teachers work together planning and providing programming for students with exceptionalities. Teams may include both general and special education teachers who work together in the classroom, teaching both the general and students with exceptionalities. In-class support, the third model, is provided by trained support staff working with specific students within the general education classroom. Educational
assistants who are assigned to particular students are characteristic of this model. In the pullout resource model, students with exceptionalities spend some time in the special education resource room working on programmes specific to their learning needs. Resource programmes may support the general education curriculum or may focus on skill development particular to individual student needs. A combination of models may be used in any one school. Identification of the inclusive models used in a given setting is important to understanding the roles of all staff involved and the challenges to inclusion in the particular setting.

Inclusive Education and Student Exceptionalities

The term student exceptionalities refers to a wide range of special needs that have been formally identified. Exceptionalities can be categorized as mild disorders to learning, behavioural disorders, giftedness, sensory disabilities, physical disabilities, and developmental disabilities. Approximately 15% of the students in North America display exceptionalities in one or more of these categories (Winzer, 2002). In Ontario specifically, 12.8% of students in publicly funded school boards in 2001-02 were identified as exceptional (Weber & Bennett, 2004). In Ontario, student exceptionalities are categorized under five headings: behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, and multiple (Weber & Bennett). Learning disabilities are defined as a communication exceptionality and giftedness as an intellectual exceptionality. The literature on inclusion of students with learning disabilities and students who are gifted is particularly significant to this study as some students with these exceptionalities are typically found in Jewish day school classrooms. Most Jewish day schools do not provide inclusive services for students with more profound exceptionalities, and thus literature on more severe
exceptionalities is not reviewed. The exceptionalities of learning disabilities and giftedness represent two distinct bodies of literature.

*Inclusion and Students With Learning Disabilities*

Children with learning disabilities make up the largest group of exceptional learners, representing just over half of the students typically receiving special education services in public education (O’Shea, O’Shea, & Algozzine, 1998; Salend, 2001). Salend describes students with learning disabilities as “the largest and fastest growing group of students with disabilities” (p. 50). Teachers in Jewish day schools typically have a small number of students with learning disabilities in their classes.

Students with learning disabilities are of normal intelligence but experience difficulties in learning. Their learning challenges are heterogeneous in nature and require a broad range of accommodations and modifications to the grade-level curriculum. Weber and Bennett (2004) describe learning disabilities as “the most elusive of all areas in special education” (p. 56) because many possible learning needs and behaviours are categorized under this exceptionality. However, common to most students with learning disabilities are challenges in working with language-based information. Without intervention these students achieve poor results in school. Accommodations made to learning materials, the physical environment, to the length and format of tasks, teaching methods, and provision of alternate end products that rely on student strengths enable students with learning disabilities to function more effectively in the inclusive regular classroom (Mercer & Mercer, 1998).

Some research in learning disabilities focuses on student perceptions of inclusion. Vaughn and Klingner (1998) found that students with learning disabilities tend to like inclusion because it provides opportunities for them to make friends and that they
respond favourably to in-class support from special education teachers. Despite these positive responses to inclusion, Vaughn and Klingner also report

The majority of students with learning disabilities preferred to receive specialized instruction outside of the general education for part of the school day.... [and] they liked the resource room because the work is easier and fun and they get the help they need to do their work. (p. 79)

These findings indicate that the student with learning disabilities may perceive the “easier and fun” work of the resource room as a welcome respite from the challenges of the regular classroom if the grade-level curriculum has not been adapted and possibly modified to address the student’s needs and strengths. The pullout model of inclusion provides regular opportunities for students to receive small-group or individual instruction in the resource room.

In a synthesis of 20 studies on student perceptions of instruction in inclusive settings, Klingner and Vaughn (1999) found that both students with learning disabilities and their nonidentified classmates valued teachers’ methods for ensuring student learning. Teacher strategies of slower step-by-step instruction, clear explanation of tasks and new concepts, instruction in learning strategies, and varied methods of teaching the same content were valued by both groups of students in the regular classroom. Effective teaching methods for students with learning disabilities benefited other students in the class and were recognized as good teaching. The authors point out, however, that “perhaps the greatest barrier to their [students with learning disabilities] success in the general education classroom has been a lack of appropriate instruction that yields adequate progress” (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999, p. 23). The appropriate curriculum accommodations and modifications are critical to success of students with learning
disabilities in the inclusive classroom.

Waldron and McLeskey (1998) studied the academic progress in reading and mathematics of students with learning disabilities in six elementary schools with a reputation for strong special education programmes, comparing progress of students with learning disabilities in inclusive classes to those in special education classes. Waldron and McLeskey found that students with mild learning disabilities tended to make better progress in reading in the inclusive classes than the students in special education classes. Both groups made similar progress in mathematics. Students with more severe learning disabilities made comparable progress in both settings. Waldron and McLeskey caution "that 'good' inclusive programs can be developed, [but] much information is available to indicate that poorly designed, bad inclusive programs, which do not meet the needs of students with disabilities are being implemented in many parts of the country [United States]" (p. 403). This study indicates the potential of inclusive practice to provide effective education for students with learning disabilities.

Inclusion and Students Who Are Gifted

In 1994, Sapon-Shevin published Playing Favorites: Gifted Education and the Disruption of Community, which was based on her interviews with general classroom teachers and teachers of students who are gifted. In her research on students who are gifted in inclusive classrooms, Sapon-Shevin found withdrawal of students (pullout model) disruptive and inadequate in addressing individual needs and differences. Her research findings supporting the benefits of effective inclusive education for students who are gifted stimulated the rebuttal to her position presented by Carol Ann Tomlinson (1994). Sapon-Shevin, an opponent of pullout models of inclusion, states that "the exemplary teaching that occurs in many inclusive classrooms is often a function of the
shared expertise and collaboration of several people, each freely and openly sharing his or skills and specialties” (p. 68). Tomlinson reminds us that the needs of all students who are gifted are not met in the inclusive setting and that the need for segregated classrooms and pullout models remains. Bernal (2003) argues further that the inclusion movement "relegates gifted children to inclusionary, regular classrooms where their needs are rarely met” (p. 183). The literature above indicates that when teachers have the expertise to implement differentiated curriculum that addresses the individual needs of the student who is gifted, the inclusive setting functions effectively, but in the absence of factors that support effective inclusion, student needs are often not met. Providing an effective programme that addresses the individual needs of the student who is gifted is a challenge for the classroom teacher.

Tomlinson (1994) stresses the important role of segregated classes in providing differentiated curriculum for students who are gifted when it is not adequately provided in the general education classroom. Tomlinson identifies large class sizes, time constraints, and lack of teacher skill as reasons that some classroom teachers provide little differentiated curricula for students who are gifted. Tomlinson found that teachers tend to differentiate curriculum more frequently and readily for struggling students than for students who are gifted and often suggest that advanced students will succeed by virtue of their strengths, without teacher intervention and curriculum adaptation.

Reis (2003) encourages incorporating teaching strategies used by gifted education specialists in segregated gifted classes into the regular classroom. Reis states that teachers of gifted classes “have expertise in adjusting the regular curriculum to meet the needs of advanced students in a variety of ways including accelerating content, incorporating a thematic approach, and substituting more challenging textbooks or
assignments” (p. 198). She further suggests that specialists can guide classroom teachers in differentiation techniques, teaching advanced research skills, creating interest groups, and teaching students independent work skills. Curriculum compacting (Winebrenner, 1992) and use of higher order thinking skills and inquiry-based instruction (Van Tassel-Baska, 1997) are also recommended strategies for teaching students who are gifted in the general education classroom. In light of Tomlinson’s observation that little curriculum differentiation tends to be made for most students who are gifted in general education classes, it is important that teachers be trained in curriculum differentiation techniques for students who are gifted.

Curriculum and Inclusion

Before examining research pertaining to curriculum differentiation strategies and integrated curriculum and inclusion, it is necessary to define curriculum. McCutcheon (1997) distinguishes between the formal and less formal curriculum and highlights the importance of the null and hidden curriculum. The formal curriculum in schools is the policy-directed curriculum of Ministry of Education documents and school curriculum guidelines. The less formal informal curriculum is curriculum experienced in the classroom. The null curriculum is all that schools do not teach to children, and the hidden curriculum is all that is unintentionally taught to students, lessons that student often learn very well. I view curriculum holistically as the sum total of the formal, informal, null, and hidden curricula: the lived experience of students in the classroom.

The lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993), in contrast to the curriculum-as-plan that is determined by formal curriculum expectations, is the actual curriculum that is experienced, lived, by each student and teacher in the classroom. This holistic view of curriculum extends far beyond textbooks and curriculum expectations. My view of the
curriculum is greatly influenced by Dewey’s (Flinders & Thornton, 1997) position that curriculum is “an outcome of the interactions among students, materials, and the teacher” (p. 4). Curriculum as an outcome is created by that lived experience.

An integral aspect of curriculum as an outcome of interactions is the possibility for negotiated curriculum. Negotiation between teacher and student can determine what the student will study and how it will be explored and assessed (Drake, 1998). Student and teacher discuss and decide together the topic, skills, resources, end product, and assessment for which the student is responsible.

The curriculum terms adapted programme and modified programme are clearly defined by Canadian standards. An adapted programme follows the expectations of the Ministry documents. Adaptations (changes) in programming are made to enable the student to meet the grade-appropriate expectations. The term accommodation also refers to changes that do not alter the grade level expectation but rather change the methods or environment in such a way that the student is able to achieve the grade-level expectation (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 2004a). The curriculum expectations themselves are changed in a modified programme. Adaptations and modifications to expectations are made when a mismatch exists between the student’s strengths and needs, and the curriculum (Hutchinson, 2002).

Integrated curriculum refers to curriculum models that bring together topics, skills, and knowledge from different subject areas in a unified manner. Integrated models of curriculum are effective in creating relevance for students and often lead to teacher collaboration in planning and implementing programmes (Drake, 1998). In her extensive work on creating integrated curriculum, Drake explains the connection between integrated curriculum and effective inclusive practice, stating:
Integrated curriculum has been hailed as one way to ensure an inclusive classroom. The rationale is that when we change the way we teach, we will be able to meet the needs of many more students. A relevant curriculum where students actively participate is more motivating to all students. (p. 173)

In integrated curriculum units, the role of the special education teacher can facilitate an inclusive approach. Wasta, Scott, Marchand-Martella and Harris (1999) describe a multidisciplinary integrated grade 3 unit on Ancient China in which the special education teacher spent half an hour each day working individually and in small groups with students with exceptionalities. The special education teacher provided modeling of skills and tasks for students with exceptionalities and direct skill instruction and reinforcement within the context of the integrated activities.

Curriculum Differentiation

Several researchers have compiled lists of suggested strategies for differentiating curriculum both through accommodations and actual modifications to expectations. Differentiation of curriculum entails the use of numerous teaching strategies and the provision of different levels within a whole-class assignment. Hutchinson’s (2002) handbook on inclusion in Canadian schools presents differentiation strategies based on her extensive practical experience and research findings (see Appendix B). Sapon-Shevin (1994) calls for the creation of a “broadly designed curriculum” (p. 66) that incorporates a wide range of strategies and many levels and modalities. Curriculum compacting, thematic units, independent study, and the use of mentorships are strategies commonly used to differentiate curriculum in gifted programmes. These strategies are recommended as effective in all classrooms. The design and delivery of a “broader
curriculum” requires that teachers receive ongoing support and collaboration as well as involvement of resource staff in the process.

In Johnsen et al.’s (2002) study of the Mustard Seed Project, teachers were trained over a 2-year period in strategies for differentiating curriculum for students who are gifted in their regular classrooms. Over the course of the study, the majority of teachers made changes involving differentiation of curriculum in their daily teaching practice. Differentiation strategies included use of accelerated math programmes, learning centres, and interest centres for independent interest-based work, developing integrated curriculum units, compacting core curriculum, using multilevel books and other resource materials, and changing classroom settings involving variety in seating arrangements and student work areas. It is important to note that Johnsen et al. found that ongoing teacher support was critical to the process of integrating differentiation into teaching practice. Teacher support included: staff development activities, strong support from leadership (particularly principals), mentoring and collegial support, increased classroom resources, and time to implement new methods.

Tomlinson (1999) has written a comprehensive handbook for curriculum differentiation that stresses the importance of ongoing assessment to inform modification of content, instruction, and end products (culminating tasks) for all students in the general education classroom. In contrast to much of her earlier work that focused on gifted education, this handbook focuses of differentiating curriculum to address the needs of all learners in the classroom. In Tomlinson’s curriculum differentiation model the teacher must identify the essential concepts, principles, and skills to be differentiated in the curriculum. All students are expected to acquire the essential understandings of a given curriculum. It is how each student is taught, what is done in tasks, and the end products
that each produces that differ depending on individual readiness, interests, and learning style. The teacher must identify key student characteristics: readiness, interest, and learning profile. Readiness is a student’s skill and conceptual preparedness for new learning. Knowledge of individual interests is an effective vehicle for relevance and student engagement with curriculum. A student’s learning profile should describe student learning style, multiple intelligences, gender factors, and interests. The curriculum is modified when student need is apparent. Optimally, student and teacher collaborate in planning, goal setting, and assessment of progress, and tasks are meaningful for the student.

Tomlinson (1999) outlines a wide range of teaching strategies to be used with students across the range of academic levels in an inclusive classroom and suggests grouping students flexibly in whole-class, small-group, and individual constellations. Tomlinson’s comprehensive list of differentiation strategies includes: multiple intelligences in programming; jigsaw co-operative group work technique; audio taping of written material; graphic organizers; varied texts and supplementary materials; literature circles; tiered lessons, centers, and end products; small-group instruction; group investigation; independent study; varied questioning strategies; interest centers; interest groups; varied homework; curriculum compacting; varied journal prompts; and complex instruction.

With the identification of exceptionalities comes the responsibility to differentiate curriculum to address identified needs. In inclusive models, that responsibility ultimately lies with the classroom teacher. Models utilizing the strengths of special education staff provide greater support for the classroom teacher and can lead to more effective programming for students with exceptionalities (Corbett, 2001). Villa and Thousand
(2003) have called for a redefining of roles in which “collaboration and shared responsibility for educating all of a community’s children and youth” (p. 21) is central. Collaboration can provide the support that many teachers require in differentiating curriculum to address a range of academic levels and needs in an inclusive classroom.

The current educational reality is that most students with exceptionalities are being educated in general education classrooms. Whether these classrooms are truly inclusive in nature or are merely mainstream placements that do not provide differentiated curriculum that addresses individual strengths and needs depends upon the many factors that affect inclusion. Educators are being called upon to work together to provide effective instruction that meets the needs of all students along the continuum of strengths and abilities as well as meeting the behavioural, emotional, and physical needs of all students in the setting. Though segregated classes for students with severe disabilities exist in most jurisdictions, most identified students with milder exceptionalities will be placed in the general classroom, with some receiving the additional support of educational assistants and special education resource teachers. Though the setting may be mandated inclusive by school or government policy, the reality in each classroom may not be effective inclusion for the individual child with exceptionalities.

*Integrated Curriculum in the Jewish Day School*

A small number of studies are emerging in the area of integrated curriculum in the Jewish day school setting. These studies reflect current interest and research in integrated curriculum in public education. Backenroth (2004) studied the integrated curriculum approach of the Blossom School, a kindergarten to grade 8 arts-based Jewish day school in the American Midwest that integrates the arts into the Judaic and general studies
Ingall and Malkus (2001) examined the implementation of an integrated curricular unit at an American Jewish high school, the Primo Levi High School. Two Jewish day schools in Toronto incorporate aspects of integrated curriculum into their programmes, and information from their school websites (retrieved 2005) is examined.

Backenroth (2004) found that all the teachers at the Blossom School were qualified to teach both Judaic and general studies and were often also practicing artists. The arts are described as the mechanism through which the hidden curriculum of “self-expressiveness, creativity, spirituality, feminism, Jewish values and ethics” (Backenroth, p. 58) is taught. The arts are used as the vehicle through which the Judaic and general studies disciplines are integrated, “highlighting the commonalities as well as the tensions between the Jewish and the secular world” (p. 58). Backenroth cautions that the success of the Blossom School at integrating across Judaic and general studies subject areas stems from the philosophy of integrated curriculum to which all teachers, school leaders, and parents are committed. In addition, the hiring of such a uniquely qualified teaching staff provides the talents and knowledge base required to implement a fully integrated Judaic, general, and arts curriculum. In order to integrate across general and Judaic studies, teachers need to be fluent in both Hebrew and English and possess the knowledge required to teach all subject areas. Many teachers in traditionally structured Jewish day schools are not qualified to teach in both Judaic and general studies, making a model such as that described by Backenroth very difficult to replicate, even without the overlay of the arts component.

The project at Primo Levi High School (Ingall & Malkus, 2001) was less ambitious in scope than the integrated curriculum of the Blossom School. A 3-week unit of study that integrated American history and literature and Jewish history and literature
proved to be very difficult to implement. The teachers embarked enthusiastically on the project but were soon frustrated by lack of time to really develop the unit. Class time was lost from the project because of special events and the schedule did not allow for any extra classes. Ingall and Markus state that “if the faculty was concerned about time, so were the students. They didn’t have enough time to discover the connections which lay at the heart of the unit” (p. 38). The project was not received positively by the students, who viewed it as an “add on” to their already heavy dual curriculum and were concerned about their grades in general studies preuniversity courses. This attempt to implement an integrated unit at the Jewish high school level did not take into consideration the demands of the dual curriculum and seems to have been interpreted as extra work by the students as opposed to part of their programme. Ingall and Malkus suggest the use of block scheduling to change the time structure and enable more time-intensive integrated projects and to encourage teachers to plan and teach collaboratively. They conclude that the concept of integrating curriculum across Judaic and general studies has great potential for developing creative and meaningful curricula but that challenges experienced at the high school level at Primo Levi High School need to be addressed for such curricula to be developed.

Both the Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School (DJDS) and the Toronto Heschel School include the use of integrated curriculum in their school philosophies. Like the Blossom School, the Paul Penna DJDS has an arts base and describes its curriculum as one that integrates Judaic and general studies “wherever possible” (Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School, 2005, p. 5). The Toronto Heschel School is also arts based and uses Jewish values thematically to integrate curriculum across Jewish and general studies which “are not treated as separate entities” (Toronto Heschel School, n.d.,
At the Toronto Heschel School, teachers have the opportunity to team teach and thus work collaboratively in planning and delivering curriculum and draw upon one another's strengths and talents. These schools appear not to follow the traditional Jewish day school structure of the dual curricula taught in separate halves of the day but rather have scheduled their school day differently to allow for the time flexibility conducive to integrated programming.

Inclusion in the Jewish Day School Setting

Under this heading, literature on commitment to Jewish education and on research specific to inclusive practice in the Jewish day school is examined.

Commitment to Jewish Education

It is important to address the question of why parents of students with exceptionalities are committed to Jewish day school education for their children when a developed special education system exists in the public sector. Davids (2003) describes parents of Jewish day school students as being highly committed to Jewish education, choosing it over the option of educating their children in public schools and having them attend supplementary Jewish after-school programmes for their Jewish education. Miller-Jacobs and Koren (2003) studied the focus group responses of Jewish day school parents of children with exceptionalities. They found that many parents "want[ed] to be part of that community of parents raising their children as Jews" (p. 2). Commitment to Jewish education and belonging to the community of the Jewish day school were strong values for the parents. Miller-Jacobs and Koren state that "the parents in our focus groups all wanted day school education for their children, not because they were looking for small exclusive private schooling, but because they wanted a strong Judaic education
for their children" (p. 2). Given such commitment to Jewish education, parents are highly motivated to educate their children within the Jewish day school context.

Concerns about Jewish continuity have also been cited as contributing to commitment to Jewish day school education. Pomson (2002) reports that since the early 1990s in Britain, and North America “the number of children educated in Jewish all-day schools has increased at an unprecedented rate” (p. 380). He states that for parents concerned with Jewish continuity and providing their children with a strong Jewish identity the Jewish day school is a desirable educational choice. In the Canadian context, however, Pomson questions the interpretation that proportionally more parents are choosing Jewish day school education for their children. Rather, he interprets the data as reflecting a tendency for children to stay longer in the system (i.e., attending Jewish high schools rather than transferring into public high schools), and he reports that increases in enrolment are proportional to increases in the Jewish population of school-age children.

JESNA (Jewish Education Service of North America), in its focus paper on Jewish day school education, states that “day schools are one of the great American Jewish success stories of the 20th century. They have emerged as key players in the communal strategy to promote Jewish identity and ensure Jewish continuity” (p. 4). Markose (1998) describes the role of educating children about Jewish traditions and enabling their participation in Jewish practices and in the Jewish community as fundamental to developing Jewish identity and contributing to continuity. This concept is explored further by Sarna (1998), who states that “Jewish education serves as the vehicle through which we train successive generations of Jews to negotiate their own way, as Jews, in the American arena” (p. 10). Jewish education is regarded as critical in fostering children’s development of Jewish knowledge and identity that will enable them
to live Jewishly within the wider context of secular society, thus maintaining that identity and contributing to Jewish continuity.

**Research on Inclusive Practice in the Jewish Day School**

In Fishman's (1994) discussion of inclusion of children with exceptionalities in Jewish schools, she cautions that lack of teacher training in special education makes the regular classroom a poor educational choice for some students with exceptionalities. Fishman stated that:

While we have embraced children with special needs, albeit slowly, and created a multitude of educational programs for them, we have yet to lay the necessary ground-work for appropriate teacher education programs that would enable present or new teachers in the field to meet the educational demands of the 1990s.

(p. 72)

The question to now be asked in 2006 is whether Jewish day school teachers have acquired the training to enable them to effectively teach students with exceptionalities in their classrooms. Jewish day school students with learning disabilities and who are gifted are routinely placed in the regular classroom, making Fishman's question, "What tools are our teachers being given to include children with exceptionalities in the classroom?" (1994, p. 73) an important one.

The Etta Israel Center in Los Angeles provides support and professional development for teachers of students with exceptionalities in 15 Los Angeles Jewish day schools. Held, Kemp, and Gold (1997) describe the model for inclusion support developed by the Etta Israel Center. Most students enrolled in the center have learning disabilities, and some also have attentional difficulties. An inclusion specialist works with the students with exceptionalities each week and also co-ordinates between the
classroom teachers and school special education teachers. The Etta Israel Center provides professional development for the classroom teachers to further their skills in inclusive practice. Beth Jawary (2004) describes the successes of the Etta Israel Center in facilitating inclusion of developmentally delayed children in the general education classroom in Jewish day schools. An inclusion co-ordinator works with the Jewish day school staff and the child’s educational assistant to facilitate inclusion. Currently, most Jewish day schools do not have the resources or mandate to teach developmentally delayed children within the context of their dual curriculum programmes. The Etta Israel Center programme provides one model for supporting inclusion of students with mild and more severe exceptionalities in regular Jewish day school classrooms.

In one recent study, Glass and Dembro (2002) examined the gifted education programmes in two Jewish day schools. They found that very few Jewish day schools provided programming specific to the needs of students who are gifted. Glass and Dembro proposed that because of the challenging nature of the Jewish day school dual curriculum, many Jewish day schools have not tended to provide gifted programmes. Sarna (1998) confirms that historically the Jewish day schools established in the first half of the 20th century “focused on the training of a gifted elite – those who could master Hebrew and cope with ‘double schooled’ system” (p. 17). In both schools studied by Glass and Dembro, the pullout model for gifted education was not successful. Grouping of students who are gifted for work outside of the classroom led to unhappy responses from children not identified as gifted, who also wanted to participate. Some parents did not approve of only some children being included in the withdrawal group. They also believed their own children were very bright and were displeased that their children were
not in the pullout programme. As a result, the schools opted for in-class models of gifted programming that were viewed as less elitist and more inclusive by parents.

At one school studied by Glass and Dembro (2002), critical thinking skills are central in the teachers’ planning of class assignments, and challenging work is integrated into the general class programme for students who are gifted. At the second school, students who are gifted are clustered in groups of 5 to 10 students in one class at a given grade level, class work is differentiated to provide challenging assignments for students, and outside experts come into the classroom for special programmes. The school’s co-ordinator for gifted education assists with curriculum differentiation, and the classroom teacher attends professional development workshops on strategies for teaching students who are gifted. Cluster grouping starts as early as kindergarten in general studies in this school and in grade 4 for Hebrew language. The co-ordinator reported that some teachers had difficulty differentiating the curriculum even after the teacher workshops and that their efforts to effectively programme for the cluster group were not successful. The authors found that when teachers were given planning time to differentiate assignments, time for additional in-service training, and support from the administration, programming was much more successful. This required that funds be allotted in the school budget for these efforts. Pressure from parents displeased because their own children were not identified for adapted programming was identified as a problem for teachers. The importance of administrative support for teachers in dealing with parents was highlighted.

In her comprehensive book on effective teaching strategies for teachers in Jewish day schools, Rubinoff (1996) identifies the aspects of time and curriculum as problematic for teachers. She found that Jewish day school teachers tend to feel pressured by parents and administrators to cover a large amount of content in a short period of time. She states
that "teachers are often pressured into placing more importance on covering the
designated material than on ensuring that their students have learned it" (p. 82). This
description reflects a curriculum-as-plan (Aoki, 1993) focus. Rubinoff points out that
some day school teachers display the attitude that teaching the material is of greater
importance than teaching to the needs of the individual student. She stresses the need for
Jewish day school teachers to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses and to
change their teaching strategies to enhance student strengths and compensate for
weaknesses.

The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education is
a professional network for special education consultants and boards of Jewish education
in North America. The consortium has yearly conferences on special education and
publishes a quarterly newsletter. Inclusion of children with exceptionalities in Jewish
day schools is a focal topic for the consortium. Current research from the general body
of literature on special education is used to inform views expressed in their newsletter.
The newsletter is not a forum for publication of academic research. It is, however, a
vehicle for updates from various regions of North America on the programmes provided
in Jewish schools and issues of concern.

At the Consortium's conference in Toronto in 2001, Dori Levine of the Toronto
Board of Jewish Education stated that "teachers who have non-homogeneous classes,
who must differentiate their instruction and deal with many children with many different
diagnoses and indications...are floundering" (Kraft, 2001). In 2004, the Toronto Board
of Jewish Education in conjunction with York University established a course on special
education for classroom teachers in Jewish day schools (Soberman, 2004). The course
addresses the challenges of educating students with exceptionalities in Jewish day school
classrooms. As well, the Toronto Board of Jewish Education established Tikun Chaim, a committee to support schools in providing special education services. The need for effective models for special education and resources to support teachers in teaching students with exceptionalities in Jewish day schools is of current focus in boards of Jewish education and individual schools.

Summary and Final Thoughts on the Literature

The literature on inclusive practice yields understanding of the history of change in special education policies from provision of segregated services for students with exceptionalities to a predominance of provision of services integrated into mainstream general education classrooms. The many factors that affect inclusive practice point to the central role of the classroom teacher and the importance of professional development and participation of special education teachers in facilitating inclusive practice. The consultation, team teaching, in-class support, and pullout resource models are commonly used approaches to inclusive practice in the general education classroom. Teacher accommodation and modification of the curriculum to address the specific needs of individual students with exceptionalities are central to effective inclusive practice. Integrated models of curriculum are identified as effective in creating relevant curriculum that is differentiated to address individual learning needs. An extensive range of differentiation strategies are identified in the literature as well as the importance of teacher support from administrative leadership, teacher mentoring, professional development, and time for implementation in order for differentiation attempts to be successful.

The body of literature that focuses specifically on inclusive practice and the Jewish day school is very limited in relation to the extensive body of literature on
inclusion in general. A small number of studies on integration of curriculum in Jewish day schools indicate the potential for development of creative and relevant curricula through integration across general and Judaic disciplines despite the many challenges presented by traditional Jewish day school structure. The small body of literature examining inclusive practice in the Jewish day school points to many challenges to inclusion and calls for professional development and the need for allocation of resources in encouraging and facilitating an inclusive approach to teaching in this setting. Little research addresses the experiences of general studies teachers in inclusive practice and I see the potential of my study to contribute to this relatively new and undeveloped aspect of the literature.

By organizing this review of the literature on inclusion under the headings of inclusive practice, inclusive education and student exceptionalities, and curriculum and inclusion, I laid the foundation for gaining understanding of inclusion in the Jewish day school. My reading of the literature on inclusion created a knowledge base from which I examined research conducted in Jewish day school settings. This knowledge base informs my analysis of the data in Chapter Four and my discussion and recommendations in Chapter Five. This literature review is by no means exhaustive, as the body of research on inclusive education is extensive. It is however representative of the breadth of research in the field as it pertains to this study of teachers’ experiences in inclusive practice in the Jewish day school.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three presents both the methodology I followed in the process of carrying out my research study and the details of data collection and analysis. In order to gain a deeper understanding of Jewish day school general studies teachers’ experiences in inclusive practice, I carried out two separate case studies. Each case was its own bounded system: a grade 4 general studies classroom in a traditional Jewish day school. I hoped that by examining two similar yet individual cases, I would gain greater depth in understanding.

In this chapter I first examine why I chose qualitative case study methodology for my research, a methodology that placed me in the comfort zone of the familiar with my many years of experience as a Jewish day school grade 4 general studies teacher. Researcher positioning is examined in light of my position as a Jewish day school insider and simultaneously outsider (Acker, 2000) in my current roles of Jewish day school administrator and novice researcher. I describe methods for participant and site selection, and for data collection and outline the primary and secondary data sources in detail. I explore the process of transcription, which is central to my analysis of the interview data, and discuss the coding process for data sources. As well, I discuss trustworthiness and triangulation of data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations, limitations, and the writing of the final document.

Why Qualitative Case Study Research?

In order to gain a deep understanding of the inclusive practice experiences of classroom teachers in the general studies component of the Jewish day school programme, I employed qualitative case study research methodology. The rich description and comprehensive understandings required to effectively address my
research questions are possible through this methodological framework. The multiple
data sources characteristic of case study methodology created a comprehensive picture of
each participant’s setting and experiences in inclusive practice.

A fundamental philosophical underpinning of qualitative research is that “reality
is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).
My study examined the interactions of teachers in their social world of the inclusive
grade 4 classroom. My goal was to examine two bounded systems in depth in order to
glean understandings of a general phenomenon (Stake, 2000). Adele and Sharon’s
classrooms at Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy respectively were this
case study’s bounded systems. Pseudonyms are used in this document for the names of
both schools, and all teachers, and students.

Open-ended qualitative interviews, six participant observation sessions in each
classroom, centred analysis of school and curriculum documents, field notes, and my
research journal entries represent the multiple sources of data collected over a period of
time in the field (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000; Tuckman, 1999; Yin, 1998). Findings
emerged from the patterns and relationships identified in the codes, categories, and
overarching themes that I identified in the process of analyzing the primary, secondary,
and additional data sources. The primary data sources were the open-ended qualitative
interviews and six participant observation sessions. The secondary data sources were the
school and curriculum documents and field notes. Additional data sources were the
research journal entries as well as a participant information sheet filled out by each
participant stating educational background and teaching experience.
Researcher Positioning

My researcher positioning is one through which I recorded, interpreted, and analyzed participant perceptions of their practice and my observations through a period of prolonged engagement in the context and with the data. I struggled to define the extent of my insider status: the extent to which I, the researcher, was inside or outside of the community I studied. Acker (2000) aptly asks the question, “Is insider-outsider status more a continuum than a clearly delineated affiliation?” (p. 196). I struggled with where to place myself on the continuum of insider-outsider positioning. Acker defines the Indigenous-Insider as “someone who is trained in, and studies, their own field or discipline” (p. 197). In studying grade 4 Jewish day school general studies teachers, I placed myself in a milieu that is natural and second nature to me. It was my field of practice for many years. I had insider knowledge based on my extensive past experience in Jewish day school education. I had to be careful to ensure I accounted for the ways in which my own views and experiences might influence my interpretation and analysis of data. For example, when I observed Adele interacting with Gilad (an exceptional student in her class), I had to consciously focus, as much as possible, on recording observations from my outsider researcher stance, rather than on how I as a grade 4 teacher wanted to respond to the student. On one occasion in Adele’s classroom I observed:

Gilad is sitting and doing nothing at his desk.

Adele says, “Gilad, get a pencil.”

Then, “Gilad, please start copying down the questions.”

Adele speaks firmly.

Gilad is guided step by step to start the task.

Initial interpretations: Is Adele frustrated?
My note beside that question: No! She does not show that outwardly. I was the one feeling frustrated. (Observation 1 notes).

I caught myself in the shoes of the teacher. I was reacting to Gilad instead of maintaining as much as possible a neutral stance. Adele had spoken calmly and firmly to Gilad. No frustration was outwardly apparent. It was my own frustration and concern about the student that I recorded in that instance. As the researcher, my challenge was to be aware of my insider teacher positioning and use it to inform my research but not affect my observations or interpretations.

Though I still identify strongly with my “indigenous” identity of the Jewish day school teacher, my reality is that I really am positioned externally. My roles of researcher and Jewish day school administrator place me externally. On the continuum, my reality is closer to that of the external insider who has come from outside to a setting and experience that is very familiar. It was important for me to make the mental shift. I had to observe and interpret as a researcher, with awareness of the insider understanding of the Jewish day school setting that I brought to the research experience. How I would have reacted to an unresponsive student who seemed overwhelmed had to be separated from my recording of events and the lens through which I interpreted them. As the external insider, I was acutely aware of the biases from my own extensive, indigenous experiences that my insider stance could yield. This internal questioning contributed to the critical reflexivity I practiced throughout the research process that I argue contributed to establishing the credibility of my research findings. Lincoln and Guba (2000) define reflexivity as a critical process, stating that:

Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher….It is the conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher
and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the process of research itself. (p. 183)

Participant and Site Selection

I selected Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy because they are both traditional Jewish elementary schools in the Jewish community of a large city. Both schools are affiliated with the local Board of Jewish Education, and their teachers attend the yearly professional development day along with teachers from several other Jewish day schools in the city. Other than their common affiliation with the Board of Jewish Education, the two schools are not connected.

Before beginning the study, I met with the principal of each school to discuss the case study. Each principal suggested a grade 4 general studies teacher who had exceptional students as a potential participant. I selected participants who taught grade 4 because I have extensive teaching experience with the grade 4 general studies curriculum and I believed that this knowledge base would be of benefit in data collection and analysis. I contacted the teachers by telephone and obtained their informed consent prior to commencing the research. The participants, Adele from Hillel Jewish Day School and Sharon from Menorah Academy, had never met and did not know of each other professionally.

Participating Schools and Teachers

Hillel Jewish Day School and Adele, and Menorah Academy and Sharon are described in detail for the reader.

Hillel Jewish Day School

Hillel Jewish Day School is a large Jewish elementary school that has several classes of students at each grade level from preschool through the junior level grades. It
is situated in a large urban centre, with other Jewish day schools nearby. The school is traditional in its structure and its religious orientation. Traditional Jewish day school structure organizes half-day Judaic and Hebrew language programmes complemented daily by half-day general studies programmes. Religiously, Hillel Jewish Day School is traditional and describes itself as “fostering a commitment to: a Jewish way of life based on Jewish law, values and practice; the state of Israel; and Klal Yisrael (the Jewish people)” (School documents, Hillel Jewish Day School Mission Statement, 2005). It is a heterogeneous student population both religiously and economically. Students come from homes with Jewish religious backgrounds ranging from quite secular to Orthodox (strictly observant). Family economic levels range from those of very limited means whose tuition fees would be highly subsidized to upper middle class families. Boys at the school are required to wear a kippah, a traditional Jewish skullcap.

Routines and schedules are well co-ordinated, and the school is run with apparent efficiency by a strong administrative team with clearly defined roles. The school building is well maintained, and its classrooms and halls are well lit, colourfully decorated, clean, and orderly. The classrooms have built-in storage units and standard classroom furniture. Noteworthy as one walks through the halls is the presence of classroom and school displays on character and respectful conduct, with clear antibullying and inclusive of differences messages. Classroom resources are neatly stored, and student work is displayed on bulletin boards in the hallways and classrooms. The displays are evenly distributed between Hebrew and English language and curricular content. The school library that has Hebrew and English collections is staffed and open to students and classes all day.
In Adele’s classroom the student desks are organized in pairs and fours, strategically placed and grouped for student needs and strengths. Student materials are stored in baskets on shelves along the side of the room, and books and materials are neatly organized on the remaining shelves. Two computer stations are at the back of the classroom. Adele’s desk is at the front left corner of the classroom, and the blackboard covers the front wall. A space on the floor beside Adele’s desk and in front of the blackboard has been left open for small groups to sit and work with Adele, with access to the blackboard. Adele shares this classroom with a Judaic studies teacher who teaches in the other half of the day. Approximately half of the display space is dedicated to Judaic curriculum, and the Judaic studies teacher’s materials are also displayed and stored in the classroom. The doorway of the classroom has a mezuzah (parchment inscribed with biblical text, enclosed in a small case) attached to it, signifying that it is a room in a Jewish institution. The mezuzah is found on door frames of Jewish homes as well and is regarded as a sign of faith.

Hillel Jewish Day School has a resource programme for students with learning difficulties and an enrichment programme for high achieving and students who are gifted. These programmes are provided for students who have been identified as needing intervention. Resource teachers work in the resource room with small groups of students who are experiencing academic difficulty. Adele’s students receiving resource support participate in three 30-minute withdrawal sessions per week. This model of providing resource support is in keeping with the pullout model of inclusion. In addition, resource teachers provide in-class intervention when time permits, in keeping with the in-class support model of inclusion. Resource programming is focused on skill remediation rather than curriculum support, though any in-class intervention tends to provide support
on class work being completed at that time. Students requiring reading support participate in a remedial reading programme led by a resource teacher. The enrichment teacher meets regularly with a group of students to provide challenging learning experiences that extend beyond the expectations of the grade-level curriculum. These experiences usually focus on one subject area per term. Some of the students who receive intervention have been formally assessed, but assessment is not required by school policy for students to receive services. Parental permission must be given prior to provision of student services. In addition, there is English as a second language intervention in the form of small-group withdrawal support for students requiring it.

Adele

Adele is an experienced classroom teacher who described being personally committed to inclusive practice and responsive to the school’s emphasis on meeting special needs. Adele teaches a half-day grade 4 class and is a remedial teacher on the school special needs team in the other half-day. She has B.A. and B.Ed. degrees as well as additional qualifications in English as a second language and specialist qualifications in special education, with a focus on learning disabilities. Adele has over 25 years of classroom teaching experience in Jewish day schools, teaching grades 1 through 6 over the course of her career to date. She has taught grade 4 for several years and works closely on curriculum planning with grade 4 colleagues.

Adele is a highly organized teacher who arrives at least an hour prior to the start of school each day to prepare for her grade 4 class. She chats comfortably with colleagues who stop by the classroom prior to the start of the day and displays a warm and friendly manner. Some mornings Adele is on duty prior to the entry bell. On the days that she is not on duty she waits in the doorway for the students to enter, greeting
each by name and quietly giving reminders or addressing matters from the day before. Adele displays a firm but warm manner with her students. She is confident and professional and is clearly in charge of the classroom. Adele is Jewish, as are many of the general studies teachers at Hillel Jewish Day School.

Menorah Academy

Menorah Academy is a large Jewish elementary school that has two or three classes of students at each grade level. It is situated in a large urban centre. Similar to Hillel Jewish Day School, the school is traditional in its structure and its religious orientation. In the School Philosophy (School document, Parent Handbook), the school is described as committed to Jewish law, the Jewish community, the State of Israel, and a high standard of moral and ethical behaviour. The statements of commitment and orientation for both schools are very similar. The student population at Menorah Academy consists of children from primarily Orthodox homes. Family economic levels range from those of very limited means whose tuition fees would be highly subsidized to upper middle class families. Boys at the school are required to wear a kippah, a traditional Jewish skullcap.

Sharon teaches two grade 4 classes, one group in the morning and one in the afternoon. The classrooms and halls are well lit, clean, and well maintained. The classrooms have built-in storage units and standard classroom furniture that is clean and new in appearance. Classroom resources are neatly stored, and student work is displayed on bulletin boards in the hallways and classrooms. The displays are evenly distributed between Hebrew and English language and curricular content. A library, staffed by a part time librarian, has collections in both Hebrew and English.
Sharon’s classroom is the grade 4 general studies classroom. The grade 4 students come to Sharon’s classroom for general studies and spend the other half of their school day in the Grade 4 Hebrew classroom. The student desks are organized in a large U shape, with an additional row of desks across the front of the U. Students are strategically placed for student needs and strengths. Their materials are stored in cubbies along the side of the room, and books and other resources and supplies are neatly organized on the remaining shelves. Sharon’s desk is at the front right corner of the classroom, and the blackboard covers the front wall. A white board on the wall near Sharon’s desk is used to record homework and reminders. A tall chart-paper stand at the front left of the room is used to record bell work and assignments. Sharon is a very organized teacher whose classroom reflects an interesting programme with a wide range of materials available for student use and interesting student work displayed. The entire room is dedicated to the general studies curriculum, and all the posters and displays support Sharon’s programme. The doorway of the classroom has a mezuzah (parchment inscribed with biblical text, enclosed in a small case) attached to it, signifying that it is a room in a Jewish institution.

Menorah Academy has a resource programme for students with learning difficulties and an enrichment programme for high achieving and students who are gifted. These programmes are provided for students who have been identified as needing intervention. The resource teachers work in the resource room with small groups of students, providing primarily curriculum support for specific class work from Sharon’s grade 4 programme. Sharon’s students receive four 40-minute withdrawal sessions per week. The withdrawal model is in keeping with the pullout model of inclusion. In addition, students experiencing academic difficulty are provided with in-class
intervention when time permits. This approach corresponds to the in-class support model of inclusion. The enrichment teacher meets with a group of students once per week to provide challenging learning experiences that extend beyond the expectations of the grade-level curriculum. Some of the students who receive intervention have been formally assessed, but assessment is not required by school policy for students to receive services. Parental permission must be given prior to provision of student services. In addition, there is English as a second language intervention in the form of small-group withdrawal support for students requiring it.

Sharon

Sharon is an experienced classroom teacher who describes herself as committed to meeting the individual needs of her students. She teaches two half-day grade 4 classes at Menorah Academy. She has B.A. and B.Ed. degrees and additional qualifications in special education, with a focus on learning disabilities. Teaching is a second career for Sharon, who also has university degrees associated with her first career. Her extensive academic background reflects her range of skills and interests and intellectual initiative. She has 12 years of teaching experience in Jewish day schools and has taught grades 3, 4, and 5. Sharon has taught grade 4 for several years. As Sharon is the only grade 4 general studies teacher at Menorah Academy, she is not part of a grade 4 planning team. Lucy, a full-time teacher’s aide, works in Sharon’s classroom, assisting Sharon with tasks and working with individual students and small groups.

Like Adele, Sharon stands in the doorway of her classroom at entry and dismissal times and speaks individually with students. She displays a warm and professional manner with both students and colleagues. Sharon is often heard laughing as she speaks with colleagues in the hallway or with Lucy, the teacher’s aide in her class. She is
clearly in charge in her classroom, which is characterized by quiet voices and order. When students cross the threshold of the room, they tend to assume their “in-class” voices and behaviour. I sense that they are well trained in Sharon’s expectations and routines, an observation that Sharon confirmed for me in several conversations. Sharon is Jewish, as are many of the general studies teachers at Menorah Academy.

Data

Primary data were gathered through the following methods for each site: two qualitative open-ended interviews with each participant (one prior to commencing the series of classroom observations and one after the concluding observation session); a series of six 2-hour classroom observations; and taped postobservation discussions with participants. Secondary data sources for each site were observations recorded through field notes; and school documents and curriculum documents. Additional data sources included my own research journal, where I kept emails from colleagues, notes from conversations, and my own reflections on the research process; and participant information forms. As well, one discussion with the special needs co-ordinator at Menorah Academy and the enrichment co-ordinator at Hillel Jewish Day School provided additional secondary data.

Interviewing

The qualitative open-ended interview is an in-depth interview method that has as its goal gaining understanding rather than generating explanation (Fontana & Frey, 2000). This interview format best suited my qualitative framework and helped me develop a deep understanding of teachers’ experiences in teaching exceptional students. The conversational and responsive nature of this method led to rich, descriptive data.
The interviews were, for me, “the intersubjective enterprise of two persons talking about common themes of interest” (Kvale, 1996, p. 281).

I conducted a qualitative open-ended interview with each participant prior to the commencement of classroom observations. I later conducted second interviews after completing the six observation sessions. I audiotaped and later transcribed each interview.

First Set of Interviews

I was careful to hold the interviews at a time and location that best suited the participants. The first interview with Adele was conducted after school in the resource room at Hillel Jewish Day School, as this best suited her schedule. Sharon preferred to meet in the evening on a weekday. That interview was held at my family member’s apartment, which was located close to Sharon’s home. These arrangements were made through back-and-forth emails, and I accommodated the arrangements that were most convenient for each participant.

Prior to commencing the first interviews, I spent time chatting and establishing rapport with each participant. The establishment of rapport was important in creating a tone of discussion for the interview and contributed to the engaged conversational flow of the interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000). I noted after Sharon’s interview that “Sharon seemed to be quite relaxed and comfortable to share” (Field notes, Sharon, Interview 1). Field notes were made prior to and following each interview in order to contextualize the interview by describing what was not reflected on the audiotape. Prior to Interview 1 with Adele I wrote:
We are meeting in the resource room. It is a small classroom with a centralized worktable where we are sitting. I feel concerned to set a warm and relaxed tone here. It feels formal.

(Continued after the interview) A very informative interview. We really had a discussion! I think the transcript will be rich. (Field notes, Adele, Interview 1).

Fontana and Frey (2000) state that “interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (p. 646). My interviews with both participants were very much discussions, with a back-and-forth give-and-take of negotiating and clarifying meaning. In the first set of interviews, I followed the interview schedule (see Appendix C) to guide my questions and correctly anticipated that further questions would be formulated in the interview process in response to the discussion that developed. The questions I formulated were in response to the participants’ statements.

Listening to the audiotape of Interview 1 with Adele, I noted in my research journal that at times I interrupted the participant and gave my own interpretations rather than listening intently to what the participant had to say. “Sometimes it is enough to say ‘Right’ and acknowledge that I am listening and following what is being said. It can be good active listening. But sometimes my response may interrupt her train of thought” (Research Journal, July 3, 2005). I realized that I had interrupted Adele and cut off her statement. After I interrupted with “Right,” her train of thought seemed to be broken. Her response of “So…” trailed off (Adele, Interview 1). I was much more conscious of this potential hazard to flow of conversation and expression of thought during the second set of interviews.
Second Set of Interviews

Guiding questions for the second set of interviews (Appendix D) were formulated from questions emerging from my transcription of the first interviews and my initial coding and interpretations as well as from the classroom observations and document analysis. As I transcribed the first interview audiotapes, started the coding process on the transcripts, and coded my observation notes, I kept a running list of Interview 2 questions. I subtitled these questions “My Emerging List.” I dated each entry and noted the question and my thoughts. On July 2, 2005 I wrote:

Question: How do the concepts “inclusive practice” and “differentiation of curriculum” fit into your approach to curriculum planning and implementation?

My thoughts: I need to know more about the connection between inclusion and differentiation as concepts/approaches and the teacher’s view of her own planning and teaching practice. (Research Journal, July 2, 2005)

I emailed the list of questions to Adele and Sharon prior to Interview 2. I wanted to give them time to think about the questions. Adele wrote notes in advance of Interview 2 that she referred to during the interview so that she did not leave out any thoughts.

The second interviews were held in July and again were held at the convenience of the participants. Both participants requested that we meet at their homes during the daytime. I was careful to make the process as convenient as possible for the participants.

Postobservation Discussions

Postobservation discussions occurred after each observation session. These discussions were audiotaped. Field notes were also made during postobservation discussions to record participant statements and my observations. These discussions were held in Sharon’s classroom at the end of each school session that I observed. It was...
more convenient for Adele to discuss the observation prior to school on the next observation day. I made notes about the questions that I wanted to ask Adele and reread my observation schedule notes and questions prior to these discussions. I found that we were still able to discuss the observation in detail and did not feel that the time delay affected the discussion data in any significant way. These discussions provided the opportunity for me to discuss, clarify, and question what I had observed. Some quotes were transcribed from the audiotapes for the final document.

Observation Schedule and Field Notes

During the six sessions observing the grade 4 general studies classroom at each school, I documented my classroom observations on the observation schedule (see Appendix E). I conducted a trial observation in Sharon’s classroom before starting the series of six observations sessions to familiarize myself with using the observation schedule. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2001) describe the technique of writing jot notes that contain key words. They explain that “field workers use these words, written at the moment or soon afterwards, to jog the memory later in the day in order to recall and reconstruct in close detail significant scenes and events” (p. 356). I regularly referred to my research questions to help focus my observation and note-taking. My observation notes were recorded under the headings of observations and initial interpretations. During the postobservation discussions with each participant, I referred to my initial interpretations and questions that I later wrote on the observation schedule in reviewing the notes. I then wrote further notes based on participant discussion responses.

I jotted short field notes at the start of each session and often afterwards as well to contextualize the day’s observations. I coded many of these notes during data analysis.
Though these notes were very brief, they served to supply details of context that proved useful. On my first visit to Adele’s classroom I jotted prior to observations commencing:

A very friendly welcome. I met several teachers who came by the classroom. Extremely professional, positive, upbeat atmosphere. Very child focused. They discuss exceptional students. Reminds me of Corbett study--morning meetings. These are much less formal. Classroom very organized, tidy, and cheery. An excellent storage system. Desk groupings--mixed level groups. Some LD paired together. One higher needs student with LD paired with strong student. Goal that student with LD would cue from stronger student. Adele says he doesn’t. Observe this.  (Field notes, Observation 1, Hebrew Academy)

These notes were coded for informal teacher collaboration, connection to research, teaching style--highly organized, and student grouping. Note that LD refers to learning disability.

I enjoyed tremendously the experiences in classroom observation. I found that I observed very much through the insider lens of my research positioning. I related so closely to running those classrooms and interacting with the grade 4 students and the curriculum. I was keenly aware of my potential bias in this position and focused on observing as objectively as possible and recording what I saw and heard with an awareness of my insider-outsider researcher position. I consciously tried to apply initial interpretation to observations only after noting the observation as objectively as possible. I was aware, however, that the notes I wrote would frame events in a certain way by virtue of the words I chose and the aspects I selected to record and thus were more “a filter than a mirror reflecting the reality of events” (Emerson et al., 2001, p. 358). I moved position whenever I could not see or hear interactions. The observer’s positioning
in the classroom determines what interactions are perceived. My observation notes reflect what I perceived, what I chose to focus on in the busy interactions of the teacher and her students.

Document Analysis

At both sites, school documents pertaining to school special education policy, curriculum, administrative expectations of teachers, homework policy, and school and formal curriculum documents were examined. Understandings from the documents further informed my classroom observations and interview analysis and provided an important data source for triangulation. I coded the documents by highlighting key statements and noting codes (a priori and emergent) and places where triangulation was possible, in the left-hand margin. In the Teacher Performance Profile document from Hillel Jewish Day School, the following statement relating to teacher knowledge of student history was highlighted in my coding. The code and triangulation notes are in italics.

Teacher Performance Profile: Planning

[Teacher] Meets the needs of a range of student abilities and interests

*Student history* -Demonstrates knowledge of student backgrounds and experiences

*Triangulation with: student history disk; interview 2 re. Student history and class information disk (pp. 8-10); Adele’s story about Albie and knowledge of student history (interview 1, pp. 1-2, 10); Adele’s story about Gilad and lack of knowledge about student history (interview 2, pp. 9-10)*
Documents provided important information about policies and procedures relating to special education and inclusive practice at each school and were important to subsequent triangulation of data.

Transcription of Interviews

I transcribed the open-ended interviews as well as segments of postobservation session discussions using transcription conventions developed by Tilley and Powick (2002). Through this process, I acknowledged the "interpretative nature of transcription" (Tilley, 2003, p. 14) and sought to transcribe conversation to reflect the participants' meanings as I understood them. I realized that in constructing transcripts "we create worlds one step removed from the real interactions we are trying to study" (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999, p. 76). After transcribing, I listened to each audiotape while reading the transcript as an additional check for accuracy, ensuring that I captured inasmuch as possible the meanings intended.

Analysis takes place during the act of transcribing as well as at the formal coding stage. I made detailed interpretive notes in my journal as I transcribed, and ideas connected to analysis emerged. The notes made during the transcription stage were fundamental to my understandings emerging from the data. I felt it important for me as the researcher, the primary instrument of research in a qualitative study, to do the actual transcription. Once transcription, coding, and initial analysis of the first interview transcripts was completed, I mailed the transcript and a synopsis of my initial interpretations of the data to each participant for member checking. The purpose of the synopsis was to give each participant some insight into my initial interpretations and into how I would be using the data.
Coding

Working with the a priori codes based on my guiding questions for the first interviews, I coded interview transcripts, observation schedules, field notes in my journal, and the school and curriculum documents. As I analyzed, a body of emergent codes developed across the data sources. I categorized these codes into meaningful categories from which I developed the eight overarching themes. This was a lengthy and challenging process.

Prior to conducting the initial interview with each participant, I established a list of 12 a priori codes based on the schedule of guiding questions. Each a priori code was clearly defined. In the analysis of coded transcripts, observation schedules, field notes, documents, and my research journal, a priori codes were noted in the right-hand margin as they were identified. Emergent codes were noted in the left-hand margins. I coded each data source twice to verify the coding and make any changes as I reinterpreted the data on second reading. This step of revisiting each data source was important, as I found that on second reading I inevitably noticed connections that I had not noted in the first reading. I did my coding on second readings in a different colour so that the additional codes could be visually identified. For example, in the second coding of Interview 1 with Adele, I additionally coded managing differentiation, school schedule, inclusion, assessment, and step-by-step monitoring in the first three pages.

All emergent codes were added to my cumulative list as new points of significance were identified. As I coded the observation notes and documents, and later the second interview transcripts, I began to note in the left-hand margin where triangulation of data was occurring. It was exciting to see the verification of information
as data sources began to overlap. This ongoing triangulation was critical to establishing trustworthiness of the data.

In the next step, codes were organized into meaningful categories and then categories were further organized under overarching themes. This proved to be a challenging junction in the analysis process. My first attempts at grouping the codes became unwieldy as I worked at clustering the codes under the themes of student, curriculum, and teacher. I realized that I would need to revision the connections between codes.

The coding process enables the researcher to think systematically about the data and to organize the codes into a meaningful framework (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I anticipated that the codes would be numerous and complex as the nature of the general studies classroom is complex and the data were gathered from several sources. Codes are tools for thinking and must be flexible. Codes “can be expanded, changed, or scrapped altogether as our ideas develop through repeated interactions with the data” (Coffey & Atkinson, p. 32). Researchers construct overarching themes that bring further meaning to our organization of codes, and ultimately, hopefully, to meaningful findings. Through the process of reorganizing codes into categories and the new categories into overarching themes, I revisited the data and created a meaningful framework for my emergent understandings. In this analytical process, triangulation continued through comparison across the data sources. The eight themes, which are examined in detail in Chapter Four, constitute the final framework that I created through the analytical coding process. The literature on inclusion in the Jewish day school and on inclusion in general served as a reference point in the analysis of data. My knowledge from reading studies in the
research literature informed my analysis of the data and was referenced in the writing of this final document, making connections from the body of literature to my own findings.

Trustworthiness

It is through triangulation and member checking of data that trustworthiness of qualitative data is established (Padgett, 1998). The multiple data sources which are characteristic of case study research allowed for triangulation of data as the connections across data sources emerged and furthered the goal of developing rich and descriptive analysis. As I coded and later recoded the data, I was able to note where triangulation occurred across interview, observation, document, and field note data sources. How exciting for me, the novice researcher, to see these connections form as my understandings from the interviews began to parallel so many of my observations and discussions in the classrooms and then became verified further by statements in the school and formal curriculum documents.

The following example regarding the codes student history and student information forms in my analysis of data from Menorah Academy illustrates the data triangulation:

Sample interview data:

So the school that I’m at, we have a binder that comes to us now and it’s filled out by the special needs co-ordinator and also by the teacher before. That tells us who are the exceptional kids. Actually, the binder has every child in the class. (Sharon, Interview 1)

Some teachers don’t like to know about the kids before from the other teachers because they don’t want their minds to be made up for them, and I used to think that. But I’m not so sure that that’s necessarily true in all respects. So I think that
behaviour, if a student is problem, usually they will be a problem for the following year. So, I do use that binder. I look through it. If a child wears glasses. If a child has a hearing problem. As the years go on, I see how important that is. (Sharon, Interview 2)

Sample document data:

1. “Teachers must be familiar with the IEP’s and Student Information Forms of all their students.” (Menorah Academy, Teacher Guideline Document, p. 27)

2. Student Information Sheet contains sections for health information; learning needs including whether a psychoeducational assessment has been done, an IEP exists, and if student has received special needs support in the past; special seating requirements and additional information are also noted. (Menorah Academy, Student Information Sheet, sample blank form)

Sample Field Notes:

The co-ordinator of the special education programme described to me the binder that all classroom teachers receive in September (before the start of school). This is a confidential binder for student history, and the IEP if applicable is included. The Student Information Sheet is filled in by the general studies teacher about each student at the end of the school year for next year’s teacher(s). In the summer the co-ordinator goes through every sheet and file to make sure that no important information is missed. (Menorah Academy, Field notes in my journal, May 30, 2005)

Through the document analysis of Teacher Guidelines and the Student Information Sheet and the analysis of the field notes and of the interview data, I understood that transfer of student information was valued and expected at Menorah
Academy. I saw that Sharon’s reliance on student information was encouraged by the expectation that “Teachers must be familiar with the IEP’s and Student Information Forms of all their students” (Menorah Academy, Teacher Guideline Document, p. 27). I also understood that the information Sharon received and valued as “true” had actually come to her from a number of sources. It was based on previous teachers’ observations and information they may have received from others as well as information from the special education co-ordinator who reviewed all forms and added information from her files.

Before Sharon met a new student, she had access to the “important information” determined by others and quite possibly opinions about the student, be they favourable or not, from past experiences. The objectivity and professionalism of those filling out such sensitive forms is essential. I wondered if the special education co-ordinator read the forms critically and whether she ever questioned information that she felt unfair. Cautionary language was not evident in any of these data. Were the administrators, teachers, and special education co-ordinator aware of the potential for biased information in the student history? Through triangulation of the data, I could see that the student information appeared to be both valued and unquestioned across the data sources.

Member checking of transcripts and synopses provides an opportunity for the researcher to make corrections and for participants to provide further information, allowing for important verification and clarification of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Sharon and Adele had the opportunity to read the transcripts for Interviews 1 and 2 and the synopses in initial analysis several days in advance of face-to-face member checking. This gave them time to reflect and to identify any aspects of the transcripts and synopses that they were not comfortable with or did not agree with. In member checking the
transcript for Interview 1, Sharon stated that she felt uncomfortable with the way her words read. She was uncomfortable with incomplete thoughts, repetition of words, and the "ummm" that was transcribed. She worried that her words sounded less intelligent because of the verbatim transcription of speech. We discussed how speech reads differently than prose and laughed a little at my awkward moments on paper in the transcript as well.

I had not anticipated that a participant might respond with some discomfort to seeing her speech in transcribed form. My own prior experience with transcription through the Qualitative Methods course (Education 5V90, Brock University) and with reading legal transcripts made me comfortable with the often awkward reading of transcribed speech. In closing that discussion, Sharon assured me, as did Adele in member checking, that she was comfortable with my using the transcript in the study and that the statements were accurately worded, representing meaning as she had intended. This verification from both participants was important to the trustworthiness of the interview data.

My awareness of researcher positioning as external insider and the possibility of researcher bias from my extensive experience as a grade 4 general studies teacher also contributed to trustworthiness, as did keeping my research journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Being an insider gave me extensive knowledge both of the Jewish day school setting in general and of the grade 4 curriculum. Such knowledge informed my interpretations but could also bias it with issues related to what my own practices might have been.

As with all qualitative research, establishing trustworthiness of the data was critical to the purpose of the study. This case study research yielded insights and
understandings about what may further enable effective inclusion in traditional dual curriculum Jewish day schools. As well, the findings produced understandings and recommendations that could be used by classroom teachers, support staff, and administration at each school. Beyond the two schools participating in the study, the findings might also be transferable to professionals at other Jewish day schools.

Reciprocity

I anticipated that the constructivist collaborative nature of the interview and observation processes would lead to reciprocity for the participants. Through the give and take of interaction between the researcher and participant and the questions and ideas that emerged in the interviews and discussions, I hoped to give back to the participants. Sharon and Adele expressed in member checking both the first and second interview transcripts that the experience of reflection and discussion about their teaching practice was very informative and satisfying to them. They appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their inclusive experiences and to discuss them with another educator.

In member checking the transcript and synopsis for Interview 1 with Sharon, she expressed how personally informative the interview process was for her, as it provided further opportunity for her to reflect on her practice. My researcher positioning as an external insider facilitated this experience for Sharon.

Being able to talk at length [about inclusive practice] with someone else in the education field felt good. It was really a cathartic process. I was able to look back on my year so far—what I did well and what I want to improve. Looking at what I said by reading the transcript reinforces how I can improve. (Sharon, Member checking, Interview 1 transcript, notes)
Adele expressed a similar appreciation of the opportunity for reflection, stating: "I often feel like I'm on a treadmill. This experience has benefited me. It's caused me to stop and reflect" (Adele, Member checking, Interview 1 transcript, notes).

I felt a sense of relief in these discussions with Sharon and Adele, as I realized the reflective process of discussing their experiences had provided the participants with a sense of reciprocity. Through discussing the challenges of their daily teaching experiences with exceptional students and the challenges of the Jewish day school structure, they gained a deeper understanding of their own practices and setting.

Ethics and Respectful Research

I was very aware throughout the process of data collection and analysis of maintaining the highest ethical standards possible to ensure that my research would be respectful of the participants and that my research design would meet and maintain the standards of the Brock University Research Ethics Board (see Appendix G). Informed consent and the participants' right to privacy were established and maintained throughout the process (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms for the names of the schools and all teachers and students in the document.

For confidentiality purposes, all data have been kept securely stored throughout the research process and will continue to be stored for a period of time afterward. Member checking of interview transcripts was a key component of respectful research, reflecting the researcher's respect for the rights and ideas of participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Limitations

My ethics approval from the Brock University Research Ethics Board arrived in April 2005. I immediately initiated contact with the principals and set times to meet with
them to discuss my research. Unfortunately, the Jewish day schools closed for a 10-day period in April for the Passover holiday (see Appendix H), and thus my meetings with the participants and initial observation sessions were delayed until May.

The timing of the study at the end of the school year made the scheduling of the observation sessions challenging. I booked observation dates that were convenient for the participants given end of the year testing and special programme interruptions to their schedules. I also had to work around my own professional end of year obligations as vice principal at my own school. The end of the school year was a busy time both for me and the participants. With much schedule juggling, I managed to arrange six sessions at each site that were convenient for the participants before the school year would end in June. I felt that I was rushed to complete the observations in a short time frame.

The observation sessions were 2 to 3 hours in length. With the time pressure of the end of the year, most sessions were only 2 hours and not the possible 3. In future research opportunities, I would schedule classroom observations in the mainstream of the school year, not end of year or holiday times. For this study, the rushed timing was unavoidable, but as both participants would later express to me in member checking, observations earlier in the year would have been even richer, and classes would have been less focused on bringing closure to tasks and winding down the year. In the midyear, I might have observed the introduction of more units/projects and been able to track them over several weeks of once weekly 3-hour visits.

A further limitation to the study was that I did not include the possibility of a focus group in the Ethics Proposal. Both Adele and Sharon expressed disappointment that they did not have an opportunity to meet one another and discuss experiences. Only at the end of the research process did I realize that a focus group discussion would have
been a further data source that could have yielded very interesting data and provided a forum for addressing new questions emerging from the set of second interviews.

Writing of the Final Document

While analyzing the data I endeavoured to “reconstruct the constructions that participants use to make sense of their worlds” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). It is the understanding of those constructions and their implications for inclusive practice that yielded the findings of the study. The knowledge and understanding that emerge from qualitative research are the result of collective rather than individual efforts (Clark, 2004) and are context-dependent (Hale-Haniff & Pasztor, 1999). Rich description and detail were my goal in the writing of this study and were critical to trustworthiness and potential transferability of findings. I have endeavoured to provide the detail necessary for the findings to lead to greater understanding of the inclusive teaching experiences of general studies teachers in the Jewish day school setting. The chapters that follow explore these findings, their connections to the literature, and my reflections, recommendations, and final conclusions.

A Final Thought on Methodology

My greatest challenge in the research process was to focus my data analysis on the connections between Adele’s and Sharon’s experiences and the realities of the Jewish day school setting. My initial analysis examined their experiences from the perspective of inclusive education in a busy elementary school general education classroom, isolating the Jewish elements of my analysis under one theme. My goal of adding to the limited body of research in the Jewish day setting was not adequately addressed by that organizational method. To make more meaningful connections in my analysis, I revisited the data and my coding through the lens of setting. My initial analysis was too focused
on Sharon and Adele as inclusive educators rather than Sharon and Adele working with
the challenges of inclusive education within their Jewish day school settings. It is my
analysis through the lens of setting that is explored in the findings in Chapter Four.
Prolonged engagement with the data is characteristic of case study methodology and was
certainly critical to my analysis of Sharon’s and Adele’s experiences.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter I examine eight themes that emerged from my analysis of the data from both schools. As the reader will find, these themes are by no means isolated. Though I discuss them individually, they weave and interconnect, creating a picture of the participants' experiences in inclusive practice in the traditional Jewish day school structure characteristic of both Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy.

"Qualitative interpretations are constructed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 23), and I constructed the following interpretations through the lens of the Jewish day school context. It is the goal of this study to contribute to the field of research in Jewish education by examining inclusive practice in the general studies within the context of the challenges and realities of this setting. The themes are:

*Time, time, time*

*Rapport: I have to win him over*

*Student history: What are my challenges going to be?*

*Commitment to Jewish education: A Hebrew education is what I want*

*Teacher collaboration: We're all in this together*

*Differentiation in the Jewish day school general studies classroom*

*Isolation*

*Integration of curriculum: We've got to try to integrate more*

The theme *time, time, time* is a thread that runs through all the other themes and thus is explored first, as it recurs throughout the findings.

*Time, Time, Time*

Sharon and Adele identified the element of time as a challenge to inclusion in
their traditional Jewish day school settings. They viewed the interruption of specialty classes such as French and gym and the coming and going of resource groups and special education teachers as a disruption to teaching time. Adele referred to the “constant disruption” as she discussed the daily time challenge.

In our half day, to be able to do all this [curriculum] and it’s not just that we have from 8:40 until 12 o’clock. We have half an hour of French four times a week. So it’s the constant interruption. (Adele, Interview 1)

In discussing the curriculum guidelines Sharon addressed how she approaches the range of expectations in each subject area stating:

I don’t select all of them because some of them are covered in other units. There is no point trying to cover too many expectations. I have to pick and choose. I try not to focus on expectations that use skills that I am already addressing through other subject areas. Because of the time limit I’m not able to cover them all.

(Sharon, Interview 2)

Sharon was aware of duplication of skills across subject areas and planned her programme accordingly. An example she gave was in the area of research skills. If students did a research project in the science unit on habits, she would not focus on research and report writing in the next science unit or in the current social studies unit on medieval times. Once research skills were taught in one unit, she wanted to focus on developing skills other than research in the next unit so that many skill areas would be addressed over the course of the year. With limited time, she would revisit research skills as time permitted.

The standards-based curriculum is demanding in the number of units of study in science in particular and in the breadth of skills and content in each unit’s numerous
expectations. It is too much curriculum for the time in a half-day programme. It is, however, the expectation of the administration that a given number of curriculum units be taught in the year. Sharon was very aware that she compressed the curriculum in response to time limitations. To address time limitations she looked critically at the expectations across subject areas to balance skill development and minimize repetition of skills. To save time, expectations were selected carefully, and those regarded as less important might not be covered in any given unit. Possibly the compressing of curriculum to meet time limitations contributed to Sharon’s observation that over the past several years seemingly more and more students required curriculum support (Interview 1).

Programmes for the Jewish holidays and special themes associated with the Jewish calendar often occur during general studies teaching time over the course of the year. Special activities were not scheduled specifically to coincide with general studies class time but rather at times that were deemed most convenient or appropriate to the event. At any given time, some classes in the school would have general studies and others would have Judaic studies, depending on each class’ schedule. Sharon identified the interruption of special programmes as the cause of breaks in continuity of learning for students with learning disabilities. These breaks necessitated time-consuming review and reinforcement of material taught prior to the break.

You know, I’ve talked about this [challenge of time] before. The challenge is the time required. Every year it seems like there are so many other things pulling at us. Special days. Being in the Jewish day school system, you know, there are special days, there are holidays, and a lot of breaks [in time]. Especially with kids who have special needs, more remedial students than enrichment, that kind of
break really breaks up their thoughts and what they’ve learned. And when they come back, it’s almost like you have to reteach it. So that’s a huge challenge.

(Sharon, Interview 2)

In the fall the High Holy Day period requires that Jewish schools be closed on seven days that often fall on weekdays rather than weekends. In addition, the day before each of four holy days requires a half or whole day school closure for holy day preparation. It is a disrupted calendar at the start of the school year, falling over several weeks in September-October.

On the subject of time for special programmes Adele stated, “We are a Hebrew day school. When there is a special day it’s got to focus on Hebrew activities or something Israel related. And it’s all these little interruptions that are very very difficult” (Adele, Interview 1). Though it is “very, very difficult” to give up additional general studies time given the time limitations in the half-day programme, the interruptions are a reality in the Jewish day school. The students are there to receive a Jewish education as well as a secular one. Adele’s choice of the word “interruption” reflected the difficulty she has in having to give up teaching time for special activities. However, her statement that a special day has “got to focus” on the theme of the day indicated that the commitment to Jewish education overrides the loss of general studies teaching time.

It is interesting to note that Sharon also identified a positive effect of the time spent on school programming for Jewish holidays and themes as “an equalizer for the kids” (Interview 1). Student participation in plays and presentations was not related to formal academic learning and provided an opportunity for children to use a range of talents and build on their strengths. She valued the positive impact of general studies time spent on involvement in Jewish theme and holiday programmes.
In classroom observations I noted on several occasions both teachers’ skill in managing time efficiently. I noted that Adele and Sharon spent very little time on transitions between lessons. Adele’s students checked the morning agenda written on the blackboard and took all the books needed from their cubbies before starting their first task. Transitions between subjects occurred seamlessly, as students generally did not need to look for materials. In the daily Mincha (afternoon) prayer service in the classroom, Sharon’s students entered the classroom quietly, took a siddur (prayer book), and began to pray to themselves. I noted in my observation schedule that “the Mincha routine is done so quietly and quickly. Everyone knows their spots to stand. They pray and then go to get their snacks. No time is wasted” (Menorah Academy, Observation 2). In our subsequent discussion, Sharon explained that in September she trains the students in following classroom routines. I noted regarding the Mincha routine that “it’s an expectation and done well, without discussions” (Menorah Academy, Observation 2 notes). Similarly, Adele described training her students in class routines in September. Both classes were time efficient in quick transitions between lessons and well-rehearsed entry, exit, and procedural routines (i.e., what to do if you don’t have a pencil). Time efficiency in daily routines meant that more time was available for learning.

In my observations of both classrooms I noted that very little time was spent on addressing disruptive behaviour. In discussion, “Sharon told me she is strict and trains routines. The expectations are clear. The students get right to work” (Observation 2 discussion notes). In observing Adele teach, I noted after watching the quiet and organized end of class routine that “the teacher is definitely in charge! The students are well trained in routines” (Hillel Jewish Day School, Observation 6). Strong class
management skills led to time efficiency. Given the challenge of the half-day schedule, there was no time to waste.

Similarly, time efficiency was observed in the scheduling of pullout resource sessions for students with learning disabilities. Special education teachers arrived at the classrooms on schedule and took students to work in the resource room. Both Adele and Sharon organized their teaching schedule around the resource time schedule so that the subject taught in the classroom to the rest of the students corresponded with the subject area of resource intervention at the pullout time. A question to be explored further is whether time efficiency and use of the pullout model of inclusion are connected.

The challenge of time experienced by both Sharon and Adele recurs in the examination of the seven themes that follow. The perception of not enough time seems characteristic of their experiences in dual curriculum Jewish day school settings.

Rapport: I Have to Win Him Over

In his study of characteristics of effective teachers, Stronge (2002) explains that "caring teachers who know their students create relationships that enhance the learning process" (p. 15). The theme of rapport examines aspects of how Adele and Sharon created relationships that they hoped would facilitate their inclusive teaching efforts and thus enhance student learning. The importance of establishing and maintaining positive rapport with individual students from the outset of the school year was a recurring theme in the data for both Adele at Hillel Jewish Day School and Sharon at Menorah Academy. Through my insider researcher positioning I related to the importance of "winning the student over" in both teachers' teaching style. I have consciously set out to "win over" a challenging student at the start of the school year: to engage the student and make a connection to foster learning from the outset. It is something that I have done, and I
related to Sharon and Adele's valuing of establishing relationships as a foundation for learning.

**Adele**

In telling me about a student with exceptionalities that she had taught, Adele described the immediacy and critical importance of establishing rapport in the first days of school.

I'm going to talk about a student who is gifted.... At first I was a bit nervous to have him in the class because I knew he was functioning not just above grade level. His language arts, his math skills, were probably at a grade 9 or 10 level....So I must say I developed a good rapport with him immediately.

(Interview 1)

At a later point in the interview:

Mary-Martha: I find it interesting that you started off the story with the development of the rapport. And for you, is that the foundation of these relationships?

Adele: I want to win, win the child. I have to win him over. I started day one. I said, "Albie, just give me a day or two. Right now we’re just scrambling."

"Oh I know," he says. "My aunt’s a teacher, so I know all about it." I said, "I promise you that within a week I’ll have things for you." (Interview 1)

Adele continued to describe how she made accommodations and modifications to grade-level curriculum to address Albie’s advanced intellectual and academic needs as well as his need to be a 10-year-old student and part of his peer group. The statement, "I promise you that within a week I’ll have things for you," indicated to Albie that Adele cared that his needs should be addressed and cared about him. In a short time she would
have the programme in place to make general studies at Hillel Jewish Day School work for him.

Adele, with resource suggestions from the resource team enrichment specialist, set up an individualized math programme for Albie. She used varied peer groupings for group work and modified class assignments in language arts, social studies, and science to make the grade-level curriculum more challenging and meaningful. Adele’s statement, “Just give me a day or two,” was an effort to win him over. That level of rapport enabled the inclusive experience she described for Albie.

Adele’s description of Albie after he had difficulty with a peer on the playground further informed my understanding of the rapport she had established with Albie.

Adele: We had a very good relationship....There were a few times that he came in crying because he had a fight with one of the boys. That was the 10-year-old coming out. The sophisticated child was a child.

Mary-Martha: There was a gap between the 10-year-old and the sophisticated thinker?

Adele: Absolutely. He would come in crying. He had quite a temper when he would come in like that, and he would be quite angry. “Do you want to talk?” I would wait until he would calm down. If I wasn’t happy with something, he was very upset.

Mary-Martha: He didn’t like it?

Adele: He didn’t like it if I wasn’t happy with something he did.

(Interview 1)

Adele’s rapport with her student opened communication between them, fostered his co-operation in the modified programme, and established a trust relationship.
illustrated by his turning to Adele when playground incidents upset him. He wanted to please Adele and looked to her for guidance. She felt that she had won him over.

Adele knew that if her half-day class at Hillel Jewish Day School was to meet Albie’s needs, the programme would have to change. In Jewish day schools, when the accommodations and modifications are not made or cannot be made, some parents remove their children and place them in secular schools, where they believe the needs will be more directly and fully addressed. In the alternate setting, either greater resource intervention is provided or the option of a segregated gifted or learning disabilities class exists. At the Jewish day school in which I was the enrichment specialist, it was this reality that prompted the establishment of the special needs department. It was also this reality that led my current Jewish day school to establish its strong resource programme.

_Sharon_

I asked Sharon about the notion of rapport:

_Mary-Martha:_ And something we haven’t talked about, I think we’ve talked around it. We’ve never, I don’t think, used the word “rapport.”

_Sharon:_ It’s so important.

_Mary-Martha:_ Is that something that you have an awareness of or?

_Sharon:_ The rapport between the teacher and the child?

_Mary-Martha:_ Yes.

_Sharon:_ I think rapport is so important. We didn’t talk about that, and I do. Because also I think that rapport is going to bring out what the child is going to do for you. If they don’t like you, they don’t care what they’re going to do for you, and they’re not going to do anything.
Mary-Martha: They’re not working to please you if you haven’t won them over on a certain level.

Sharon: Exactly. (Interview 2)

In this exchange I used Adele’s notion of winning over the student with exceptionalities because it captured the intent of establishing rapport. I sensed, however, that for Sharon rapport was dependent on the child “liking” the teacher. I failed here as an interviewer to probe the meaning of “like” further, to establish if by saying “like” Sharon was actually referring to respect, care, interest, understanding, or concern. Classroom observations and discussions yielded better understanding of how Sharon established rapport with students.

I observed Sharon display a warm, firm, and knowing manner in her interactions with students. Frequently, Sharon quietly cued, prompted, and redirected weaker students to keep them on task and to encourage responses and participation in which they could succeed. On one occasion, Sammy, a quiet student with unidentified learning difficulties, sat playing with a strip of paper, not attending to the text open on his desk. As Sharon called upon Andrew to read a passage aloud from a story on gardening and conservation, she walked past Sammy and gently took the strip of paper without comment. She quietly said his name and redirected his vision to the place in the story as Andrew continued reading. I noted her “respectful and quiet tone” (Observation 1) of voice and how she continued directing and commenting on the reading with the entire class, mindful of Sammy’s attention to the reading and discussion as the lesson proceeded. Her redirection was gentle and respectful, reflecting care for Sammy. He responded to her redirection and kept watching as she prompted a page turn or pointed to
an illustration in the text. I observed a positive learning relationship between teacher and student in this occurrence. I could see a warm rapport, a connection between them.

I noted similar redirecting and teacher proximity to a number of weaker students in a language arts class discussion on literature circle roles. In our discussion after the observation session, I asked Sharon if she was aware of the frequent redirecting and clarifying that I had observed. She replied that as she teaches she circulates around the room, rarely taking time to sit at her desk. “I keep the weaker kids in the back of my mind much of the time” (Observation 2 discussion). Her active style of teaching facilitated frequent redirecting for Sammy and others who required repeated teacher contact during a lesson in order to succeed on the task. This active teaching style and ongoing awareness of her students with exceptionalities as she teaches contributed to the rapport Sharon had with her students.

Sharon’s use of the expression “in the back of my mind” raises interesting questions. Does the back of her mind mean that she has an ongoing awareness of their needs, like a subtext to her thoughts as she teaches, or that she addresses these students as an afterthought? Are they really “in the front of her mind” in the sense of concern and awareness of their needs? These questions can be extended to curriculum. Does Sharon differentiate curriculum for them as an afterthought, if they are in the back of her mind, or is differentiation in the front of her planning process?

I also observed that each day Sharon stood at the classroom doorway speaking individually to students by name when the class entered after recesses and when students were dismissed. Sharon stated in our discussion after one session that she deliberately set out to establish and maintain rapport by greeting students and making a small personal
comments at entry or dismissal times. By doing so, she tried to indicate to each child that she cared about that child as an individual.

Sharon also expressed awareness that in her afternoon class of 28 students it was possible for a quiet student with learning difficulties to go unnoticed much of the time. In monitoring student progress on tasks Sharon was aware of making contact with all students and particularly monitoring those with exceptionalities. She worked to establish a teacher-student connection by "really focusing in on them so they know that I'm sort of watching them and concerned with them" (Interview 1). Sharon circulated around the room as students worked and made purposeful personal contact with students as she built rapport and monitored progress on tasks.

Stronge's (2002) study of the research on effective teachers supports the benefits of teacher movement around the room as a proactive classroom management tool that encourages students to attend to the task at hand. Teacher proximity was found to ultimately lead to more time spent teaching and learning and far less time spent in disciplining students. In my observation notes on both classrooms, I commented on several occasions that teacher proximity was used effectively to maintain student focus and that very little class time needed to be spent on student discipline issues. In postobservation discussions, both Sharon and Adele linked my observations on teacher proximity to their training of students in the first weeks of every school year to follow class routines and behavioural expectations.

In each observation session I noted that Adele too made a point of greeting students at the doorway at entry times. She also made regular individual contact with students as she circulated around the desk groupings at work time. I observed: "She makes eye contact with students, has a quiet word with them about their work, and makes
a point of revisiting certain students on her next circuit around the room” (Observation 4). It was the students with exceptionalities that Adele often revisited, as they required more teacher guidance in working through the task at hand. I noted when the students were creating culminating scrapbooks for their year-long study of medieval times that the revisiting of students as Adele circulated around the room reflected the message, “I am connected to you” (Observation 1 notes). In the postobservation discussion that day, Adele confirmed that she deliberately revisited students to monitor their progress on the task at hand and to create awareness that she was watching them and cared about their progress. Adele’s deliberate actions furthered her attempts to establish and maintain rapport with her students.

Corbett’s (2001) case study research described highly skilled inclusive educators who seek the active and successful involvement of every student in the learning process through their teaching style and techniques. The conscious winning over of students with techniques such as ongoing personalized messages at the doorway and quiet contact in circulating at work time are illustrative of the effective style and technique that Corbett described and provided both Adele and Sharon with opportunities to enhance teacher-student rapport.

Was winning them over merely good teaching and reflective of responsible practitioners with the goal of providing the best education for each student, or was it also a response to the demands of the Jewish day school time and curriculum structure? The push to win over students from the onset could also be interpreted as addressing needs that Adele and Sharon had. The teachers were pressured to compact the Ontario Curriculum into a tight 3-hour time schedule each day while attempting to tailor that programme to meet the diverse learning needs of the students in their classrooms. To win
them over as quickly as possible would serve the teachers’ needs to establish and maintain tight classroom control and to get to work on a demanding curriculum in a tight time schedule. To adapt the grade 4 curriculum to address the learning needs of students with exceptionalities, Sharon and Adele needed the co-operation of those students to work on differentiated tasks and participate in withdrawal groups for enrichment or support in keeping with the schools’ commitment to the pullout resource programme model. By encouraging student co-operation to win them over could be interpreted as facilitating effective teaching practice for the Jewish day school teacher. It was to Adele’s and Sharon’s benefit as well as to the benefit of their students to win them over.

Student History: What are My Challenges Going to Be?

Both Sharon and Adele discussed extensively the role that knowledge of student history plays in understanding a student with exceptionalities’ strengths and needs, and being able to develop rapport and personally connect with that student. It became clear that with the time pressure both teachers felt in teaching the Grade 4 curriculum in the half day framework, they viewed prior knowledge about student strengths, needs, and school history as essential to effective curriculum planning and effective teaching in the first weeks of school. Analysis of administrators’ expectations of teachers in both schools indicated that the teachers were required to be familiar with the student history information provided to each teacher on every student for the upcoming year.

Adele

Adele relied on knowledge of student history for understanding individual needs as early as possible in the school year. This knowledge informed her approach to curriculum planning and managing differentiation and facilitated her ability to develop an informed rapport with students with exceptionalities.
Adele: At the beginning of the year we are given a disk (with school student history).... My grade 4 disc this year has all this grade 3 information on it...I can see which children received enrichment, which children received resource. So that is all tracked on this sheet if you go into it, which I do. You know sometimes there are teachers that don’t. But I do. I read all this because it does give you some history. (Interview 1)

In Interview 2, Adele revisited the importance of teacher knowledge of student history.

Adele: I don’t know what I’m going to get this year. I might have one or two really brilliant students, and what I did for my bright students last year may not be sufficient for them. They may need more.

Mary-Martha: That also ties in with that piece you talked a lot about, gathering that information when the profile comes to you.

Adele: That whole profile comes to me. We are given a disk with that profile, and I know, I make it my business. I did it this year. I came home with my disk. I went through that profile, and I made notes. I wanted to know, “Who am I going to be facing in September? What are my challenges going to be?”

(Interview 2)

At Hillel Jewish Day School, though not stated in school documents that I reviewed, the expectation that teachers familiarize themselves with student history was made clear with the presentation of the class information disk to each teacher in preparation for the new school year. I did not find evidence at either site of an administrative mechanism that would ensure each teacher was familiar with the information for each student through these student tracking tools, yet the expectation that teachers utilize them in advance of the start of the school year was clear. As Adele
stated, "it is all tracked on this sheet if you go into it, which I do. You know sometimes there are teachers that don’t. But I do. I read all this because it does give you some history" (Interview 1).

Adele further explained about the importance of student history to her ability to start the school year effectively and efficiently.

Mary-Martha: Years ago there were two camps. “I should know nothing about the kids. I believe in a fresh start. I’ll learn about them.” And the other camp: “No give me all the information you’ve got.” In the day school, are the days of “I’ll learn about them later” over? Is there time?

Adele: I need to know who needs preferential seating.

Mary-Martha: From the beginning?

Adele: From the beginning.

Mary-Martha: So there’s a big shift.

Adele: Absolutely. So that I find, that’s what I need for my curriculum planning....And I need to know, what are the needs of my students? What needs do I need to meet.... For example, Gilad. He came into my class and I knew absolutely nothing about him.

Mary-Martha: He was new to the school. He wasn’t part of that disk?

Adele: He was new to the school. I believe we started school the Tuesday. By Friday, I knew I had a problem. I knew I had a problem by Friday. Already in the first week he would wander in, other than the first day, I think even the first day he came late. That first week he would arrive 9, 9:10 every day. He kind of didn’t know where he was at. I always get them just to write something....You know, get the students to write something in the first week and assess where
they’re at. He couldn’t put down two words. I knew I had a problem. But I just had no information, but I knew I had a problem. We just had to start probing deeper and deeper. (Interview 2)

Adele relied on the student history information so much that the appearance of a new student with learning difficulties and no student history to inform the teacher of his specific challenges was very difficult for her. Adele used the student history to assist in her initial planning for the student with exceptionalities. She needed to spend more time than she would normally spend on beginning of the year student assessment for Gilad because she had no information about his learning needs and past progress. Adele felt that valuable learning time for Gilad was lost and that her work was made more difficult. Efficiency was impacted by lack of student history information.

At Menorah Academy, a New Student Information Form with pertinent information on student needs is completed for newly admitted students. Such a form might have aided Adele in teaching Gilad at the Hillel Jewish Day School in the initial weeks of the year. It is also possible that Adele could have taken more of a “wait and see” attitude with Gilad. Her goal of addressing his needs as quickly as possible was likely a response to the need for time efficiency. “Curriculum-as-plan” may be more efficient than “lived curriculum” in directly addressing the expectations of the formal curriculum. Efficiency in the implementation of curriculum-as-plan is impeded by lack of student history information.

Sharon

Sharon felt that she could teach more effectively from the very first day with some prior awareness of individual student needs. In Sharon’s words, “I think it’s
important that you have the right expectation coming into the classroom because there are different abilities in the classroom and every child is different” (Interview 2).

The teacher guideline document at Menorah Academy stated that “teachers must be familiar with IEP’s and Student Information Forms of all their students” (p. 27). The Student Information Form provided information similar to that on Adele’s class disk: past resource intervention, visual or auditory needs, preferential seating near the front of the classroom, allergies, academic needs, and pertinent family information. Sharon had come to the realization that the information forms and any IEPs that had been written previously enabled her to address student needs from the start of the year and that she had not made optimal use of them in the past. Sharon expressed the challenge she experienced with the obligation of using the forms:

Mary-Martha: Has that made a change in your ability to address individual needs?

Sharon: I think so. You know you don’t, unfortunately I probably don’t look at it enough. But I do try and glance through it at the beginning of the year, and you see these names. It really doesn’t mean very much to you until you get to know the child a little bit better. But then I try and look at it a few months into it, and then I see. But it is important because, it really is. Because a child might have a hearing problem and you have to seat them at a certain place. So it really is important to look through.

Mary-Martha: That’s informative.

Sharon: It’s really good. It’s a really good thing.

Mary-Martha: Especially for those first weeks of school when you don’t know them....
Sharon: And it’s there for you, so you can’t say that you haven’t been told....That’s where you get a lot of your information, from the teacher before. And it’s a much better way now because before, you depended on talking to the person, and some people aren’t that accommodating. And I understand. At the beginning, and during orientation in August, there isn’t a lot of time to get your classroom ready. Here the binder’s done. You don’t even have to talk to anybody. You know you don’t have to bother anybody. It’s there for you.

(Interview 1)

Sharon’s mention of using the forms as an information source rather than discussion with last year’s teachers reflected the reality of time pressure. She expressed some understanding of colleagues who had not been “accommodating” in providing requested information and may not have presented as complete a picture of the needs of students with exceptionalities as Sharon desired. One can question whether requesting such information from colleagues is “bothering” them in the busy days prior to school opening day or rather is a professional obligation. It is clear that the use of information forms became a method of passing information to teachers from year to year. The co-ordinator of the special needs department gathered the information forms from the grade 3 teachers in June, reviewed them, and added further pertinent information from her files where required, and then collated the forms in binders for the next year’s grade 4 classes. Forms reviewed by the special needs co-ordinator may actually have provided more thorough information than a discussion with last year’s teachers in the busy days before starting a new school year. In June, the needs of each student are fresh in the grade 3 teacher’s mind. In late August, the teacher’s mind is focused on the incoming class and all that must be accomplished before school begins.
Over my years in education, I have heard teachers say that they prefer not knowing about students before the year begins and forming their own impressions through the first weeks of school. They would rather not be biased by information from the past and hoped that the child would have a positive, fresh start in the new school year. At some point into the fall term, they then reviewed information from past years. In the time-constrained Jewish day school this is less viable. The 3-hour teaching day for the formal curriculum pressures teachers to get right to work on the curriculum and makes the time spent assessing basic learning needs less practical.

In my current professional role of vice principal, I encourage teachers to read assessments, to share pertinent information about student history, and to discuss successful behaviour and learning strategies for individual students. The teacher always has the personal discretion to ignore information that she feels may be irrelevant or somehow unfair. But once information has been given, is it really possible for it to be ignored as irrelevant? It is important that all students be allowed to have a “fresh start” each September. This right should be maintained and is easily violated by the sharing of student history if teachers use it insensitively. The passing of information from year to year can be problematic when negative opinions about a student are passed along and contribute to continuation of a poor view of the student’s behaviour, attitude, potential, or strengths. It is important that the teacher be able to balance a fresh start with the impetus for efficiency in beginning work on the curriculum-as-plan as quickly as possible in September. It is possible that conceptualizing the curriculum as curriculum-as-lived would provide a teacher perception of more time for ongoing assessment to answer questions about needs and strengths and to provide direction for differentiation.
Commitment to Jewish Education: A Hebrew Education is What I Want

The findings indicate that commitment to Jewish education existed for many parents and students in the two schools and for Sharon and Adele.

Why do some Jewish parents elect to send their children to Jewish day schools given that Ontario Jewish day schools are private institutions that receive no government funding? They are funded by tuition paid by parents, donations from benefactors, and monies contributed by local Jewish community federations (Schoenfeld, 1999). Despite the sliding scale for tuition fees based on family income at Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy, fees constitute a significant financial burden for many parents. It is their commitment to providing a Jewish education for their children that motivates most Jewish parents to take on this financial obligation. For many parents, this commitment brings a feeling that they are part of the Jewish school community. At both schools, the payment of tuition fees (full tuition fees were approximately $10,000 per child per year) was strong evidence of parental commitment to Jewish education.

Sharon discussed the spiritual feeling and the sense of belonging to a community that she believed parents and children experienced in the Jewish day school and that contributed to their commitment to the setting.

Mary-Martha: Could there also be some emotional benefit to the setting?
Sharon: A spiritual feeling, a connection to the other kids and their surroundings. Yes, probably they do feel more, I think like a connection and family-related feeling at the school. Sometimes you see this with the kids who, you know, we recommend that they should leave, but the parents really don’t want to take them [out] because it’s part, they’re in the community that they live in. You know, they might not live near the school but it is their community.
Mary-Martha: They feel very connected.

Sharon: Yes, very connected.

Mary-Martha: And there’s an emotional component for the parent as well?

Sharon: Yes. Yes, yes. (Interview 1)

Sharon described having parents choose to remain at Menorah Academy even when an alternate school that could better meet the child’s needs had been recommended. For these parents, commitment to Jewish education and commitment to Menorah Academy took precedence over a setting that possibly was better able to address their child’s exceptionality. Commitment to Jewish education meant working within the parameters of the best programme that Menorah Academy could provide for their child.

The very fact that Adele and Sharon taught in Jewish day schools was evidence of their commitment to Jewish education. Both teachers possessed the academic and professional qualifications to teach in the public school system and both had chosen to teach within the Jewish day schools. For general studies teachers in large cities, salaries are often on par with the public education system, but pension and health benefits, where they are offered, are inferior to those provided in the public sector. This creates an economic disadvantage to teaching in the Jewish day schools over the public schools. Choosing to teach for Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy over the local public school board, for which they were fully qualified, further reflected both teachers’ commitment to Jewish education.

By choice, Adele’s extensive teaching experiences were in Jewish day schools, reflecting a professional life commitment to educating Jewish children in the framework of a Hebrew language and Jewish studies based school. Though Sharon had volunteered in a public school classroom prior to starting her teaching career, she too had chosen to
teach in Jewish day schools throughout her 12 years of professional experience. A question that I failed to ask both teachers was why they had made the decision to teach in a Jewish day school when the public school offered greater financial rewards. I would suggest that it may have been because of the familiarity of the setting, the schedule of days off for Jewish holy days, and the emotional, even spiritual rewards of playing a role in Jewish education.

At Hillel Jewish Day School, there was no segregated gifted programme for Adele’s student who is gifted, Albie. Hillel Jewish Day School, like most Jewish day schools, did not have segregated gifted or learning disabilities classes for students with exceptionalities. In Ontario public schools, that option exists for students for whom the general education classroom is deemed an inappropriate setting (Weber & Bennett, 2004). A major challenge facing the Jewish day school teacher is working with the resources available to make the programme as effective as possible for the student with exceptionalities. In both the Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy, the combination of delivery models for inclusive practice provided some support to Adele and Sharon in their programming for students with exceptionalities.

In Albie’s case, he participated in some enrichment pullout activities with the enrichment specialist (resource pullout model), and Adele accessed resources and programming guidance through consultation with the enrichment specialist (consultation model). Even though placement in a segregated gifted setting had been suggested as the optimal placement for Albie, it was not an option for him within the range of Jewish day schools operating in his city. Adele and Albie’s Jewish studies teacher were faced with the challenge of providing a modified programme for Albie within the constraints of the resources available. It was parental commitment to Jewish education, possibly
encouraged by Albie’s desire to be at Hillel Jewish Day School, that kept him there. His gifted needs in general studies probably could have been more fully addressed in a gifted programme outside of the Jewish day school system.

Adele described Albie’s personal commitment to remaining in the Jewish day school system.

Adele: I asked him, “Are you continuing at the [Jewish] school?” And he said, “My parents really want me to go to ______ [name of a private secular school for students who are gifted].” I think they wanted him to go and he would do very well, but he said, “A Hebrew education is what I want.”

Mary-Martha: Oh my goodness. Wow.

Adele: Yes. And that is why he is still in the system, because the Hebrew education is very important to him.

Mary-Martha: To him.

Adele: To him. He sings in the choir in shul [synagogue]. In the bible contest last year he placed very high. (Interview 1)

From this description, the commitment that Albie’s parents had to Jewish education was apparent. His participation in the synagogue choir and the bible study competition were evidence of parental encouragement of involvement in Jewish extracurricular activities. Such participation reflected a home in which Jewish study is highly valued. Albie wanted very much to be in the Jewish day school, but it was his parents’ support of that desire that meant he could be there.

The parent guideline document for Hillel Jewish Day School acknowledged the limitations of the resources available for students with exceptionalities. It stated that:

Hillel Jewish Day School will do everything in its power to retain a student with
academic difficulties. Occasionally, desired results are not achieved and it is determined that it will be in the student’s best interest to attend an alternate educational setting. In these cases, we will assist parents in choosing the most appropriate alternative for their child. (Hillel Jewish Day School Parent Guidelines, p. 13)

Hillel Jewish Day School’s policy was to attempt to meet student needs within the limitations of the resources and knowledge available to its teachers and support staff. The school would even assist parents in finding a more suitable setting should it be required. In a sense, this wording gives the school the “out” to say that it could not meet the exceptional child’s needs if those needs were too challenging for the teachers and resources available. In cases, such as Albie’s, where the school is not necessarily the best choice academically, it can be the best choice for the whole child, because of the family and individual child’s commitment to Jewish education.

Not all students in the Jewish day school share Albie’s commitment to Jewish education. They find themselves in a demanding dual language, dual curriculum programme. How challenging it must be for students who are struggling and may not themselves feel any affinity for Judaic studies or Hebrew language. Adele described such difficulty in working with Gilad:

We actually don’t know what to do with him. But that’s a whole different story. He is quite happy to just sit and do nothing. Part of the problem is that he really doesn’t want to be here. I don’t think he wants to be in the Hebrew system....I don’t stand for nonsense. I’m very firm but fair with them. And I won’t have him sitting. So I get work from him. But in the Hebrew class, he’s
out wandering. He does nothing...He’s becoming a behaviour problem. (Adele, Interview 1)

During each observation session, I watched Adele return time and time again to Gilad’s desk, monitoring his progress on following simple directions and on working through the task at hand, which often was substantially modified for him. Gilad tended to sit and not respond to directions unless Adele addressed him directly and watched him follow through. When asked to get his mathematics books from his cubby one day, Gilad required repetition of the directions and Adele’s insistence that he get up from his desk to do so.

The description of Gilad’s difficulty functioning in the Hebrew class despite resource teacher support and a modified programme and the statement that he was becoming a behaviour problem in that half of the day signaled concern. It is possible that the programme was too difficult for him, despite efforts to modify and support his learning. The lack of motivation I observed in class and the behavioural concerns in Hebrew may mean that Gilad felt overwhelmed by the demands of the setting. Without strong commitment to being in the setting, it is possible that students with significant challenges will find it difficult to thrive.

In their school guidelines, both schools expressed a commitment to Jewish values which implied commitment to community and Jewish education. In its handbook, Menorah Academy stated that “we work hard to create an environment that reflects the Torah [the five books of Moses] values that we all share and hope that you, our parents, are our partners in this holy task” (p. 4). Similarly, the Hillel Jewish Day School mission statement outlined the school’s commitment to “providing our students with an excellent Jewish and general studies education, based on Torah values.... to fostering a
commitment to: a Jewish way of life based on Jewish law, values, and practice; the state of Israel; and Klal Yisrael [the Jewish people]” (p. 1).

The ultimate goals of the schools appeared not only to be the provision of an excellent quality of Judaic and general education but also to teach Jewish Torah values to its students, thus supporting parental, staff, and student commitment to Jewish education. The transmission of Hebrew language, Jewish culture, history, and religious tradition goes hand in hand with the teaching of the secular curriculum common to all students in Ontario. In discussing Jewish education in the United State, Sarna (1998) stated, “Jewish education serves as the vehicle through which we train successive generations of Jews to negotiate their own way, as Jews, in the American arena” (p. 10). Sarna explained further that Jewish education continues to be seen by many in the Jewish world as the key to ensuring Jewish continuity. Such sentiments only serve to further commitment to Jewish education on the part of Jewish educational institutions and on individuals in the Jewish community.

The financial burden of Jewish day school tuition fees, the commitment of Sharon and Adele to teaching in Jewish day schools, and the philosophical positioning of Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy in teaching Jewish values point to the centrality of commitment to Jewish education. For Albie, commitment to Jewish education kept him in the system. For Gilad, lack of interest or frustration with the demands of the programme may have contributed to his great difficulty. The Jewish day school may indeed not be the best setting for some students with exceptionalities.

Teacher Collaboration: We’re All in This Together

I had anticipated that teacher collaboration would have been central to Adele’s and Sharon’s inclusive experiences. I was surprised to find less evidence of collegial
collaboration than anticipated in the data for either teacher. In my reading of the literature I had found teacher collaboration to be a common characteristic of effective inclusive settings (Corbett, 2001; Johnsen et al., 2002; Westberg & Archambault, 1997) as it provides opportunities for teachers to discuss challenges, plan differentiated tasks, and share strategies and resources with one another. In particular, Corbett’s case study research in inclusion supported the significance of communication and a collegial team approach to inclusive practice. She described the effectiveness of daily before-school meetings where teachers discussed strategies to address specific behaviour and curriculum matters.

I found that Sharon and Adele both relied on brief, informal discussions and infrequent formal meetings with special education teachers for any collaborative planning and problem solving in programming for their students with exceptionalities. Time for formal meetings when teacher collaboration on curriculum and programming for students with exceptionalities could be discussed was very limited. Collaboration with colleagues tended to be informal and time pressed. Time to collaborate and collaboration with groups of colleagues presented challenges for Adele and Sharon.

Adele

For Adele, collaboration with grade team colleagues was organized by members of the administration as an approach to general studies curriculum planning and professional development. In reference to planning meetings for the next year’s grade 4 curriculum, Adele said, “And we’re all learning. We’re all in this together as a group to plan. You know, we will talk about planning and that is definitely going to be differentiated instruction” (Interview 2). The statement that the teachers were all expected to plan differentiated curriculum together reflected an ethos of collaboration
with colleagues as an integral part of the curriculum planning process. Teachers were expected to work collaboratively, and Adele viewed this as a challenging learning experience that the teachers would tackle together. Hillel Jewish Day School’s document for teacher performance assessment states the expectation that the teacher “collaborates with colleagues to share ideas and approaches to planning, instruction, assessment and evaluation with the goal of improving performance” (p. 35).

Adele expressed that working collaboratively with one colleague was very different than attempting to collaborate as a team. Adele was required to work with a group of grade 4 teachers to plan new units of study in both language arts and social studies, with differentiated tasks for students with exceptionalities. Discussing the challenges Adele stated that, “it’s difficult to get the mindset, everybody on the same page. And some people feel very threatened by change. And it’s difficult. And you know, two people working together, it’s not difficult, but several…it’s challenging” (Interview 1). Relative to the task of planning with one colleague, it was difficult to work with a group of teachers amongst whom perspectives on differentiation and comfort with changes in pedagogy differed.

I observed that Adele spoke briefly with both the enrichment and resource teachers prior to class each day. These quick talks occurred as the specialist walked past the classroom and, seeing Adele inside, stopped in for a few words. The enrichment teacher and Adele shared an ease of communication that I observed on each of the six observation days. Each day, the enrichment teacher met for a few minutes with Adele to discuss the week’s schedule and her involvement with Adele’s grade 4 students that week.
One day, they discussed the participation of three high-achieving mathematics students in a training workshop on probability challenges. The students had previously worked with the enrichment teacher on the probability activities and would that day be learning to lead these activities in a workshop format for a special probability session that their class would attend the next week. This project had required the training of Adele's students in both the math challenges and student leadership with peers.

Through brief informal meetings, Adele and the enrichment teacher had planned the probability miniunit to address the grade 4 probability expectations in the curriculum, an area that Adele found difficult to get to in her time-pressed programme each year. The enrichment specialist first worked with enrichment students from Adele's class and the other grade 4 classes on probability challenges and then taught the skills needed for the students to lead the challenges for their classmates in a workshop experience. I observed the workshop session on my next visit and saw the students share their newfound understanding of principles of probability with their classmates. Through teacher collaboration, Adele addressed grade 4 mathematics expectations in the curriculum and also addressed the enrichment needs of students with exceptionalities in her class.

Similarly, Adele had brief, informal discussions with the resource teacher prior to class on several occasions. They quickly reviewed the resource teacher's work with students in a reading support group and discussed how individual students were functioning in the class. One day, they discussed Gilad's unco-operative behaviour in the resource group and concerns about his progress in the group and in class. These short informal discussions provided collegial support for Adele in addressing individual needs and coping with the challenges she experienced with individual students.
Teacher collaboration through informal discussions provided support for Adele in inclusive practice and reflected the strong rapport that Adele had with particular teachers. Her regular brief discussions with the resource and enrichment teachers were part of the daily routine and focused on the needs of students with exceptionalities and the technicalities of scheduling and co-ordinating programmes. Similar collaboration between Adele and the Judaic studies teacher(s) who taught her students in the other half of the day was not apparent. Adele did refer to occasional discussions with Judaic studies teachers about particular students, but there did not appear to be an ongoing collaboration of sharing strategies and information.

I also observed several interactions between Adele and general studies grade 4 colleagues. In these quick before-class interactions, a teacher would ask to borrow a book or arrange timing to share the VCR that day to show a science video. Adele also told me about scheduled curriculum meetings with grade colleagues to develop new curriculum units and to discuss new materials and approaches introduced by the administration. These formal opportunities for collaboration served to further develop differentiated activities in units of study, thus facilitating in-class programming for students with exceptionalities. It was, however, the brief informal meetings with the specialists that supported her work with individual students with exceptionalities on a daily basis. It was these interactions that provided an opportunity for Adele to share observations and discuss concerns about students with exceptionalities with colleagues who were also working with them.

Time contributed to the nature of teacher collaboration for Adele. The formal meetings with grade colleagues were scheduled infrequently during the school year and on the few planning days at the end of June and prior to school opening in September.
Further meetings would have to be co-ordinated on the teachers' own time, which would be difficult to arrange for a group of teachers. The informal meetings that provided brief daily collaboration occurred in the few minutes before classes began. There appeared to be very few opportunities for teachers to talk longer than a few minutes. The tight daily schedule did not have that flexibility.

*Sharon*

Sharon felt that communication amongst colleagues in a Jewish day school was limited by the school structure. She was the only general studies teacher at her grade level and lacked time to discuss curriculum with general studies colleagues of different grades. Few opportunities existed for them to come together as a group to talk. Sharon suggested curriculum mapping as a vehicle for increasing knowledge and communication about curriculum across grades.

It's about the day school system for teaching students with exceptionalities and regular students. I think, I don't know what it's like in the public school, but in our school there isn't a lot of opportunity [for communication]. I like the idea of mapping the curriculum because I think it's important for [teaching] students with exceptionalities particularly. I have talked to the administration about this recently. I really think that it's important to sit down with the grade before and after to know what they are teaching. I have no idea about what they are teaching in grade 3. I know what they do in grade 5 because I communicate with those teachers. I think it is very important to have continuity between grade 2, grade 3, grade 4 in terms of what we're teaching. What type of writing programme? What type of reading programme? What type of math programme? And that's been difficult for me. (Sharon, Interview 1)
This discussion clearly reflected the isolation Sharon experienced from the grade 3 general studies staff and her lack of knowledge about the Grade 3 programme. It was not the Ontario curriculum expectations for grade 3 that Sharon had referred to in Interview 1. Sharon could have reviewed the grade 3 expectations in the curriculum documents. It was the way in which the grade 3 curriculum was implemented at Menorah Academy that she lacked knowledge about. The grade 3 classrooms were not located close to Sharon’s room, and she did not have frequent opportunities for informal discussion with those teachers. She would have to seek them out. Sharon’s comment in reference to grade 5 that she “communicates with those teachers” implied that she did not communicate with those in grade 3.

Sharon’s grade 4 classroom was located close to the grade 5 classrooms, and she had frequent opportunities for informal discussions about curriculum and students with those teachers. On each observation day, I observed Sharon chatting with a grade 5 teacher as they awaited their students’ arrival in the hall at entrance times. Proximity led to collegial communication. Sharon also planned a unit on literature circles with a grade 5 colleague, sharing resources and creating continuity of approach from grade 4 to grade 5 in using literature circles. This unit was multileveled for both grades 4 and 5 and provided opportunities for leveled groupings. Proximity and an ongoing collegial relationship led to sharing of information and planning of differentiated curriculum between Sharon and her grade 5 general studies colleagues.

Sharon had addressed the need for communication with general studies teachers across the grades and the notion of curriculum mapping with the administration. Lack of communication with general studies teachers was “a difficulty” for Sharon. The Teacher Guidelines at Menorah Academy supported teacher collaboration, stating that “teachers
should willingly exchange ideas and assist each other professionally” (p. 5). Despite promoting collaboration in principle, the limited formal opportunities for staff to communicate at monthly staff meetings or the two yearly professional development days did not adequately address Sharon’s need for greater communication with colleagues.

Most intervention of special education staff in Sharon’s programme was through the in-class support staff model and the pullout resource programme model. Sharon worked with a full-time teacher’s aide, Lucy, who provided in-class support to students with exceptionalities in the class. The resource and enrichment teachers who were assigned to Sharon’s class provided pullout programming for students with exceptionalities several times a week. Students requiring curriculum support worked with the resource teacher in a small group session for 40-minute periods four times each week. The enrichment teacher worked with a small group of students at least once per week, also outside of the classroom. When these teachers arrived to pick up a small group for the pullout programme, they spoke briefly with Sharon regarding what the students were working on in class and what they would be doing in the small group.

I asked Sharon about any support that the resource teacher provided for her in teaching the students with exceptionalities in her class.

Mary-Martha: Do materials come into the classroom? For instance, would she [the resource teacher] give you materials, or would she take an assignment and say, “You know, let’s change this a little bit. I’ve got some suggestions?”

Sharon: I say that to her. She gave me one thing, a patterning booklet, but that really wasn’t for that specifically. But when I give most of my tests, I want to modify them for these kids, so I show them to her and she takes out the questions that she thinks they can’t handle. So that works well.
Mary-Martha: So she doesn’t prepare differentiated materials or anything like that?

Sharon: No. No, she doesn’t.

Mary-Martha: Or do any planning with you?

Sharon: No.

Mary-Martha: So support seems to be more in the sense of teacher support time with the remedial teacher?

Sharon: Right.

Mary-Martha: Is it primarily out as opposed to within the class?

Sharon: Yes. It’s primarily out. Sometimes she stays in, but it’s primarily out. I think it just works better that way because you have such a big class and they’re [the resource students] spread out [in different parts of the classroom].

(Interview 1)

The role of the resource teacher was not a collaborative one in which she worked with Sharon to provide differentiated materials or suggestions for ways that the grade curriculum could be better accommodated or modified to meet the needs of her students with exceptionalities. In my discussion with the co-ordinator of special needs at Menorah Academy, I learned that the role of the resource teacher was to provide curriculum support to students with exceptionalities to help them cope with the demands of the classroom programme. The resource programme was not a full remedial programme, but rather curriculum support in which some remedial strategies were used. The pullout model removed students from the classroom to work on aspects of the curriculum they were struggling with.
Sharon stressed the importance of maximizing the involvement of the resource/enrichment teachers in the classroom teacher’s planning and implementation of differentiated curriculum for students with exceptionalities. Sharon said that she would advise a novice teacher coming into the Jewish day school to “use your resource people because they’re there to support you and the kids. Use them as much as you can” (Interview 2). Sharon was clearly aware of the potential of the resource staff to directly support students with exceptionalities and to also support her efforts to differentiate the curriculum for those students to work effectively within the classroom. I observed a very successful integrated art and science class that was the result of Sharon’s collaboration with the enrichment and art teachers. That observation session illustrated the potential of collaborative planning in facilitating Sharon’s inclusive practice.

During the third observation session, Sharon’s class went to the art room to work on the collaboratively planned integrated activity. As Sharon explained to me in the postobservation discussion that day, the art teacher liked to integrate art projects into some aspect of the general studies or Judaic curriculum for each class. Sharon’s class worked in the art room under the guidance of the art teacher, Sharon, and Lucy, Sharon’s teacher’s aide. The project required the students to create a three-dimensional habitat chair descriptive of a habitat of interest that they had studied. The sample pond life chair had waves, bullrushes, ducks, and ferns.

The enrichment teacher had been working with four students on research projects that enabled them to more extensively explore specific subtopics of interest in the science unit on habitats. Sharon and the enrichment teacher planned this enrichment extension together, and the enrichment teacher worked with the students during weekly pullout sessions. In the art room, these students were to create a habitat chair that would enhance
their individual research project. I noted in my observation schedule that their specific assignment had been previously discussed with the enrichment group students. Sharon reminded them during the session: “I want to remind the people working with Ms. Blum that you are working on a chair for your habitats project” (Observation 3). The students nodded and carried on with their work. This activity was an example of effective collaborative planning by Sharon and two colleagues, and I noted that “all students are able to come to the task regardless of academic level and artistic ability. The work combines construction/building and cut and paste art. It’s a very doable art task, very open ended” (Observation 3). In our postobservation discussion that day, Sharon said that the excited response of the students to the art task was to the art teacher’s credit as she “really makes the kids feel good about their [art] work” (Observation 3).

I did not observe evidence of collaborative planning with Sharon and the resource teacher. The resource teacher supported the students in working through class work that they found challenging, providing some teaching of strategies and skills to enable student success. Collaborative planning of differentiated tasks that these students could have worked on within the context of the classroom was not a part of this process.

Though Lucy worked primarily within the classroom, circulating amongst students, sitting with individuals or small groups to work on particular tasks, Sharon at times asked Lucy to take a small group out of the classroom to the library to work on a challenging task. During the first observation session, Lucy took five students to the library to work on the reading comprehension assignment for the story Ladybug Garden. In our discussion that followed, Sharon told me that Lucy knew how to modify the number of questions the students would do, omitting the more difficult higher-order thinking skill tasks that they were not ready for. Sharon and Lucy had a working
relationship in which Lucy had learned to adapt tasks to meet the needs of individual students. Sharon could indicate particular students and a task, and Lucy could adapt the task appropriately.

What limited Sharon’s ability to collaborate with the resource teacher and with her general studies colleagues? Sharon’s physical proximity to the grade 5 teachers and distance from grade 3 impacted on the frequency of opportunities for informal discussion. She made a point of planning with the enrichment and art teachers. The art teacher initiated curriculum-based discussion and collaborative planning. I did not observe the enrichment teacher initiating collaboration. In my discussion with the special needs co-ordinator, collaboration did not seem to be a goal of the resource intervention. It was the responsibility of the resource teacher to provide support to students with exceptionalities in coping with the grade-level curriculum rather than to plan tasks with the classroom teacher that could enable the student with exceptionalities to work more effectively within the classroom context.

Curriculum support could be revisioned as collaborative planning, and implementation could be done within the context of the classroom as opposed to withdrawal. The special needs co-ordinator stated, “We work with the curriculum” (Research Journal notes, May 30, 2005), meaning that the curriculum-as-plan was focal in student intervention. In the context of working with the curriculum, the classroom teacher could also be supported through collaborative planning and even team teaching with the resource teacher, who would have much to share in expertise in remediation strategies and skill development that could be integrated into leveled and differentiated tasks. Similar collaborative planning and team teaching could occur with the enrichment teacher.
Differentiation in the Jewish Day School General Studies Classroom

In examining differentiation of curriculum, it is important to first explore Adele’s and Sharon’s views on inclusive practice and curriculum. When asked what the term “inclusive practice” meant to her, Adele stated that:

Inclusive practice means meeting the needs of every child in your class whether the child is gifted or whether the child has learning disabilities. It means meeting their needs and allowing them to succeed at the level they are at. Allowing every child to experience success. And if it be on a much lower level, so be it, or at the other end. To me that is what inclusive means: every child’s needs being met. (Adele, Interview 1)

Adele includes every child in the class in her view of inclusion. To focus only on the needs of students with exceptionalities is actually exclusive practice. Adele’s definition of needs seems to be very academically focused. Need in the sense of social or emotional is not discussed. Differentiation of curriculum primarily addresses academic needs and strengths, though social and emotional needs and strengths can be addressed through grouping strategies and emphasis on talents and strengths in tasks.

Sharon was less certain in discussing what inclusive practice meant to her. She replied:

It means to me that you include in your class the learning abilities of all different levels. That’s what inclusive practice is. Is that right? That’s what it means to me. Yes. That’s what it means to me, that in a general studies classroom you have low-end to middle to high-end students, and you include them all in some kind of way in your teaching. (Interview 1).

Sharon questioned her understanding of the term. The classification of low,
middle, and high end refers to academic achievement and labels students as belonging to an achievement level group. For efficiency I think that many teachers tend to label students as low, middle, or high achievers. Sharon defines inclusive practice with an understanding of the need to include all students in the class. Curriculum occurs with an awareness of three basic achievement levels as a foundation. The specific needs of individuals often necessitate further differentiation to address a particular need or call on a particular strength.

The formal curriculum (McCutcheon, 1997) at Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy was based on Ministry of Education documents and school directives. Adele's experience and confidence in her knowledge of the formal curriculum and her ability to develop a working curriculum from the documents was very apparent. When I asked Adele what she felt were the most important factors for her in running an inclusive classroom she replied:

I think the first thing is really knowing the curriculum. I know exactly what is expected in each grade. I know my students. I know their strengths and their weaknesses. That's very important, and I try and teach to their strengths.

(Adele, Interview 2)

Tomlinson (2003) describes "curriculum and instruction as the vehicle for addressing student needs" (p. 56)). Knowing both curriculum and student needs well, the teacher can make a match between the two. Adele's adept daily handling of three and sometimes four levels of groupings in language arts and mathematics lessons was evidence of her knowledge of both curriculum and students' needs. In both reading and mathematics sessions, Adele's leveled groups worked on tasks with materials and complexity of expectations directed to the strengths and needs of all the students in the
class. The students with exceptionalities in the class were integrated into these groups and received some individual attention as well.

The resource teacher was able to work with students requiring support in reading, three days per week. The reading material used complemented the class integrated reading unit on medieval times (social studies and language arts integration). Both Adele and the resource teacher addressed learning needs of students requiring remediation in reading. Adele did so within the groupings of her reading programme, and the resource teacher did so through small-group sessions in the resource room. Similar intervention occurred for a small group of students who were very strong in mathematics with weekly small group sessions over a period of many weeks. This use of resource and enrichment groupings to provide differentiation of curriculum for students with exceptionalities was characteristic of the pullout model of inclusive practice.

I observed a similar approach to leveled groupings and integration of resource and enrichment sessions with support staff in Sharon’s classroom. In the first interview, Sharon stated that effective teaching of students with exceptionalities requires teachers to have a solid understanding of the curriculum and specific programming in the grades prior to and following the class’ grade level. She suggested curriculum mapping across grades and subject areas in general studies as a way of increasing teacher understanding of curriculum expectations as they are taught at Menorah Academy. She identified such information as particularly important in teaching students with exceptionalities. These students often are not working at grade level in some subject areas.

Adele often negotiated curriculum (Drake, 1998) with an student with exceptionalities and created student “buy in” to a given task or topic. She was aware of
the potential stress to herself and the student in working on a differentiated programme. Adele described establishing Gilad’s responsibilities for the medieval times scrapbook:

I gave him the choice. “Do you want to do a scrapbook or not?” Because I thought, you know I’m not going to stress myself or stress this child. He wants to do the scrapbook. I said, “Fine, then I’ll help you.” And when there has been written work, I get him to tell me what he wants to say, and I write it and he copies it. (Adele, Interview 1).

In the classroom observations I watched Gilad work on his scrapbook and saw Adele modify tasks by reducing the number of steps and accommodate for him by scribing when needed. Negotiating curriculum and adapting the specific task to fit the needs, strengths, and interests of the individual student with exceptionalities were approaches that decreased stress for both Adele and her students.

Tomlinson (2003) refers to differentiated instruction as “responsive instruction” (p. 2). In teaching responsively, the teacher responds to the student’s readiness, interests, and learning profile (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). The responsiveness of differentiated instruction relies on the teacher’s connection with the student (rapport) and the teacher’s understanding of the student’s readiness, interests, and learning profile through assessment and knowledge of student history. In identifying differentiation in my observations of Sharon’s and Adele’s classrooms, I identified many instructional strategies that they used in differentiating aspects of content, process, and end products to address the needs of individual students and small groups. In exploring this theme, I focus on the strategies that I found to be most effective or interesting. All the differentiation strategies I identified through my conversations and observations of the participants are found in the literature on differentiation (Hutchinson, 2002; Johnsen et
al., 2002; Tomlinson, 1999, 2003). The participants’ methods for curriculum differentiation are documented approaches to effective inclusive practice and have been integrated into their approach to inclusion in the half-day general studies programme. The strategies that work in regular full-day programmes are also effective in the time-constrained half-day Jewish day school classes.

Intent to provide differentiated instruction was stated in the documents of both schools. With regard to the resource programme at Menorah Academy, the school guidelines state: “Our goal is to help students meet with more success in the classroom by accommodating, modifying, enriching and differentiating the curriculum” (p. 19). The pullout model approach to intervention that I observed did not provide such adaptations to the grade 4 curriculum in the context of the classroom. It happened in isolation.

Menorah Academy’s philosophy in the school guidelines states:

Each child is an individual, possessing his own unique personality traits, his own unique capabilities and his own unique needs; the Jewish day school must recognize this fully and reflect in its program a commitment to addressing the needs and nurturing the capabilities of each and every one of its students. (p. 2)

Such acknowledgement and nurturing of individual capabilities requires the responsiveness of teaching characteristic of effective differentiation. The documents indicate an expectation of differentiation, so I asked Sharon if she felt she was being directed to do so. She responded that “they ask you if you are modifying the work for them [referring to students receiving resource intervention]. But I think that the incentive for that conversation comes when a parent says something. For the most part, modification is really teacher initiated, I do think so” (Observation 6 discussion).

Sharon’s lesson plans indicated some modifications to be made, her grouping of students
for leveled tasks or modified assignments, and the modified tests she created for some students were initiated by her and in keeping with formal school expectations. Accountability for how and how often she made adaptations was not in place.

Hillel Jewish Day School documents revealed that teachers are expected to address individual needs through accommodations and modifications to the formal curriculum and to plan appropriately differentiated tasks. The parent guidelines described the roles of student services, enrichment co-ordinators, and resource and remedial teachers in supporting student needs both in the classroom and on a pullout basis. The Teacher Performance Profile includes expectations for teacher proficiencies in differentiation. The following expectations are selected from across the performance profile:

-[the teacher] plans programme modifications for both stronger and weaker students;
-uses teaching techniques and learning resources that are compatible with the learner’s needs and capabilities;
-responds to a variety of student needs, capabilities and interests
-accommodates and/or modifies instruction for individual learners when required;
-accommodates for the variety of different student learning styles;
-makes accommodations to meet the needs of students who have special needs;
-ensures respectful, inclusive, supportive environment for all learners. (Hillel Jewish Day School Teacher Performance Profile document, pp. 34-36)

The language of these expectations reflects the school’s intention that differentiation to meet individual needs occur. I observed ongoing examples of the
adaptations Adele made in response to student needs, but we did not discuss any mechanism for accountability.

Key differentiation strategies for both Sharon and Adele relied on the use of leveled groupings of students. Students in their classes were homogeneously grouped by level for lessons in mathematics and language arts in particular. Groups were not static in composition but varied according to the expectations or topic of study. Students with exceptionalities were placed in groupings that supported their individual needs. Adele reported determining group composition based on ongoing assessment of student skill development and grasp of concepts. At times, small-group work with support staff outside of the classroom complemented the work in the class. Adele planned her classroom reading to coincide with the remedial reading pullout group on set days. On those days, the students in the remedial group did not participate in the leveled reading tasks in the classroom, but on nonpullout days, they did.

Sharon described creating student groups based on interests, academic level, and individual strengths. The make-up of homogeneous or heterogeneous groupings with respect to academic strengths and needs was deliberate. In pairing students for partner work, Sharon stated:

I definitely do it low ability with high ability [students] together. I really do not try to pair low ability together. And I never let them pick their pairs. I feel badly about that. I wouldn’t want somebody to be left out, because we do have an issue where one kid doesn’t have friends [in the class]. It’s painful when I pair them. You just hear the sighs. I give a lecture about it….They still do it, and you just kill yourself inside. (Observation 5 discussion)
Sharon’s grouping strategy for partners provided support for weaker students and reflected sensitivity for the needs of those who were socially vulnerable. In working on the “Get a Life Project” I observed, students worked with teacher-assigned partners. They were to find newspaper and flyer ads for food, rent, and furniture within a set monthly budget. The end product was a poster. Sharon maintained the expectations for the assignment and partnered weaker and stronger students together. She explained that one pair I observed functioned so well because the artistic ability of the academically weaker student was valued by the stronger student, who in turn took a leadership role with writing for the end product. The student strengths complemented one another. The pairing for strengths was an effective strategy.

In both classes the core assignments were altered for both advanced and weaker student groupings. For example, complexity and number of tasks on a mathematics assignment on fractions differed for each group within the same basic assignment. Stronger students had a reduced number of questions on the core assignment and additional worksheets with fractions word problems. Students having difficulty with the concepts worked with Adele in a small group using manipulatives to work through the first page of the assignment and to do additional practice questions. Adele, in particular, provided reading and resource material at differing reading levels. Adele spoke at length about the challenge of locating reading material on specific topics at a range of reading levels. In addition to classroom, school library, and public resources, she downloaded selections from an extensive website with fiction and nonfiction leveled reading selections. Sharon relied more on supporting weaker students with the grade 4 level text resources and providing extension resources for greater challenge. Both approaches reflected responsiveness to student needs.
Locating resources to support differentiated tasks is a challenging aspect of differentiation in the general studies classroom. Jewish day school libraries often have quite limited collections, necessitating supplementing from the public library or books that children bring from home. Both teachers are computer savvy and made good use of internet resources to supplement their resource collections and as a source for creative ideas in programming. Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy are sensitive to religious content in resource material. This requires teachers to preview resources for the appropriateness of content for the setting.

Through building curriculum resources and teacher-made materials over years at a given grade level, Adele felt she was able to provide greater differentiation of curriculum for students with exceptionalities. Sharon continued to build upon her differentiated tasks for particular units and specific lessons from year to year in grade. Through revising lesson plans to address specific needs in the class and building curriculum resources and teacher-made materials over the years at the grade 4 level, Adele and Sharon felt able to provide greater differentiation of curriculum for the students with exceptionalities in their classes.

Time needed to plan a differentiated programme necessitated extra hours spent at school each week for Adele and Sharon. As Adele stated, “I think to be well prepared is absolutely essential. You cannot run a differentiated programme if you’re not fully prepared for it” (Interview 2). I observed that Adele arrived at school by 7:30 a.m. each morning that I was at Hillel Jewish Day School. In discussing the daily preparation of the classroom and her materials for the day’s activities, Adele explained that the extra time spent in planning differentiated assignments and preparing the required materials for each day enabled her to teach much more effectively. She started each school day with
the materials she needed and the details of differentiated lessons all ready prepared. In turn, Sharon did this preparation each day after school so that the materials and her lessons were fully ready for the next morning. Both teachers planned the entire week’s lessons with accompanying differentiation the week before so that they had time to assemble materials and prepare activities well in advance.

Each Jewish day school creates its own policies for special education in contrast to the public schools that are directed by both Ministry mandates and local school board requirements. This flexibility in creating policy both facilitated and impeded inclusion for Sharon and Adele. In both Jewish day schools, not all students who received resource intervention were formally assessed and identified. At Menorah Academy an IEP was written for a student who was formally assessed, and the assessment was made available to the school. Sharon used the IEP as a source of direction for differentiating the programme effectively for those students. In our discussion, the special needs co-ordinator indicated that an IEP would be written the next year for every student receiving resource intervention. This change in school policy would provide Sharon with added direction for differentiation. Adele too discussed the importance of the IEP in planning differentiation and effectively addressing the needs of the student with exceptionalities and that formal assessment was not a requirement of intervention at Hillel Jewish Day School. The absence of assessment requirement in the two Jewish day schools studied allowed more students to receive intervention, which the participants viewed as a positive result but meant that IEPs were often not available.

In addition to extensive use of leveled resources, group work, modified class assignments, and strategy suggestions from IEPs for differentiation, an active teaching style in which the teacher rarely sits at her desk and circulates around the room while
students' work was noted repeatedly in each class. This enabled individual work with students and an ongoing monitoring of student work. For Adele, it enabled her to guide Gilad through tasks and ensure that he followed instructions. It also created moments for each teacher to interact with all her students individually and to monitor their work. Sharon described how her teacher's aide, Lucy, assisted in monitoring and guiding students as they worked. She said, "It helps a lot because she will go around and help the kids as well. So there are four hands instead of two. It really helps" (Sharon, Interview 1). Though resource and enrichment teachers frequently followed the pullout model for intervention, they too provided in-class support at times, circulating and working with individual students and small groups. This involvement seemed to occur only when time permitted. The scheduled sessions were predominantly pullout.

Sharon identified her most successful strategy as "chunking and guiding" (Interview 1). She chunked the student with exceptionalities assignment into small, sequential steps and guided the student through the work process, chunk by chunk. She circulated around the room as students worked and returned regularly to the student with exceptionalities to give feedback and guidance as she guided from one chunk to the next. This strategy was also important in developing rapport with the individual student. I observed both Sharon and Lucy using this strategy daily, guiding and monitoring students with exceptionalities during independent work. Adele too used this technique. In teaching one student with learning disabilities in her class, she used the chunk and guide method in all tasks I observed him participate in. It is important to note that in chunking assignments, both teachers often reduced the amount of work required of students and selected elements they felt were most appropriate to their needs and strengths. Sharon was aware of the need to vary strategy use and to view any one strategy as one of several
tools to use. She stressed the importance of teacher creativity in differentiating tasks for a given student, stating that tasks need to be “interesting and varied, so that it’s not always one strategy that is being applied for one child” (Interview 2).

Sharon and Adele focused their curriculum planning on two goals: Meeting expectations of the formal grade 4 curriculum by creating a thorough and interesting programme; and addressing the specific learning needs of students with exceptionalities in the class, through a responsive differentiated programme that acknowledges student readiness, interests, and learning profiles so that they can experience success.

Differentiation of curriculum is an approach to teaching that Tomlinson and Allan (2000) refer to as “a way of thinking about teaching and learning” (p. 13). My study of both Adele and Sharon as inclusive practitioners indicates that they think with a mindset of differentiation and work hard to accomplish differentiated teaching in the context of time constraint and the mix of inclusive models in their schools (pullout, consultation, team teaching, and in-class support). Perhaps it is flexibility amongst models that can eventually enable the best fit of need to service.

Isolation

In many ways, Adele’s and Sharon’s experiences reflected a reality of isolation. The general studies teachers were isolated from the Judaic studies teachers. Each taught their curricula in isolated halves of the day. Sharon’s classroom was purely a general studies “English” classroom and was isolated from the visual presence of Judaic and Hebrew language elements. The mezuzah (a small parchment with text from the Torah enclosed in a small cylinder-shaped case) attached to the doorway and the siddurim (prayer books) used by the students for the mincha (afternoon prayer) service each day after recess were the only Judaic materials in Sharon’s general studies classroom.
Bulletin board displays with posters and student work in Hebrew and the Judaic texts and resources used by the Judaic studies teacher who shared Adele’s classroom in the other half day created a more English and Hebrew integrated learning environment.

Sharon’s general studies classroom was somewhat isolated from the Jewish context of Menorah Academy. I think it is that isolation that causes Jewish day school students to commonly refer to general studies as “English” and Judaic studies as “Hebrew.” The separation of the languages and the separation of religious and secular curricula create two distinct spheres of learning.

The absence of references to Judaic studies colleagues by both Sharon and Adele was noteworthy. In interviews and postobservation discussions, few references to Judaic studies colleagues were made. In discussing challenges she faced in meeting the needs of students with exceptionalities in her class, Sharon stated:

I find in talking to my Hebrew colleague that there are usually the same needs on the Hebrew side of the curriculum. The remedial children are going out for extra help in English and they’re doing the same in Hebrew. I don’t know why that’s important, but it’s interesting. (Interview 1)

Some discussion about student needs did occur between Sharon and her students’ Judaic studies teacher. Sharon acknowledged that often the same individual student learning needs were present in Judaic studies. Student learning was divided into two distinct experiences, Judaic and general, and though commonalities existed, they were not explored. The opportunity for collaboration between Sharon and her Judaic studies colleague existed but appeared not to have been acted upon beyond discussion of where common challenges existed.
Similarly, Adele referred to problems that Gilad experienced in the Judaic half of the day. She stated that “in the Hebrew class he’s out wandering. He does nothing” (Interview 1). She had observed him out of class and not working. The opportunity for collaboration between Adele and the Judaic studies teacher existed, and it is likely that the Judaic studies teacher needed support in working with Gilad. Part-time Judaic studies teachers would be at the school only during their teaching half of the day, limiting the possibilities for collaboration to that time of day. With curricula isolated to distinct halves of the school day, the opportunities for teachers to discuss common challenges, let alone to collaborate on curriculum and strategies, are very limited, and such communication is likely minimal.

I sensed that Sharon felt very isolated. She was the only grade 4 general studies teacher at Menorah Academy. She expressed the need to have greater knowledge of colleagues’ programmes because she was isolated from that information through lack of communication with them. In this sense, Adele experienced less isolation than Sharon because she had grade 4 general studies colleagues to work with at Hillel Jewish Day School. As well, Adele was mandated by the administration to plan new curriculum units with her grade-level team. The team met at set times in the year to co-ordinate long-term and unit plans, to plan specific activities, and to share ideas.

Sharon expressed a feeling of isolation from the public system, a feeling of not really knowing what programmes and issues were current in local public school education. When I asked Sharon whether students were ever kept back from the next grade and about her further thoughts on inclusive practice, she replied in both instances, “I don’t know what happens in the public school now” (Interview 1). This repeated response implied a lack of information, isolation from professional knowledge. One can
question whether the responsibility for accessing that information rests with Jewish day school teachers themselves or with administrators. In discussing her thoughts about Jewish day school differences from public schools, Sharon said:

You know, this is again from what I understand about [public schools]. First of all, the time frame that we talked about. You know in a public school obviously there is no Hebrew. There is French, but they still have the full day [for the remaining subjects]. Also, I think that the resource teacher teaches outside of the curriculum. I think they have their own materials that they might teach the child. It’s a different stream they’re taking them through, from what I understand. So I wonder if that’s more beneficial? (Interview 1)

The relative lack of time for teaching the Ontario curriculum in the Jewish day school was central to Sharon’s impression of how the public and Jewish schools differed, as was her impression of how public school resource intervention was focused. It is significant to note that Sharon questioned whether the remediation she believed public schools provided would be of greater value to students than the curriculum support her students received.

Sharon’s lack of information reflected the isolation that Jewish day school teachers can experience with respect to practices in other Jewish day schools as well as local public schools. Though Jewish day schools in a large city usually are affiliated with a board of Jewish education, each institution functions quite independently, establishing its own policies and programming for special education. Some consulting and resources may be available through the board of Jewish education, but the board does not have the influence or resources characteristic of the publicly funded boards. Sharon seemed to feel isolated from what she perceived as her lack of knowledge of current public school
practice. Adele was less isolated in this respect. She had some familiarity with practice in the local school board through a language consultant she knew. However, her reference to the “little bits and pieces” of information indicated a lack of knowledge that she still perceived.

Well, you know, as far as the public school goes, I’ve never taught in the public school. I know only from what I hear, the little bits and pieces. Well firstly, they do have more time. And I think that makes a difference. And I think they have more resources available to them. When they need a consultant in helping them, somebody is there. They have more professional development days. They have a lot of professional development. (Adele, Interview 2)

Both Adele and Sharon stated first in their responses that the public elementary school teachers have a full day in which to teach the Ontario curriculum. This difference was important to both teachers because the issue of time created significant pressure for them. The perception of limited availability of resources and professional development opportunities was accurate and reflects the financial constraints typical in privately funded Jewish day schools. Very limited opportunity for professional development also contributed to feelings of isolation through lack of knowledge of current trends and issues. Teaching in a Jewish day school provided Sharon and Adele with limited opportunities for professional development (2 days per year in their schools). Access to professional development that included information on current public school inclusive practice would further inform Sharon’s and Adele’s own inclusive practice. Corbett (2001) identified opportunities for professional development as an essential factor for developing skills in curriculum differentiation and facilitating inclusive practice. Sharon’s and Adele’s perceptions of time, access to professional development, and
availability of consultants and resources in the public school may not be reflective of the actual constraints experienced by teachers in their local public schools.

Inclusive philosophy seeks to integrate students with exceptionalities into the general classroom. One goal of this integration is to lessen the isolation students may experience from having learning needs that differ from those of the more average learner. The pullout model of inclusive practice, central to the resource and enrichment intervention provided at both schools, contributed to isolation of students with exceptionalities rather than integration. Most of the resource and enrichment student contact time in both Sharon’s and Adele’s classes was used in withdrawal group teaching of students with exceptionalities away from their classrooms. The pullout model, in contrast to the consultation, team teaching, and in-class support staff models led to further isolation by physically isolating students with exceptionalities from their classmates and the classroom experience during resource and enrichment sessions. Sharon expressed her concern about the pullout model being stressful for students with exceptionalities, stating:

        And it’s also hard on the child, I can imagine because they’re being told they don’t understand the work in English and also in Hebrew [referring to Hebrew resource withdrawal support during Judaic studies time]. And they’re being pulled out for extra help, and some of them are being tutored outside of school in English and Hebrew. (Interview 1)

The in-class support model was also significant in Sharon’s practice as she had Lucy, the teacher’s aide, working alongside her. Lucy provided support to the students with exceptionalities in Sharon’s classes all day. In addition, the consultation and team teaching that I observed with Sharon and the art teacher reflected some dimension of the
consultation and team teaching models. The special education intervention provided by the resource and enrichment teachers followed the pullout model, but Sharon’s approach was clearly a combination of models.

At Hillel Jewish Day School, the primary model observed was also the pullout model. Though some consultation was apparent, opportunities for team teaching or in-class support were much less frequent. This was a reflection of specialist teachers being assigned to several classes and an intervention system built on the use of pullout small-group teaching. On one occasion the resource teacher came by the classroom and said, “I have a few minutes available now” (Observation 4), and Adele invited her in. She proceeded to work with Gilad, who was having difficulty following the directions in constructing gears in a science lesson. Adele did not have a teacher’s aide in her classroom to provide more ongoing in-class support (besides her own in the teacher role), and on only one other occasion did I observe the resource teacher working with an individual student in class during a language arts session. The Hillel Jewish Day School policy document stated that a teacher’s assistant would be assigned to classes larger than 27 students for up to half of the general studies time each day. The possibility for in-class support from a teacher’s aide existed only for larger classes.

It was interesting to me that in both schools a combination of models was observed, with the pullout model being predominant. The possibility of furthering the use of in-class support, team teaching, and teacher consultation with special education teachers and other colleagues existed at both schools.

Integration of Curriculum: We’ve Got to Try to Integrate More

The theme of isolation was countered by the opposing theme of integration. As these themes emerged in the data, I realized that integration of curriculum presented a
possible solution to the challenges of isolation experienced by Sharon and Adele and
their students with exceptionalities and the isolation of areas of curriculum. As well,
integration of curriculum might present a solution to the challenge of Jewish day school
time constraints.

Integration of curriculum was a curriculum planning strategy that both Adele and
Sharon used. Both teachers integrated some curriculum content and skills across subject
areas in order to use the half-day time frame for general studies in the Jewish day school
as effectively as possible and to make their programmes more relevant and interesting. In
discussing the challenge of teaching the Ontario curriculum in the half day, Adele said,
“It’s huge and difficult to do all this, and you just try and integrate as much as you can”
(Interview 1). Integrating curriculum across two or more subject areas, a
multidisciplinary approach to integrated curriculum, provides relevance for students and
allows teachers to address expectations from different subject areas of the curriculum
within the same activity (Drake, 1998). This approach is potentially time efficient and
can lead to dynamic programming that is meaningful and motivating for students.

I noted through the interviews, classroom observations, and postobservation
discussions evidence that both Sharon and Adele sometimes used a multidisciplinary
approach in integrating curriculum across subject areas. I observed Sharon’s integration
of the habitats unit in science with reading selections and comprehension and writing
tasks in language arts as well as the integrated science and art lesson for making the
habitat chairs. In both teachers’ classrooms I observed lessons in which the social studies
unit on medieval times was integrated into reading and writing tasks in language arts. In
discussions, both participants reported integration of mathematics expectations in data
management and geometry, where possible connections were made between the social studies and sciences curricula.

*Adele*

The Teacher Performance Profile document for teacher assessment at Hillel Jewish Day School stated the expectation that the teacher "draws from concepts in different disciplines for thematic study where appropriate" (p. 34). Adele made connections across disciplines where she found connections were appropriate in that they were logical and manageable with the resources available or possible to find. Adele also reported that the principal told the staff that "he really does want everything integrated" (Interview 2). In describing planning differentiated tasks on medieval times with her grade 4 colleagues, Adele discussed integrating the social studies expectations with language arts expectations for expository writing. She referred to an imperative to "try to integrate":

I took the knights and castles and also the essential questions and all those headings [to plan differentiated tasks for], but I integrated it into report writing because I know we are doing report writing. So now, basically we've focused the report writing taking the medieval content. And at the end, every child would have a little report about castles. Some will be one paragraph, some will be five paragraphs, but there will be a report about castles. I was responsible for that section and integrated it into our report writing. We have to try and integrate. So this has made everybody think about the social studies in a very different way. (Adele, Interview 1)

This integrated curriculum was part of the grade 4 teachers' collaborative work encouraged by the administration. Adele shared that plan with her colleagues, and it was
implemented with each teacher working with students at different levels of writing skill ability. Collaboration and integration in curriculum planning and implementation led to addressing the varied skill levels in the grade 4 inclusive classrooms in a time-efficient manner. All students potentially received direct instruction at their level and produced an end product that addressed social studies and language arts expectations.

In speaking further about the pressures of time and curriculum, Adele pointed to integrating curriculum as an effective strategy.

Adele: But you know, for the goals for next year for science we have five strands to cover.

Mary-Martha: I know.

Adele: We’ve been trying to beg to do less, but it’s not happening.

Mary-Martha: That’s a big expectation.

Adele: It’s huge. It’s huge and difficult to get to all this. And you just try to integrate as much as you can. (Interview 1)

Adele presented integrated curriculum as a method that she and her colleagues were learning to use, a method they needed to use more. Adele said that “we’ve got to try to integrate more. That’s what we’re trying to do. Like in planning our social studies, we’ve tried to integrate some of the social studies into the writing” (Interview 2).

Adele also described how, in her other half-day role as the resource teacher in grade 5, she gathered selections on Ancient Egypt at grades 2 and 3 reading levels that the resource students could read successfully and understand. She described the impact of this in the students’ classrooms:

Adele: And these kids really know. So when they were in the classroom they could understand. I started well in advance of when they [the grade 5 general
Studies teachers] introduced it. And one of the teachers actually brought it up, and she said when she started talking about Egypt and the Nile River, there were two of my reading boost students and every minute their hands are up. And how the Nile River is so important and all that. And she said the rest of the class was just staring at them.

Mary-Martha: What a good moment for those kids.

Adele: This is it. They needed that. So when I integrated reading, that was my reading for them in social studies. (Interview 2)

In classroom observations, I noted some integration of Judaic themes into the medieval times social studies and language arts. The students listened to Adele read aloud each day. She was nearing completion of *The Star and the Sword*, a novel set in the days of Robin Hood that tells the story of two Jewish children. Listening to the novel read aloud and discussing the story's medieval content and Judaic connections created a special relevancy for the students. The students also had written stories about the Golem, a monster-like figure from medieval Jewish lore, that were used as part of the scrapbook culminating activity Adele had designed for the medieval unit. The final copies of these stories were written on paper that was bordered with a Star of David motif and included the students' drawings of what their Golem looked like. These activities were illustrative of how, with adequate planning, teacher knowledge, and access to resources, integration of Judaic content into the general studies curriculum was possible. Both activities met expectations in the social studies and language arts curricula and were carried out in such a way that the various skill levels of students were accommodated.
Sharon

Unlike Adele, Sharon did not have an expectation from the administration to integrate some curriculum across disciplines within general studies. After observing examples of integrated curriculum in Sharon’s classroom, I asked her whether the administration discussed integrated curriculum with the staff or if it she had initiated it herself. She responded: “I think it is more intuitively developed. And they [the administration] know that I do it, and they like it” (Interview 2). Like Adele, Sharon viewed integration as a way of addressing the time constraints of the half-day programme. She noted that some skill expectations are repeated across disciplines in the Ontario curriculum documents and that she would omit skill expectations from one subject when she had addressed the skill through another subject area.

Mary-Martha: If something is covered in another area of the curriculum, is that more skill based? Like a writing skill or a research skill?

Sharon: Yes, like a research skill for example. It seems to be a skill that is addressed a lot in the curriculum. So if I’ve done that in habitats [science] for example, I don’t necessarily do it in medieval times [social studies]....I might be covering a design process [in science] or something in math or language arts that I can use to cover a specific expectation. So it is integrated within the different subjects as well....When I plan lessons I try to make connections between subject areas. (Interview 2)

In a language arts class I observed Sharon provided additional higher order thinking questions for a reading comprehension activity based on Burns’ Bog, a selection on wetlands from the reading anthology. She quietly directed some students to these questions, and for others she modified the main activity she had introduced to the class.
The challenging questions were not restricted to those students. All students were able to work on them once the main body of work had been completed. Both Lucy and Sharon circulated around the class, working with individual students as needed. The lesson integrated science and language expectations and was differentiated to meet individual learning needs. It was an example of inclusive practice with integrated curriculum that worked well. Students were engaged and productive and seemed able to cope well with the elements of the task for which they were responsible.

Summary and Final Thoughts on the Findings

Eight themes emerged from my analysis of the data collected at Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy: time, rapport, student history, commitment to Jewish education, teacher collaboration, differentiation of curriculum in the Jewish day school general studies classroom, isolation, and integration of curriculum. Undoubtedly, some issue with pressures of time is a common understanding in relation to teaching and curriculum. However, the pervasiveness of time across the data was most unexpected. The challenges of compressing the curriculum into a half day programme and the time demands of specialty classes, pullout resource sessions, and special programming for Jewish holidays and themes all contributed to teacher emphasis on time efficiency and commitment to curriculum-as-plan. Both Sharon and Adele established rapport with exceptional students and relied on prior knowledge of student history to facilitate inclusive practice. Rapport and knowledge of student history enabled time efficiency in differentiating curriculum to address particular student needs.

Sharon and Adele expressed a commitment to Jewish education and through their stories, commitment to Jewish education on the part of parents and some students was described particularly in relation to the need for and expectation of accommodation and
modification of curriculum. The traditional Jewish day school structure of Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy contributed to the lack to opportunity for teacher collaboration in inclusive practice experienced by both Sharon and Adele. Strategies for curriculum differentiation that were observed in both classrooms paralleled strategies identified in the literature. The emphasis on curriculum support at Menorah Academy particularly, contributed to the commitment to curriculum-as-plan. The potential of greater opportunity for both teacher collaboration and student intervention focused on skill remediation and individualized instruction addressing student strengths and needs was apparent. Sharon and Adele experienced isolation to varying degrees, via separation of general and Judaic time, staff, and curricula and by virtue of constraints of the traditional Jewish day school structure. The predominance of the pullout resource model was identified in both classrooms and can be viewed as isolating for students with exceptionalities. The final theme, integration of curriculum, presents an approach to curriculum used by Sharon and Adele in curriculum compacting and differentiation.

My reflections on the eight themes yielded understandings about time, efficiency, day school structure, inclusion models, and curriculum-as-lived and curriculum-as-plan. Teacher perceptions of time pressure and limitations impacted on their view of curriculum-as-plan and appeared to contribute to a drive for efficiency for both Sharon and Adele. The dual curriculum structure of their traditional Jewish day school settings restricts the teaching of general studies formal curriculum to the general studies half day and excludes curriculum integration across Judaic and general studies time allotments. Sharon’s and Adele’s efficient classrooms very much follow the pullout model of inclusion. The curriculum-as-plan, time efficiency, and the pullout model of inclusion are characteristic of both classrooms. In Chapter Five my understandings from the
findings are explored. They yield recommendations for my own practice and future research.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this case study research was to examine Adele’s and Sharon’s inclusive education experiences in their grade 4 general studies classrooms. My qualitative examination of Adele’s experiences at Hillel Jewish Day School and Sharon’s experiences at Menorah Academy yielded understandings about their inclusive practice and about challenges of the traditional Jewish day school structure. The theme time, time, time ran as a thread through my analysis of the remaining seven themes that emerged from the case study data from each setting. My understandings about the isolation experienced by Sharon and Adele point to implications for the traditional Jewish day school structure and curriculum. The need for efficiency demonstrated by both teachers leads to a discussion of the implications of efficiency on models of inclusion, and thus inclusive practice, and on the way curriculum is conceptualized and experienced by students in the classroom. What connections exist between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived and inclusion?

Reflections on the Findings

My reflections on the findings focus specifically on commitment to Jewish education, time, models of inclusion, differentiation, and isolation and integration.

Commitment to Jewish Education and Commitment to Inclusion: There is a Connection

A central assumption underlying this study is that inclusion of students with exceptionalities, specifically those of learning disabilities and giftedness, in the regular classroom is a desirable goal. It is critical, however, that the support services, resources, and teacher knowledge required for inclusion to effectively address individual student needs are present in the setting. I became familiar with the research of Dafna Ross well into the data analysis stage of my research. Ross (2000) very astutely identifies that
inclusion and Jewish education “share common goals in promoting the belonging and identification of members of the ‘community’” (p. 3). The common goal of belonging is central to both experiences.

Commitment to Jewish education was important to Adele and Sharon as educators who had chosen to develop their careers in the Jewish day school system. Commitment to Jewish education is a critical element in parental decisions to send their children to Jewish day school. Many parents of Jewish students who are exceptional tend to be highly committed to Jewish education. They choose to send their children to a Jewish day school even if it is not necessarily the best setting to address their child’s specific learning needs. Commitment to Jewish education exists because parents want their children to belong to and identify with the Jewish community and to be able to function knowledgeably within it. Inclusion in education gives the student who is exceptional the opportunity to belong to and identify with the regular classroom community as opposed to the community of the segregated special education setting. As Held et al. (2005) state:

Our needs in the Jewish community are unique because we are committed not only to academic achievement, but also to the development of a religious Jewish identity, which includes a sense of “belonging” as a community member. Quite often, the individual with special needs (and perhaps the family as well) becomes distanced from mainstream Jewish life. (p. 2)

Held et al. refer to developing a religious identity. For some parents this identity may be more cultural than religious in nature, but nonetheless, the goal of belonging remains the same.

For parents who are committed to Jewish education, having their children belong
to mainstream Jewish life includes belonging in the Jewish day school community.

These goals of Jewish education and inclusive education are being addressed at Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy. The very presence of their special education departments and the goal to facilitate inclusion for students who are exceptional with learning disabilities and giftedness in particular are evidence of this commitment. Preparedness of Jewish day school teachers for inclusive practice in the regular classroom is critical (Fishman, 1994). Teachers not trained in curriculum differentiation, without understanding of learning disabilities and needs of students who are gifted, will have difficulty providing and implementing effective programmes for students who are exceptional in their classrooms. The professional development opportunities provided to Sharon and Adele at the school level were limited to only a few days a year. Professional development beyond that provided by the school seems warranted for teachers to acquire and continue to develop their skills in this area. The schools must provide more professional development and/or the teachers must seek that education on their own in order to continue developing their knowledge and skills in teaching a differentiated curriculum. Programmes such as the in-service course on special education in the Jewish day school (York University, Toronto) and the Etta Israel Center Inclusion Model (Held et al., 1997) are models for provision of needed teacher professional development.

*Time, Time, Time*

Many issues related to time emerged from the data. These included: the teacher perception of lack of time; knowledge of student history as critical in saving time; impact of Jewish theme and holiday programming on general studies teaching time; time away from the classroom for resource and enrichment pullout groups; little time for teacher collaboration and communication; too much curriculum in too little time; and curriculum
support as more time efficient than remediation. The need to maximize teaching time was characterized by efficiency. These time-related issues impacted on the teachers' inclusive practice and their perceptions of curriculum.

It is in the area of teacher support through collaboration and the development of differentiated curricula that the range of student learning needs in the classroom can inclusively be addressed. Increased time for collaboration and communication can lead to teacher support in the form of provision of resources and modified curricula, team teaching, consultation, and in-class support for students who are exceptional. The pressure for efficiency and emphasis on curriculum-as-plan inhibit teacher collaboration. As both Sharon and Adele experienced, there is little time for teachers to collaborate more intensively than brief communications in passing in the halls or before the school day begins. Creative strategies exist for building teacher collaboration time (Mercer & Mercer, 1998) and could become part of a restructuring of the Jewish day school day. Time for deeper teacher collaboration needs to be built into the Jewish day school structure. Professional development and the provision of teacher support at the classroom level are required.

Both Sharon and Adele had come to an understanding of the general studies curriculum not as a body of expectations "to cover," but rather groups of expectations from which key skills and content were to be taught. They made decisions about which expectations would be taught and which were not to be included, often because they were addressed already through different subject-area expectations or because they were not a priority in the time-constrained programme. Time efficiency drove the selection of expectations, leading to a tightly scheduled curriculum-as-plan. Careful selection of
expectations does have the potential for creating lived curriculum that is still time efficient and meaningful. How can this best be accomplished?

My data analysis yielded similar answers for both school settings. Sharon and Adele individually pointed to a solution to the need for time efficient and meaningful curriculum. The concept of integrated curriculum emerged in the data from both teachers. Adele summed it up when she said as a potential solution to so much curriculum to be taught in the half-day time frame, “We’ve got to try to integrate more” (Interview 1). More integration of curriculum requires a change in how teachers view curriculum, how they plan, and how they implement those plans in light of curriculum expectations and student needs. A shift in teacher perception of curriculum from that of curriculum-as-plan to a more fluid curriculum-as-lived accompanies a shift to greater integration of curriculum. The model(s) of inclusion followed will impact on how curriculum is conceptualized and experienced in light of inclusive practice.

Models of Inclusion

Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy used a combination of inclusive education models. The delivery of special education support services to Adele and Sharon and their students determined the models. Both schools relied heavily on the pullout resource programme, which meant that students worked in small groups outside of the classroom with the specialist teacher, not within the context of their classroom, missing what happened in the classroom at that time. The in-class support staff model was used daily in Sharon’s class because of Lucy’s role in the classroom. Lucy provided individual and small-group support to weaker students within the class but also took groups to work in the library or available space when Sharon requested. Sharon found that the students could focus better in a quiet place without the distractions of the
classroom activity and was not opposed to withdrawal. Adele did express concern about the classroom experiences the student “misses” during the withdrawal time. In both classes, use of consultation and team teaching models was very limited. The potential for further development of the latter models, which inherently encourage differentiated curriculum delivery in the classroom rather than through pullout groups, existed and could be explored further.

The predominant use of the pullout model adds a further dimension of isolation to the traditional Jewish day school structure in both classrooms. It is possible that pullout is most effective for some students and that, free from the potential distractions of the busy classroom, some students may concentrate more effectively in the small-group setting. However, the isolation of withdrawal may impact negatively on the self-esteem of some students who might feel more confident and successful receiving intervention within the context of the classroom, working at their own desks. Ultimately, the model that creates the best fit for the student’s learning needs given the level of differentiation the classroom teacher is able to provide, the availability of special education staff, and time efficiency is the most appropriate model for that student. Criteria to help establish a best fit of model to school and student are needed.

I envision integration of curriculum as a potential solution to more effectively teaching the student who is exceptional within the parameters of the Ontario curriculum and school expectations of academic excellence. These are very high expectations that are set for teachers to accomplish each year. There were students in both Sharon’s and Adele’s classes who were working well above the expectations of the grade 4 curriculum, and for these students enrichment experiences were required. Those students who were
working below grade level required support that was delivered primarily through small-group pullout work.

At Menorah Academy the resource programme provided curriculum support. Skill remediation was not a primary focus and was addressed secondary to curriculum support. If the curriculum was more integrated and had multilevel differentiated tasks, students who are exceptional might not require as much pullout curriculum support but rather might work more independently in class. Greater modification of curriculum within the classroom would enable the resource teacher to focus on providing skill development and remediation addressing the specific strengths and learning needs of the child. Rather than the need for efficiency driving the use of the pullout model, the more inclusive in-class support model could focus on remediation of skills.

The model at Hillel Jewish Day School was more focused on remediation than that of Menorah Academy. Examination of both the pullout model as a response to the need for time efficiency and the option of a more integrated curriculum with an in-class approach to remedial resource support is a potential focus for future research. The curriculum-as-lived is far more than teaching plans. It is the dynamic of interactions experienced in meaningful learning experiences. I see a connection between curriculum-as-lived, integration of curriculum, and the potentially more relevant in-class support model and emphasis on skill remediation. The emphasis at Menorah Academy of curriculum support intervention is time efficient, effective with the pullout model, and serves the curriculum-as-plan, but may well not truly address a student’s needs and strengths in a more lasting way.
Differentiation in the Jewish Day School General Studies Classroom

Differentiation is more than a strategy or a series of strategies—it is a way of thinking about teaching and learning. (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000, p. 13)

My analysis of this theme answered my first research question: How do teachers differentiate curriculum in this setting? They viewed inclusive practice and the need for differentiation very much as “a way of thinking about teaching and learning.” Sharon and Adele actively differentiated their programmes using a range of strategies well documented in the literature. They differentiated curriculum using the strategies they found most efficient, not unlike the strategies used by teachers in other settings. Each displayed a range of strategies that I could trace in the literature. Both Sharon and Adele expressed interest in continuing to develop their repertoire of strategies and engage in professional reading and professional development as is available to support their inclusive practice. Strategies such as those suggested by Hutchinson (2002; see Appendix B), Tomlinson (1999, 2003), and the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (2004a) present a wealth of possibilities for teachers in matching differentiation strategies to the individual needs and strengths of the students who are exceptional in their classrooms. Some strategies may not be applicable in the Jewish day school classroom because of limitations in time or access to particular resources that may not be readily available, but other strategies have the potential to create new possibilities for teachers and their students.

Commitment to inclusive practice is an approach to curriculum that encourages differentiation. For Adele, it was an approach mandated through school policy and that she supported, as evidenced through her statements in interviews and discussions and her teaching as observed in the classroom. School mandates can only direct a teacher to
adopt an inclusive mindset. It is factors such as professional development, teachers’
attitudes towards inclusion and change in practice, and the potential for teacher
collaboration and support from colleagues and support staff that promote inclusive
practice (Corbett, 2001; Westberg & Archambault, 1997) and thus, I believe, the
development of the inclusive mindset. My classroom observations confirmed that Adele
and Sharon were committed to differentiating curriculum to address students’ individual
needs. Most differentiation occurred through their own initiatives, separate from the
work done by resource and enrichment specialists with students who are exceptional in
their classes.

Collaboration and communication amongst all staff members involved in teaching
students who are exceptional has been identified as very important to effective inclusive
practice (Corbett, 2001; Held et al., 1997). Time to collaborate on curriculum
development and the creation of differentiated lessons and activities was inadequate at
Menorah Academy and Hillel Jewish Day School. The potential for teacher collaboration
was great but underutilized.

Do special education support staff see facilitation of differentiation of curriculum in the classroom as part of their role? If this is a goal, how do we make it happen? I suggest that it requires policy direction from administration to provide support staff with the mandate to work with classroom teachers in this capacity and for classroom teachers to feel entitled to request such collaboration in planning a differentiated curriculum. The classroom teacher has been identified as the key agent of change in classroom practice (Corbett, 2001). If the classroom teacher is to practice inclusively and adopt differentiation strategies, enlisting the skills and expertise of colleagues and support staff to enable such efforts is desirable.
Special education teachers and classroom teachers have the knowledge base and combined creativity to develop highly differentiated curricula but need the time and initiative or leadership to do so. The potential for creating differentiated lessons within integrated units of study requires time and encouragement for teacher collaboration that makes use of the talent, knowledge, and experience that a team of educators has to share with one another. School leadership must support such initiatives and provide the time and direction for teachers to work together so that the development of integrated curricula can begin to address issue of time for Sharon or Adele. The scheduled nature of pullout intervention constrains the in-class experience. Material is taught at certain times, so as to coincide with the time that the resource group leaves the class. A special education teacher who works within the class in the in-class support model can provide support and remediation to students in a more natural way that does not interrupt the learning dynamic.

*Isolation and Integration*

The theme of isolation that emerged in the data surprised me. As I have often been the only general studies teacher of my grade in the Jewish day schools in which I have taught, I experienced the professional isolation of having no grade-level colleagues with whom to plan general studies curriculum and problem solve. I had taken that isolation as a given of the setting and had never explored it as a concept. Isolation emerged in several contexts across the data: the separation of general studies “English” and Judaic studies “Hebrew” curricula; isolation of Sharon’s learning space from that of Judaic learning space; isolation of learning time into “English” and “Hebrew” time of the day; isolation of teachers; and isolation of students who are exceptional through predominance of the pullout resource model of inclusion.
The Jewish day school systems have created schools that are inherently isolating. The “system” is not a system like those in the public, government-funded and -regulated sector. Each individual school or school that is a member of a small number of related schools functions quite autonomously, receiving only some arm’s length resource support and consultation from a local board of education, should the community be large enough to have such a board. Jewish day schools in small Jewish communities, like Hamilton and London, Ontario, unlike large centres such as Toronto and Montreal, function without the support of a local board of education. However, regardless of size of community and presence of a Jewish board of education, the individual Jewish day school functions in an isolated state without the potential collaboration and support that being part of a larger system can provide.

The element of time also contributes to the isolation of both curriculum and teachers themselves. For Sharon and Adele, the challenge of teaching the general studies curriculum in the half-day time frame was a recurring theme across the data sources. Both teachers expressed the pressure experienced in compacting a full-day programme into 3 hours a day. The integration of Jewish holiday programmes and special events, though recognized as important to the Jewish experience for students, was often perceived by the teachers to be an interruption to their own teaching and curricular goals (lost time). Just as integration across subject areas within general studies can address the issue of time constraints, integration across the two curricula has potential for time efficiency and enhancement of relevance for student learning.

Why is the potential for collaboration and support from outside of the school important to inclusive practice? For Sharon and Adele, isolation meant that resources in the form of support staff and material resources were very limited. They relied on their
small school libraries and classroom resources. Adele described borrowing theme-related resources from the public library. The library at Hillel Jewish Day School was staffed by a librarian all day and provided more resources than the smaller library at Menorah Academy, which was staffed part time and held a much smaller collection. The local board of Jewish education provided some resources for Judaic and Hebrew studies but very little for general studies. The local board of Jewish education may be a potential source for curricula and support materials for integrated Judaic-general studies units of study. Revisioning Jewish day school curriculum could involve a “top-down” approach with greater consultant, curriculum, and resource support available to interested schools and teachers. This would require belief in the value of integrated curriculum and interest in revisioning curriculum as well as dedication of funds.

The very nature of the traditional Jewish day school structure is isolating. The learning experience is isolated into quite independent general studies and Judaic studies components, with little time allotted for integrated curriculum across general and Judaic curricula. The expertise required of teachers of Hebrew language and Jewish studies and the requirements of attaining certification for teaching general studies are very different. At present, there are few teachers in most Jewish day schools with the expertise to teach both curricula in one integrated programme, necessitating maintenance of the status quo. Neither Adele nor Sharon has the level of Jewish knowledge and Hebrew language facility to teach both general and Judaic studies at the grade 4 level. Most of the general studies teachers in both Hillel Jewish Day School and Menorah Academy are not qualified to teach both general and Judaic studies. Thus the isolation of general and Judaic is maintained, as is an emphasis on curriculum-as-plan within each half-day programme.
Curriculum Revisioned

How can the goals of inclusion and Jewish education be met while teaching the formal curriculum? As a result of my reflections on the findings of this study, I suggest integrated curriculum as a potential solution that warrants further exploration. Development of integrated curriculum within the context of the traditional Jewish day school, like Hillel Jewish Day School or Menorah Academy, requires significant change to the dual curriculum structure.

The Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School and the Toronto Heschel School appear to be organized differently from traditional Jewish day school structure. Their school philosophies espouse the value of an integrated approach to curriculum that brings together aspects of Judaic and general studies curricula. Neither institution presents itself as fully integrated but rather as incorporating integrated curriculum into its approach. Neither school presents itself as following a dual curriculum in the traditional half-day format.

At The Toronto Heschel School integrated learning is described as follows:

Jewish and General studies are not treated as separate entities. Jewish values are identified and applied to everything that is studied, from math to environmental studies. Children are taught to connect what they learn in various subject areas....The General studies curriculum follows Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines and works in concert with curriculum written by top-level educators at The Toronto Heschel School. (The Toronto Heschel School, n.d., p. 2)

The Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School describes its curriculum as allow[ing] students to delve deeply into an area of study. Throughout the day, our students make connections across the subject areas using a multidisciplinary and
arts-enhanced approach. Teachers weave together Jewish and general studies wherever possible. We emphasize the constant nurturing of critical thinking skills. (Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School, 2005, p. 5)

To address the issue of isolation that Sharon experienced as the only grade 4 general studies teacher and both Sharon and Adele experienced as a function of the traditional dual curriculum structure, revisioning of curriculum can cross the divide between general and Judaic studies curricula. The process for inclusion and integrated curriculum design that I describe in Appendix F can be applied across the spectrum of subject areas that make up the entire Jewish day school curriculum. Not every subject area needs to be worked into an integrated unit of study. Rather, relevant connections that can be authentically established and developed should be used to create a unit that is meaningful and includes differentiated tasks that address the learning needs of the students who are exceptional in the class. To paraphrase Adele, we need to think about curriculum in a different way.

Drake (1998) discusses the interdisciplinary approach to curriculum integration that through a common theme or issue connects the subject areas involved. Thematic interdisciplinary integration allows for integration across several subject areas from both Judaic and general curricula. Gardner's multiple intelligences and Bloom's taxonomy (Heacox, 2002) are frameworks that can be used in the planning of specific lessons and assignments to differentiate instruction to address the range of individual needs in an inclusive class. The theme is the starting point for curriculum development and thus must be applicable across some subject areas of both Judaic and general studies and be of interest to students and teachers. Meaning is established when themes make connections across subject areas and are perceived as relevant and of particular interest.
Such revisioning of curriculum from the segregated half-day format for both Judaic and general studies requires that significant structural changes be made to the traditional day school format. The curriculum-as-plan needs to change in order for curriculum-as-lived to occur.

In Conclusion

Case study research in Adele’s classroom at Hillel Jewish Day School and Sharon’s at Menorah Academy provided understandings about their experiences as general studies teachers striving to teach a rigorous and inclusive programme within the parameters of the traditional dual curriculum structure. Less traditional structure and approach to curriculum and the use of some integration of curriculum in that structure are of interest in light of the findings of this study. Research with respect to inclusion and curriculum development and delivery in these schools may contribute to the revisioning of curriculum for traditionally structured Jewish day schools from one that is efficiency-driven curriculum-as-plan to one that is focused on curriculum-as-lived. Examination of the role of the pullout and in-class support models of inclusion is important to such research. Professional development on inclusive pedagogy and integrating curriculum and time for collaborative learning and planning with colleagues across general studies, Judaic studies, and special education are recommended.

The findings of this study point to further research in inclusion and integrated curriculum in order to better understand possible restructuring of the traditional Jewish day school from the time- and efficiency-constrained dual curriculum structure to a more flexible structure conducive to a meaningful and dynamic lived curriculum. It is the understandings related to the concepts imbedded in this direction for further research that I take with me into my own professional practice in a traditionally structured Jewish day
school. As vice principal, I can arrange block scheduling of class time to enable projects in integrated curriculum across disciplines in both general and Judaic studies. Such projects will require professional development for teachers and school leadership in integrated curriculum, inclusive pedagogy, particularly around differentiation, and in refocusing curriculum from a dependency on curriculum-as-plan in our efforts to be time efficient to the more flexible and dynamic curriculum-as-lived.
References


Lapadat, J. C., & Lindsay, A. D. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry, 5*, 64-86.


Appendix A

Commonly Used Terms for Inclusion

A number of terms are commonly used to indicate inclusive philosophy and programming. Policy descriptors in Canada include (Hutchinson, 2002, p. 10):

- inclusive education (British Columbia);
- inclusive philosophy (Yukon);
- most appropriate placement (Alberta);
- inclusive schooling (Northwest Territories and Nunavut);
- inclusive setting (Saskatchewan);
- philosophy of inclusion (Manitoba);
- regular class first (Ontario);
- integration and neighbourhood schools (Quebec);
- regular instructional settings (Nova Scotia);
- most enabling environment (Prince Edward Island);
- and regular classroom and continuum of services (Newfoundland and Labrador).

This range of terms is found internationally throughout the body of literature on inclusion.
Appendix B
Commonly Used Differentiation Strategies

Hutchinson (2002) describes differentiation strategies in the context of adaptations to be implemented when a mismatch exists between the student's needs and the demands of the classroom (curriculum and setting). Through my reading of Hutchinson I have created the following list of differentiation strategies:

1. Teach around the mismatch. Bypass strategies allow the student to use alternative methods (i.e., use a calculator, use a spellchecker). Bypass strategies should foster independence.

2. Provide remediation or acceleration to directly address mismatch.

3. “Teaching through the mismatch.” This parallels Tomlinson’s (1999) three questions to ask in curriculum differentiation: Differentiate what? Differentiate how? Differentiate why?

In teaching through the mismatch Hutchinson poses four similar questions:

Why do I teach this?

How do I teach this?

How do students learn this?

How do students show they have learned this?

4. Develop adaptations around student interests. This leads to engagement of the learner.

5. Vary the method of presentation, vary the pace of presentation, and use scaffolding (support in a skill or task that can gradually be removed as independence is moved towards).

6. Co-operative learning and grouping are effective in adapting curriculum, as they can provide the scaffolding support needed by exceptional students.
7. Use of direct instruction for basic skills.

8. Directly teach listening skills.

9. Use the Scaffolding Reading Experience (SRE) which provides a range of prereading, during-reading, and postreading activities, for effective reading adaptations.

10. Direct teaching of vocabulary and comprehension strategies.

11. Use of story planners and the scaffolding approach to teaching the writing process.

12. Mathematics adaptations include bypass strategies (i.e., calculator use), providing visual organizers and supports (i.e., hundreds chart), direct teaching of step-by-step processes, and the use of self questions (pp. 214-218).

13. Reciprocal teaching (p. 220) is small group process in which students take turns leading discussion on a given text that they have read together. Exceptional students are placed in heterogeneous groups of 4 or 5 students. The group generates questions, summarizes, predicts, and clarifies information and ideas through their discussion of the text.

14. Concept maps (p. 220) are suggested as an organizer to map relationships between key ideas and concepts.

15. The problem-solution-effect structure (pp. 220-221) is suggested as an expository text organizer.
Appendix C

Interview Schedule of Guiding Questions for Teacher Interview 1

1. Tell me about an exceptional student that you have worked with.

2. Tell me about the integration of a student who has been identified as exceptional into your class.

3. How do you know which children need resource help or adaptation/modification of curriculum?

4. What challenges do you face in meeting the academic needs of exceptional students in your class?

5. What resources are available to you in trying to resolve such challenges?

6. What strategies have been most successful for you in meeting special needs in your classroom?

7. Tell me about any strategies that you have never had a chance to implement, but might like to try.

8. What has your experience been with the Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

9. Do you think that teaching exceptional students in the general education classroom would be different in a public school? How so?

10. Are there any other aspects of the Jewish day school setting that you feel enable or impede teaching and learning for exceptional students in the general studies classroom?

11. What does the term inclusive practice mean to you? Tell me about it.

12. Are there any other experiences or thoughts about teaching exceptional students that you would like to discuss? Please share these with me.
Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts and experiences with me today. I look forward to observing in your classroom and continuing our discussion.
Appendix D

Interview Schedule of Guiding Questions for Teacher Interview 2

1. Tell me about the curriculum guidelines and process that you follow in preparing long-term and daily plans.

2. How do the concepts inclusive practice and differentiation of curriculum fit into your approach to curriculum planning and implementation?

3. Tell me about the importance you place on having student history information about an exceptional student prior to September. How does this information impact on your decisions in classroom management, set-up, and curriculum planning?

4. Tell me about how scheduling is done for resource or enrichment withdrawal times.

5. Do you feel that you have high expectations for your students? How do you approach enabling all students to meet high expectations?

6. How would you describe your role in inclusive education in the Jewish day school general studies classroom?

7. Tell me about how your experiences as an inclusive educator in a Jewish day school may differ from that of grade 4 classroom teachers in public or secular private elementary schools.

8. What advice regarding teaching exceptional students might you give to a first-year teacher teaching a grade 4 general studies class at your school?

9. How do you foresee your practice changing in the next year? Tell me about any goals you have set for yourself or any areas that you wish to pursue.

10. What have been the most important factors for you in running an inclusive classroom?

Thank you for once again sharing your experiences and time with me.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix E</th>
<th>Observation Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Interpretation</td>
<td>Initial Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.M. Starkman</td>
<td>M.M. Starkman</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Inclusion and Integrated Curriculum Design for the Traditional Jewish Day School

A suggested process for thematic interdisciplinary curriculum integration

- Solicit a grade-level team of teachers from general studies, Judaic studies, and special education. Involve the librarian, who may be helpful for resources and research, as well as art, French, gym, and computer teachers in the planning process where appropriate. Team members must be familiar with the grade-level curriculum and interested in being a part of the project.

- Brainstorm themes that connect disciplines. Unit topics from curricula can be helpful in doing this. Any curriculum maps that exist from general or Judaic studies are good sources of ideas. Jewish holiday themes, Jewish ethical statements or concepts, connections to the study of Israel or community are possible starting points.

- Select a rich theme. The theme can be stated as a Big Idea that is further developed by a list of guiding questions (Drake, 1998) or learnings, that teachers want the unit to accomplish. The big idea may well be a Jewish value that connects widely across disciplines.

- Teachers work together to brainstorm all the possible connections that exist within their areas of expertise to the selected theme and any guiding questions. Connections can be as explicit as specific expectations from curriculum documents.

- Teachers work more independently to further develop the connections that exist within their subject areas.
• Create a large web that maps the connections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Jewish History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>Hebrew language (stories, songs, vocabulary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Chumash (5 books of Moses, bible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Dinim (holidays, laws &amp; customs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arts</td>
<td>Navi (study of the prophets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Talmud (Rabbinic commentary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Israel (geography, people, way of life, current events)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The possible discipline areas that may connect to the theme are extensive across the breadth of the Jewish day school curriculum. Teachers select the discipline areas that have strong, believable, workable connections that they find exciting.

• Teachers identify areas where team teaching may be applicable and joint activities that bring together two teachers’ disciplines.

• Teachers develop the topics, concepts, skills, and content for their discipline areas, keeping their planning connected to the common theme/big idea and utilizing the curriculum expectations from curriculum documents.

• Special education teachers work with general and Judaic studies teachers to plan differentiated tasks and the modifications and accommodations that are necessary to address anticipated individual needs. Lesson plans include strategies for inclusive practice and assessment tools.

• Teachers collectively plan culminating activities across general and Judaic studies, possibly in the form of an event that highlights end products across disciplines.
Appendix G

Research Ethics Approval

Brock University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>April 27, 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FROM</td>
<td>Linda Rose-Krasnor, Chair Research Ethics Board (REB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Susan Tilley, Education Mary-Martha STARKMAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FILE</td>
<td>04-365 - STARKMAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>Teachers’ Experiences in Inclusive Teaching Practice in the Jewish Day School General Studies Classroom</td>
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The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: Accepted as Clarified

However, please remove the statement regarding participant anonymity from the Telephone Script, and submit a revised copy to the Research Ethics Office for our records.

This project has received ethics clearance for the period of April 27, 2005 to September 30, 2005 subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The clearance may be extended upon request. The study may now proceed.

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. During the course of research no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment, or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to [http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/forms](http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/forms) to complete the appropriate form Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form Continuing Review/Final Report is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.
Appendix H

Jewish Day School Calendar 2004/2005

**September**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Wed-Thurs</td>
<td>Teacher Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>School begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Erev Rosh Hashanah, noon dismissal (holiday begins at sundown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Thurs-Fri</td>
<td>Rosh Hashanah, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Erev Yom Kippur, noon dismissal (holiday begins at sundown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Erev Sukkot, noon dismissal (holiday begins at sundown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Sukkot, no school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**October**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Sukkot, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Hoshanah Rabbah, noon dismissal (holiday begins at sundown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Shemini Atzeret, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Simchat Torah, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Thanksgiving, no school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**November**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Early Friday (Shabbat) dismissal in winter months begins, 2:10 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Professional Development Day, no school</td>
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</table>

**December**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Winter Break begins</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**January**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>School resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>Midwinter Break, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Thursday, Fast of Esther, early dismissal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Friday, Purim, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Thursday, Passover break begins, noon dismissal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 22 – May 2</td>
<td>Passover break, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tuesday, School resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Friday, 3:45 Friday dismissal resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Thursday, Yom Ha’Atzmaut, early dismissal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Monday, Victoria Day, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Friday, Lag B’Omer, early dismissal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>Mon-Tues, Shavuot, no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Wednesday, Last day for students, noon dismissal</td>
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</table>