The Personal Program Plan: Exploring Educational Support Teachers' Perceptions of a New Template

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By

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ABSTRACT

A Personal Program Plan (PPP) is a document that outlines a student's strengths and needs. It is used for three reasons: to support students who require greater assistance than what is provided through the Adaptive Dimension; when learning outcomes within a grade differ from the provincial curricula; and to facilitate individualized programs for students identified as a Level I or II intensive need student (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2007). The PPP includes measurable goals that outline supports which will help the student participate and succeed within the mainstream classroom. The Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) has a different vision of what a PPP should measure than what is suggested by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. In August 2008, the SRSD proposed an action research project to the Ministry of Education to create a new PPP template. The new template focuses on the Understanding by Design (UbD) format using a Performance Task (PT) (an authentic task used to demonstrate understanding) instead of only SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely) and offers two options regarding the document's focus: a PPPI (for those who follow regular curriculum but have behavioural issues) or PPPII (for those not able to follow regular curriculum).

This qualitative study opens with a brief timeline of the history of Special Education within Canada, with special attention focused on Saskatchewan (SK), as well as a comparison of the SK PPP template to other templates around the world. By using content analysis, categories of analysis explored patterns and trends that emerged from six SRSD Educational Support Teachers (ESTs) responses to a semistructured style questionnaire. Six main themes emerged with respect to the research question: (1) a team approach including teacher and parent involvement; (2) a monthly timeframe; and (3) the expectation of student achievement with regard to a rubric component and how this rubric connects to student achievement; (4) the

concept of time, specifically focusing on apprehensions with the amount of time expected of the participants, implementation difficulties, and monthly time commitments; (5) teamwork difficulties, regarding working with teachers and parents; and (6) the steep learning curve that accompanied the new PPP template and the UbD format. Numerous recommendations also arose in response to the research question with respect to: (a) adding more personal information to the template; (b) attaching an adaptations checklist to the template; (c) fixing the technical glitches; (d) reevaluating the expectations of the workload; (e) identifying who has ownership of the template; (f) determining involvement of the team; (g) establishing time commitments; (h) providing training for the team; (i) and having a team-based understanding of the provincial template.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Education is a right, not a privilege. Education for all Prekindergarten to Grade 12 students is a shared responsibility between the Ministry of Education and the locally elected school board in Saskatchewan (SK). Each party has particular duties and responsibilities. The Government is in charge of the following five areas: to approve the certification of teachers; to develop school curricula and documents that support curricula; to guide instructional practices that are to be used within schools; to distribute funding to the various school divisions within the province; and finally, to create legislation to ensure the best education for all students in SK (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008a). The local school division is responsible for creating partnerships between the school and the community, business arising within the school division, school division facilities, transportation, enrolled students, curriculum and instruction, as well as associated employees (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2005a).

Teachers within each school division have many duties, but their primary responsibility is to assist with student learning related to provincially approved curricula. Workshops and training sessions are put on by the Ministry of Education and the school division to help support teachers with this task. Regardless of ability, all students are entitled to a proper and appropriate education (Walker, Chomos, & Burgess, 2009). Students with "exceptional learning and behavioural needs" (Government of Saskatchewan, 2007a) may require extra attention and assistance with learning. Classroom teachers are responsible for making adjustments to accommodate diversity in student learning needs, as defined by the Adaptive Dimension (Saskatchewan Education, 1992). Students requiring assistance beyond regular adaptations may qualify as needing "intensive supports" and be identified as a Level I or Level II Intensive Needs student (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009a).

Identification of Intensive Needs

A student who is identified as Intensive Needs (IN) or otherwise called a special learner "may, indeed, have special needs historically known in the province as 'designated' disabilities and now as requiring intensive supports" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 2). This definition encompasses those who have pronounced needs stemming from their "environmental effects", "mild disabilities", and/or who are "at risk" (p. 2), as well as those students with medical or mental health diagnoses. The procedure for identifying a student who requires additional support to the regular program of instruction is consistent across the province.

A Special Education Teacher or Special Education Coordinator can have many different names. Within SK, in 2010, these individuals have been given the title Student Support Service Teachers (SSSTs) by the Ministry of Education. However, during the time period of this research, they were identified as Educational Support Teachers (ESTs) within SK. For the purpose of this paper, these professionals will therefore be referred to as both SSSTs and ESTs, interchangeably. A complete list of acronyms used throughout this paper is also provided (Appendix A).

An EST is responsible for individual assessments, program planning, and program delivery (Government of Saskatchewan, 2007b). With help from the classroom teacher, the EST fills out the current impact assessment document labeled: Impact Assessment: Identification of Students Requiring Intensive Supports (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009d). According to this document, there are ten different areas that potentially influence student learning. These areas include: Learning Capacity, Current Learning Achievement, Communication, Independence/Problem-solving/Work Habits, Motor Skills/Sensory, Safety, Personal/Social Well-being, Physical Health/Medical Personal Care, Transition, and Other. The EST is to decide,

from a continuum based rubric, the level that "best describes the present functioning of the student within each area" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009d).

Next, the EST is to outline the "Current Sources of Support", which can range from "Frequently" to "Occasionally" to "Periodically". The different kinds of supports may involve the School Team (EST and/or Educational Assistant (EA)), the School Division Team (Consultant, Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP), Educational Psychologist, Counsellor/Social Worker, and/or Occupational Therapist (OT)/Physical Therapist), and Other Agencies and External Supports (Health, Social Services, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, and/or "Regional Intersectorial Committee" (RIC)/Cognitive Disability Strategy (CDS)/Elders/Community/Community Based Organizations) (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009d). A formal assessment by one or more members must be completed. From there, a consultant from the school division determines whether or not a student qualifies as needing intensive supports.

If a student is blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, intellectually disabled, has mental health impairments, multiple disabilities, an orthopedic disability, pervasive developmental disorder, a physical health impairment, prenatal substance exposure, substance-related disorder, or other diagnosed or undiagnosed conditions, assessment and documentation is needed for two reasons. The first reason is to confirm the diagnosis. The second reason for documentation is to substantiate that the impairments adversely affect the student's educational performance. Depending on the amount of Occasional and/or Frequent supports identified, the student will be identified as a Level I (Occasional School Team Support, School Division Team Support, and/or Other Agency Support) or Level II (Frequent School team Support, School

Division Team Support, and/or Other Agency Support) intensive needs student (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009d).

Within the 31 schools of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD), there is a process to have a student identified as Level I or Level II. A team meeting is scheduled to occur either at the end of the school year or at the beginning of the following school year. The key stakeholders at this "Intensive Needs Meeting" usually in attendance include the Principal, EST, the student's current and/or next year's teacher, EAs who have worked extensively with the student, a school division Consultant, the SLP, Educational Psychologist, Social Worker, and/or OT. As a result, students may be recognized as having Level I or Level II intense needs and therefore require the identified sources of support from the school team, the school division team, and other agency support.

As currently employed as a Psychometrist (i.e. working towards finishing my Masters and becoming a Registered Educational Psychologist), my contributions to the IN meeting would be somewhat different from that of a teacher, SLP, EST, or Principal, for example. But as well as being able to provide insight towards a student's ability level, according to Milsom, Goodnough, & Akos (2007), a psychologist, who may also be in the role of a school counsellor, may comment on a student's academic, career, and personal or social well-being. Being invited as a team player to the PPP meetings has added to the collaboration process.

The Saskatchewan Personal Program Plan

When an Impact Assessment Form is completed, it will be utilized to help "develop programming and services for students with intensive needs. These students have learning needs that impact on numerous areas of performance and require intense and frequent supports…"

(Government of Saskatchewan, 2007c, p. 1). These supports need to be documented on a Personal Program Plan (PPP), another requirement outlined by the Ministry of Education.

A PPP is a document that is used as a record of a student's outcomes that have the highest priority for that particular student during the school year. Across Canada, this document is also referred to as an Individualized Education Program (IEP), Individualized Program Plan (IPP), or the Individual Student Support Plan (ISSP) (Smith et al, 2009). According to Drasgow, Yell, & Robinson (2001), the PPP directs and monitors the student's special education program and describes the educational goals, objectives, and needs of a student, programming and placement for the student, as well as the evaluation and measurement criteria that are applicable to the student's program. Individuals who require a PPP are students whose curricular outcomes differ from those in the province at their grade level, require extensive interventions and individualized supports that go beyond the Adaptive Dimension, or have been identified as a Level I or Level II intensive needs student. Every student who may require a PPP will not necessarily be identified as requiring Level I or Level II supports, but every student who meets the criteria is expected to be placed on a PPP (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b).

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's PPP (2010b) (Appendix B) covers a variety of supports and is available online or in print form. The Ministry advises that, in SK, PPP documents must include the following**:** (a) student background information and identification; (b) strengths, needs, and level of performance; (c) annual student outcomes (SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely); (d) short-term objectives (SMART); (e) strategies and responsibilities; (f) implementation supporters and location of implement plan; (g) evaluation and review plans; (h) transition goals; and (i) signatures of team members involved. The PPP should be made meaningful for the student and help to foster transitions into the adult

world of independence, self-determination, participation within the community, social networking, healthy and safe lifestyle choices, and meaningful employment (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b).

The PPP is developed and implemented by a collaborative team. The team consists of many different individuals from the school, the school division, as well as other agencies; each team member contributes different perspectives regarding the child (Gartin & Murdick, 2005). These people may include the student, parent(s)/guardian(s), teacher(s), administrator, EST, EA, Consultant, SLP, Psychologist/Psychometrist, OT, Social Worker, PT, Counsellor, as well as people from Health, Justice, and other Community Resources (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b). According to the Ministry, it is important to "give consideration to achieving a balance between the natural supports within a student's life and specialists' expertise" when deciding on who should attend the collaborative meeting (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 6). The team will then help support the classroom teacher with implementing the PPP.

The Legalities of the Personal Program Plans (PPP)

The SRSD Board of Education provides the framework of an education system that addresses the diverse learning needs of every student. Specifically, diverse learners "may require [their] program of study [to be] adapted, modified, or altered. To this end, the Board provides programming that seeks to draw the greatest potential from every student" (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2005b, p. 1). Programming decisions are determined by a team. However, if the team decides that a student has met the set criteria and is identified as an Intensive Needs (IN) student, it is presumed that the student will require additional supports to access curricular objectives and succeed at meeting these objectives. In order to facilitate student access and

progress, components of the student's school program are framed by a PPP. Although a school division is mandated by the Saskatchewan (SK) Ministry of Education to place a student on a PPP once this student is identified as having Level I or Level II intensive needs, it is not a legal requirement, as it is in the United States of America (USA). However, there are many benefits to using a PPP as a tool to assist students who require intensive supports.

The Canadian PPP mirrors the Individual Education Plan (IEP) that was developed by the United States. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed in 1975. In December, 2004, President George W. Bush reauthorized IDEA and signed the Act into law. Provisions to the Act became effective on July 1, 2005 in regards to the content of the IEPs (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a). In Canada, however, the PPP is not a legally binding document, but seen instead as a "written document" (C. Hadden, personal communication, March 3, 2009). According to Corey Hadden, Senior Program Manager with the SK Ministry of Education, "a PPP isn't any more a legal document than a teacher's lesson plan" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Geraldine Knudsen, Solicitor for the SK School Boards Association (SSBA), confirmed Mr. Hadden's position (G. Knudsen, personal communication, April 7, 2009). Ms. Knudsen further stated that although curriculum is set by the Ministry of Education, decisions surrounding how one accesses the curriculum is made by the school team. Assessments are individually based and are determined by whether or not a student is deemed IN. The programs available to an IN student are pre-determined by the Board of Education (i.e. Alternative Education, Life Skills) but ultimately it is a collaborative team that determines what is in the best interest of the student, in terms of personal programming, and whether or not the student should be placed on a PPP. Parent or guardian signatures are encouraged, however they

are not a requirement in order to implement a PPP (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006; Families for Early Autism Treatment of Ontario, 2002), as they are in the USA.

Reasons for Implementation

If a PPP is not a legally binding document, why are school divisions putting in the time to create and implement Personal Program Plans? Five main reasons are outlined here. First, the Ministry of Education has made it a requirement that all students identified as IN require a PPP. But a student identified as IN and placed on a PPP requires extra supports to ensure that he or she is succeeding to his or her potential. Therefore, a school division must have adequate staff to accommodate the needs of the individuals identified.

In 2009, the Ministry proposed a "Staffing Profile" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009c) which outlined the ideal number of staff within each position. Based on these projected numbers, a School Division would therefore be more able to provide all of the necessary supports for diverse and IN student. The proposed ratios were formulated on prevalence rates and were consistent across the province. The Ministry delineated specific funding within the province of SK for staffing within each school division. At that time, funding had been fixed for a two year period. Each school division submitted a proposal for funds from the Ministry to accommodate an increase of staff consistent with desired staffing numbers. However, funding decisions are not made until October of the following school calendar year, and divisions, such as the SRSD, worked to accommodate staffing numbers in order to balance the ratio between staff and IN students. Since the Ministry of Education has made it mandatory for a school division to identify students as IN, place them on a PPP, and be staffed accordingly, there was a natural source of tension between school divisions and the Ministry regarding

identification and support through the IN and PPP processes. Ministry personnel and school division staff have worked hard to strengthen their relationship and accommodate school divisions as best as possible.

A second reason for completing PPP documentation involves a school division's legal responsibility to educate all students. Each student in the Division has the right to an authentic, meaningful, and relevant education. In 2009, the SRSD enrolled 9,220 students and the level of cognitive performance of these students varied from Extremely Low to Very Superior. Regardless of a student's ability, each student is required to have an equal opportunity to learn. "Equality", however, does not necessarily imply "same" for each student, within the responsibility that each school division has to provide a stimulating and challenging standards-based education program for all students.

Third, as School Divisions have a moral responsibility to provide the most appropriate education possible, many factors must be taken into consideration when determining whether or not to place a student on a PPP. These include the areas that are impacting a student's life (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b), the student's self-esteem, cognitive ability, and capacity to work at grade level. Regardless of individual backgrounds, gifts, and challenges, our students are the future of the world and need supportive educational contexts in order to reach their potential.

The fourth reason as to why School Divisions implement a PPP is based on the responsibility to provide the best possible education to all students. A PPP is a living document that is constantly reviewed and assessed. It is used to ensure that the needs of an individual student are continuously met (Kiwi Families for Passionate Parents, 2007). The PPP is a strength based document that focuses on what a student can do, rather than what a student cannot do. It

therefore builds on the student's strengths and starts from where he or she finds success versus where a student is struggling. It is a tool that is used to help guide teachers' work within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978; Berk & Winsler, 1995), using a student's strengths and basing support on actual needs. The PPP can also be used to help plan for a student's future and ensure that the School Division offers the right kinds of services to meet the needs of the student (Florida Department of Education, 2001).

Lastly, all parents have expectations that their children will be educated, as all students have the capacity to learn and be exposed to learning. Parental trust creates added responsibility on school divisions regarding the best possible education for students who require intensive supports. Regardless of the ability of a student, there is not only the hope for a promising future, but the expectation that a child will reach his or her potential. The PPP can be used as a tool to assure parents that their child has not "slipped through the cracks" and that supports have indeed been put into place to help their child succeed. In this capacity, it also serves as a framework for communication between home and school.

The Review Process

What would happen if a parent was not satisfied with the quality of teaching? In many cases, school divisions offer particular processes in this regard. If for some reason any parent or guardian was dissatisfied with decisions that were made by the SRSD team, for example, in regards to (a) the designation of the student or the failure to designate the student, (b) the placement of the student, or (c) the program provided to the student (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2005b), a five step review process is used to evaluate the decision and/or

placement of the student. A PPP would provide the necessary documentation that would display the level of supports and commitment of the school towards an intensive needs student.

The review process is outlined in the "Student, Parent, and Student Concerns: Board of Education Governance and Operation, 2040" (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2005c). The first step is for the parent or guardian to initiate contact with a team member who has helped to make the decision. If contact is not able to be made, the parent or guardian may then contact in-school administration. The goal of the first step is resolution. However, if this cannot be reached, the goal is applied to step two involving the Principal. The third step of the process would be to involve the Superintendent responsible for Special Education. Step four would then involve the Director of Education. Finally, if the parents still disagree with the decision, the last step would be to meet with a Mediation Committee initiated by the Director of Education. This committee would include the following people (a) one person chosen by the parent or guardian, (b) one person chosen by the Director of Education, (c) and an agreed upon person from the community who is trained in mediation. The decision of the Mediation Committee would be made within 30 days of the meeting; however, the final decision rests with the Board, who can "ratify, modify or deny the recommendation(s) of the Mediation Committee" (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2005c, p. 2).

In one case in Canada, a family has challenged the decision of a School Board. In 1997 an Ontario case of Brant County Board of Education vs. Eaton occurred (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2005). This particular case dealt with the "responsibilities of an educational authority to provide reasonable accommodation in primary education" (p. 1). The particular child had severe communication disabilities, visual impairment and mobility impairment and in this incidence, the parents were striving to keep their child with special needs

integrated within the standard school system, with necessary support services. The family turned to the law to decide on the best placement for their child. The courts stated the following:

> In some cases, special education is a necessary adaptation of the mainstream world which enables some disabled pupils access to the learning environment they need in order to have an equal opportunity in education. While integration should be recognized as the norm of general application because of the benefits it generally provides, a presumption in favour of integrated schooling would work to the disadvantage of pupils who require special education in order to achieve equality. Schools focused on the needs of the blind or deaf, and special education for students with learning disabilities indicate the positive aspects of segregated education placement. Integration can be either a benefit or a burden depending on whether the individual can profit from the advantages that integration provides… (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2005, p. 1).

The courts ruled in favour of the school division based on the merit that the school team is seen as a professional body that has the best interests of the students at heart. It was, however, a requirement of the courts that the school complete ongoing assessment of the student's needs to ensure that any changes in the student's needs could be reflected and that it was the obligation of the school board and the parents to collaborate creatively in a continuing effort to meet the student's present and future needs (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2005). If in the future another parent or guardian were to take their concerns to a court of law, the SRSD would have the necessary documentation in the form of a PPP that would display the level of supports and commitment of the school towards an intensive needs student.

Summary

Although the PPP is not a legally binding document, there is the expectation that PPPs will be put into place within a school division. A PPP allows school divisions to best justify their responsibility and/or position regarding the education of students with intensive needs. The Ministry has included the PPP as part of the IN process and staffing funds are tied to the number of IN students present within a school division. A school division has both a legal responsibility to educate all students, and a moral responsibility to students and parents, and these responsibilities include cases where intensive needs are involved. Policies are actualized when a parent or guardian is not satisfied with the decisions made by the team, although court cases have resulted in decisions both in favour of, and against, school division activities. Using a PPP helps school division personnel strengthen their case as to how they have supported a student with intensive needs. Most importantly, the PPP document works with students' strengths and helps to prepare them for their future, creating the least restrictive educational environment possible.

The Present Study

The PPP is a pivotal document across all school divisions in SK. According to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2008b), this document outlines a student's strengths and needs and is used for three specific reasons. First, it is used with students who require greater continuing interventions and supports than those provided through the Adaptive Dimension of curriculum. Next, it is used with those students whose learning outcomes in a specific grade differ from the provincial curricula. Finally, it is used with those individual students who are identified as a Level I or Level II student with intensive needs. The PPP is also a useful tool to guide instructional direction, provide a basis for goal setting and evaluation, as well as open the

lines of communication between team members (Polloway, Patton, & Serna, 2001). It outlines specific goals for the student (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b) as well as particular supports required to help the student participate and succeed within the mainstream classroom. These supports are then measured and tracked through the use of the PPP (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002).

The SRSD has a somewhat unique vision of what a PPP should measure. In 2008, the SRSD in Prince Albert, SK began an action research project under the direction of John Kuzbik, Superintendent of Schools. The goal was to propose to the Ministry of Education a locally developed PPP template that focused on a Performance Task (PT) instead of only SMART goals. A PT is an authentic task used to demonstrate understanding (Wiggins, Wilbur, & McTighe, 2003) whereas a SMART goal is a goal that is created to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009a). With the SRSD PPP template, a student can have either a PPPI (a behaviour learning plan) or PPPII (curriculum focused learning plan).

The purpose of this study was to determine Educational Support Teacher reactions to the new SRSD PPP template. More specifically, this study asked the following question: What patterns and trends emerged in the responses of six Saskatchewan Rivers School Division Educational Support Teachers to the locally developed Personal Program Plan template?

Definition of Terms

Content analysis - close inspection of text(s) to understand themes or perspectives (also refers to the analysis stage of qualitative studies) (Brantlinger, E., Jimenez, R., Klingner, J., Pugach, M., Richardson, V. (2005).

Living document - something that can be continually edited, updated, and shaped into the perfect document.

Performance Task (PT) - an authentic task used to demonstrate understanding.

Personal Program Plan (PPP) - a written living document developed and implemented by a collaborative team. It is a compilation of outcomes that have the highest priority for the child during the time period of the PPP.

Rubric - is a reflective assessment tool to provide information about current levels of performance and works as an evaluation tool to measure progress over time.

Personal Connection with the Research

I have had considerable experience working with children and youth. For many years, I was a camp counselor at Camp Tapawingo, Candle Lake, SK, for children ages six to 18 years of age. I also worked as a Child and Youth Care Worker with Ranch Ehrlo Society in Prince Albert and the Prince Albert Adolescent Group Home. These three experiences have given me a strong foundation working with children and youth from a variety of different socioeconomic backgrounds, ability levels, and cultural beliefs. When I started with the SRSD in 2007, I began as a practicum student working under the direct supervision of Berk Seymour, Registered Psychologist. In May of 2008, the school division offered me a full-time position as a Psychometrist, working under Lynn Peterson, Registered Psychologist. I am assigned to different schools, working closely with the ESTs, specific teachers, parents, and doing file reviews, observations, assessments, and follow-up with students who are having academic and/or behavioural issues. I therefore gravitated towards this research because the role of a

Psychometrist involves working with students who struggle, and the PPP is one tool which helps create a plan for success.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following chapter is divided into four sections. First, the history of the Personal Program Plan (PPP) in Saskatchewan (SK) is explored. As the PPP is a global concept, the second section will illustrate what other countries and one major city around the world include in their PPP. The third section will look at current research that has been conducted on teacher responses towards the PPP. Finally, the last section will look at the new PPP template that the SRSD has implemented.

History of Events: Special Education and the Personal Program Plan within Saskatchewan

Many changes in Special Education have occurred in Canada since 1867. One of these changes involved the implementation of the PPP, a requirement implemented in 1989 (Saskatchewan Education)**.** Further changes, with influences from the USA, have helped the PPP evolve to the current design that we use today in SK (Andrews, 1996a; 1996b; Andrews & Lupart, 1993; Bunch & Valeo, 1997; Crawford & Porter, 1992; Crealock & Bachor, 1995; Friend, Bursuck, & Hutchinson, 1998; Lupart, McKeough, & Yewchuk, 1996; Porter & Richler, 1991). The concept of Special Education originated in France in the 1700s with a bold beginning, as a young boy who could not communicate with words was found. Although the results of this specific case were profound and the benefit to Special Education was promising, the model of supportive education for individuals with challenges unfortunately was soon forgotten. History continued with a prevalence of segregation and isolation for individuals with special needs. Decades passed before Special Education began to shift towards a model of inclusion. Dollar (2006) briefly discussed the history of special education in Canada and SK, and made some suggestions for future research. Until this point in time, however, there has not been

a written timeline provided regarding the history of Canadian and SK PPPs. This chapter contains such a timeline (Appendix C), beginning with a wider context related to special education.

Significant Historical Events Related to Special Education

Special Education is catalogued as beginning in France with the story of the "Wild Boy of Aveyron" (Horrocks, 1993; Brantlinger, E., Jimenez, R., Klingner, J., Pugach, M., Richardson, V., 2005). In the late 1700s a young boy named Victor was found growing up with wolves. An intensive program, which proved to be successful, was created by Jean-March Itard to build Victor's language and behaviour skills. Years later, a spinoff of this program was created by Edourd Sequin, a student of Itard's. He developed a method to teach children with disabilities, which tapped into human physiology, and was linked to aspects of early education and assessment on an individualized basis. Regardless of the success related to these two methods, people with disabilities were still segregated and institutionalized. Thus the underpinning of special education began in a rather thwarted fashion.

In 1867, Canada officially became a country. During that time, The Constitution Act, created by the Canadian Government, appeared as the first document pertaining to education and the law. Within this Act, provinces were given power to make laws in regards to education as long as specific conditions of the Act were followed (Department of Justice, 2008a). As a result, each province governed differently and inconsistency across Canada arose regarding education and the education of individuals with a disability (Dickinson & MacKay, 1989; Horsman, 2006; Osborne, 1988; Tomkins, 1986).

Between 1900 and approximately 1945, individuals with a disability across Canada were not always treated with respect nor offered the chance to live with dignity. SK became a province in 1905 and by accordance of The Constitution Act, had the power to make educational decisions in regards to children with special needs. Unfortunately, these individuals were segregated out of the mainstream education system and eventually institutionalized into separate locations (Dahl & Haines, 2006; Dickinson, 1989). Times changed, however, and in SK, the first special education class opened in 1929 in Saskatoon, and in 1955 Saskatoon's John Dolan School was founded. John Dolan School, later incorporated into the public school system, was designed to help children with cognitive difficulties and "enhance each student's quality of life through educational experiences and caring relationships that foster independence and self-esteem" (Wikipedia, 2010). The entry of a special education class and a private school for students with special needs helped to pave the way for provincial changes (Cherneskey, 1978; Dahl & Haines, 2006).

Nineteen years later, human rights were recognized for all individuals around the world. On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. Article 26 explained that everyone has the right to free education at the "elementary and fundamental stages" (United Nations, 2011). Article 26 implied that education should help to develop human personality, strengthen respect for human rights and freedoms, as well as promote understanding, tolerance, friendship and peace among nations, races, and religions (United Nations, 2008). By the early 1960s, deinstitutionalization began to occur (Romanow, 2006) and special classes were established within regular schools. The educational needs of gifted children and children with other exceptional learning needs were suggested as best met by classroom teachers (Horsman, 2006).

A change in philosophy regarding best practice in the education of students with special needs was not limited to Canadian contexts. In 1965, John Dewey had a profound effect on the philosophy of American Education. He wrote that each child is "entitled to equal opportunity of development of his own capacities, be they large or small in range. Moreover, each has needs of his own, as significant to him as those of others are to them" (cited in Boylan, 2006, p. 7). The 1970s to 1990s brought great change regarding the services available to youth with exceptional needs. In 1971 the SK government amended the School Act, making the education of all students mandatory, including those with disabilities (Dahl &Haines, 2006). Saskatchewan was the first province in Canada to make such a bold statement and follow through with a philosophy of having all students instructed in the least restrictive environment possible (Horsman, 2006). Teachers in SK became the front-runners, shaping the new concept of inclusion (Lupart, 1999; Lupart & Weber, 1996).

The USA took best practices a step further and was the first country to pass a law in regards to services for children with disabilities. Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Children Act, was passed in 1975 (Philpott, 2002). This law was called into effect "to assure that all children with disabilities have available to them…a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs" (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 2000). This law specifically mandated Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) (National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, 2008). Public Law 94-142 was amended five different times before it reached its present version, Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004, otherwise known as IDEA (Culverhouse, 1998; Philpott, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2006b). This law had a ripple effect and parents in Canada pushed for equal educational opportunities vs. integrated placement (Philpott, 2002). Other parts of the

world followed suit and in 1975 the United Nations created a declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons (Abosi, 2001; Philpott, 2002).

By 1978, most provinces and territories in Canada had a statute regarding the legal right of children to attend school (Manley-Casimir & Sussel, 1986). SK combined previous legislation with the School Act to create the Saskatchewan Education Act (Horsman, 2006). This Act extended children's rights in the following, more comprehensive terms, with s. 144(1) of the Saskatchewan Education Act:

> Every person between the age of six and twenty-one years of age shall have the right to attend school in the division in which he and his parents or guardian are residents, and to receive instruction appropriate to his age and level of educational achievement and in courses of instruction approved by the board of education in the school or schools of the division… (Sussel, 1995, p. 67).

The following year also brought more changes in Canada. "Although the common law recognized that every child [had] a natural right to education," Quebec was the only other province besides SK to specifically have a statue referring to education as a protected right within the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Manley-Casimir & Sussel, 1986, p. 10). SK was already ahead of its time with The Saskatchewan Education Act but decided to implement The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (Government of Saskatchewan, 2007d) to further support inclusive communities. Section 13(1) of the Code states that:

> Every person and every class of persons shall enjoy the right to education in any school, college, university or other institution or place of learning, vocational training or apprenticeship without discrimination or the basis of a prohibited ground other than age (p. 9).

Section 13(1) is followed by Section 13(2) stating that religion, creed, sex, or disability will not impede enrollment. This helped to enforce equality among all in the province. To help the education system move forward, recommendations were put forward by the Curriculum and Instruction Review Committee, which was created by the Minister of Education (Horsman, 2006). This report was generated in 1981. Countries around the world were also on par, as later that year the United Nations declared 1981 the International Year of the Disabled (Abosi, 2001; cited in Philpot, 2002).

The "equality rights for mentally and physically handicapped person[s] … [was a] long overdue addition to Canadian anti-discrimination laws" (Manley-Casimir & Sussel, 1986). It was not until 1982 that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was enforced by the Government of Canada to help create balance within the country in regards to equality (Department of Justice, 2008b). Lobbyists for individuals with disabilities protested prior to the writing of the Charter to help ensure that there was proper representation and that they would indeed be seen as equals in the eyes of the law. In response to public effort, Canada became the first country to grant equality rights for individuals with a disability (Friend, Burusck & Hutchinson, 1998)**.**

The two sections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that most apply to individuals with a disability and special education are Sections 7 and 15. Section 7 states that "everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice" (p.3). Section 15(1) explains that everyone is equal and has a right to equal protection without discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, nationality, colour, sex, religion, age, or mental or physical disability. Section 15(2) affirms that a person cannot be discriminated against based on their disadvantages.

The goal of Section 15 was that of equality (Bayefsky, 1985; Dworet & Bennett, 2002; Special Education Advisory Committee, 2007).

Responsibility of the educational needs of individuals with a disability has moved from the national government to the provinces to individual School Divisions. Supports have evolved from segregation and institutionalization, to specialized classrooms within schools, to inclusion in regular classrooms. In 1982, The Shared Service model reshaped support services across all the provinces and two years later, long-term changes in the curriculum in SK were mandated as a result of the Directions Report (Dahl & Haines, 2006). Later that year, "through a set of goals, the design of a Core Curriculum, and the development of a resource-based learning policy, changes were supported…to… strengthen education through improvements to the curriculum and instructional practices" (Horsman, 2006, p. 17). In 1986 The Education Regulations (Government of Saskatchewan, 2008a) was created to outline the school division as the primary provider of education, ensuring that students were given the program that met their needs and abilities, and to establish the identifying criteria for the individual with intensive needs. This document was again updated in 1995, with The Education Act (Dahl & Haines, 2006; Government of Saskatchewan, 2008b). Special Education had changed from institutionalization to inclusion primarily due to mandated laws and policy that have evolved over the years. Improvements to quality of education for students with disabilities can be attributed to these changes in laws and policy.

The Coming Together of a Plan

Eleven years after the Individual Education Plan (IEP) was introduced in the USA, two documents in SK were created connecting students with intensive learning needs and the

curriculum. In 1989, Saskatchewan Education created the document “Meeting Challenging Needs. A Handbook for Teachers of Students Having Intensive Educational Needs as well as the Special Education Policy Manual”. These two papers outlined the first introduction to the PPP in SK. Over the years, however, documents were created that also pertained to the structure of the PPP. In 1999, “Teaching Students with Autism” (Saskatchewan Education) was released. Children with autism were to have a PPP, which would be developed through team collaboration. Included on the PPP were adaptations, strategies, personal and educational data, assessment information, and the student’s strengths and needs. Goals and objectives related to the regular curriculum were also recorded. The PPP was used as a guide for students’ day-to-day work and not as a daily lesson plan of instruction. The document was to be monitored and modified accordingly throughout the year (Saskatchewan Education, 1999). “Planning for Students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a), also included a PPP component. This document stressed the help and impact parents can have on the PPP process.

In more recent years, the Saskatchewan Special Education Review Committee (2000) developed a team to conduct a study to explore the foundation and delivery of special education programs and services, as well as eight other key Terms of Reference (Dahl & Haines, 2006; Horsman, 2006). With all the “changes in special education in the past thirty years, there [had] been no comprehensive review” (Saskatchewan Special Education Review Committee, 2000, p. 3). In 2000, the report was published with recommendations and directions for those involved (i.e. Saskatchewan Education, Education Partners, Stakeholders, Governments, Boards of Education). Later that year, a response and action plan for implementing the Special Education Review Committee’s Recommendation was released (Horsman, 2006). Saskatchewan Learning

responded to the review by committing their support and reaffirming the philosophy of inclusive schools (Dahl & Haines, 2006).

In 2001, Saskatchewan Learning created a document called “Creating Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Multiple Disabilities” which defined the PPP as a Developmental Approach to planning. At that time, the PPP was based on the Core Curriculum and Common Essential Learnings, and focused on both the strengths and needs of an individual with intellectual or multiple disabilities. The PPP was to prioritize goals and objectives, illustrate a list of resources, roles, and identify the specific methods that would support the student. The PPP was also to include a plan for transitions, and operate as a “continually changing document” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001).

The following year, “The Children’s Services Policy Framework” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002) was designed to “support all students in achieving their full potential” (p. 4). PPPs were explicitly outlined in this document as well. The PPPs were similarly explained as in the previous document, but with a few more stipulations. For example, the PPP was advocated for students who require individual supports and who have been identified for funding. In addition to previously outlined components, this newer version of the PPP included baseline assessment information and technology and equipment accommodations. “Teaching Students with Reading Difficulties and Disabilities” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b) was released two years later, where procedures for completing the PPP were drawn from the “Children’s Services Policy Framework" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002).

Saskatchewan Learning again revamped the PPP in 2006 in the “Policy, Guidelines, and Procedures for Functional Integrated Programs”. The Minister of Education stressed that the “development of a PPP represents the principles of fair treatment, equality of benefit, and

integration of services" (p. 10). As before, the process of the PPP was to be collaborative, written with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-related (SMART) outcomes. What differed from the original PPP template was that the SK government specifically outlined what the PPP should look like and what the PPP should not look like. Some other differences included transition planning, record keeping regarding proposed student resources, and the identification that the PPP was not to be static or a historical record for the student, but a record of goals changing over time. This 2006 document referred to the resource "Creating Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Multiple Disabilities" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001).

More recently, in 2007, a new Saskatchewan government was elected. The Ministry of Education's interest in special education resulted in a more up-to-date document that described the PPP process. "Personal Program Plans (PPP): Smart Outcomes and Student Outcome Rubrics Living Document" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b) has four chapters which outline the specifics to the PPP process from start to finish. It includes a Student Outcome Rubric (SOR), which "details strategies for those students who follow approved SK curricula but require extensive and continuing use of the Adaptive Dimension…for accommodations…or adaptations…" (p. 4). It includes the reporting process of the PPP to parents, school personnel, and the school division. It also outlines how to train and support teachers. This document gives an explicit example of a PPP and areas of impact, as well as blank forms that may be copied. In 2009 a follow-up document was prepared; "Personal Program Plans (PPP) Guidelines" outlines in detail the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a PPP (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009b). The Ministry has also provided numerous examples of exemplar PPPs for students in elementary, middle, and high school that can be found online on the SK Ministry of Education's website.

Summary

History demonstrates the changing landscape of special education. Various events helped shape special education as we know it today. For example, records show that special education originally started with the boy named Victor in France in the 1700s (Horrocks, 1993). But regardless of the educational success that Victor displayed from the intense efforts by Itard, a wiser teaching opportunity was missed and others with special needs around the world continued to be isolated and segregated for many more years. Eventually, with the passing of legislature and laws (Constitution Act, Public Law 94-142, The Saskatchewan Education Act, The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms), and the writings of other key documents ("Meeting Challenging Needs", "Special Education Policy Manual", "The Children's Services Policy Framework", "Functional Integrated Programs: Policy, Guidelines and Procedures"), special education evolved to where it stands today. The Personal Program Plan has been used since 1975 in the USA with students who have special needs. In SK, the PPP has been employed since 1989. The current PPP template has been used across the province in all school divisions and has been adopted, changed, and revised through an identification of best practices by the Ministry of Education.

Personal Program Plans: A Global Perspective

Use of the original template of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) commenced in the USA in 1975. This document had a profound effect on education and has since created a world-wide ripple effect. Twenty-eight different countries and their PPPs were therefore explored and researched with attention to specific patterns and trends (Appendix D). These countries include Brazil, South Africa, Sweden, Norway, Germany, India, Saudi Arabia, Italy,

Israel, Korea, Greece, Czech Republic, Russia, Belgium, Poland, China, Japan, Denmark, France, Nigeria, and Ukraine. However, quality information on these specific regions was not readily available, the information was not available in English, or the country still utilizes special schools for people with disabilities. It was found, however, that different countries have a unique title and spelling for the PPP as we know it in Canada (i.e. IPLP, IEP). For the purposes of this paper, seven countries as well as one city will be reported on as adequate information was readily accessible. These places include the United States of America (The U.S. Department of Education, 2000), Ireland (The Department of Education and Science, 2000), Australia (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2007a), Scotland (The Scottish Government, 2005), Singapore (Ministry of Education, 2008a), New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2008b), Finland (The Finnish National Board of Education, 2004), as well as London, United Kingdom (Department for Children, Schools, and Families, 2007).

United States of America: Individualized Education Program

The USA may be considered a leader in Special Education in regards to the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Today in the USA, every student must have an IEP if they receive special education and/or related services. As outlined by The U.S. Department of Education (2000), the IEP must include specific contents. These components include the student's current performance level, annual goals, the special education and/or related services that the student will be receiving, an explanation of the degree to which the student will not participate with nondisabled children, modifications that the student will need in order to participate in state and district-wide tests, dates and places, transition service needs beginning at

ages 14 and 16, a statement towards the "age of majority", and finally, how progress will be measured (The U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

The IEP is written by a team. The team includes the child's parents, the special education teachers or providers, the regular classroom teacher, a representative of the school system, an individual qualified to interpret the evaluation results, any other agencies who may be involved with funding or providing transition services, any other individuals who can contribute to the meeting, and when appropriate, the student (The U.S. Department of Education, 2000). There are other special features that are required by law when developing the IEP. This list includes the student's behaviours, the child's language ability, whether or not the student has an impairment (e.g. blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing), communication needs, as well as the child's need for assistive technology. After the document is written and the special considerations are made, a placement decision is made and the parents receive a copy of the IEP. All team members involved must have access to the PPP so it can be implemented, reviewed, and revised. If the parents do not agree with the IEP, there are a number of options outlined to parents regarding the steps they can take in order to come to an agreement (The U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The American IEP has been used to support various court cases related to "procedural" and/or "substantive errors" of the IEP (Drasgow, Yell, & Robinson, 2001) with school division results varying between winning, and losing (Yell & Drasgow, 2000).

Ireland: Individual Profile and Learning Profile

Ireland uses a similar format as SK's PPP. Under the direction of the Government of Ireland**,** The Department of Education and Science (2000) has written a document outlining specifically what an Individual Profile and Learning Profile (IPLP) entails. An IPLP is used to

"record relevant information relating to a pupil's learning attainments and his/her learning strengths and needs" (p. 68). This document outlines the Individual's Learning Programme (The Department of Education and Science, 2000). There are three crucial steps needed in creating an IPLP. These steps consist of the following: (1) collect relevant information through formal and informal assessments; (2) identify the individual's personal strengths and needs; (3) base learning targets in accordance with the strengths and needs.

The Department of Education and Science (2000) has provided teachers with a "ready-made form" (p. 69), but does not discourage teachers from creating their own. However, the IPLP must contain specific data. The first piece of information that is to be included is a detailed description of the pupil, class placement, and names of his/her class teacher and "learning-support teacher" (p. 69). The date of when the student began the "supplementary teaching programme" (p. 69) must also be included here. Next, informal and formal assessment results must be documented. Third, any other additional information that is relative to the student must also be recorded. This information may come from parents, the student themselves, the class teacher, or other professionals (The Department of Education and Science, 2000).

The next piece of information that is to be recorded on the IPLP is the student's "learning strengths/attainments and priority learning needs" (p. 69). It is during this section that explicit learning targets are created for the pupil. Targets are directed towards particular academic areas, including: oral language, emergent literacy skills, phonemic awareness, word-identification skills, reading comprehension strategies, reading and writing links, engagement in reading continuous text, mathematics, oral exposition and discussion in mathematics, conceptual knowledge in mathematics, and information and communications technology (The Department of Education and Science, 2000). The fifth piece of information that is to be included is

"medium-term learning targets for specific period of supplementary teaching" (p. 72). The expected date of achievement is also to be included with this section.

Specific learning activities are also to be included on the IPLP. These are to be planned by all who are involved in the process, as the making of an IPLP is a collaborative, inclusive process. Finally, "organizational details" (p. 72) are to be included on the IPLP. Such details include the duration of the instructional term, individual and/or group teaching, and the times and location of the instruction should also be included (The Department of Education and Science, 2000).

Australia: Individual Education Plan

In Australia, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are developed by the school and/or pre-school in collaboration with Families South Australia. According to the Department of Education and Children's Services (2007a), IEPs take a holistic approach and every single child must have an active IEP within one month of entering school. An IEP focuses on the potential of the child, based on educational, social, and behavioural outcomes, and is in line with the South Australian curriculum, Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework. It is also used to "enhance the wellbeing and self-esteem" of the child, is age and developmentally appropriate, flexible, and is future oriented (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2007a, p. 1).

There are five key steps in developing an IEP. The first phase is to form an IEP Support Group including the child, caregiver(s), educators, Families South Australia (SA) case manager, and sometimes other professionals. Next, information is gathered from school personnel, the student, and the caseworker. Such information may include the individual's abilities, needs, assessment information, past education history, learning style, personal thoughts and feelings,

and behaviours. The third step is to plan for the future through ongoing support, where SMART principles are set. Once this has been achieved, the IEPs may be implemented. The team will identify what needs to be taught, match teaching methodologies to the student, and identify strategies for delivery of the program. The final stage is the reviewing, evaluating, and refining of the program. This is to occur throughout the year, with formal reviews conducted annually and during transitions (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2007b). A flow-chart has been created to outline the process of the IEP (Appendix E).

Scotland: Individualised Educational Programmes

An Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) is used in Scotland to outline the steps that are to be taken to help a student with special educational needs achieve specific targets (The Scottish Government, 2005). Specifically, it is used for "persons with special educational needs who require significant, planned, intervention" (p. 6) as well as all students in special schools and units. The IEP must contain targets and plan for progress; it must also monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. The local authority, the school, secondary school, special school/unit, and support services all have specific roles in creating and implementing the IEP.

The following nine key points need to be addressed on the IEP: (1) the IEP is based on the assessments of the individual and long term goals are agreed upon; (2) the individual with special needs is involved in the making of the IEP when possible; (3) SMART targets are set; (4) short-term targets are typically accomplished before longer term targets are achieved; (5) short-term targets are to be broken down into smaller steps and are expected to be reached within 6-8 weeks, whereas a long-term target is geared towards a school session; (6) short and long-term targets are to be given appropriately, as to help the individual manage what is expected; (7) the

IEP should define the action of the individual, the staff involved, the frequency, duration, and resources required; (8) success criteria are to be listed; and (9) parents should be involved in this process (The Scottish Government, 2005).

The type and total amount of targets are based on the specific needs of the students and are related to the curriculum, learning, and teaching. For example, targets can be set for literacy, numeracy, behaviour, communication, using specialized equipment, or developing independence (The Scottish Government, 2005). In mainstream schools, 4-8 short-term targets will be set in "one or more of the areas of communication and language, numeracy and personal and social development" (The Scottish Government, 2005, p. 7). If an individual is attending a special school, targets will also be set in the areas of "understanding and relating to the environment and personal and social development" (The Scottish Government, 2005, p. 7).

Singapore: Special Schools

In Singapore, special education is seen in a different light than other countries previously discussed in this review. Mainstream education is only for those individuals without a disability and those with mild to moderate dyslexia or autism spectrum disorder. Individuals with any other type of special needs are placed in a special education school. For example, there are three schools available for students with sensory impairments, five schools for severe autism, four schools for those with multiple disabilities, five schools for individuals with an IQ below 50 and six special schools for those with an IQ between 50-70 (Ministry of Education, 2008a). By 2012, 5% of teachers will be trained at the primary level and 15% of teachers will be trained at the secondary level to work with students with other mild special needs, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and speech and language difficulties. These teachers will be able to

provide individual or small group support, assist with transitions, communicate strategies and resources to parents and other teachers, and help with the monitoring of student progress (Ministry of Education, 2008a).

New Zealand: Individual Education Programme

According to the Ministry of Education (2008b) in New Zealand, an Individual Education Programme (IEP) represents a cycle of assessment, planning, provision, and evaluation, and includes a formal meeting to discuss individual needs, a plan for an individual, as well as a documented programme. The IEP is a living document used for "learners with a disability, learning difficulty, or behaviour difficulty" (p. 3) and is reviewed every term.

The distinct process to follow when completing an IEP is similar to that of many other countries. The first step is to identify the student. Once identified based on need, there are many people who get involved in creating the IEP. The team may consist of the identified student, the parent/caregiver, the classroom teacher, the key worker, family support, other school personnel, specialist teacher, specialist service provider, therapist, and/or the teacher aide (Ministry of Education, 2008b). Next, the members will pool their formal and informal assessment results, which will help to create a "comprehensive picture" (p. 8) of the student. The fourth step is to arrange a meeting where the roles and responsibilities will be divided up amongst the team members. Next, the IEP will be written up into long term aims (based on the hopes and aspirations for the student for the next two years), focus areas (the priority concerns for the student), present skills and needs ("the gap between what the student can presently do and what he or she needs to be able to do" (p. 10)), achievement objectives or goals ("selected from the appropriate curriculum document" (p. 11)), learning outcomes (linked, specific, achievable,

measurable), and the allocation of responsibilities (where each member helps to ensure the student achieves the learning outcomes) (Ministry of Education, 2008b).

Finland: Individual Educational Plan

The Finnish National Board of Education (2004) also uses Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for every student who is in "special-needs education" (p. 28). The goal of the IEP is to "strengthen the pupil's individual learning process over the long term" (p. 28). The IEP is developed by a team, which includes the student's parents or guardians, teacher, and pupil welfare experts.

A Finnish IEP consists of the following nine key features: (1) the individual's learning abilities, strengths, needs, and requirements that are needed for their learning environment; (2) short- and long-term objectives; (3) number of weekly lessons per year in the student's subjects; (4) a list of subjects that are different from the general syllabi; (5) description of how the pupil's progress will be monitored; (6) list of services that the individual will need for instruction; (7) a description of how the individual instruction will be delivered; (8) the roles of all who are involved in providing the instruction; and finally (9) monitoring of the support service and assessed on an ongoing basis (The Finnish National Board of Education, 2004).

Assessment of the IEP is determined by set criteria. There are three possible paths an IEP can follow based on the ability and needs of the student. The first choice is to stay with the basic educational curriculum where the student will be assessed according to these general objectives. The second option is to be assessed in accordance to an individualized syllabus, which would be outlined in the IEP. Lastly, if the IEP has been set up by activity areas, assessment will be based

on motor coordination, language and communication, social and cognitive skills, and skills in daily functioning (The Finnish National Board of Education, 2004).

London: Individual Education Plans

London is the only city included in this discussion, as information was readily available. London's Individual Education Plan (IEP) has a similar outline to the SK PPP. According to the Department for Children, Schools, and Families (2007), the IEP is a tool used for planning, teaching, and reviewing. The IEP should "only record that which is additional to or different from the differentiated curriculum plan" (Department for Education and Skills, 2007, p. 54). There are six key topics to focus on when writing an IEP. The first area is the list of the targets for the individual. Three to four short-term targets are created, based on personal strengths of the individual. These goals are related to communication, literacy, mathematics, and aspects of behaviour or physical skills. SMART targets are generally used. The second piece of information that is to be included in the IEP is the list of teaching strategies that are to be used. External services may also be included in this list.

Next, the conditions of the IEP that are to be put in place are recorded. The provision is that such conditions involve programs "additional to or different from those generally available for all pupils" (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, p. 5). Fourth, the success of the individual should be measured and documented, as well as how the student may discontinue using the IEP. Review dates are the fifth item on the IEP. These are to be completed at least twice a year. Finally, the outcomes are documented during the review process. There is, however, another important piece of information that needs to be included although it is not seen as part of the IEP. Documentation on the student's baseline, entry level assessments, specific

needs, and current strengths are required in order to help define the student (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

Summary

Upon researching the format of a PPP in different settings, it was found that five of the seven countries researched are following an IEP of similar format to the SK Ministry of Education's format. Singapore, however, is still using specialized schools for individuals with special needs, and therefore does not utilize a specific program document. Many common themes within the different IEPs were found. For example, the IEPs are based on personal strengths and assessments of the individual, and short- and/or long-term learning targets are set, measured, and reviewed. A few IEPs use SMART targets (Australia, Scotland, London), which translate into Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-related goals, whereas Ireland, New Zealand, and Finland link their targets to the curriculum. SK's Ministry of Education uses SMART and curriculum related targets for their PPPs. In Finland, the type of IEP used is based on the individual level of the student. For example, an IEP can be created in accordance to the basic educational curriculum, an individualized curriculum, or by activity areas, where assessment will be based on motor coordination, language and communication, social and cognitive skills, and skills in daily functioning, depending on the level of need of the student. London's IEP is also worth noting, as it is based on only what is different from the mainstream differentiated curriculum plan and the goals are connected to specific areas in communication, literacy, mathematics, behaviour, or physical skills. By comparing various PPP formats, it appears that the SK Ministry of Education is in sync with other locations around the world.

Teacher Responses to the PPP within Saskatchewan

Previous research has been conducted on teacher responses toward the PPP within SK. Dollar (2006) specifically focused on secondary programs within SK. Her research was titled *The Personal Program Plan in Secondary Programs: An Analysis of Selected Saskatchewan School Division Practises and Policies*. One of the research questions focused on stakeholders' perceptions of how effective PPP use is in SK secondary programs for students with learning disabilities. It was found that there is a "perceived ineffectiveness" of the PPP (p. 207) which included criticisms towards the PPPs being poorly written, a confusion of responsibilities, lack of consultation with the classroom teachers, goals and objectives that were not measurable or attainable, as well as an ineffective use of time. It also discussed the "ineffectiveness caused by a teacher's workload" (p. 208). Dollar (2006) discovered that "findings from other studies (Edmunds, 2003; Kreutzer,2004; Lupart, 2000; Lupart & Webber, 2002; Scruggs & Masteropieri, 2002; Seitsinger & Zera, 2002) also suggested that time and increased responsibilities can be [a] major factor in the negative perceptions of general educators" (p. 208).

Demmans (2009) completed her research within SK. Her focus was with the Public School Division in Saskatoon, SK. Her thesis was titled *Teachers' Perceptions of Personal Program Plan Requirements and School Team Collaboration*. The following seven themes emerged from her data:

> (1) The need to be flexible with parents; (2) Resource room teachers have large workloads; (3) Concern over EAs not being able to attend PPP meetings; (4) The need for rubrics to be discussed within the context of a PPP meeting; (5) The effect of having different knowledge bases and levels of expertise represented in a PPP team; (6) The use

of visual aids during the PPP meeting; and (7) Working with the dual role of resource room teacher and Vice Principal (p.81).

Themes that emerged in 2006 still seemed to be apparent in research conducted in 2009.

The Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) Personal Program Plan (PPP) Template

Saskatchewan Context

In order for students to succeed to their fullest potential along their educational paths, extra support is occasionally needed. When an individual has exceptional needs, a "school-based team is responsible for collaboratively planning and documenting [a] program" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 49) that is tailored to the individual. A PPP is a document that outlines specific strategies and appropriate supports for an individual with special needs that are geared to work with his or her personal strengths to accommodate his or her needs (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002).

In SK, the Ministry of Education has identified specific details as to what should be included in a PPP. Once an Impact Assessment form (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009a) has been filled out and it is determined that a student is classified as a student with Intensive Needs Level I or Level II, a PPP must be created for that particular student. There are four essential areas of development that have been outlined within the Ministry's guidelines of a PPP. The first section should describe the student's abilities, needs, and interests; second, the goals and objectives of the PPP are defined; appropriate strategies and activities are then listed; and finally, the ongoing evaluation and revision of the plan is summarized (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002). Specifically, the PPP must incorporate the student's personal and educational information, baseline behaviours, strengths and personal needs, SMART goals and short-term

objectives, pertinent strategies and resources for instruction and participation, as well as adaptations. Other information that should be documented includes the list of assessment instruments that have been used, methods of tracking student progress, designated duties for those involved (e.g. parents/family, student, teacher, learning assistance teacher, school-based administration, paraprofessionals, personnel from other support systems), specialized services that may be needed (i.e. interpreter), technological needs, transition plans, review process, and evaluation format (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002).

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division Context

Thus far, the SRSD has adhered to the provincial format developed by the Ministry of Education. However, two main areas in the Ministry's approach have been highlighted by the SRSD as opportunities for change to the document. First, all students with needs, regardless of their diversity, use the same PPP with the same categories of objectives. Second, the PPP focuses on isolated targets and supports that may not connect to a "bigger picture" for the student. For example, A SMART goal may look like the following: "Student will recognize up to 50% of the letters in the alphabet as well as 10 of their sounds with 75% accuracy, on 3 consecutive trials, by June 2010". A short term goal may look like the following: "By December of 2009, Student will recognize and know the sounds of the four letters in his name with minimal verbal prompts at a rate of 90% accuracy". This would suggest that the goal of the PPP would be for the student to recognize his name and 50% of the alphabet. But what is the "bigger picture" to having a student be able to do this? By asking the question "Why do we want the student to learn this?" it expands on the reason behind the PPP. It opens the door to further learning for the student by

showing the student and team what the bigger picture is, through connections between the long and short term goals.

When developing its original PPP, the SRSD referred to the philosophy of Understanding by Design (UbD) where UbD is based on the concept of teaching for understanding (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). In order to create a PPP that is based on the UbD belief, there are three stages the writer must go through. The first stage has the end product in mind and concentrates on the desired outcomes. A goal is established that will determine what is relevant for the student. “Understandings”, “Essential Questions”, “Knowledge”, and “Skills” will all be addressed in this section. Understandings are the “big ideas”, “specific understandings”, and the predicted misunderstandings that a student may have in relation to the goal. Essential Questions are the questions that the student will need to work through in order to foster inquiry, understanding, and transfer of knowledge. The Knowledge and Skills pieces are what the student will acquire by working through this process as well as what they will eventually be able to apply as a result of the goal.

The Second section discusses the “Performance Task” and “Other Evidence” that the student will demonstrate to show that he or she has grasped the concept. The Performance Task (PT) is an authentic task where the student will demonstrate his or her understandings. It should typically “describe a scenario or situation that requires the student to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the year to demonstrate their understanding in a real life situation. The PT contains the elements of a SMART goal and GRASPS (goal, role, audience, situation, product/performance, standards) (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006)” (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2009). The Other Evidence is simply the different ways in which a student may also display knowledge (i.e. through observation, anecdotal records, quizzes, written tests, academic

prompts, homework, journals, etc.) as well as whether or not the student self-reflects on his or her learning and is able to self-assess.

Finally, the last stage is the "Learning Plan". The goal here is that a definitive plan will help the student accomplish the desired goal. The acronym "WHERETO" is followed to help the developer with their teaching strategies: W - help the student know where they are going and what is expected; H - hook the student; E - help the student explore and experience learning; R - give the student opportunities to rethink and revise; E - have the student evaluate their work; T - tailor to the student's needs and individual strengths and interests; and finally, O - organization is key to maximize engagement and effective learning (Wiggins, Wilbur & McTighe, 2003). The SRSD PPP has directly included these three stages when they designed their PPP. The revamped PPP has the end in mind (i.e. why we want the student to learn this particular concept, what we want to student to be able to do with this knowledge), works backwards from the goal (i.e. how will we get there, what skills and knowledge will the student need to be able to reach the final goal), and uses the learning plan to help guide all those involved with the student.

In Finland, a student's type of IEP is based on an educational curriculum plan, individualized curriculum plan, or by an activity area, where assessment is based on motor coordination, language and communication, social and cognitive skills, and skills in daily functioning, depending on the level of need of the student. As well as referring to the UbD format, the SRSD PPP has pulled from Finland's tiered PPP concept. As students are all individual with very specific needs and challenges, a PPPI and a PPPII were created. A PPPI is for those students whose academic performance is not the main area of concern, but their behaviour is so drastic that it is impeding their ability to learn. A PPPI "most often describes a behaviour learning plan that is necessary for students to achieve social and academic success in

age and grade appropriate provincially approved curriculum" (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2009). A PPPII is for students who struggle with meeting the objectives of the curriculum within their determined grade level. A PPPII "most often describes a curriculum focused learning plan…where the independent living [curriculum] outcomes in the required areas of study [science, social, ELA, etc.] are directly connected to the three broad goals of education: lifelong learning, building sense of self and community, and building engaged global citizens through learning experiences in the required areas of study" (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2009). The team decides whether or not a student is more suited to having a PPPI or PPPII, and then develops the PPP accordingly.

The SRSD PPP template (Appendix F) considers carefully the Ministry's PPP guidelines and retains the majority of their components. For example, the SRSD PPP template incorporates the SK Ministry of Education's (2009) ten Areas of Impact that potentially have the greatest influence on student learning (Learning Capacity, Current Learning Achievement, Communication, Independence/Problem-solving/Work Habits, Motor Skills/Sensory, Safety, Personal/Social Well-being, Physical Health/Medical Personal Care, Transition, and Other) (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009a). It also incorporates the student's background and identification information, his or her strengths, needs, and current level of performance, and a standards rubric, which identifies "the desired level of performance that the student will achieve by the end of the school year" (Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2009). Although the SRSD PPP template may not use the same terminology, reference to the Ministry's categories are clearly included through the following: implementation supporters; strategies and resources; evaluation and review plans; short-term objectives; location of implement plan; reporting procedures; transition goals; and signatures of team members involved.

The SRSD, under the direct influence of Superintendent John Kuzbik, felt that the Ministry's PPP template was missing some key aspects. They took the Ministry's PPP template and built upon it, incorporating the UbD format. Through an action research project, the SRSD has developed a new, and in their eyes, improved version of the Personal Program Plan.

Dollar (2006) also briefly discussed the history of special education in Canada and SK and made some suggestions for future research. Her suggestions included researching the relationship between provincial policy design and the school division PPP policy design, how and by whom the PPP is implemented and monitored within SK, the continuation of services from elementary to middle to secondary programs for students with LD, effective PPP policy and practices at the school division level, the effectiveness of local autonomy in relation to the consistency of PPPs of special education programs at the secondary level, as well as research in exemplary inclusive environments. Although the current research study does not utilize all of Dollar's proposed ideas for future research, the goal of this project involves a comparison between provincial and school division PPP design as well as a deeper exploration of participants' responses to the latter. The current study will explore the thoughts and feelings of how the PPP template brought significance and meaning to those involved with the template, the tensions of those who piloted SRSD's new PPP towards the document, as well as what changes are recommended to the new PPP template to make it the ideal document.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methods used in this research. The first section summarizes qualitative research and how it applies to this study. Next, the ethical issues that were considered are reviewed. Finally, the specific tool used for data collection will be discussed.

Research Question

In August 2008, the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) proposed an action research project to the Ministry of Education involving the creation of a new Personal Program Plan (PPP) template. The new template would focus on a Performance Task (PT), which is an authentic task used to demonstrate understanding, instead of focusing only on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely) goals. With this new template, a student can have either a PPPI or a PPPII. The PPPI is geared for those who follow the regular curriculum but have severe behavioural issues that impede their ability to access the curriculum. A PPPII is for those students who are not able to follow regular curriculum and need to be on their own individualized program. The purpose of this study was to examine the finished PPP template that the SRSD created and looked at the following:

> What patterns and trends emerged in the responses of six Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) Educational Support Teachers (ESTs) to the locally developed Personal Program Plan (PPP) template?

Gathering this information will hopefully help the SRSD gain an understanding of the value of the new PPP template, further refine the template, as well as possibly influence other school

divisions across the province who may be considering changes to the standard provincial template.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research can be used for many reasons and "involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Qualitative research is about discovery, integrating the research question with the context in which it is asked, gathering the data, and analyzing the results (Morse & Richards, 2002). Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem" (p. 15). A few years later, he explains that a theoretical lens is needed to make meaning of individuals or groups in regards to the problem (Creswell, 2007). The data is to be collected in a natural setting with the voices of the participants presented. The researcher needs to "build a complex, holistic picture, analyze words, report detailed views of information, and conduct the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15).

Methods

Data Gathering

There are many different methods used to gather and analyze data. A method is defined as "a collection of research strategies and techniques based on theoretical assumptions that combine to form a particular approach to data and mode of analysis" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 2). Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2008) have categorized the analysis of qualitative data into four different areas that represent the major sources of data collection. These techniques include "talk,

observations, drawings/photographs/ videos, and documents" (p. 588). The first technique, talk, consists of an interview or an interview in the form of a Questionnaire. Observations include participant and/or field work observations. Drawings/photographs/videos is self-explanatory, whereas documents may include archival research, written data sources that are both published and unpublished, company reports, memos, letters, reports, email messages, faxes, newspaper articles, etc. (Myers, 2004). For the purpose of this study, I worked within the area of "talk" to identify the themes that emerged from the data, and a Semistructured Questionnaire Style Interview (see Appendix L) was used to collect data. With "Semi-Structured Interviews, [they] may be used to explore and explain themes which have emerged" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 3).

Choosing the Participants

Before recruitment for participation could occur, an application was sent and permission was granted by both the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board and the SRSD Boards (Appendix G; Appendix H). Morse & Richards (2002) explain that when conducting qualitative research, "valid representation" should be sought versus "random sampling" (p. 173). As this study is dependent on the implementation of the SRSD PPP template, purposeful sampling (Spradley, 1979) was conducted. Purposeful sampling is when the researcher chooses his or her participants based on their characteristics (Morse & Richards, 2002). Good informants or participants are those who speak the native language, have an understanding of the information required, are willing to reflect on their experience of interest, have the time, and are willing to participate (Spradley, 1979). Participants were therefore recruited from the SRSD and included Educational Support Teachers (ESTs) only. Teachers are ideally believed to be involved with the

PPP process; however, it is the ESTs at each school who are responsible for writing the actual document and are the key individuals in developing the PPPs for the students within their school.

Although the selection of participants was narrowed to a small group within the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, specific criteria still needed to be met in order to be a qualified candidate. Participants were chosen using the following criteria: 1) have at least two year's experience as an Educational Support Teacher (EST)**;** 2) have written at least one PPP using the Ministry of Education's template (in previous years); and 3) have written at least one PPP using the SRSD new PPP template (this past school year). In order to involve these specific participants, written permission from the school board was required (See Appendix H). Once school board permission was granted, a letter was sent to each Superintendent asking for permission for the EST within their school to be approached to participate in this study (See Appendix I).

Recruiting occurred through an invitation sent through the SRSD email system. A total of 44 emails were sent to the ESTs within the school division (See Appendix J). This email opened by explaining the proposed study, the criteria to be considered a participant, procedures, risks and benefits of participating in the study, and confidentiality. The right to withdraw from the study at any time was also outlined within the email. The participants were instructed to write a pseudonym on the questionnaire. If they decided that they no longer wanted to be included in the study, they would anonymously write a letter to the researcher asking to pull the data that corresponded with the pseudonym. However, the data could only be pulled until such time as the data had been pooled.

Attached to the email was a Participant Consent Form (See Appendix K). It clearly stated that participation was completely voluntary and there was no penalty for choosing to decline

involvement. Participants were asked to reply to the email only if they wanted to participate, thus indicating that they had read and agreed to the Participant Consent Form. The first six people to respond were chosen for the purposes of this research. The remaining ESTs were then emailed to inform them that the participant pool was complete but that if new participant position opened, they would be contacted.

A second email was then sent to these six participants to inform them that they were indeed chosen. Attached to this email was the Semistructured Questionnaire Style Interview (Appendix L). They were asked to complete the Semistructured Questionnaire Style Interview and were given a deadline of two weeks in which to return it. They were instructed to use the interoffice mail system and address the envelope to "Heather Hayes" as well as not to include a return name or school address as to ensure their anonymity.

In exchange for the participant's time and effort, an incentive of a $25 gift certificate to a local restaurant was offered. All six individuals have already received their gift certificate through the inter-office mail system.

Out of the eight participants who indicated interest, six teachers were selected on a first-come-first-serve basis. These six participants were all female. As a group, they had a variety of experience, as the number of years that they worked in the EST position ranged from 2 years to 24 years. One participant began her career in this position where the other women brought with them knowledge from subbing, tutoring students with LD, teaching within the classroom, teaching within the Developmental Education classrooms, and administrative leadership. Four of the participants were in this position 100% of the time in both the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 school years. One participant started at 50% in 2008/2009 but moved to 100% in 2009/2010 where the final participant went from 80% in 2008/2009 to 50% in 2009/2010. The majority of

the participants spent their time with the elementary/middle year's students with one participant who work primarily with the high school students.

Semistructured Interview Questions

Cathy Mills, the Action Research Facilitator for the SRSD, administered numerous surveys to the EST throughout their action research project. Some of the questions in her surveys were taken and modified to fit the goals and purpose of this research. The purpose of Ms. Mills' surveys were to report back to the Ministry of Education outlining specifically the planning tool that was developed and to make recommendations for further work in this area. These surveys told the Ministry a story of change, professionalism, and the dedicated commitment of the SRSD staff. Although Ms. Mills' results were rich in data, the purpose of this research was to determine the significance and meaning that the template brought to those involved, the tensions the six ESTs experienced in relation to the locally developed PPP template, as well as how the SRSD's new PPP template could become the ideal document.

For the purpose of this study, six ESTs were asked to answer a total of 38 questions on The Semistructured Questionnaire Style Interview (see Appendix L) surrounding the SRSD PPP template. The interview was divided into three sections: the EST's demographic information, questions around their experience using the SRSD's new PPP template and how they felt about the new PPP template in comparison to the old template that they previously used, and any concluding remarks they wished to share. Each question was open ended, which helped to encourage a full and meaningful response. In addition, questions were designed to gather the participant's opinions, experiences, and insights into the new PPP template. Based on their perceptions, understanding, and firsthand experience of using the template, they provided their

responses as to how they made meaning out of using the template. Through examining their responses (Berg, 2009), patterns, concepts, and themes emerged, thus giving this study a qualitative focus.

Data Analysis

According to Berg (2004), data analysis is defined as comprising three "flows of action": data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verifications. Data reduction is the understanding that "qualitative data needs to be reduced and transformed in order to make information more readily accessible, understandable, and to draw out various themes and patterns" (p. 39). Once the Semistructured Questionnaire Style Interviews were gathered, the results were transcribed using Dragon Dictation (Nuance Communications, 2010), which is a speech to text software application that was downloaded onto an iPad™. By using Quickoffice (Quickoffice, Inc., 2011), I was able to email the transcribed results from the iPad™ to a PC™. Once opened, each participant's results were copied and pasted onto individual spread sheets using Microsoft Office Excel (2003). Next, the data was rearranged to compile all six participants' answers under the corresponding question. This rearrangement helped to visually organize the data and make it more readily accessible.

Data display is "intended to convey the idea that data are presented as an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusions to be analytically drawn" (Berg, 2004, p. 39). Once the results were transcribed and each participant's responses were organized into charts, the same questions and answers from each participant were clumped together, as to systematically write up the results. From there, "conclusions and verifications" (pg. 39) were drawn. Conclusions and verifications involve the researcher confirming that the conclusions

drawn are real and not “wishful thinking” and that the means used to arrive at the conclusions “have been clearly articulated” (p. 40). Themes began to emerge.

Classical content analysis, otherwise known as “content analysis” is a method to analyze communication. More specifically, “Berelson (1952) defined classical content analysis as “objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 489) (Leech & Onwuegmuzie, 2008. p. 596). According to Leech & Onwuegmuzie (2008), the researcher uses content analysis to chunk and code the data and then determines how often a particular code is used. This coding establishes the prevalent concepts throughout the data. Within content analysis, a researcher must decide “whether the analysis should be limited to manifest…or extended to more latent content” (Berg, 2004, p. 269). Berg (2004) defines manifest content as “those elements that are physically present and countable” (p. 269) whereas with latent content, “the analysis is extended to an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data” (p. 269). The “best resolution of this dilemma about whether to use manifest or latent content is to use both whenever possible” (Berg, 2004, p. 270). For the purpose of this research, both manifest and latent content were therefore used.

Reading through the questionnaires, specific words surfaced more often than other words throughout the participant responses. The more times a word arose, the more it was thought to be significant. In order to determine the amount of times a particular word occurred, the Find function within Microsoft Word 2010 was used, which locates and selects specific text, formatting, or type of information within the document. For example, if applying manifest content, the term teacher appeared 107 times throughout the data. However, by understanding that it is best to use both manifest and latent content, the context surrounding the word needed to be taken into consideration. As a result, by combining both manifest and latent content, the word

teacher was used 93 times throughout the data with respect to a team approach concept. Other key words that emerged that were also in relation to a team approach included the following: parent was used 48 times, team was used 21, collaborate was used 16 times, where staff was used 14, everyone was used six times, and discussion was used twice. Altogether, these key words were used a total of 200 times with respect to a team approach. Thus, the first theme emerged.

By replicating this approach, seven main themes emerged from the data. These themes included the following: a team approach, a monthly timeframe, expectations of student achievement, concept of time, teamwork difficulties, the steep learning curve that occurred, and future recommendations. The theme monthly timeframe was determined through the words month, which was used 64 times, goal (58 times), and performance task (32 times) for a total of 154 words. Expectations of student achievement was encapsulated by the words rubric (31 times), achievement (17 times), growth, (eight times), relevant (six times), independence (five times), expectations (four times), purposeful (three times), and understanding (twice). Altogether, 76 words were used to describe this theme. Next, the concept of time was shaped from the words monthly commitments (64 times), implementation difficulties (57 times), and time expectations (54 times), totaling 175 words.

Team work difficulties generated from the terms working with teachers, which appeared 93 times throughout the data and working with parents, which emerged 48 times within the data, for a total of 141 times to describe this theme. The theme that spoke to the steep learning curve that the participants faced was influenced by the idea of learning the structure of the PPP, which occurred 21 throughout the data, and learning the UbD format, which occurred 12 times throughout the interviews, for a total of 33 times the concept was brought up. Lastly, nine different future recommendations emerged from the data.

Ethical Considerations

There were a number of issues to consider before this research was conducted. First, in order to involve the specific participants, written permission from the U of S Ethics Board (Appendix G) and then the School Board were required. Two copies of the Request for School Board Permission (Appendix H) were hand delivered to the Director of Education, Dr. Bill Cooke. The letters described the proposed study, the intended participants, recruitment procedures, potential risks involved with the research, potential benefits, as well as the method of data collection. As anticipated, the Director of Education, Dr. Bill Cooke, returned a signed copy of the Request for School Board Permission form to the researcher. Upon obtaining this initial permission, a letter was sent to each Superintendent asking for permission for Educational Support Teachers within their schools to be approached to participate in this study (Appendix I), which was signed and also returned to the researcher.

Third, protecting the confidentiality of the participants was imperative. In order to ensure the Questionnaires could not be traced back to the individuals who completed them, the participants were instructed not to write any identifying marks on the Questionnaire (i.e. name, school they work within). They were also instructed to use an envelope without a return address on it.

Next, I am presently employed by the SRSD in a Consultant position as a Psychometrist. Also, my primary role is to work closely with the ESTs, specifically those within the six schools that I am assigned to. Consultations about Intensive Needs (IN) and non-IN students occur on an ongoing basis. I am thus a fellow colleague of the ESTs but I am also the researcher. Therefore, a dual relationship occurs. I was conscious of the potential for a conflict of interest, as participants

may feel obligated to participate. In order to minimize this, I outlined both the benefits and risks attached to participating in the study within the Participant Email (Appendix J).

Finally, the data in its entirety were reported. As anticipated, both positive and negative feedback was collected. However, ethically, it was the responsibility of the researcher to report on all aspects of data, regardless of the tone of it. Suggestions were therefore made accordingly, within an open context around the potentiality of the current SRSD PPP to evolve and change.

Research Sensitivities

The idea of the SRSD new PPP template was initiated by John Kuzbik, Superintendent within the Sask. Rivers School Division. The sections of the document that address information regarding Mr. Kuzbik were shared with him as a courtesy on an informal basis, and he verbally approved the factual elements that were included.

Although Mr. Kuzbik is the head of the Student Support Services Department, his background is not specifically in the area of special education. He does, however, have 30+ years experience within the education system as a physical education teacher, a Vice Principal, working for the Ministry of Education as an Instructional Consultant, a Principal, a mentor to first and second year teachers, and as a Superintendent of Schools. He has had extensive training in the Common Essential Learnings, instructional strategies, SMART goals, SOARS, and UbD. Together, with his experience and a true understanding of learning, he has created a template based on his passion and foundational belief that anyone is and can be a learner. This is no different for the intensive needs student. All individual students should be pushed and challenged regardless of their ability level. This template seeks to accomplish this.

One of Mr. Kuzbik's roles as Superintendent is to oversee the Special Ed. Department. ESTs are employees within this department, and are the ones in charge of overseeing the PPPs within their school, and therefore fall under his direct supervision. As this research was asking the participants to report directly on the template that he initiated and oversaw, research on this topic was considered to be sensitive. As a result, participants may not have felt able to freely and honestly answer the questions even with assuring that their anonymity would be kept. In situations like this, Morse & Richards (2002) report that:

> Sometimes, if participants cannot be interviewed or if the topic is sensitive or embarrassing, the researcher may ask participants to write their answers on [a] Semistructured Questionnaire; the instrument is formatted with spaces after each question in which participants can write their open-ended responses. These responses are usually transcribed into the computer in preparation for analysis (p. 94).

In order to display sensitivity to these concerns, the participants were given a Semistructured Questionnaire style interview to complete, where they were asked to write down their answers and mail in their responses using the SRSD interoffice mail system.

Summary

Within this chapter, the methodology that was used for this research has been outlined. More specifically, the research questions were reviewed, a definition of qualitative research was given, and I have identified the form of analysis that was used for the purpose of this research, which is content analysis. I described who the participants were, the rationale behind why they were chosen, how the data was gathered, as well as how it was analyzed. A list of themes that emerged was also discussed. Finally, several ethical considerations were reviewed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The sections of this chapter will correlate to the specific questions of the Semistructured Questionnaire: the process of those involved, time commitments of the Personal Program Plan (PPP), main focus of the PPP, the timeframe of the PPP, the PPP as a living document, the PPP as a planning tool, student growth, monitoring Intensive Need (IN) students, and student independence. The PPP as a communication tool, high standards and further teaching, PPP template comparison, management of the PPPs, and choosing between the two documents were also discussed as well as concluding remarks from the participants.

The participants were asked to provide a pseudonym as to protect their identity. The following six names were created by the participants: Little Red Riding Hood (Red), Joe, Joanne, Mary Christmas (Mary), Pippie Longstocking (Pippie), and Space Girl (Spirl). The participants brought with them a range of experience to the EST role. This experience included: tutoring, subbing, teaching elementary, teaching middle years, working within the Developmental Education classroom, obtaining certification in Special Education, as well as some administration experience.

Process of Those Involved in the SRSD Pilot Project

According to the participants, there were specific key people involved with writing the PPP. These people included the EST, classroom teachers, parents, Education Assistants (EAs), other team members (Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP), Educational Psychologist), and sometimes when appropriate, the student. Although these were the main people outlined as being involved in the process, each participant indicated a different level of involvement for those specific individuals.

Red reported as working together with the classroom teachers, although there were aspects that she was solely responsible for. She collaborated with the teachers to set goals, implement, monitor, and review the PPP, as well as conduct the parent meetings together. Red reported that she was in charge of writing the document, typing it into the format, updating the PPP, and collecting the signatures.

The process was truly a collaborative process, with Red taking more of a facilitator role. She explained the process as the following:

> The EST [met] with the teacher to discuss the skills and knowledge piece that [was] missing and that need[ed] to be focused on for the year. From that a performance task [was] developed, mainly by the teacher, with the ESTs facilitation and support. The remainder of the PPP [was] discussed. The EST [did] the data entry and then the completed PPP [was] given back to the teacher for revisions. A final document [was] constructed and given to the Principal for his review and input at [that] time. A summary of the PPP [was] developed by the EST, consisting of the performance task, the skills and knowledge sections and the rubrics. This summary [was] given to the teacher and parents to keep for the year as a reminder of the goals we [were] working towards for the year. The entire PPP [was] offered to both the teacher and the parents at the beginning of the year. But, due to the fact that that PPP [was] mostly a skeleton at [that] point, often the teacher or parent [did] not want a full copy of the document. Each month the teacher [was] given a written sheet asking for feedback on the progress towards achieving the performance task. The teacher [was] also asked to mark the rubrics for that month and comment on what skills were taught that month to help achieve the performance task at the end of the year. Feedback [was] also sought with regards to the entire PPP and if any

> changes or additions [were] now needed. The EST ask[ed] for this information from the classroom teacher. The EST then transfer[ed] this information onto the PPP documents each month. At the end of the year, the EST and the classroom teacher [met] to finalize the PPP. If an EA [was] involved with the student, their input [was] sought throughout the process by both the EST and the classroom teacher. They [were] also involved in the performance task and the information on the PPP [was] communicated with them so that they [were] part of the team.

Joe was also involved in a collaborative process. Along with the classroom teachers, they set the goals together. Together they contributed to ideas, collected signatures, and implemented the PPP. The EA was also a key person to help with implementation. However, the rest of the process was guided by Joe. This included guiding the teachers through the new template, monitoring, and reviewing the PPP on a monthly basis.

Joe indicated that the teachers met with her as often as necessary. Together, they did a quick walk through of the last year's PPP, indicating the student's needs and strengths, the skills and knowledge pieces, and what the teacher felt the student needed to learn and was capable of learning from the curriculum. They also tried to determine what would give students the most success in the future. From there, the Performance Task (PT) was determined that best addressed the student's needs. Curriculum alignment within the template needed to be considered. Joe filled in the template, collected the signatures, juggled with the EA timetable, and aimed to meet monthly to review the student's progress towards the PT.

At Joanne's school, collaboration was evident when she spoke on who was involved with writing the PPP. The EST, classroom teachers, the EAs, other team members (SLPs and Educational Psychologists), as well as parents and students were involved with setting the goals

for the student and reviewing the PPP. The EST, classroom teachers, and EAs, were involved with implementing, monitoring, and reviewing the PPP with the student and parents/guardians. When applicable, other team members were involved with implementing the PPP as well, however, Joanne was solely responsible for writing the PPP and collecting the signatures.

The process consisted of Joanne setting up the meetings with the classroom teachers, EAs, and sometimes the Principal. The EST was the one to initiate the meetings and collaboration occurred mostly informally through casual conversations and emails. Parents were given the opportunity to have input but would mostly leave it up to Joanne for the goals (PT), rubrics, and other parts of the PPP.

In Mary's case, she did most of the work. She handed out the checklists, set up mini tasks, and recorded the data. The teachers and EAs were, however, quite involved with the monitoring and reviewing of the PPP.

The process for Mary began in the spring, where she met with the classroom teachers and EAs to list ongoing needs and a description of the students' current level. They also discussed a possible PT at this time. In the fall, she met with the new teachers to choose the skills to work on and to confirm the PT. For new students, she gathered as much info as she could from files and former teachers then met with the new teachers to discuss and choose skills and the task. Mary was the one who wrote the PPP and reviewed it with teachers for editing.

Pippie, as well as Spirl, were solely responsible for the PPP. Pippie invited the teachers and parents into the process, but they were not an active part of the process. She was the one who met with parents and teachers, wrote the PPPs, collected the signatures, and monitored the progress of the student. Spirl was also the key person involved. She was the one to choose the goals then ask the teachers if they were suitable. From there, she made up the PPP. She met with

the parents to go over the PPP and collected the signatures. She initiated the conversations with the classroom teachers in order to update the PPP.

Pippie met with parents and teachers initially and created the PPPs based on students' areas of most need, whereas Spirl found it difficult to find time to meet formally with teachers. For these two participants, collaboration was more informal (i.e. in staff rooms during recess or in hallways or quickly during teachers' prep). Initially, Spirl would discuss the previous year's goals with the classroom teachers, and then decide if those goals needed to be continued. If not, they discussed what an appropriate goal for the coming year would look like.

When implementing a new template within a school division, although it is the same document, there was not one "correct" way to carry this process out. Collaboration occurred differently from school to school, as well as the level of each of the team members' involvement in this process. This demonstrates that with creativity, the process works differently within different schools.

Time Commitments of the PPP within the SRSD Pilot

For three of the participants, the number of PPPs that they were in charge of increased during the new template pilot phase. It was reported that this increase was due to a "high rate of turnover within the school, many transient families, new students from foster care, high needs of students within the school, as well as the foster care system". One participant had changed schools, which ultimately resulted in an increase in the number of her PPPs. For another EST, her number was consistent from year to year. She felt that this was because of the transient nature of her school, as well as attendance issues. She felt that "families treat the school as a drop in center or place to store their children for a month". The final two EST's felt that their number

of PPPs that they were responsible for decreased. This was due to the fact that their school lost students, more staff was brought in to share the workload, and because the “criteria was more defined [as to] who qualified for a PPP”.

There was a discrepancy in regards to the amount of time it took each participant to complete the different components of the PPP. To develop one PPP, Joanne reported that it took her at least two hours initially. Joe said it took her about three to six hours and Mary believed it took her about four to six hours. According to Red, it took her eight hours per PPP and Pippie felt it took her six to eight hours, depending on how many teachers the student had, how intensive the needs were, and how long the student was discussed at the ‘Intensive Needs meeting’ at the beginning of each year (average 10 to 20 minutes per student). Therefore, the participants felt that it took anywhere from three to eight hours to develop one PPP.

The time it took to implement the PPP was a little more difficult for the participants to measure. Red felt that it was a continual process that should be happening throughout the day, every day of the school year. The implementing of the PPP was reported to happen within the classroom, where the classroom teacher was aware of the goals in all areas of study, and tried to reinforce the learning that had been set as the goals for that student. Red also felt that ideally, the student's performance task should be known by all staff in the school so as opportunities arose in which learning could happen, this would also help to reinforce the goals for that student and the staff members could capitalize on the moment. Red therefore felt that implementation was not something that happened only during a specific subject or specified time period.

Spirl had a similar response to Red, as she felt that the time spent on implementing the PPP was dependent on the student, the teacher, and EA involvement.

Joanne also believed that this was hard to measure because each teacher, for the most part, implemented the PPP. She felt that the goals (rubrics) were worked on almost daily though.

Pippie, Joe, and Mary were able to articulate a quantifiable number to the implementing phase of the PPP. Pippie believed that it averaged an hour per teacher and EA to implement each PPP. Joe felt that the PPP was implemented on a daily basis and/or two to three hours per week whereas Mary felt that there were too many hours to count accurately.

Monitoring of the PPP was also an ongoing process. Red felt that this process was tied to both the classroom teacher and herself. Pippie tried to meet with each teacher and EA almost monthly for one hour to monitor the progress of each student. She felt that it was probably the most difficult aspect of the process to manage since she could not seem to successfully arrange group meetings. She ended up meeting with each teacher individually (6 to 8 hours per month) plus she had regular conversations with parents, either monthly or during each assessment period. In Spirl's school, the teachers and EA helped to monitor the PPP, but the amount of time spent doing this varied depending on the student and teacher, as some teachers were more willing to document than others. Joe gave weekly reminders, did monthly checks, and updated the PPP on a monthly basis at her school. Joanne spent about two hours per month where Mary spent about one hour per month monitoring the PPP.

The participants spent similar time reviewing the PPP on a monthly basis. Spirl did this on a continual basis, reviewing and revising, but she said the time was dependent on the student. Joe set aside time during report cards to review the PPP and would usually tweak it when they were monitoring the progress of the student. Mary spent approximately 30 minutes to one hour per month, Joanne spent about two hours per month, and Red reported as spending approximately three to four hours per month on average reviewing her PPPs. Pippie usually

reviewed each PPP with consultants and teachers, which took about 30 to 45 minutes per student. She reported that the team estimated 10 to 15 minutes per student and had to schedule a second day to finish. It is unclear as to whether or not Pippie implied per week, per month, or per school year.

For five of the participants, the consensus was that more time was spent on the new PPP template in all areas (developing, monitoring, implementing, and reviewing) than with the previous template. Red agreed with the other participants in the sense that there was an increased amount of time in the implementation, monitoring and reviewing stages, but felt that it was about the same amount of time in the developmental stage. She reported that

> In the past, PPPs were carefully developed skill analysis taking much of our time. Once the PPP was developed and the materials decided on, I found that often the actual PPP would not be looked at until year-end when a year-end evaluative comment would be made prior to filling them in their files. The new format ensures that the PPP is worked with on an ongoing basis. I like the fact that I can say that we "have" to do monthly reviews. I don't feel like I am hounding the teachers for their input but rather their input is now an expectation.

Pippie, Spirl, Joe, Joanne, and Mary reported numerous reasons as to why they felt there was an increase in the amount of time spent on the PPP than in previous years. For example, the participants felt that the new format was complicated, which meant more time was spent first on understanding. They reported that there are more sections to look at (i.e. the background information, essential questions, understandings, the PT, and knowledge and skills components) in comparison to the old template. They felt that more thought was needed to complete each of

the different areas, as it took more effort to use correct wording and to try and tie each of the sections together (i.e. areas of impact, PT, overarching understandings, knowledge and skills).

The collaboration process in itself was more time consuming than in the past, as monthly collaboration, monitoring, and updating did not occur with the old template. They found it difficult finding time to meet with other staff members in either a large group or individually. Documentation of the collaboration process also needed to be recorded, which ultimately took time to do.

The new PPP format was based on the Understanding by Design (UbD) format, which was new to most of the participants. They found it to be more time consuming as it called for a shift in their thinking. The template also demanded more writing than the last template, as the old template had check boxes that were provided, which helped to speed up the process. Another reason that was reported by one of the participants was that there was a redundancy in the rubric and the proof of success section. Overall, using the new PPP involved a learning curve for the participants and was therefore more time consuming to develop, monitor, implement, and review.

Main Focus of the PPP

Four of the six participants had difficulty identifying just one ‘main’ focus of the new PPP template. However, Mary was able to narrow it to one main focus. Mary believed that each section on the PPP template encouraged deep understanding of real, purposeful goals, which therefore focused on developing skills that would serve a lifelong purpose for the student. Spirl was able to narrow it to two. She felt that the main focuses were to make the PPP a living document that reflected student progress. Joanne believed the template focused on four different

things (measurement, documentation, goals, and curriculum). For example, she stated that the PPP was “to measure student growth, strengths, and weaknesses”, to document the years’ work as well as the assessment tools used, to have a goal to work towards for the entire year, and that it had “curriculum outcomes” and should be kept “in line with the UbD format”.

Pippie reported similar thoughts to Joanne. She thought the main goal of the PPP was on the PT, or the end goal. The rubric outlined how they planned to reach the goal, and the PPP was used to record or document the process. Joe indicated that there were four main areas that her PPPs focused on: documentation, accountability, the PT, as well as the design of the PPP. Also like Joanne, she felt that the PPP was used to record their work and the process of building and implementing the PT, as well as document the student’s efforts and achievement. She believed that there was more accountability, which helped to “focus the teachers and EAs on a more concentrated and directed efforts for these students”. She also thought that with the change of using UbD, Differentiated Instruction (DI), and having a curriculum focus, the alignment of the lesson plan would become familiar.

Red outlined the difference between the PPPI and PPPII. She stated that a PPPI had a behaviour focus where the PPPII centered on the curriculum and focused on outcomes and learning objectives. But like Joe, Red also felt that accountability or teacher involvement and ownership was the overall focus of the PPP template.

Overall, the participants had difficulty speaking to just one ‘main’ focus of the new PPP template. As a result, 13 points arose. The participants believed that the new PPP template had a lifelong purpose, that it was a living document, and that it focused on student progress. It was used for measurement, documentation, and goal setting purposes, and that it could have a

curriculum or behaviour focus. The design was UbD and DI, which helped to guide the PT. It also helped with accountability, and teacher involvement and ownership.

Timeframe of the PPP

Agreement between the participants occurred when discussing the length of time that the PPP was geared towards. They believed that the PT, otherwise referred to as “a goal”, was created with the intent that it was to be long-term (i.e. the length of a school year). However, it was also mentioned by five of the six participants that within the long term goal, monthly short-term goals were embedded within the plan. They could be found within the monthly updates, skills that needed to be taught or have been taught, in the knowledge and skills sequence, and/or within the monthly learning plan. But overall, the PPP was meant to be a plan for a full year of learning.

Although the ESTs were consistent in believing that the timeframe was focused on a long-term PT or goal with short-term goals along the way, they were in discord as to whether or not this timeframe was effective. They were asked if they felt that the timeframe was effective for students, the school team, and with parents. In respect to the students, two participants (Joanne and Joe) felt that it was only somewhat effective because the PPP had to be tweaked a lot and if the PT was made to be too high of a goal, it was not always met. Pippie believed that the effectiveness was solely dependent on the student and depending on whether or not a student was placed on a PPPI or PPPII. If the goal was behaviour based (PPPI), she felt that the goal needed to be shorter for those students in comparison to those whose PPP focus was academic. Red felt that the younger students were not as involved in the process of planning the PPP as an older student but having a long-term goal was still a great way to provide focus for a student's

program and kept everything heading in the same direction. Spirl and Mary both felt that this was an effective timeframe for students. Mary specifically felt that the students knew that they would have time to work towards a goal and that it was broken down into small achievable steps to make it seem less daunting.

Four of the six ESTs felt that it was an effective timeframe in respect to the school staff. Joe felt that it kept the team focused, on track, and collaborating. Joanne believed that it gave her and her staff time to implement strategies, offering skills and knowledge to the student, whereas Mary thought that it was logical to have a PPP geared to the school year, as this is the same length of time that the teacher has to be with that student. Spirl stated that it was effective but time-consuming and Pippie believed that the effectiveness of the timeframe for the school team was dependent on the student. Red shared that this timeframe provided focus for all of the school staff that were involved with that child. Ideally, she felt that if they were allotted more planning time, they could regularly meet and discuss how each person was working towards the common yearlong goal. They could also discuss the monthly progress and the skills that have been taught each month or the skills that still need to be taught. Right now, Red said that this information came mainly from the classroom teacher.

Parent involvement was reported as not being consistent across the school division and therefore the uniformity among the participants varied. Joe commented on the PPP in its entirety and felt that it was an ineffective tool for parents, even though the parents she dealt with were rarely involved. Mary had a hard time commenting on this question, as she, too, stated that many of the parents that she dealt with were “not very involved in their children's education”. Pippie reported that most of the parents seemed “okay” with a year-end goal at her school. Spirl and Joanne thought it was effective for the parents and Joanne went on to report that the parents

whom she dealt with generally seemed pleased with the progress of their child and could see the steps that were being taken to get them there. Red felt that it was encouraging for parents to see that they were working with their children on an ongoing basis and that they were all working towards a common goal of seeing their child succeed in life. However, the parents whom she worked with found it way too overwhelming and technical. As a result, she simplified it and tried to explain it in a way that would not leave them feeling out of the loop. Effectiveness of a year-long goal was therefore dependent on which school the EST worked in, the involvement of the parents, and whether or not the parents understood the template.

Living Document

A living document is something that can be continually edited, updated, and shaped into the perfect document. The participants agreed that the new PPP template was a living document. They felt that the old template was created, put in the file, and according to Joanne, not really looked at again and maybe even forgotten by the classroom teacher. With this template, the participants stated that they were more accountable for documenting, monitoring, changing short-term goals and learning objectives, updating progress, tweaking the PT, and planning for next month. The PPP was therefore revisited each month, whenever an opportunity arose for the staff to meet, thus making it a living document.

Once “pulled off the shelf”, the ESTs reported that there were numerous reasons as to why the PPP was revisited. For example, the PPP was used as a tool to evaluate, monitor, and record student progress or lack of progress, review skills that have been or still need to be taught, and discuss the different strategies that have been useful and what new ones the team might try in the future. The document was also used as a reminder with Red, Pippie, Mary, and Spirl of the

focus of the program, the goals that they were hoping to achieve with that student in that school year, and whether or not those goals and/or PT needed to be revised part way through. Spirl reported that the PT was always in the back of everyone's minds (i.e. the teacher, EA, EST) as they worked with the student. This helped ensure that they were all working towards the same goal, and the monthly progress updates forced them to continually review the PPP to see whether the goals were attainable or whether they need to be revised. Red shared a story that "during the 2009-2010 school year, she had one student who needed his PT "tweaked" twice, as he kept meeting the standards set in the PT way before the end of the year," which was seen as a good problem. Finally, according to Joanne, the PPP was used to "document, collaborate, and assess". By using the document in this manner, the new PPP template was used as a living document.

Mary, however, struggled with her staff using the PPP as a living document. She emailed the PPP as well as gave them a paper copy that they were to jot notes down onto. However, this rarely occurred. Mary ended up coming to them each month and sat with them as they marked and reviewed the PPP. She did this with all but one EA. She felt disappointed in their use of the monthly plan and felt that they tended to do what they wanted rather than what they had set up for the month together. Comments each month tended to be general rather than on specific skills worked on. But despite the criticisms and extra efforts, the document was looked at monthly and overall was used effectively as a living document.

Planning Tool, Student Growth, Monitoring IN Students, and Student Independence

The participants were asked whether or not they thought the new PPP template was an effective planning tool, if the PPP template allowed for growth to be shown, and whether or not

the PPP assisted the student to achieve a higher level of independence in his or her learning. Responses were split.

Pippie thought that the focus of the PPP was too broad and therefore it was difficult to connect to every lesson. When the PPP was focused on behaviour, it was hard to connect the goals to curriculum outcomes, as not all the teachers were comfortable with the format just yet. She therefore thought that the PPP was an effective assessment tool, but not an effective planning tool. In saying that, she believed the rubric and monthly assessment helped to monitor progress whereas the assessment notes and monthly meetings were helpful for adjusting goals for students and recording feedback from teachers. What were missing, though, were the day to day expectations, other adaptations, as well as the amount of designated EA support, which were not included on the PPP. This would have been useful for monitoring and supporting the intensive needs students. Also, unfortunately, time did not always permit monthly meetings to occur and the PPPs were not shared with the students and therefore she could not comment as to whether or not the PPP led to an increase in their independence. She believed, however, that the PPP would be more effective at creating independence if the rubric included skills which helped students to become independent (e.g. organization, maintaining focus, and initiating).

Joe also believed that the PPP was not used as a daily planning tool. She commented that although there were goals, the steps to achieve the goals were vaguely written, thus leaving the teachers to use their own daily planning tool. She felt that the monthly comments and the rubric were effective ways to demonstrate student growth and that it was an effective tool in monitoring and supporting the work of an intensive needs student. However, she felt that the PPP was not effective or used effectively enough to assist the student in achieving a higher level of

independence in their learning even though they were shown the monthly or weekly goals that were written for them.

Mary said the effectiveness was dependent on the student and the type of plan it was. In some cases, she felt that it was highly effective where in others, just meaningless paperwork. She felt that it really depended on the level of commitment of the adults who were working with the child. She also believed that the monitoring and supporting the work of intensive needs student was dependent on whether the teacher bought into the idea or not. Some teachers followed the skills listed on the PPP where others looked at it as people who were not involved (i.e. division experts) trying to tell them what to do. She noted that attitude was the key. She did find it to be effective in the sense that the frequent reviews kept them all more aware of student progress (or lack of progress). But like Pippie, Mary thought that the monthly area for comments, the rubric, and assessment results spoke to student growth. She constructed a checklist that corresponded to the rubric, which made it easier for teachers to mark. The checklist clearly showed if the student was making progress or not. As far as independence, Mary felt she had not involved the students enough last year but explained that she was planning on sitting with them this year to go through the PPP and set up a self-monitoring system.

Red was reluctant to say that the PPP accurately reflected "daily" learning but was more confident in saying that it was an effective planning tool. By having a goal for the year, they were able to see what skills needed to be taught, which allowed them to work towards teaching students particular components month by month. She felt that this helped to direct the teaching so it was relevant and purposeful. She also felt that the monthly reviews of the rubrics and the evaluative comments helped to track the growth of the student throughout the year. “The PPP help[ed] to keep everyone accountable to do their part in helping the students achieve their PT to

progress towards the overall goal for all students' education - to become independent adults." She felt that the new PPP was an effective tool to help the student achieve goals by ensuring that the team consistently monitored and worked with the intensive needs students in a purposeful way.

Joanne also believed that the PPP was "relevant, effective, and accurately reflect[ed] the learning of the student". She said the rubrics that were created were individual and were worked on daily/weekly for each IN student. Going through the rubrics as well as the assessment notes, the PT, comparing the current student behavior (at beginning of the year) to the notes at the end of the year, and documenting the knowledge and skills monthly helped to determine whether or not growth had occurred. She felt that the PPP in general helped to make the student more accountable for their learning, but also gave the staff direction and a place to document all the work they did with the student throughout the month. It also helped to monitor the transient students when switching from school to school. All students were able to see their accomplishments through the documentation of the skills and knowledge that needed to be learnt, which also gave them a goal to work towards.

Spirl, too, felt that it was an effective planning tool but did not elaborate as to why she felt this way. She did report that the PPP was quite effective in monitoring and supporting the intensive needs student. Although she felt it was very time-consuming, she felt it was useful in planning, tracking, and reporting. She found the monthly progress updates useful in tracking and seeing the growth take place. For the younger students, however, she did not feel that the PPP was as effective as with the older students for discussing goals and assisting the students to achieve a higher level of independence in their learning.

The results in this section were quite split, with two participants feeling that the PPP did not accurately reflect the required daily learning for the student and therefore was not an

effective planning tool, with one EST reporting that it “depends”, and the remaining three participants thinking that it was indeed an effective planning tool. Each participant also commented whether or not the template allowed for student growth to be illustrated, how the PPP assisted students to achieve a higher level of independence in his or her learning, as well as whether or not the PPP was effective in monitoring and supporting the work of intensive needs students.

Communication Tool

The participants were asked how effectively the PPP allowed for communication of the student's program with three different audiences: with the student, with parents/guardians, and the school support team. The six participants’ opinions varied and were not consistent across the board.

Red did not show the PPP to the students she worked with, as she taught younger students. She thought it would, however, work well with older students. It was too technical and not overly relevant to a parent who did not understand UbD, but she did feel that the PT, skills and knowledge section, and the evaluation comments were easier for a parent to understand. It worked well with her school staff though, especially with the new teachers as they had a greater understanding of UbD. When gone over together, they were able to have meaningful discussions about the students and their specific needs.

Pippie also chose to not share the PPP template with her students last year. She felt that it would be too confusing for them to understand. It worked better for her to informally discuss the goals with each individual student or to have the students attend parent-teacher interviews or meetings. Parents were given the opportunity to suggest what they thought their child needed to

work on. Pippie shared the completed document during interviews and a copy was sent home, which acted like the end of the year report card. Pippie therefore thought the template was only somewhat effective when communicating with her school staff team but felt that it could have been better if they recorded right on the document the many informal discussions that occurred between her and the EA.

Like Red and Pippie, Mary did not use the PPP as a communication tool with the students last year but planned to this school year, as she is more involved with the students. She found it to be quite effective to communicate with parents. She photocopied the rubric, marked it, and sent it home each reporting period. If parents came for parent-teacher interviews she would often discuss the child's progress with the PPP goals at that time. She made a checklist that corresponded with the rubric, which she found to be very effective during the monthly school team meetings. It helped to make it very clear which students required more strategies and intervention.

Spirl disagreed with Red and Pippie, as she found the rubric (as is) was an effective way to show the student where he or she was at and where they wanted them to be. The rubrics were also a great way to communicate to the parents and easy for them to understand. Spirl did, however, report that the parents preferred to hear the entire PPP explained to them or to see a summary of it, as it was quite large which often deterred parents from wanting to look at it. Spirl thought the PPP was very helpful for the next year’s teacher to know where to start as well as she felt the monthly progress updates were useful in communicating student progress to the team.

Joe had the teacher and EA explain the PPP to the student, but if the student could not read, it was not effective. She also felt that the majority of parents did not attend scheduled meetings and those who did, usually just nodded and signed. The PPP, in her opinion, was still

beyond many of the parents' understanding and she would have to explain it in very simple steps as to how their child would be helped. But overall as far as a communication tool with the school staff, Joe thought that it was effective.

At Joanne's school, she believed that most students could see and understand what they were working towards with the PT. Some of the students were given a say in the PPP and were part of the review process. Some of the parents felt overwhelmed and maybe even a bit intimidated with some of the "jargon" that educators use. However, she felt that the rubrics were clear and a good way to measure current/past achievement and most of the parents could understand them, which gave them a clearer picture of what was worked on throughout each month. Joanne shared a hardcopy version with the teacher, parent, and EA as well as an electronic copy so everyone "was on the same page" and could give their input at all times.

Overall, as a communication tool, responses varied between the different participants. Some felt that it was too complicated for their students and therefore did not show it to them but were willing to introduce it to students this school year. Responses were also inconsistent as to whether or not it was an effective communication tool with parents. Each EST was, however, able to find a way to incorporate some part of the PPP that worked best with their parents into their conversations. Lastly, most of the participants were able to find value in using the PPP as a communication tool with the school team.

High Standards and Further Teaching

When the participants were asked, "How did the PPP ensure that students were expected to achieve a high standard?" the responses were pretty consistent. Four of the six participants believed that this occurred with the rubric, where two participants thought it was due to the PT.

Red and Pippie believed that by having a “1” as a consistent high standard for all students; it was teaching them that “OK” was not enough. Pippie stated that “if the goals were achieved at Level 1 on the Rubric, new goals were created for students. If it was evident that the student was having extreme difficulty in a certain area, the goal was revisited to see what adjustments needed to be made. Sometimes specific skills needed to be broken down to smaller, easier to achieve steps.” As the needs changed and the students gained success in certain skills, Red was able to plan for further teaching, which allowed for further growth. But if the Level 1 expectation ended up being set too high, the goal would then be carried over to the next school year. Joanne explained that “setting a goal that was higher to achieve than [they] expect[ed] [was] good because it perhaps motivate[d] the student and teacher to "get the job done!"” It was also a good reminder for the entire team to show what had been tried and what worked and did not work.

Joe felt that along with the rubric, curriculum alignment also helped to ensure that the students knew the expectation was to achieve. Techniques that she found useful were to build on the student’s accomplishments, scaffolding, and utilizing assessment for learning and of learning, which helped to identify if changes needed to be made. Spirl and Mary thought the PT helped the school team remain focused and ensured that teachers did not get complacent with the students’ daily and weekly program if they were expected to reach the ultimate goal by June. The short-term and long-term goals made it clear to everyone that the student had many mini steps to take in order to reach the goal. Spirl explained that once the student achieved the goal, however, a new goal was put in place. The goals were continually being reviewed and revised. Mary shared that the monthly reviews were good because it reminded the staff of what was supposed to be taught, of what still needed to be taught, of what the student needed to continue working on, or that they could move on.

Through the rubric and PT, the participants reported that it was ensured that high standards were put in place for all students. From there, further teaching was always on the forefront.

PPP Template Comparison

The participants were given an opportunity to compare the new template to the template that they previously worked with. For this section I will discuss the participants' thoughts about what they would keep from the previous template and add to the new template, what they liked or would change about the new template, what their ideal document would look like, how the new template has worked for them and their intensive needs students, as well any other general comments that they offered.

PPP Template Strengths and Weaknesses

The participants were given an opportunity to explain what they liked best and what they liked least about the PPP. It was pretty evident that the new PPP template created a shift from EST ownership to shared responsibility of the PPP as five of the six participants commented on this change. For example, Red explained that "it's great having the classroom teacher so connected to the PPP, as they are the front lines with the students and not the EST. The information the classroom teacher can provide is very valuable. And by having the classroom teacher connected to the PPP it helps the teaching to be much more purposeful and accurate to the student's needs". She felt that there was an accountability aspect for continued updates from not just the EST, but from the entire team. Spirl found that her teachers were now more involved in monitoring student progress. Joe, too, liked the collaboration of the stakeholders and how the

process has increased teacher exposure to the PPP and PT as well as the responsibility level of teachers for all students' education.

The monthly learning plan was found to be most helpful by Mary as it outlined who was responsible for what during that month. This helped with the natural progression toward the ultimate goal. The rubric and assessment notes were also identified by Pippie as one of the strengths of the template as these sections helped guide when the meetings would occur between the EST and the teachers. Joanne's comments were geared towards the organization of the PPP and how she liked that there was a place for signatures and a pull-down menu for areas of impact.

The remarks around what the participants did not like were not as in sync as what they liked about the PPP template. Red found that some of the areas were almost a repeat of other areas but just worded differently. She gave the example of the Essential Questions and the Overarching Understandings. She felt it was the same thing, but just changed from a question into a statement. Mary also had a difficult time writing these two sections.

As the concept of a PT was new, it was a learning curve for Joe. She was not 100% confident with writing them as she had not done enough to refine her skills and judge what would work. She found that the PT they started with in September would drastically change by June. She also commented that this template is specific to the SRSD and therefore "doesn't do anything for the child who moves out of division" as well as for those students who do not attend regularly. She felt that it was a lot of initial writing and planning that she knew she was going to have to change in a month. The PPP's therefore required a lot of flexibility on her part and on the part of the teachers and EAs.

The concept of time was another factor that was seen as a negative in regards to this template. For example, Spirl and Pippie commented that the amount of hours and days it took to create, develop, implement, and write up took away from working with students who fell within the ‘diverse’ group. It was also seen as really difficult to find the time to meet with the teachers on a regular basis and work with students on a consistent schedule.

Lastly, the technical side of the PPP gave Joanne trouble. She did not like the fact that you could not change or pick the font, that it would not be able to type more than the section allowed, and that it kept saying the ‘birthdate’ was invalid.

Pippie thought that this template was more effective as an assessment tool rather than a planning tool. Teachers still needed to do a lot more planning on their own to accommodate the student's needs and that was not evident from the PPP. If the PPP had an academic focus, it almost needed to be done for each unit taught in order for it to reflect the actual planning for that student. Joe, too felt that this template was only “somewhat” effective as a planning tool. Within her school situation, a lot of flexibility was required. She felt that it would have been helpful if the original plan was shorter with smaller goals and steps as it was continually changing. The teachers in her school also did not use the UbD format, which made it difficult as the new PPP template is based on UbD. This was a struggle for Joe, especially as the teachers were not about to change their ways.

Overall, regardless of the amount of time that it took, the technical glitches within the program, and the unfamiliarity with the PT, the majority of the participants (four out of six) thought that this was an effective planning tool. They believed that this template allowed for student programming to be relevant, for a collaborative process to occur, for goals to be broken down into smaller segments, keep accountability within the team, and to document a year’s

worth of work, regardless of the amount of time and work it created for the EST and classroom teacher. It was not seen as overly 'parent friendly' but the rubrics helped to bridge the communication with the parents/guardians of the student's progress. Once the ESTs feel proficient in writing the PT, Overarching Understandings, and Essential Questions, it will be that much easier for them.

Strength of New PPP Template

There were two key features that the participants particularly liked about the new template that they would opt to keep if the template were to change again. First, three of the participants (Red, Pippie, and Spirl) commented on the rubric (Appendix M). They felt that the rubric was great for evaluating student progress on specific skills, it was a useful tool to share progress with parents, it was easy for parents to understand, and it helped to facilitate regular meetings and refocus goals. The next attribute that four of the participants (Red, Pippie, Joe, and Mary) were in agreement on was the idea of a monthly focus: monthly updates, monthly assessments, monthly responsibilities, and the monthly learning plan section. By having a monthly focus, it helped to break down goals into smaller parts in a sequence, kept everyone on track, and defined the roles of the team very clearly. A few other qualities of the PPP that were liked were the PTs, the skills section, and the pull down menu when entering the data onto the template. It was felt that these were practical and directly related to the student's growth as a student.

Main Difference between the Templates

The participants found there to be a few main differences between the old and new PPP. Red, Pippie, and Spirl found the new PPP to be more of a 'living document' than the previous one. With the old template, the PPP could be written at the beginning of the year and never looked at again all year. This document was revisited and updated many times throughout the year.

The focus of the new PPP was curriculum based, which helped to have curriculum alignment between each of the sections of the PPP. However, Red found that although the PPP offered Learning Objectives from the curriculum, they were not specific enough. She believed the "curriculum focus [was] good, but because they [were] written for all students they often [fell] short of addressing the student's specific needs".

Another difference that Mary discussed is that the new PPP allowed for the breaking down of a goal into a step-by-step sequence. She stated that this helped to encourage more frequent reflection. Joe explained that the components of the template itself were also key differences. For example, using the UbD format, the PT, the Essential Questions, the Overarching Understanding, and the Knowledge and Skills pieces were different from the original template. However, Spirl was not quite sure if the Overarching Understandings and Essential Questions were a necessary part of the PPP.

Red said that having a drop down menu was also a nice feature of the new template, where Joanne stated that another main difference between the two was that the author did not have an option to change the size and fonts on the new template. Finally, Pippie explained that some of the relevant student information was included in the new PPP.

Strength of Old PPP Template

The participants were asked to discuss the strengths of the previous PPP template and what they would take from it to add to the new one. With the original template, a checklist was provided which outlined the different accommodations that a teacher could use with a student. Red, Pippie, Mary and Joe stated that they liked having this list on the PPP and wished it could be incorporated somewhere on new template. Red explained that this list not only helped to give a more accurate picture of the student but was given to the next year's teacher. She therefore took the initiative and made one. She had the teachers fill it out at the beginning and again at the end of the school year and attached it to the PPP. Pippie also believed that it was really important for the adaptations to be passed on from the previous year's teacher to the next year's teacher, and having a specific form to record this information helped with collaboration between teachers. The list also provided further ideas of what could be tried with the student in the future.

Other items that were listed to carry over from the old and add to the new PPP included a place to document which assessments have been done with the student (i.e. who assessed, date, whether report is on file), any diagnoses, identifying relevant information (address, phone number, medication taken), designation/etiology, whether the student has been identified as Level I or II, background information, outside agency support, and educational history. Joanne also commented on the size of the previous PPP and how the new PPP template is "too big, although it's easier to read", but parents seem to like the smaller document better.

Other Recommended Changes to the New Template

Along with the previous suggestions of what the participants would take from the previous PPP and add to the new template, the participants have a few other suggestions. Pippie

would like to see the EA/EST scheduled support time documented somewhere on the template. Spirl would like to see the signatures (of the EST/Special class teacher, teacher, Principal, parent, other) on a separate page other than just on the last page of the document.

Joe and Red have concerns around the UbD format. Joe felt that the teachers she worked with did not use UbD and were not familiar with it. This made working with it a struggle. Red suggested that a:

> UbD in-service should be offered to all teachers, perhaps by school on a PLC day by the consultant/coaches so that all teachers understand the concepts and ideas. This would make PPP writing and updating much easier for us as ESTs… I also think this would be helpful in helping teachers understand the diverse student and the intensive needs student, by seeing how to apply or use the adaptive dimension in their day-to-day teaching. We are struggling with one teacher this year that is in a dream class with one student that is lower in ability but does not have any behavioral issues. She is a typical diverse student. She is not completely capable of doing all the work in her Div. 2 classroom yet wants to try to and likes to follow along. This teacher is insistent that this student should be Intensive Needs and that she should have an EA for all academic classes. Despite various different people in the school trying to explain the adaptive dimension to her, she still insists that she needs to be teaching the same thing to all of her students at the same time and this student does not keep up. I think that workshops or in-servicing on UbD would be time well spent from the point of view of the PPP and all students.

Red also suggested looking at the PPPs in the rest of the province to see if there are any other areas that could be added to the new template as to ensure consistent information is being documented throughout the province.

Monthly progress updates can be quite time consuming. Spirl made the suggestion to make the progress updates every two months, rather than monthly. Her reasoning was that for some students, progress can be quite slow so the teacher therefore ends up repeating what he/she had said in the previous month. Finally, the participants wanted the technical issues to be sorted out. For example Joanne said that the copying and pasting was “a bit more tricky in the new template”, Mary and Joanne would like to be able to change the font size and have more room to type, as the print gets smaller and smaller until you cannot read it.

Management of PPPs

The majority of the participants felt that the new PPP template did not help with managing the number of PPPs they were responsible for. Five of the six participants felt that it took an equal amount of time or longer to manage the PPPs for which they were responsible. Red was the only participant to report that it helped with making it easier to manage her work load because she used to write PPPs for a lot of students and not just those with Intensive Needs. She felt that “the monthly requirements of the template made it easier for her to ‘bug’ the teachers on a consistent basis for information on how that student was doing and what had been happening to teach towards achievement of the PT”. She went on to say that “it has changed [her] impact on working with IN students. It changed the way [she wrote] the PPP and also how [she got] the teacher on board and remind[ed] them to do updates on a consistent basis”.

Pippie felt that as long as the EST had sole responsibility for the PPP instead of the classroom teacher, it would be difficult to manage this aspect of her workload. She felt that she had less time to work directly with the students and more of her time was spent on the paperwork aspect. In past years, she said there seemed to be more paperwork up-front but now it is an

ongoing, time-consuming reality. Joanne, too felt the new PPP template has created more paperwork, but it has given a way to document their work. Spirl described that she is better able to see how her IN students are doing. She ultimately knows them better because of this continued monitoring. Mary, too, felt "more 'on top of' their programming", which has made everyone more accountable. At her school, they review and revise much more frequently than in the past. The teachers therefore "cannot just turn the student over to [her] and expect [her] to do all the programming in pull-out sessions". Joe has strengthened her admiration for these individuals and she "works towards giving them the best tools and experiences to make them as successful as possible during their school career and after the schooling in their adult life". The PPP template has helped with these transitions of the student.

Choosing between Two Documents

Although there were some suggested changes to the new template and the majority of the participants felt that the new PPP template did not help with managing the number of PPPs they were responsible for, it was almost unanimous; five of the six participants wanted to continue using the new PPP template vs. the previous one. Many different reasons were given to support this conclusion.

Mary simply felt that the new template is an "excellent document that covers all the bases". Joanne preferred the new one because in comparison to the old template, it did not take up as much space in the students' files. Joe has "spent the last two years getting used to the new one, the teachers are starting to become more familiar with it, [and] it creates more of a collaborative air" so would therefore prefer the new to the old template. Plus, she stated that it is mandated by the division to use the new one.

Spirl liked how the new template provided more information about the student and was an actual living document. Pippie and Red believed that changing a template is a lot of extra work for the EST and therefore would prefer not to relearn something new again. Red suggested helping the EST with writing better PPPs by giving in-services on getting a deeper understanding of each component of the template. Finally, Pippie was the sole participant who wanted to see a blend of the old and new template.

Final Concluding Remarks from the Participants

Pippie had four different points to share. First, she commented that the percent of time that an EST is delegated should be based on the number of IN students and PPPs that she is responsible for. She felt that a part-time EST has the added stress of completing possibly the same amount of PPPs in comparison to a fulltime EST. For example, it is difficult to do as effective job of nine PPPs at 50% (half) time when compared to an EST with nine PPPs who is designated in that position 100% of the time. Next, she commented that teachers need to become familiar with UbD unit planning before they can be expected to be fully responsible for their student's PPP. Next, she felt that EST roles and responsibilities still need clarifying with administration and regular class teachers, as the actual time required to effectively create, implement, and monitor student progress far exceeds the time some ESTs currently have available. Lastly, she believes that staff is much more accountable with the new PPP in comparison to when the previous one was being used. The monthly meetings have helped with becoming better at collaborating and sharing information about students.

Joanne’s concluding comments were directed towards the researcher’s style of questioning. She suggested that she would have liked to have seen the questionnaire set up with

an outlined rubric to rate the effectiveness of the old and new PPP templates. In her opinion, this would have made the data less subjective, more concrete for the researcher to measure. This was a great suggestion; however, as this research had a qualitative focus, the goal was to gather the thoughts and opinions of each participant in-order to find themes between the responses. Perhaps a more quantitative focus could be delineated in future studies on this topic.

Summary

This chapter has presented the responses of the six participants' Semistructured Questionnaire. The process of those involved, the time commitments of the PPP, the main focus of the PPP, the timeframe of the PPP, the PPP as a living document, and the PPP as a planning tool were first discussed in the beginning of the chapter. The last half focused on student growth, monitoring IN students, student independence, the PPP as a communication tool, and high standards and further teaching. The PPP template comparison section broke down and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the old and new PPP, the main differences between the two templates, and other recommended changes to the new template. Finally, the chapter ended with results on managing the PPPs and the participants making a choice between the two documents and giving their concluding remarks.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE EMERGING THEMES

This chapter is broken into seven different themes which emerged from the research questions: *What patterns and trends emerged in the responses of six Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) Educational Support Teachers (ESTs) to the locally developed Personal Program Plan (PPP) template?* These themes include the following: a team approach, a monthly timeframe, expectations of student achievement, concept of time, teamwork difficulties, and the steep learning curve that occurred. Lastly, ten different recommendations for the SRSD PPP will be made based on the participants' suggestions, which surfaced within the data.

Theme Number One: The Team Approach

A team focus was the first theme to emerge from the data. The Educational Support Teachers (ESTs) unanimously agreed that they were the main facilitators of the PPP process. They may have been the ones to initiate it all, but it was evident that there were other key players involved. The word 'team' was mentioned 21 times throughout the data, 'collaborate' was mentioned 16 times, 'staff' was mentioned 14 times, 'everyone' was mentioned six times, and 'discussion' was mentioned two times throughout the results. The focus shifted from a one-person PPP process to a collaborative team focus.

According to the participants, the team approach truly was collaborative, which brought meaning to the process. Although the EST took more of a facilitator role, the team included the classroom teachers, Educational Assistants (EAs), Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs), Educational Psychologists, parents, and sometimes the student. Red stated that she "like[s] best that there is an accountability aspect for continued updates and that the PPP is not the responsibility of just the EST but instead of that team. It's great having the classroom teacher so

connected to the PPP, as they are the front lines with the students and not the EST. The information the classroom teacher can provide is very valuable. And by having the classroom teacher connected to the PPP it helps the teaching to be much more purposeful and accurate to the student's needs.

The next year's teacher was also involved towards the end of the school year in preparation for transitioning a student. Adaptations and strategies that worked with a student were passed on to the following teacher, which helped with the collaboration process. The new template helped to create this environment. But collaboration and the level of the team member's involvement occurred differently from school to school. Different people were more involved in the process than others for the writing of, monitoring, implementing, and reviewing the PPP. But when the PPP was gone over together, meaningful discussions about students and their specific needs occurred.

In some schools, the EST initiated most of the meetings and collaboration occurred more informally. For example, casual conversations, emails, meetings in staff rooms during recess, in hallways or quickly during teacher prep occurred. Unfortunately, not all of these conversations were documented. One participant felt that it would have been more effective if these informal discussions were recorded somewhere on the PPP. With the previous template, documentation was made a little bit easier. An accommodations checklist was given to the teachers to fill out at the beginning and end of the school year. This list helped to give a more accurate picture of the student and could then be passed onto the next year's teacher. This not only helped with collaboration between the past and new classroom teacher, but it assisted the teacher with knowing where to begin and provided further ideas of what could be tried with the student. If an

adaptations checklist could be added to the new template, this could help ease the collaboration process.

Teacher Involvement

Depending on the school, the team consisted of a mixture of EA's, SLP's, Educational Psychologist's, parents, students, and finally, the classroom teachers. Next to the ESTs, the partnership with the classroom teacher was discussed by all six participants as the key element of successful PPP construction. Furthermore, the word 'teacher' was mentioned 93 times throughout the data.

A teacher worked side by side with the EST to create the PPP. As the template was new, the EST spent a lot of time guiding him or her through this new template. It started with a conversation about an Intensive Need (IN) student's previous goal in terms of progress. From there, the teacher would describe the student's current level, set the goals for the student, and the Performance Task (PT) would be developed. Joe stated that she "guided the teacher through the new template….and the teacher contributed to ideas, helped collect signatures, and implement the PPP". The EST worked together with the teachers to implement the PPP, monitor student progress, review and make revisions when necessary, list ongoing needs, conduct parent meetings, and finalize the PPP at the end of the year. In some schools, the PPP was given to the teacher at the beginning of the year where he or she could document the progress the student was making towards achieving the PT, or lack thereof. The EST tried to meet with the team on a monthly basis, but due to time, meetings seemed to occur most often with the teachers in staff rooms during recess, in the hallway, or during teacher prep. At the end of the year, the EST would involve the next year's teacher to discuss the PPP and where the student was at.

The teachers were such an important part of the team and were appreciated as part of the process for a few reasons. First, teachers worked directly with the students and had valuable information to contribute to the PPP process. Next, the ESTs found that by having them connected to the PPP, it helped make the teaching that much more purposeful and responsive to the student's needs. Third, teachers were able to give input on what the student still needed to learn in order to reach their goal. As a result, some teachers were more involved with implementing the PPP and monitoring the progress of their student. Finally, in some schools, it was the teacher who explained the PPP to the student and facilitated the parent meetings.

Team meetings were held with the school staff to discuss how each person was working towards the year long goal. Although a monthly meeting was the ideal, this did not always occur due to time constraints. Some ESTs tried to meet with each of their teachers for at least an hour per month to monitor the progress of each student where others met whenever the opportunity arose. One participant went to her staff each month and sat with them as they marked and reviewed the PPP together. Another participant did a weekly check-in with her teachers to help keep them on track, whereas another EST asked her teachers to complete a written sheet asking for feedback on the progress towards achieving the PT. Regardless of the approach, the participants spent similar time reviewing the PPPs on a monthly basis. The reviews were seen as positive as it reminded the staff of what was supposed to be taught, what still needed to be taught, and what the student needed to continue working on. The review sometimes revealed that the student could move on. The ESTs were also in favour of the reviews as it helped with compliance from the rest of the team and made it easier for them to obtain information on a consistent basis. Although it was time consuming and a lot of writing and planning that possibly was going to have to change in a month, the meetings helped the team become better at

collaborating, communicating student progress to all the players, adjusting goals for the student, recording feedback from teachers, and being accountable for planning for the next month and responsible for implementing the plan.

Depending on the school and commitment level of the teacher, the PPP template was only somewhat effective when communicating with the school staff team. However, although it was viewed as only somewhat effective, the participants still found value in using the PPP and identified other positive results. For example, in some of the schools, an expectation emerged indicating that teachers had to give their input on a monthly basis. This accountability helped to focus the teachers on a more concentrated and directed effort in regards to IN students. With increased teacher exposure to the PPP and to the PT, responsibility levels of teachers for all students and their education also rose. Teacher involvement and ownership was outlined by the participants as meaningful and one of the main goals that the new PPP template was trying to accomplish.

Parent Involvement

Other people involved in the team process that the participants outlined as significant were the parents, as the term ‘parent’ was mentioned 48 times throughout the results. Parents were given the opportunity to be involved with creating the PPP to give input on what their child should work on at the beginning of the school year (or in spring at some schools). Red explained that “additional information was gathered from the parents and their feedback was added to the PPP document.” Sometimes they helped with setting the goals for the student, but mostly they left it up to the EST to finalize the PT, rubric, and the rest of the document. Most of the parents were “okay” with the goal chosen for their child. One participant developed a summary of the

PPP and gave a copy to the parents at the beginning of the year. Parents tended to not want a full copy of the document as it was just a skeleton outline at that point. It was found that parents preferred to hear the PPP explained to them or for them to see a summary of it during reporting periods, as it was too large a document to digest independently. Depending on the school, as difficult as it was to reach parents, the participants felt that there was merit in trying to engage and include parents and guardians as much as possible throughout the process.

Theme Number Two: A Monthly Timeframe

Although the PPP was designed to facilitate a year's worth of learning, the second theme was in respect to a new timeframe. In the past, the PPP template was created with a goal in mind, and the objective was to reach this goal by the end of June. Unfortunately, the old PPP process included creating the PPP to fulfill Ministry requirements and not necessarily using it until review time came along at the end of the school year. The process has drastically changed with the new PPP. There has been a mind shift, where this template is used as a living document. Joanne explained that "with the previous template, the old PPP would be put in the file and not really looked out again, more or less forgotten about" whereas this PPP was created to set goals, measure the progress of the student, and document the results. They interpreted this as extremely useful in the sense that it gave the team direction and a place to record successes and roadblocks. Determining the skills and knowledge helped the teacher and student understand what the monthly focus was to be, which would help him or her work towards the ultimate goal. Spirl suggested that the "monthly progress updates forced [the team] to continually review the PPP to see whether the goals are obtainable or whether they need to be revised." Ongoing documentation within the learning plan helped keep track of student growth throughout the year

and outlined who was responsible for what. The end goal if the PPP, otherwise known as the PT, was what the student was striving towards.

The focus of the PPP process shifted from a yearlong process or goal to more emphasis on the monthly plan. The term ‘month’ was referenced 64 times throughout the data. The term PT was mentioned 32 times and ‘goal’ was brought up 58 times throughout the results. By having a PT that was a yearlong goal, the student was able to see what skills were needed to be learnt, which allowed him or her to work month by month towards the larger goal.

The Performance Task (PT)

The PT was new from the previous template which meant that the ESTs, teachers, and the rest of the team needed an understanding about what the PT was and what was needed in order for the student to reach particular goals. The unfamiliarity meant that it took time for everyone to learn. The general sense was that the ESTs did not quite feel proficient in writing the PT. If the ESTs had access to exemplary examples of different types of PTs, this could help to ease their tension around writing the “perfect” PT. But despite the learning curve, the participants really enjoyed the concept of the PT and felt that it was meaningful and one of the main focuses of the PPP template.

The idea of achieving the year-end PT could have seemed overwhelming for a student. “Generally for the year my performance tasks were geared to what goal the student could meet by the end of the year, more long-term. However, there are short-term goals built in the knowledge and skills sequence to help them get to their final (bigger) long-term goal” (Joanne). So in order to reach the long term goal, short-term goals were embedded within the plan. This changed the emphasis of the PPP from a yearlong plan to a monthly focus because in order to

reach the end goal, monthly mini goals were needed. Monthly responsibilities were therefore implemented and expected from the team. This included updating the learning plan, completing assessments, teaching the knowledge and skills pieces, monitoring progress, documenting student growth and areas that still needed to be worked on, having team meetings, engaging parent contact, reviewing and/or revising the goals, and updating the template. By having a monthly focus, it broke the long term PT into smaller, less daunting, short, sequential, and achievable steps. It also helped to increase teacher exposure to the PPP and PT, keep everyone on track, have clearly defined roles, ensure that the goals were continually being reviewed and revised, and served as a reminder of the responsibility for all students' education.

There were many people involved with the goal setting, depending on the school. For example, in one school, the EST would choose the goal then run it past the classroom teacher. In other schools, the EST worked with the teachers and sometimes EAs, parents, and the student to set up the goal. Depending on the school, the goal would either be chosen in the spring and confirmed the following school year, or in some schools, the goal would just be created in the fall. The previous year's goal was the starting point and it would be decided from there as to whether or not the same or a different goal was needed. This was also very helpful for the next year's teacher to know where to begin and many teachers recommended that this practice continue.

Goal setting was a good reminder for the entire team to show what had been tried, what worked, or what did not work. "The performance task is always in the back of our (teacher, EA, EST) minds as we work with student(s) so that we are working towards the goals" (Spirl). Another participant felt that the PT should be known by all staff in the school so when opportunities arose in which learning could happen, learning could occur in that moment.

Although one participant reported that teachers still needed their own daily planning tool as the steps to achieve the goals were vaguely written, a summary of the PPP was given to the teachers who had IN students in their classrooms to keep the PT at the back of the their minds. This helped to focus the teachings and reinforce the learning that had been set as the goal for the student. This also tried to ensure that the teacher did not get complacent with the students' daily and weekly program, as it was expected that the student would reach the goal by the end of June. The PPP assisted with accountability of team members in doing their part to help the student achieve this goal. In some cases, it worked well for teachers to informally discuss the goals with each individual student but in other cases, such discussions were not as helpful. One of the participants reported that it was more effective discussing goals with older students than with the younger ones.

There were two focuses of the PPP. A PPPI was used with a student who was following the regular curriculum but was having behavioural issues. The PT was therefore behaviour based. A PPPII was intended for a student who was not following regular curriculum and therefore the PT was curriculum centered. One participant noted that if the PPP was focused on behaviour (PPPI), it was difficult to connect the goal to the curricular outcomes within the classroom, as not all the teachers were comfortable with the format just yet. It was also reported that if the PT was behaviour based, it may work better for the goal to be a shorter focus for those students in comparison to those whose PPP had an academic focus. For example, the goal or PT could be aimed to be reached in three months vs. at the end of the school year.

Theme Number Three: Expectations of the Student

The third theme that occurred throughout the data was with respect to how the PPP brought a high standard to all students. The term rubric was used 31 times throughout the text, achievement (referenced in the context of a higher standard) was used 17 times, growth was used eight, relevant was used six times, independence was used five, expectations was used four times, purposeful was used three, and (deeper) understanding was used twice. Together, these terms made a total of 76, which when put altogether, described the expectation placed on the student. High standards may encourage deeper understandings of real, purposeful, relevant goals, which focused on skill development that would serve a lifelong function for the student. It addressed the student's needs and outlined what he or she was working towards. The Understanding by Design (UbD) format helped with this, by guiding the PT. Students could see and understand what the goal was that he or she was working on and had time to work towards it. Whether or not the PPP was effectively used to assist in achieving a higher level of independence in learning seemed dependent on the student and the work of the team. The rubric helped the school team remain focused towards the PT as well as short-term and long-term goals.

The rubric (Appendix M) was extremely significant for the participants. The rubric was reviewed monthly and was used to track and monitor the growth of the student throughout the year. Some ESTs were in charge of marking the rubric where in other schools, the classroom teacher was asked to mark it. This way, the teacher could comment on what skills were taught during the past month to help achieve the PT and monitor the progress of the student. In those cases, the EST would then transfer the information onto the PPP document. The rubric, along with the assessment notes, was used to help refocus the goals and guide the date and time of the

next meeting between the EST and the teachers. The ESTs indicated that the assessment notes were helpful for monitoring progress, adjusting goals, and recording feedback from teachers.

The rubric was revisited to remind everyone involved with that student of the focus of the PT and the desired goals. “The rubrics are an effective way to show the student where they are at and where we would like them to be” (Spirl). Expectations on the rubric were set to ensure that a high standard would be achieved. For example, Joanne stated that “setting a goal [on the rubric] that’s higher to achieve than we expect is good because it perhaps motivate the student and teacher to ‘get the job done!’” The rubrics were created individually and worked on daily or weekly, depending on the EST’s available time. This helped to make the PPP relevant, effective, and accurately reflect the learning of the student. Although developing the rubrics took more time being spent on the PPP than in previous years, the rubric would assure that by having a "1" (consistently) as a high standard, striving to achieve a “4” (almost always did not) was not seen to be good enough. According to Red, just “’OK’ is not enough”. However, in some cases, the rubric helped to indicate that the PT was indeed set a little too high. The goal would then either be carried over to the next school year or would be revisited to see what adjustments could be made. In some schools, this happened quite often where the original PT drastically changed by the time June came. The specific skills would therefore need to be broken down to smaller, more achievable steps. Red reported “tweaking” the PT twice throughout the year but not because the goal was too high. She commented that the particular student kept achieving the goals set at Level 1 of the rubric. In this case, new goals were created and put in place for the student. The rubric was found to be the most effective part of the PPP template by the participants to show students, teachers, and parents where the student is at and where the student is headed.

Although the rubric is easily understood and recommended to be kept within the template, there are many areas on the new PPP template which also directly indicate whether or not growth has occurred with a student. For example, the assessment notes, the monthly area for comments, documenting the knowledge and skills that have been worked on, and assessment results all give information about a student's progress and encourage a deep understanding of real, purposeful goals. Although the rubric is parent-friendly, one participant created a checklist that corresponded with the rubric and asked the teachers to mark it. This helped to clearly outline each month how the student was improving. Based on the conversations with the team about how the student was progressing, goals were adjusted and feedback was recorded. As the needs changed and as the student succeeded with certain skills, new focused, purposeful lessons were planned and delivered, which also allowed for further growth. Behaviours and achievement levels at the beginning of the year were also compared to notes at the end of the year, and it was decided as to whether or not the student achieved the PT. By having a yearlong goal, the ESTs reported that it was easier to see what skills needed to be taught each month, which helped to direct the teaching that happened, ensuring it was relevant and purposeful. This also helped indicate whether or not growth occurred throughout the year.

Overall, the ESTs found the PPP template to be more effective because they found themselves to be more responsible for documenting, monitoring, changing short-term goals and learning objectives, reviewing the rubric, updating progress, tweaking the PT, and planning for next month with this new template. The PPP helped keep everyone accountable to do their part in helping the student become an independent adult, which ultimately was the overall goal for the student. One participant discussed showing a student his or her weekly or monthly goals and the rubric, indicating that it was not necessarily 'used effectively enough to assist the student in

achieving a higher level of independence in their learning'. However, another participant reported just the opposite, in that her PPPs were shared with the students, which did help to increase student independence. The discrepancy between these two opinions may depend on number of factors, which may include school demographics, motivation of the teacher and student, the type of PT given to the student, and/or the age of the student with the PPP. The rubric itself may also have affected the student's ability to achieve independence. For example, if the rubric included skills such as 'organization, maintain focus, and initiating' this may have helped narrow down the skills to assist the student with becoming more independent. By having the classroom teacher connected to the PPP, it helped the teaching to be much more purposeful and directed towards the student's needs.

Theme Number Four: The Concept of Time

Time Expectations

This first theme that emerged within this section that was a source of tension for the participants is in relation to the concept of time. The term 'time' was used in 54 occasions throughout the results. In comparison to the previous PPP template, the time factor was an unexpected, overwhelming, extreme difference from what the ESTs were used to. The ESTs had a difficult time juggling their work load to accommodate all of the demands that the PPP placed on not only the EST but the entire team involved in that student's life. Numerous reasons were given as to why there was an increase.

Implementation Difficulties

With the previous template, the ESTs filled out the PPP and either gave it to the classroom teacher or kept it with them in the student's file. In most cases, the document was not referred to again until the end of the school year. The paperwork side of the new process therefore seemed to be more time consuming upfront. With the present template, however, the PPP was used as a living document, with a monthly 'check-in' focus. Pippie commented that:

> I had less time to work directly with students and spent a lot more time working on paperwork. In past years, paperwork was more time-consuming at the beginning and end of the school year. Now, it seems to be more ongoing, but there just isn't enough time to effectively keep up with it.

She also acknowledged that:

> It also took longer because it was almost impossible to meet with the staff as a group which meant meeting with each staff member individually. The PPP needed to be be visited monthly, which also increased time spent working on updating info.

This was a substantial change in the amount of time that the ESTs were used to, thus paper work seemed to be an ongoing, time-consuming reality.

The ESTs needed to be creative with how they implemented, monitored, and reviewed the PPP. Implementation of the PPP was not easy to do on a consistent schedule and was therefore difficult for the participants to measure. Pippie suggested that it was "really difficult to meet with teachers on a regular basis and work with students on a consistent schedule." Implementation was therefore not something that happened during a specific subject or time slot, but was ongoing over the course of the day. The participants reported that on average, they spent about an hour per teacher per PPP. But the amount of time it took to implement the PPP was

dependent on the student, the teacher, and EA involvement. Each member of the team needed to be on board with the PT and take an active role in working towards achieving it.

Monthly Commitments

The lifespan of the PPP was aimed to be a school year's worth of learning. The feelings of the participants were that this timeframe was ideal as the classroom teacher is with the student the same length of time as the PPP focus. According to Joe, "the monthly responsibilities [kept] everyone on track and define[d] the roles of the team very clearly." Although this was an effective timeframe, it was none-the-less time-consuming and success was dependent on student success. This length of time seemed to allow for the EST and the team to concentrate on the goal, track progress, and collaborate on an ongoing basis. This timeframe provided a focus for all of the school staff who were involved with the student. It allowed ample time for strategies, skills, and knowledge pieces to be implemented.

However, in order to meet the goal at the end of the year, the template was broken into monthly sections. The participants reported that it was difficult to find time to engage in the collaborative process with the key stakeholders to meet this timeframe. The collaboration process in itself was more time consuming than in the past, as monthly collaboration did not occur with the old template. The monthly meetings, monitoring, and updating was a new concept so not only did the ESTs find it an adjustment, but they found it hard to meet with teachers on a regular basis, meet with the entire team, and meet in a formal meeting setting. The meetings therefore did not always occur. One participant suggested that if the ESTs were allotted more planning time, they could regularly meet with the team to discuss how everyone was working towards the common yearlong goal, the monthly progress, and the skills that have been taught or

still need to be taught. But as previously suggested, for specific students, perhaps an option could be for the team meeting to be scheduled every second month. This may help with the collaboration process.

The ongoing monitoring and reviewing of the progress of the student was also a new concept in respect to the PPP, as tracking and updating did not usually occur with the previous template. The team was helpful with this, but the amount of time spent documenting varied as according to Spirl, “some teachers were more willing to document than others”. Monthly reviews were deemed ideal as well as during report card time but the time it took to review the PPPs averaged about three to five hours per month, depending on the amount of PPPs the participants were responsible for. In comparison to previous years, five of the six participants felt that it took an equal amount of time or longer to manage the amount of PPPs for which they were responsible.

Overall, the participants felt that more time was spent on developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing progress updates than with the previous template. However, regardless of the amount of time that it took, the majority of the participants (four out of six) thought that this was an effective planning tool and an effective period of time that it was geared towards. They believed that this template allowed for student programming to be relevant, for a collaborative process to occur, for goals to be broken down into smaller segments. These things served to help keep accountability within the team, and to document a year’s work of work, regardless of the amount of time and work it created for the EST and classroom teacher.

Theme Number Five: Teamwork Difficulties

Working with Teachers

As much as the ESTs enjoyed working with the classroom teachers, there were quite a few struggles outlined by the participants in regards to working with the team, specifically with some of the teachers. Working with teachers was the fifth theme to emerge.

The entire PPP process was said to be initiated by each of the ESTs. They were the ones to bring the other team members into the process and help them to engage with the PPP. Depending on the school and the specific teacher, the level of cooperation varied. Some of the teachers followed the skills listed on the PPP where others looked at it as people who were not involved (i.e. division experts) trying to 'tell them what to do'. Some of the participants felt like they had to 'bug' their teachers on a consistent basis for information on how a student was doing and what had been happening within the classroom to help move them towards achievement of the PT. It is therefore very important and recommended to have the teachers as part of the PPP process from the beginning.

One of the participants felt that some of the teachers were still unclear on the roles and responsibilities of an EST. The EST is there to support the classroom teacher and their struggling students and to help the teacher with the PPP process. But the reality was that some teachers did not have sole responsibility for the PPP and were not overly active during the process. Most of the conversations and meetings were initiated by the EST with the classroom teacher. Some ESTs struggled with their staff using the PPP as a living document as some were more willing and/or able to document than others. The monitoring and supporting the IN student with the PPP was also dependent on whether or not the teacher bought into the idea. In order to find success, the ESTs needed to change their approach on how they got teachers on board and get their

updates on a consistent basis. They both needed to be flexible with their thinking and their timetable in order to accommodate their students' needs. It was also reported that a downside of the PPP was that teachers still needed to do the day to day planning on their own, which was not evident on the PPP. As a result, teachers were using their own daily planning tool vs. the PPP as a daily planning tool. If a consistent, top down message regarding the importance of the PPP template and the role of the EST came from the school administration team, this may help teachers to own the PPP for their IN students, initiate the conversations as to how the EST can support their teaching, and to use it for daily documentation.

The new template in itself was also a struggle for the EST with classroom teachers. As there were more sections to look at (i.e. the background information, essential questions, understandings, the PT, and knowledge and skills components) in comparison to the previous template, more thought was needed to complete each of the different areas, as it took more effort to use correct wording and to try and tie each of the sections together (i.e. areas of impact, PT, overarching understandings, knowledge and skills). Some of the 'veteran' teachers were reported as just starting to become more familiar with the PPP template whereas other teachers did not use the UbD format at all. According to one participant, some teachers were unwilling to change their ways. It was, however, found that the "new teachers" had a better understanding of the UbD format, as this was what their training was based on. The ESTs therefore had to help the teachers with this learning curve as the PPP was a lot of work and time for the teachers. Although UbD in-services are now offered within the school division, not all teachers chose to attend. So in order to support the EST, if attendance of an UbD in-service could be made mandatory to those teachers who specifically have IN students in their classrooms, this could help save the ESTs time and help to close the learning gap for those teachers. If the expectation is that a teacher is to

be fully responsible for the PPP, mandatory training for teachers might be one way to facilitate the process.

Working with Parents

Parents were invited into the process on an ongoing basis, but were not necessarily active members. Parent involvement was reported as not being consistent across the school division. In some schools, parents were rarely involved in the PPP process as well as in their children's education at all. The participants reported that they tried to have regular conversations to review the PPP with parents, either monthly or during each assessment period, but this did not always regularly occur because parents did not always show up for the meetings. Unfortunately, as Joe reported, the parents who "did [attend] just nodded and signed" the document. A couple of participants felt that the PPP was still beyond many of the parents' understanding and they had to explain it in very simple steps as to how their child would be helped. Joanne reported that the document was too technical and "some parents [may have felt] overwhelmed and maybe a bit intimidated with some of the "jargon" that us teachers use." Some of the information presented in the PPP is not overly relevant because parents do not understand the UbD format, which can make it quite overwhelming for parents. However, it was evident in the data that, according to the ESTs, the parents seemed to take away the message that everyone involved wanted to see their child succeed.

As a whole, a few participants felt that the PPP template was an ineffective document when communicating with parents. However, there were different sections of the PPP that parents did find easier to understand. When parents did attend meetings, they were accepting of the yearlong goal and found it easier to understand the PT and the skills and knowledge section

vs. the UbD format. But the majority of the participants felt that the rubric (Appendix M) was the section that parents gravitated towards the most. The rubric was found to be quite effective with communicating with parents and was easy for them to understand. Joanne explained that "the rubrics are clear and a good way to measure current/past achievement that most [parents] can understand. They also have a clear picture of what we worked on throughout each month." A couple participants photocopied the rubric, scored it, and then sent it home at each reporting period. The teachers and EAs also had a hardcopy as well as an electronic version to help ensure everyone was on the same page and could input data at all times. One participant created a checklist that corresponded with the rubric and asked her teachers to fill it out. This was helpful during the monthly team meetings and would give a clearer picture as to what was worked on throughout the month. The rubric was useful to outline where the child was at, to measure past and current achievement, and to help determine what strategies and other interventions were needed. It was also reported as successful in sharing progress and bridging communication with parents on the progress of their child, which helped to guide the meetings and refocus goals when necessary.

When parents were involved in the process, Red reported that it was encouraging for them to see who all was working with their child on an ongoing basis and to understand that together they were all working towards a common goal of seeing their child succeed in life. Parents generally seemed pleased with the progress of their child and could see the steps that were being taken to ensure ongoing positive growth. One of the goals is to increase parent involvement and make the template parent friendly. Ideally, it would be best to have the parents onboard from the beginning of the process, but one strategy that was tried involved the school holding onto the report card or PPP until the parent comes into the parent-teacher interview. The

schools that have tried this approach reported a greater success rate with getting their parents to come into the school to meet with the school staff.

Theme Number Six: A Learning Curve

Structure of the PPP

The idea of a new PPP template evolved out of an action research project. The project began in August 2008 and continued for one year. During that year, the template was continuously changing. The final draft has been completed and is currently in use. During the process, the ESTs had to constantly adapt to the current template that was being presented to them. They reported that there were more sections to look at (i.e. the background information, essential questions, understandings, the PT, and knowledge and skills components) in comparison to the old template. Pippie reported that in the beginning, she "struggle[ed] with wording and understanding the format while writing [the] PPPs." The amount of time that it took the participants to complete the different components of the PPP varied. More thought was needed to complete each of the different areas, as it took more effort to use correct wording and to try and tie each of the sections together (i.e. areas of impact, PT, overarching understandings, knowledge and skills). Flexibility and time was therefore needed by the participants to relearn the newest and latest template.

Understanding by Design (UbD) Format

The content of the template was original, but the design of it, too, was a newer concept that the participants needed to learn. The format was based on UbD, which was found to be complicated. This meant that more time was spent understanding what was expected, as it

involved a complete shift in thinking. “More time [was spent] than previous years [on the PPP] due to the different format, learning something new; more time was spent thinking of the right wording; more time was spent trying to tie everything together such as the areas of impact, performance task, overarching understandings, and knowledge and skills; also, more time was spent trying to monitor and updating monthly” (Spirl). Not only did the participants need to learn the format, but so did the teachers who were not familiar with UbD. It was felt that many of the teachers were not familiar with the planning tool, but working with newly hired teachers was much easier, as they had a greater understanding of UbD as a unit planning tool. One of the participants recommended to change the PPP format to “not include the UbD format because all the teachers [she] works with do not use this and aren’t familiar with it” (Joe). However, another participant reported that even with teachers who were not familiar with the tool, they were still able to go through the PPP together and have meaningful discussions about the student and his or her specific needs.

More time was spent on the new PPP because of unfamiliarity with UbD and the new PPP template. It was felt that the participants had less time to work directly with the students as more time was spent on understanding the UbD format, the PPP template, and completing the paperwork. Overall, the new PPP template and design was a learning curve for the participants and therefore more time consuming.

Summary

There were six main themes that emerged with respect to the research question. The first theme was in regards to a team approach. Both teacher and parent involvement was discussed. The second theme to emerge was around the monthly timeframe. Third, the

expectation of student achievement was discussed. The rubric was discussed in length, emphasizing how it was connected to student achievement. The fourth theme was concerning the concept of time. Apprehensions with the amount of time expected of the participants, implementation difficulties, and the monthly commitments were discussed. The fifth theme to emerge was regarding teamwork difficulties, both with working with teachers and parents. Finally, the steep learning curve was discussed with respect to the structure of the PPP and the UbD format.

Future Recommendations

The participants offered recommendations to best improve the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) PPP template. Suggestions were made in regards to the technical side of the template, expectations of the workload, time commitments, parent involvement, specific sections of the PPP, and provincial standards.

The first suggestion was in respect to having more relevant personal information available on the template. This could include the assessments that have been previously completed with the student. For example, the name of the assessment, who did the assessing, date of assessment, and whether or not a report was on file. Other information might include basic identifying information (i.e. address, contact numbers, medication taken), if the student has any diagnoses, whether the student has been identified as Level I or II for the Ministry, some pertinent background information (i.e. if in foster care, social service involvement), outside agency support, EA/EST scheduled support time, and finally, educational history of the student.

Next, the participants would like to see an adaptations checklist attached to the template. This would allow for future teachers, either in the same school or at another school, to identify

which strategies have been tried, which worked well, and those that did not work well for the student. This could help ease the collaboration process as well as assist the teacher with knowing where to begin.

The third suggestion was in regards to the size of the document. It was suggested that the printed PPP hardcopy was just too big. Although it proved easier to read, parents seemed to like the previous size, as it was a smaller document. The format of the printed copy is the result of the computer program that is used to create the document. Other issues that stemmed from the program included issues with copying and pasting, not being able to change the font size, where the lines for signature are located, and not having enough room to type, as the print would decrease in size until it could not be read anymore. Unfortunately, these technical glitches are out of the control of the creators of the PPPs and could only be fixed if new software was used.

The fourth suggestion that was made is in regards to the number of PPPs that an EST is responsible for. Regardless of the amount of time one is designated in the position, they would need to complete a PPP for each IN student. One participant felt that the number of PPPs that are expected to be completed should be directly correlated to the percent of time that the EST is delegated for. She felt that a part-time EST had the added stress of completing possibly the same amount of PPPs as a fulltime EST. Within a varying time frame, the EST is responsible for all IN students, regardless of the percentage of time they are allocated to the job. The commitment of agreeing to be in the position mixed with the love for the job as well as wanting what is best for the students, might weigh heavily and may add stress to needing to reach every IN student. With that being said, it is extremely important for and therefore recommended by the participants to have the teachers as part of the PPP process from the beginning. One of the EST's primary roles is to support the teachers. By having the teachers take ownership over the PPP, this would have

to alleviate some of the stress of completing each PPP regardless of the amount of time the EST is designated in the position, which was the fifth suggestion.

The positive impact of parent involvement is a common belief in education. Many schools within the division have struggled with getting their parents into the building for not only regular team meetings, but even with a single meeting. One strategy that a few schools are trying is to hold onto the report card or PPP until the parent physically comes to the parent-teacher interview. The schools that have tried this approach reported a greater success rate with getting their parents to come into the school to meet with the school staff and feel that this strategy has been beneficial for not only the team, but for the student as well. By having parents attend parent-teacher meetings, it builds the connection between home and school, as well as adds a sense of pride to the student that a parent came to see his or her work and accomplishments. The sixth suggestion was to continue to develop the parent-school relationship.

For some students, progress can be quite slow. As a result, the teacher would end up repeating what he or she had reported during the previous month's meeting. In these cases, the monthly reports were almost seen as too frequent. The seventh suggestion by the participants is therefore to give the team a choice as to whether or not a monthly meeting is indeed needed. This could be determine on a monthly basis as to whether or not the meeting would be productive or if stretching it to the next month for those specific students might be a more effective use of time. At the monthly meeting, the rubric is discussed in depth. The consensus from the participants is that out of all of the sections of the PPP, this would be the section they would like to keep if further changes were to be made to the template. The rubric is a great way to evaluate student progress on specific skills and therefore is the eighth suggestion by the participants.

The ninth suggestion was in respect to the steep learning curve that the ESTs felt. Not only did they have to individually learn UbD in order to make sense of the template, but found themselves in a teaching role with most of the teachers who had an IN student in his or her classroom. From the point of view of the participants, they felt that teachers need to become familiar with the UbD unit planning. If teachers are expected to fully take responsible for their student's PPP, they need to understand it. One of the participants suggested that an UbD in-service could be offered to all teachers, ESTs included, during a Professional Learning Community (PLC) day by those in a Consultant or Coaching role, or by those who are most familiar with UbD. Once the Consultants heard that people were asking for this training, an in-service was indeed provided. However, not many teachers attended. But if attendance of this in-service was made mandatory to those teachers who have IN students in their classrooms, this could help save the ESTs time and help to close the learning gap for those teachers.

The final suggestion made by the participants had more of a global perspective. It was suggested that the participants are given more opportunities to explore and examine the PPP templates that other school divisions across the province are using. This experience would help to see if the locally developed template is missing any key sections and if anything else could be added. This would also help to ensure that consistent information was being documented across the province.

Summary

Throughout this last section, numerous recommendations were made in respect to the final research question. Suggestions were made in regards to adding more personal information and an adaptations checklist to the template, as well as fixing other technical glitches,

reevaluating the expectations of the workload, ownership and involvement of those involved (or not involved) with the template, time commitments and learning curve that the new template has brought, and focusing on more of a provincial perspective.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Throughout the course of this research, many different and important topics have emerged. Such topics include the history of special education, the history of the Personal Program Plan (PPP), what the PPP template looks like in other countries, the legalities of the PPP, past teacher responses to the PPP within Saskatchewan (SK), the current PPP template within SK, as well as the template that the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) has created. The current study looked at six SRSD Educational Support Teachers' (ESTs') responses to the PPP template that the SRSD designed, developed, and implemented. Areas of interest included the process of those involved, time commitments of the PPP, main focus of the PPP, the timeframe of the PPP, the PPP as a living document, the PPP as a planning tool, student growth, monitoring Intensive Need (IN) students, and student independence. Other key ideas that were focused on include the PPP as a communication tool, high standards and further teaching, a comparison of the new PPP template with the old, management of the PPPs, and choosing between the old and new document.

With a qualitative research context, semistructured interview questions were developed and completed. Through the method of content analysis, the data were analyzed and themes emerged, with respect to the research question. Six themes emerged: (1) a team approach, where teacher and parent involvement was discussed; (2) the monthly timeframe; and (3) expectation of student achievement, where student achievement was directly correlated with the rubric; (4) the concept of time, apprehensions with the amount of time expected of the participants, implementation difficulties, and the monthly commitments; (5) teamwork difficulties, both with working with teachers and parents, and (6) the learning curve of the template, with respect to the Understanding by Design (UbD) format. Numerous recommendations also surfaced. Suggestions

included adding more personal information and an adaptations checklist to the template, fixing the technical glitches, reevaluating the expectations of the workload, ownership and involvement of those involved (or not involved) with the template, realistic time commitments, and the steep learning curve that the new template brought, as well as focusing on more of a provincial perspective.

Comparison of Research Findings

In past research, it was found that there was a "perceived ineffectiveness" (Dollar, 2006, p. 207) of the PPP, which included criticisms towards the PPPs being poorly written, a confusion of responsibilities, lack of consultation with the classroom teachers, goals and objectives that were not measurable or attainable, as well as an ineffective use of time. An "ineffectiveness caused by a teacher's workload" (Dollar, 2006, p. 208) was also discovered. More themes that emerged from other previous research included the need to be flexible with parents, resource room teachers having large workloads, EAs not being able to attend PPP meetings, need for rubrics to be discussed within the context of a PPP meeting, having different knowledge bases and levels of expertise represented in a PPP team, using visual aids during the PPP meeting, and working with the dual role of resource room teacher and Vice Principal (Demmans, 2009).

Between these two studies, Demmans (2009) and Dollar (2006), there has been some consistency between the findings in the research. It is, however, interesting to see the patterns that have emerged across all three studies as well as what issues are no longer apparent. For example, as the current PPP template was such an incredible learning curve for the participants, there was the risk that the PPP would be poorly written during the first year when the ESTs learned the template. But as time passed, this was not as much of an issue as indicated in previous research, as the added expectation of student achievement and collaboration helped to

create appropriate goals for the PPP. Participants have, however, expressed a need for exemplary examples of Performance Tasks (PTs) to be placed in an accessible communal bank to help ensure they continue on the right path.

By having a monthly focus, the PT (i.e. the goal or objective) is constantly being monitored to see if it is attainable. The rubric acts as a visual aid to help ensure that this is occurring. Although there was a previous need stated for the rubric to be discussed within the context of a PPP meeting, this too, is no longer lacking. With the new template, the rubric is one of the main sections of the PPP that is brought forward within the meeting and is reviewed and discussed and directly correlates to student achievement.

A lack of consultation with the classroom teachers also does not seem to be an issue as a result of the process the SRSD has implemented. Consultation occurs regularly on a monthly basis and the team approach that is implemented has the expectation of both teacher and parent involvement. As far as the PPP being an 'ineffective use' of time, it is actually just the opposite. Although the monthly time frame had both pros and cons, it was far from an "ineffective use" of time. The amount of time expected of the participants was rated as considerable, with one PPP reporting to take anywhere from three to eight hours to develop, and more time, again, spent on monitoring, implementing, and reviewing each PPP. Although time consuming, participants found meaning in this work. They believed that the template had important purpose in the life of a child, that it should be used as a living document, that it encouraged collaboration with the team, and that it focused positively on student progress.

Previous research reported some confusion with responsibilities. The new template seems to have alleviated this issue to some extent, as there is an identified section on the template that outlines who is responsible for what. Frustrations do, however, still occur at times in respect to the ownership of the template as well as when working with parents. As previously found in the

research, ESTs still need to be flexible with parents. Teamwork difficulties were outlined as an issue when working with both teachers and parents, but with that being said, both parents and teachers are an important part of the team and are key stakeholders within the collaboration process. Unlike past concerns, the EAs are welcome to attend the PPP meetings and different knowledge bases and levels of expertise are represented in a PPP team.

Another main concern outlined in previous data has been the large workloads of resource room teachers. The current template still increases the tensions of not having enough time within a day to get everything accomplished that needs to get accomplished, with students, teachers, parents, EAs, and administration all demanding a piece of an EST's time. Difficulties surrounding implementation and the monthly time commitments were of main concern to the participants, as well as the time it took for them and classroom teachers to learn the new format. But regardless of these findings and concerns, the majority of the participants would continue using the new template because they believe in it.

Implications

There are many implications that may occur across the different levels of the school divisions based on this research. First, like the IEP used in New Zealand, the participants felt that the PPP was most useful as a living document. This was a mind shift for the participants, as the old template was looked at only a couple of times during the school year. . According to one of the participants,

> In the past, PPPs were carefully developed skill analysis taking much of our time. Once the PPP was developed and the materials decided on, I found that often the actual PPP would not be look at until year end when a yearend evaluative comment would be made

> prior to filling them in their files. The new format ensures that the PPP is worked with on an ongoing basis. I like the fact that I can say that we "have" to do monthly reviews. I don't feel like I am hounding the teachers for their input but rather their input is now an expectation (Red).

The new PPP template was used as a tool to help the participants be more accountable for documenting, monitoring, evaluating, and recording the students' progress or lack of progress. Monthly meetings were held to plan for the following month, review skills that had been or still needed to be taught, and discuss different strategies that have been useful as well as what new ones the team could try in the future. Changes to short-term goals, learning objectives, and/or the PT could be updated or changed right on the template, which allowed the PPP to be a working, living document. This document acted as a reminder of the focus of the program, the goals that they were hoping to achieve within that school year, and whether or not those goals and/or PT needed to be revised part way through. As a result, student progress was reflected on more frequently.

By using the PPP as a living document, it also enhanced the collaboration process. Although the ESTs found that some teachers were more willing and/or able to document than others, the monthly meetings helped ensure that everyone was working towards the same goal. The PPP was continually reviewed collaboratively on a monthly basis by, at minimum, the EST with the classroom teacher, to see whether or not the goals were attainable or if they needed to be revised. By using the document as a living document, the new PPP template stimulated the collaborative atmosphere, inviting the opportunity for monthly dialogue to occur about student progress.

Second, the PPP is developed and implemented by a collaborative team. Similar to the process in the USA, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand, Finland, and Singapore, within SK the collaborative team consists of many different individuals from within as well as outside of the school division. These people may include the student, parent(s)/guardian(s), teacher(s), administrator(s), EST, EA, Consultant, SLP, Psychologist/Psychometrist, OT, Social Worker, PT, Counsellor, as well as people from Health, Justice, and other Community Resources (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b). Best practice would therefore be to have the parent/guardian as part of the initial team planning meeting. However, this was not always the case.

According to the participants, parent involvement varied, depending on which school the participant worked at. A couple of the participants felt that parents rarely got involved with the process. One participant stated that many of the parents were “not very involved in their children's education”. Another participant went as far as saying that “families treat the school as a drop in center or place to store their children for a month”. This perception is not an overly positive perception of the involvement of parents. But according to best practice, parents should be an equal part of the collaborative school team when developing and implementing the PPP. Joanne was the only participant to report that parents in her school were given the opportunity to offer input towards the development of the PPP. But she then went on to say that most parents chose to have her set the goals (PT), rubrics, and other parts of the PPP. Pippie described having regular conversations with her IN students’ parents, either on a monthly basis or during each assessment period. However, these conversations occurred after the PPP had been developed, during the implementation stage. Other participants also invited parents into the process on an ongoing basis, but found that parents were not necessarily active members. Again, this invitation

occurred after the PPP had already been developed. When a meeting was scheduled, Joe had found that most of the parents did not attend the scheduled meetings and those who did, usually just nodded and signed the document in agreement, not necessarily contributing to the decisions and/or process.

As far as the template was concerned, not all of the participants felt that the PPP template was an effective tool for communicating with parents. Different sections of the PPP seemed to be easier for parents to understand than others. Parents found it easier to understand the PT and the skills and knowledge section vs. the UbD format. But the majority of the participants felt that the rubric was the section that parents gravitated towards the most. The rubric (Appendix M) was found to be quite effective with communicating with parents and was easy for them to understand. A couple of participants photocopied the rubric, scored it, and then sent it home at each reporting period. One participant created a checklist that corresponded with the rubric and asked her teachers to fill it out. This was helpful during the monthly team meetings and would give a clearer picture as to what was worked on throughout the month. The rubric was useful to outline where the child was at, to measure past and current achievement, and to help determine what strategies and other interventions were needed. This helped to communicate the progress of the child to the parents. The rubric is a key piece of the template used as a tool to communicate with parents.

Third, the new PPP template demanded more of the participant's time than in previous years, which was quite overwhelming for the participants. The learning curve of the UbD format demanded a shift in thinking when it came to writing the new template. There was more writing involved and the monthly time commitment as well as the time it took to develop, monitor, implement, and review the PPP was unexpected. The ESTs had a difficult time juggling their

work load to accommodate all of the demands that the PPP placed on not only the EST but the entire team involved in the process. Although this was a significant change for them, the participants were willing to put in the extra time because they believed in this document. They believed that this new PPP was an effective planning tool that allowed for documentation to occur, for student programming to be relevant, for a collaborative process to transpire, for goals to be attainable, and in the end, results were indeed achieved. Regardless of the amount of time and work it created for the EST and classroom teacher, dedication to the process was given, which ultimately indicated that value was placed in the process. This dedication paralleled the results that the students achieved.

Fourth, when technology works, it has its advantages. However, when there are glitches with software, it can be problematic. The participants felt this stress. The software that was used to create the PPP has certain settings that cannot be changed. For one, the printed PPP hardcopy was set at a certain size, which was thought to be too big. Although it proved easier to read, parents seemed to like the previous size, as it was a smaller document. Secondly, the participants could not copy and paste text, which resulted with the ESTs using more time to fill out the document. Lastly, the font size could not be changed and as one typed and the number of characters in a specific area increased, the print would decrease in size until it could not be read anymore. Unfortunately, these technical glitches are out of the control of those who created the template and could only be fixed if new software was used. One solution would be to create a template that was not dependent on software until all of the glitches have been worked out. However, as this has become a society dependent on technology, an EST may prefer having the template online, even with these issues. Personal choice would come into play as to whether or

not one would choose to persevere with the template as is, or choose a paper copy where glitches could be fixed with a simple application of whiteout.

Lastly, having high expectations of achievement of student success is an underlying philosophy of the PPP. This belief helps to shape the goals of the PPP and expectations of the student. Having high standards helps drive the participants and teachers through the entire process. However, if goals are set either too high or too low, this may impact the motivation of the student. Ultimately, there needs to be sensitivity towards and training regarding zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978; Berk & Winsler, 1995). With the PPP being a living document, the 'perfect' document is constantly being sought after by the ESTs, which in itself is worthy of mention. Time is taken to continually make adjustments to enhance the document to assist the student with reaching the goals. Flexibility is therefore a key piece of the picture, which was apparent from the beginning. Depending on the needs of the student, there is the choice to place a student on a PPPI (for those who follow regular curriculum but have behavioural issues) or on a PPPII (for those not able to follow regular curriculum). By having high expectations, flexible thinking, and a living document, the PPP can specifically be tailored to meet the needs of students who have special needs.

Future Research

Rich opportunities for future research arose during the course of this study. First, although teachers are brought into the conversation by participant comments, it is the teachers who are most connected with the student. When a teacher notices that a student is struggling more than their typical peer, either academically or behaviourally, it is the teacher who approaches the EST for extra assistance. Although the EST supports both the student and the

teacher, it is ultimately the teacher who works directly with the student day in and day out. If a student's needs are too intense, a decision is then made by the team as to whether or not he or she is placed on a PPP. As there are many hours dedicated by the EST to the PPP process, this research may help bring more appreciation and awareness to the process. It may help to identify the significance and importance of using the new PPP as it is intended, as a living document. Many hours go into the process of completing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing the PPP and ideally, teachers should be moving in the direction of taking over this responsibility. However, a deeper understanding of the UbD format is needed in order for teachers to be fully comfortable with the new template. Further research could be warranted with respect to teacher involvement with the PPP process to acquire an understanding of how teachers within not only the SRSD, but other SK school divisions view their role in the PPP process within the different stages (i.e. development, implementation, monitoring). The tensions and joys that they face when involved in this process could also be explored, as well as the amount of training that occurs in school divisions before something new is implemented (e.g. the new PPP template, UbD format, etc).

Second, some of the participants found that it is difficult to engage parents in the PPP process. Depending on the school, the amount of parent involvement varied within the different stages of the PPP. But as useful as the rubric and other parts of the template were with communicating with parents, the participants commented that the majority of the parents were not involved with developing the PPP but were more so 'kept in the loop' during the implementation stage vs. the developmental stage. A parent or guardian signature is encouraged to be obtained, but is not necessarily required for implementation (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006; Families for Early Autism Treatment of Ontario, 2002). It would therefore be interesting to

explore more of an in-depth reason as to why parents were viewed as “not very involved in their child's education” or why the school is viewed as “a drop in center or place to store their children for a month”. This research only briefly touched upon parent involvement. Demmans (2009) found with her study that there is a need to be “flexible with parents” (p. 80), but further research could explore the perception of parents of children with special needs towards the PPP process. It could also examine the following questions: How many parents are actively involved with the development of the PPP? How do parents of children with special needs view school team attempts to document progress? What are parents doing to help implement the PPP? What suggestions do parents have with respect to the collaborative process? What barriers do parents face that contribute to the stigma of “lack of involvement” in their child’s life? What experiences do parents and guardians have with team meetings and invitations for their participation? What language that is commonly used within the school context is confusing for parents? What is the average number of parents who participate in parent-teacher meetings? By obtaining answers to these questions, it may help to bridge the gap between parent involvement and a school’s understandings of parent involvement.

One perspective that is sometimes forgotten is that of the student. Although a couple of the participants commented on the occasional involvement of students when reviewing the PPP, this research does not allow for the voice of the student to be heard. Although the team is working towards making the best possible education plan for a student, it would be interesting to see the point of the view from the students’ eyes, from their lived experience of having a PPP guide their educational goals. The third recommendation for future research is therefore to capture this valuable perspective.

Lastly, administrators are more heavily involved in the PPP process in some schools than they are in others. As administrators are part of the collaborative team, the relationship between the Principal and the school staff could affect the dynamic of the team. The Principal oversees everything that goes on within their building, including the programs implemented within that school, for both students without and with intensive needs. The climate of the school therefore stems from the direction given by the administrative team within the building. Is this message consistent across the school division? How administrators' beliefs and/or perspectives affect the school climate and the working climate of the ESTs would be data worth collecting.

Final Thoughts

This has been a process full of expected learning; however, there has definitely been unexpected learning that has occurred as well. For example, gaining an understanding of the new PPP template was a job expectation for the EST. But the work that went into being active participants of the Action Research Project of the SRSD was done above and beyond the call of just their job. It is only my guess as to what motivated the ESTs to follow through with such an extreme sense of attentiveness, pride, and dedication to each and every one of their students. There is the obvious extrinsic motivator; it is an expectation placed on the ESTs to not only learn the template but be a part of the collaborative team. This expectation is to be carried out because it is part of their job. However, it takes a special person to be in an EST role. As a Psychometrist working towards becoming an Educational Psychologist, I work closely with ESTs, who were the participants of this study. There is a sense of enthusiasm and authentic feelings of interest that come across as being rooted deep within each of them. They are truly passionate about what they do and love working with their students. ESTs pour their hearts and souls into their job

despite all of the challenges that have been outlined, which has been one of the most interesting findings of this research. It is their drive, passion, and intrinsic motivation that helped move the PPP process to where it is today. They are the leaders of this process, and support the entire team on the PPP journey.

Although I work closely with the ESTs, this research has brought a new perspective and appreciation towards those in the EST role. Because I am not seen to be directly linked within the immediate school community but as an outsider, someone coming in to the building to work with the student, school staff, and parents, my role is quite different than the EST, which has its advantages. Originally the process to obtain a Psycho-Educational assessment within the SRSD was through sending home a letter for parents to sign indicating that they wanted their child to obtain services. But as the process evolved towards best practice, the Psychometrist/Psychologist is now expected to first meet with the parents individually, explain the assessment process, go over the different pillars of assessment (informal and formal assessment tools, interviews, and observations), describe what possible result could come from the assessment, as well as answer any questions the parent may have. It is stressed that the information that is gathered from the assessment is just one piece of the puzzle, as the teacher and more importantly, the parents hold valuable information with respect to their child's learning. By making this initial contact, it has proven to reduce the anxiety that parents have about a "Psychometrist" or "Psychologist" needing to come and work with their child. In turn, this new process increases parent rapport and decreases the amount of "no shows" at the follow-up parent meeting. This research has therefore opened my eyes to just how imperative these connections with parents really are. As an active participant of the collaborative PPP team, I can advocate for both parents and the school staff, helping the school to bridge that gap between home and school.

APPENDIX A
List of Acronyms

DI – Differentiated Instruction

EA – Educational Assistant

EST - Educational Support Teacher

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP – Individualized Education Program, Individualized Education Plan, Individualised Educational Programme, Individual Educational Plan, or Individual Education Plan

IN – Intensive needs

IPLP – Individual Profile and Learning Profile

IPP – Individualized Program Plan

ISSP – Individual Student Support Plan

OT – Occupational Therapist

PPP – Personal Program Plan

PLC - Professional Learning Community

PT – Performance Task

SK - Saskatchewan

SLP – Speech and Language Pathologist

SMART – Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely

SRSD – Saskatchewan Rivers School Division

SST – Support Service Teacher

UbD – Understanding by Design

USA – United States of America

APPENDIX B
Saskatchewan's Current Personal Program Plan Template

CONFIDENTIAL

Personal Program Plan

A Personal Program Plan (PPP) is a written living document developed and implemented by a collaborative team. It is a compilation of outcomes that have the highest priority for the child during the time period of the PPP.

ELCC 12/2009

Child's Name:	**Date of Birth:** mm / dd / yyyy
Facility Name:	

Implementation
This PPP will begin on _____. A review meeting (a minimum of every six months) will be held on _____.

Assessment Information:

Strengths

Challenges

Additional Information

Priorities for Annual Child Outcomes Areas of Development Please list 3 to 4 key areas of development:	Target Skills
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Area of Development	**Target Skills**
Current Level of Ability - What can the child do currently?	
Annual Outcome -What will the child do?	

Short-Term Objectives to Achieve Annual Outcome	**Strategies and Responsibilities** (How will it be done and by whom?)
1 month	
3 months	
6 months	
1 year	

Assessment Method	**Child's Progress**

Area of Development	**Target Skills**
Current Level of Ability - What can the child do currently?	
Annual Outcome - What will the child do?	

Short-Term Objectives to Achieve Annual Outcome	**Strategies and Responsibility**
1 month	
3 months	
6 months	
1 year	

Assessment Method	**Child's Progress**

Facility Accommodations/Adaptations in place
Facility Accommodations/Adaptations to be put in place
Transition Plans
Additional PPP Comments

Signatures of Team Members

_____	_____
Parent/Guardian	**Date**
_____	_____
Centre Director/Provider	**Date**
_____	_____
Early Childhood Educator	**Date**
_____	_____
Supporting Professional	**Date**
_____	_____
Other	**Date**

APPENDIX C

Summary of Key Events in Special Education: A Timeline

Late 1700's	The "Wild Boy of Aveyron"
1867	The Constitution Act
1905	Saskatchewan became a province
1929	First special education class opened in Saskatchewan
1955	John Dolan School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Early 1960's	Deinstitutionalization and special classes within regular schools began to occur
1965	John Dewey (USA) – each child is "entitled to equal opportunity of development of his own capacities, be they large or small in range. Moreover, each has needs of his own, as significant to him as those of others are to them".
1971	Amendment of the School Act by the Saskatchewan government
1975	Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Children Act (USA) mandated Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
1975	Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms
1978	Saskatchewan Education Act
1979	The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code
1981	Curriculum and Instruction Review Committee
1981	International Year of the Disabled (United Nations)
1982	Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – Canada became the first country to grant equality rights for individuals with a disability
1982	The Shared Service model
1984	Directions Report
1986	The Education Regulations
1989	Meeting Challenging Needs. A Handbook for Teachers of Students Having Intensive Educational Needs (Saskatchewan Education)
1989	Special Education Policy Manual (Saskatchewan Education)
1995	The Education Act

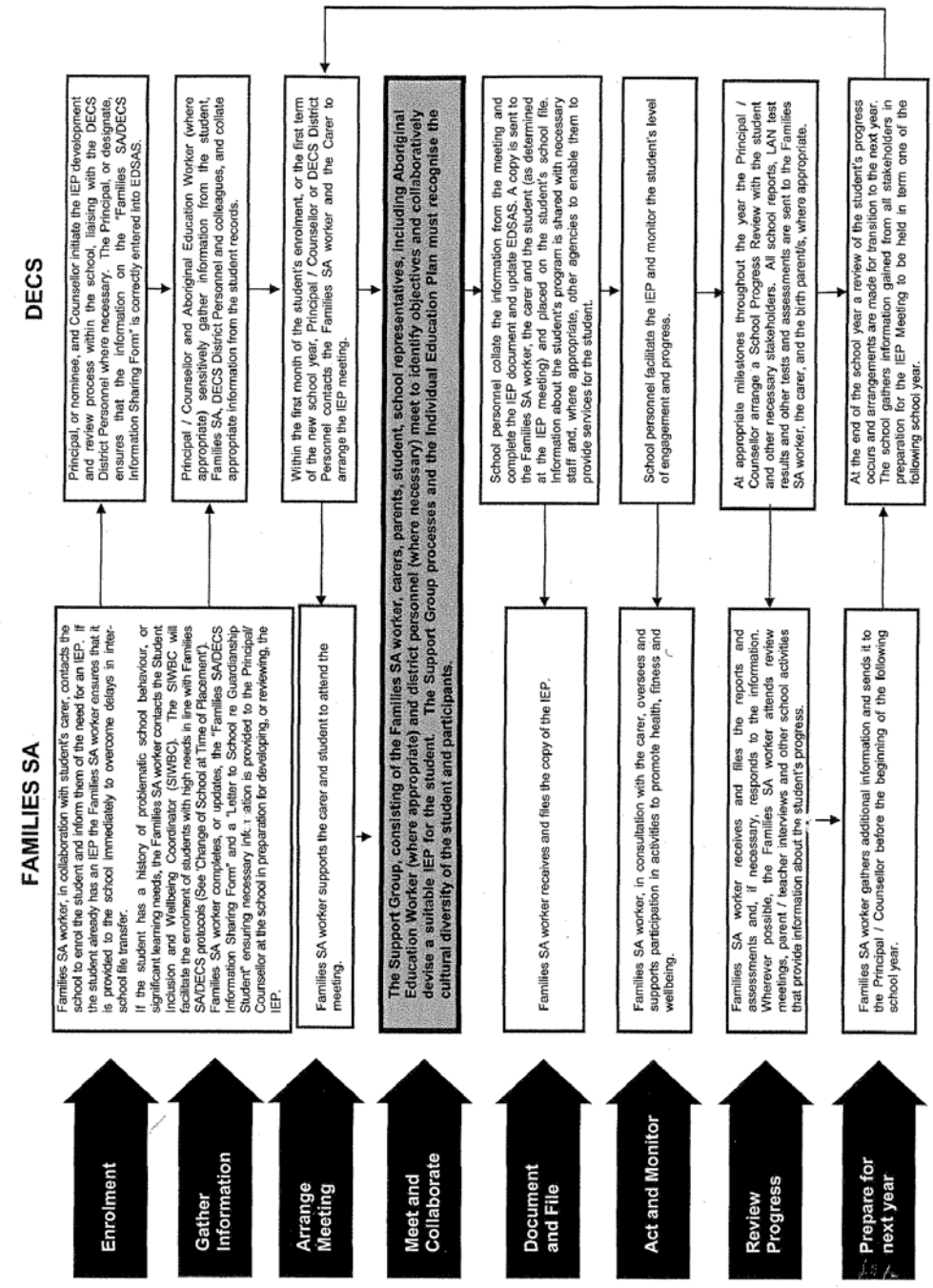
1999	Teaching Students with Autism (Saskatchewan Education)
2000	Saskatchewan Special Education Review Committee
2001	Creating Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Multiple Disabilities (Saskatchewan Learning)
2002	The Children's Services Policy Framework (Saskatchewan Learning)
2004	Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (amended five times before this latest revision)
2004	Planning for Students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) (Saskatchewan Learning)
2004	Teaching Students with reading Difficulties and Disabilities (Saskatchewan Learning)
2006	Policy, Guidelines, and Procedures for Functional Integrated Programs (Saskatchewan Learning)
2008	Personal Program Plans (PPP): Smart Outcomes and Student Outcome Rubrics Living Document (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education)
2009	Personal Program Plans (PPP) Guidelines (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education)

APPENDIX D
Worldwide PPP Comparison

Location:	**Resource:**
Brazil	http://www.brasil.gov.br/
South Africa	http://www.education.gov.za/EducationinSA/tabid/327/Default.aspx
Sweden	http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/2063
Norway	http://www.regjeringen.no/en.html?id=4
Germany	http://www.paris-oecd.diplo.de/
India	http://india.gov.in/citizen/education.php
Saudi Arabia	http://www.saudiembassy.net/links/education/
Italy	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Italy
Israel	http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/Education/
Korea	http://www.korea.net/index.do
Greece	http://www.ypepth.gr/
Czech Republic	http://www.vlada.cz/en/
Russia	http://www.vlada.cz/en/
Belgium	http://www.belgium.be/en/
Poland	http://en.poland.gov.pl/
China	http://english.gov.cn/2006-02/08/content_182537.htm
Japan	http://www.mext.go.jp/english/lawandplan/1303462.htm
Denmark	http://www.denmark.dk/en/menu/Live-And-Work/Education
France	http://www.education.gouv.fr/
Nigeria	http://www.fme.gov.ng/
Ukraine	http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/npd/search?query=education
United States of America	http://www.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html
Ireland	http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/learning_support_guides.pdf?language=EN
Australia	http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/default.asp?id=25668&navgrp=2305
Scotland	http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/02/19009/33934
Singapore	http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/special-education
New Zealand	http://www.minedu.govt.nz/print_doc.cfm?layout=document&documentid=7359&indexid=7960&indexparentid=6871&fromprint=y
Finland	http://www.oph.fi/english/page.asp?paths=447,27598,37840,72101,72106
London, United Kingdom	http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/4610/Toolkit%205%20Text,pdf

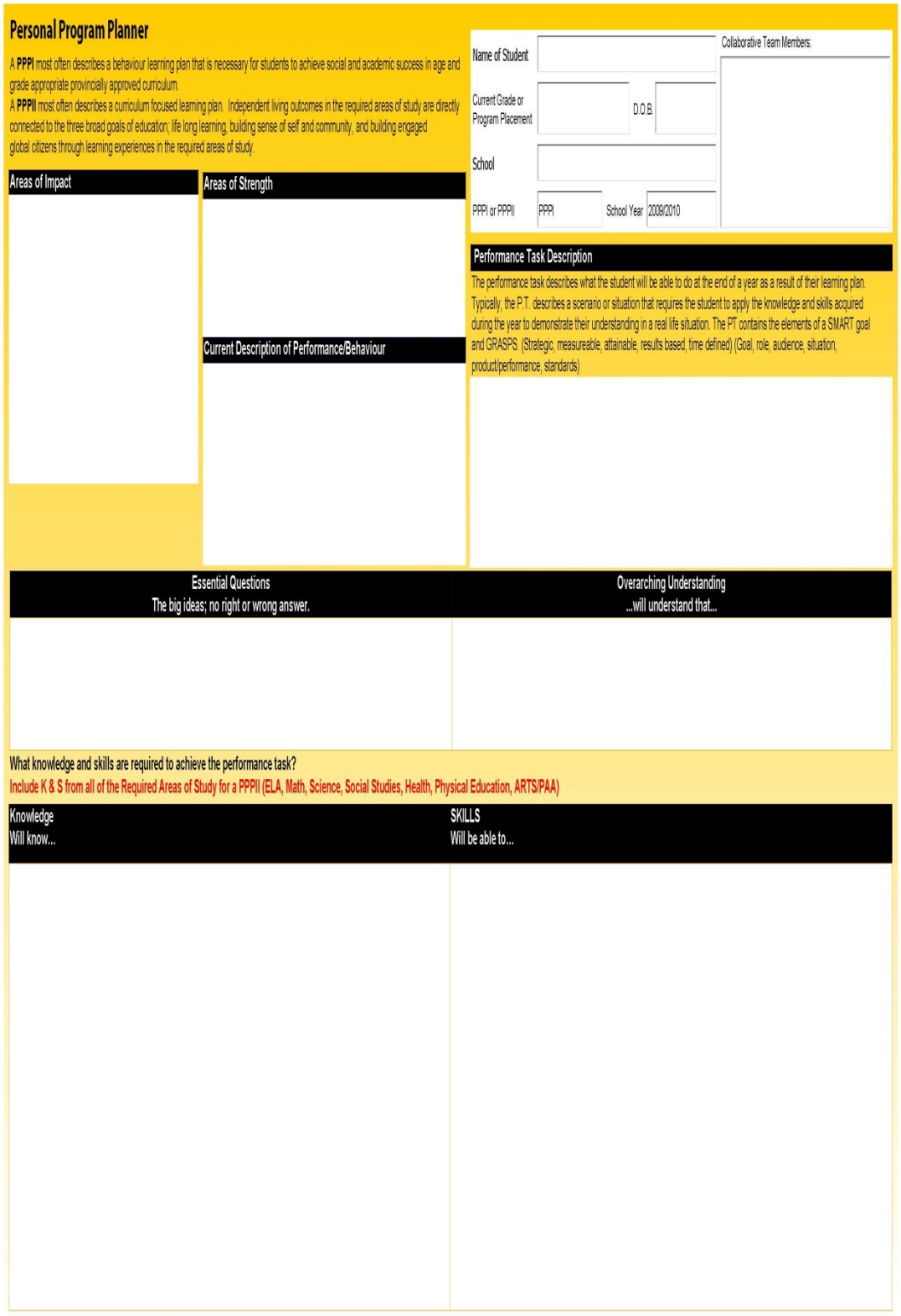
APPENDIX E

South Australia Flow Chart



APPENDIX F

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division's Personal Program Template



Personal Program Planner

A **PPPI** most often describes a behaviour learning plan that is necessary for students to achieve social and academic success in age and grade appropriate provincially approved curriculum.
A **PPPII** most often describes a curriculum focused learning plan. Independent living outcomes in the required areas of study are directly connected to the three broad goals of education; life long learning, building sense of self and community, and building engaged global citizens through learning experiences in the required areas of study.

Name of Student

Collaborative Team Members:

Current Grade or Program Placement

D.O.B.

School

PPPI or PPPII: PPPI

School Year: 2009/2010

Areas of Impact

Areas of Strength

Current Description of Performance/Behaviour

Performance Task Description

The performance task describes what the student will be able to do at the end of a year as a result of their learning plan. Typically, the P.T. describes a scenario or situation that requires the student to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the year to demonstrate their understanding in a real life situation. The PT contains the elements of a SMART goal and GRASPS. (Strategic, measureable, attainable, results based, time defined) (Goal, role, audience, situation, product/performance, standards)

Essential Questions The big ideas; no right or wrong answer.	Overarching Understanding ...will understand that...

What knowledge and skills are required to achieve the performance task?
Include K & S from all of the Required Areas of Study for a PPPII (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, Health, Physical Education, ARTS/PAA)

Knowledge Will know...	SKILLS Will be able to...

Standards Rubric

The standards rubric identifies the desired level of performance that the student will achieve by the end of the school year. Various levels of performance are described to illustrate the various levels of performance attained throughout the school year. The rubric identifies the facet(s) of understanding that the student will use to demonstrate understanding. Standards may include levels of independence, quality of work, and consistency.

Facets of Understanding: Identify the facet(s) of understanding that he/she will demonstrate in the performance task.

Description	Level 1 Criteria (Achieved Expectations)	Level 2 Criteria (High level of skill and knowledge acquisition-lacking transfer)	Level 3 Criteria (Acquiring some of the skills and knowledge)	Level 4 Criteria (Developing skills and knowledge)

Other Evidence of Success:

Throughout the learning plan the student will be required to demonstrate skill and knowledge acquisition. What evidence will provide you with this information?

Learning Plan

Identify the sequence that the performance task skills and concepts (knowledge) will be introduced. The skills and knowledge requirements will be explicitly taught in each of the months. Regular assessment instruments will be used to measure student success and will provide information to guide subsequent learning activities.

	Skills and Knowledge Sequence List the Skills and Knowledge that will be introduced and reinforced in each month. Include Differentiation and Strategies to be used.	**Responsibilities** Who is Supporting and How? Identify who will have primary responsibility for each of the learning and assessment activities identified in each month.	**Assessment Notes** Evidence of Success Describe the level of success achieved by the student in each of the areas identified in the month learning plan. Include how the assessment will change the learning plan in the next month.
September			
October			
November			

December			
January			
February			

March			
April			
May			
June			

Assessment Notes:
Throughout formal reporting periods describe the current level of performance related to the Performance Task.

September to October	
November to December	
January to February	
March to April	
May to June (Final Assessment)	
Recommendations for the new school year:	

Signatures:

EST/Special Class Teacher: _____

Teacher: _____

Principal: _____

Parent: _____

Other: _____

_____

APPENDIX G
Request for Ethics Board Permission

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	DEPARTMENT	BEH#
Tim Claypool	Educational Psychology and Special Education	10-201

STUDENT RESEARCHERS
Heather hayes

SPONSOR
UNFUNDED

TITLE
The Personal Program Plan: Exploring Educational Support Teachers' Perception of a New Template

ORIGINAL REVIEW DATE	APPROVAL ON	APPROVAL OF	EXPIRY DATE
05-Aug-2010	04-Oct-2010	Ethics Application Consent Protocol	04-Oct-2011

Full Board Meeting ☐ Date of Full Board Meeting:

Delegated Review ☒ Expedited Review: ☐

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: *http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics_review/*

Please send all correspondence to:

Research Ethics Office
University of Saskatchewan
Box 5000 RPO University, 1602-110 Gymnasium Place
Saskatoon SK S7N 4J8

APPENDIX H
Request for School Board Permission

Heather Hayes, B. Ed.

t, Saskatchewan
S6V

October 25, 2010

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division

Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
S6V

Attention: Dr. William Cooke

Subject: School Board Permission to Administer Personal Program Plan Survey

My name is Heather Hayes. I am a currently an employee of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division as a Psychometrist. I am also in the process of finishing my Masters of Education with the University of Saskatchewan. I have attended classes for two years and am working towards finishing a thesis. **I am writing this letter to request your permission to collect my thesis data from Educational Support Teachers within the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division.** If you grant me permission to do so, I will contact the Superintendents and principals and request their written permission to survey these individuals from their designated schools.

A Personal Program Plan (PPP) is a document that outlines a student's strengths and needs. It is used for three reasons: for students who require supports greater than those provided through the Adaptive Dimension; when learning outcomes within a grade differ from the provincial curricula; for students identified as a Level 1 or 2 intensive needs student (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008). The PPP includes measurable goals that outline supports which will help the student participate and succeed within the mainstream classroom. The Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) has a particular and contextualized vision of what a PPP should measure. In August 2008, the SRSD proposed an action research project to the Ministry of Education to create a new PPP template. The new template focuses on an authentic task used to demonstrate understanding, called a Performance Task (PT), instead of on SMART goals (specific,

measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely). According to this new template, a student can have either a PPPI (for those who follow regular curriculum but have behavioural issues) or PPPII (for those not able to follow regular curriculum). The purpose of this study is to examine the finished PPP template that the SRSD created. More specifically, this study will look at the thoughts and feelings of those using the new PPP towards the format, its effectiveness, as well as recommended changes within the new format. Following is a brief overview of my research methodology.

Administration of the Semistructured Questionnaire style interview: An email will be sent to every EST who meets a set criterion within the school division. It will open with an explanation of the proposed study. Risks, benefits, and confidentiality of participating in the study will also be outlined within the email. Attached to the email will be a Participant Consent Form. It will be clearly stated that participation is completely voluntary and there is in no way a penalty for choosing to decline from taking part or withdraw from the study. Participants will be asked to return a confirming email stating they want to participate, which will also indicate their consent to participate. The first six people to respond will be chosen and emailed a copy of the Structured Questionnaire. The Questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Once completed, the participants will be asked to place it in an envelope addressed to Heather Hayes and mail it via the inter-office mail system. Participation is strictly voluntary and all participants will be able to choose to leave out any question they are uncomfortable with as well as to decide to discontinue their participation at any time.

Potential Benefits: Information gained from the Questionnaire will be presented in summative form to all Superintendants and school principals, all participants if so desired, as well as any other employee of the School Division if requested. These results will also be posted online once completed and can be found by searching "Heather Rae Hayes" through the "google" search engine on the world wide web. This information may hopefully help with the action research project that the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division is heading.

Potential Risks: There is a small possibility that the participants may feel that it is a requirement to participate in the survey, as the implementation of the new PPP template was mandatory. However, as previously indicated, all participation is completely voluntary and the participants are free to choose not to answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable and to discontinue participation. However, they will only be able to withdraw from the study until November 30, 2010. After that date, it may not be possible to withdraw the data, as the data will have been pooled by this time. Anonymity also cannot be assured due to the small sample size and the design of the study.

Questions: You will be informed of any new information that may affect your decision to allow your school division staff to participate in this study. If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided below. This research has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (to be determined).

If you are interested in having your school division participate in this study please sign the permission slip below.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Student Researcher
University of Saskatchewan

Research Supervisor
University of Saskatchewan

I, Dr. William Cooke, grant student researcher, Heather Hayes, permission to recruit Educational Support Teachers from the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division to participate in her study entitled ***The Personal Program Plan: Exploring Educational Support Teachers' Perceptions of a New Template***.

APPENDIX I
Superintendent Permission Form

Heather Hayes
Address
City, Saskatchewan
S6V ###

November 1, 2010

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division
Address
City, Saskatchewan
S6V ###

Attention: Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Request for Superintendent Permission

Educational Support Teachers in your schools are invited to participate in a study entitled ***The Personal Program Plan: Exploring Educational Support Teachers Perceptions of a New Template.*** Written permission has been obtained to involve the Saskatchewan School Division staff in this study from Dr. Bill Cooke, Director of Education. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions that you might have.

Research Supervisor: Dr. Tim Claypool, Ph.D., R.D. Psych.

Student Researcher: Heather Hayes, M.Ed. Candidate
Educational Psychology and Special Education, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, (306) ###-####, email@email.ca

Purpose and Procedure: The background for my research involves the Personal Program Plan (PPP) document used by the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD). In August 2008, the SRSD proposed an action research project to the Ministry of Education to create a new PPP template. The new template focuses on a Performance Task (PT) (an authentic task used to demonstrate understanding) instead of only SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely) and where a student can have either a PPPI (for those who follow regular curriculum but have behavioural issues) or PPPII (for those not able to follow regular curriculum). Gathering this information may help the SRSD gain an understanding of the value of the new PPP template, further refine their template, as well as possibly influence other school divisions across the province who may be considering changes to the standard provincial template.

The purpose of this study is to look at the thoughts and feelings of those expected to pilot the new PPP towards the effectiveness of the new template, the format of the new PPP, **as well to collect statements of** recommended changes regarding the new format. Following is a brief

overview of my research methodology. This will be accomplished by administering a short, anonymous Semistructured Questionnaire style interview to Educational Support Teachers within the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division. Participant consent will be sought before participation occurs. As participation is entirely voluntary, individuals will not be penalized for choosing to not participate in this Questionnaire. Also, participants will be able to choose to leave out any survey questions they are uncomfortable with as well as to decide to discontinue their participation in the survey at any time.

Potential Benefits: The results of this survey will be presented in summative form to all Superintendents and school Principals, all participants if so desired, as well as any other employee of the School Division if requested. These results may help with the action research project that the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division is heading.

Potential Risks: There is a small possibility that the participants may feel that it is a requirement to participate in the survey, as the implementation of the new PPP template was mandatory. However, as previously indicated, all participation is completely voluntary and the participants are free to choose not to answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Confidentiality: All surveys will be completely anonymous. Participants will be asked NOT to record their names on their surveys.

Right to Withdraw: Participation in this study is voluntary. Individuals may choose to not participate by not returning the form. Once surveys have been submitted, however, it will not be possible to remove participants' data from the study.

If you are interested in having the Educational Support Teacher(s) participate in this study please sign the permission slip below and return it to the researcher using the inter-office mail system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I, _____, Superintendent with the Saskatchewan

Rivers School Division, grant student researcher, Heather Hayes, permission to recruit

participants from _____

Schools to participate in her study entitled ***The Personal Program Plan: Exploring Educational***

Support Teachers Perceptions of a New Template.

_____ _____

(Signature) **(Date)**

APPENDIX J
Participant Email

Hello,

I am sending this email in hopes to obtain **6 participants** to complete a **Semistructured Questionnaire style interview** to assist me in gathering data for my thesis. The Questionnaire will take approximately **20-25 minutes** to complete.

As you are all aware, the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD) had a different vision of what a Personal Program Plan (PPP) should measure. In August 2008, an action research project started, which was approved by the Ministry of Education. The new PPP template was created, which focuses on a Performance Task (PT) (an authentic task used to demonstrate understanding) instead of just outlining SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely). A student can now be placed on a PPPI (for those who follow regular curriculum but have behavioural issues) or a PPPII (for those not able to follow regular curriculum). This research will help to examine the finished PPP template that has been created by the school division.

In order to be considered a participant, the following criteria must be met:
1) Have at least **2 years experience** as an Educational Support Teacher (EST)**; and**

2) Have **written at least one PPP using the Ministry of Education's template** (in previous years); **and**

3) Have **written at least one PPP using the SRSD new PPP template** (this past school year).

There are both benefits and risks attached to participating in this study. Benefits include the pleasure of knowing that you will assist with the gathering of data indicating what works well and offering suggestions for the new PPP template. In exchange for your time and effort, **you will receive a $25 gift certificate to Amy's** on Second Ave. restaurant in Prince Albert, SK. The potential risks involved are minimal, as your answers will be anonymous. But due to the small sample size and design of the study, anonymity cannot be 100 percent assured. You are NOT required to answer any of the questions that you are uncomfortable with and participation is strictly voluntary. This is NOT a requirement for your job.

Precautions have been taken if you choose to withdraw from the study after you have sent the questionnaire into the researcher. On the questionnaire, there will be a spot to **write down a pseudonym** that you create. Therefore, if you choose to withdraw, you will need to send an anonymous written request via inter-office mail asking to pull the interview with your pseudonym on it. Again, you will not be penalized for choosing to withdraw. **Withdrawal can take place until December 10, 2010**. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Confidentiality will be strictly kept. Your **coworkers and employer will not be able to find out if you were involved thus will be unable to know what your answers were.** To ensure

anonymity this to be true, please, DO NOT record your name, name of your school, or any other identifying marks anywhere on the Questionnaire .

If you wish to participate, please reply to this email. Upon replying, it will be assumed that you have read and agreed to the Participant Consent Form (see attached) and are willing to complete the Semistructured Questionnaire style interview. The first 6 people to respond and who meet the set criteria will be contacted and sent the Questionnaire. A follow-up email will then be sent to the remainder of the ESTs to inform you all that I have obtained my participants.

Upon completion of the Questionnaire, you will be asked to place it in a sealed envelope addressed to Heather Hayes and mail it in using the inter-office mail system by **December 3, 2010**. Again, please do not place any identifying information on the envelope.

If you wish to be one of the 6 participants, and meet the criteria, please respond to this email ASAP. I am hoping to hear back from 6 people by Friday, December 19th.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself at (306) ###-####; email@email.ca or my supervisor, Tim Claypool at (306) ###-####; email@email.ca.

Thank you for your anticipated participation.

Sincerely,

Heather Hayes, B.A.

APPENDIX K
Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study entitled ***The Personal Program Plan: Exploring Educational Support Teachers' Perceptions of a New Template.*** Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Researcher: Heather Hayes, University of Saskatchewan, (306) ###-####

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of this study is to look at the thoughts and feelings of those expected to pilot the new PPP to determine the effectiveness of the new template, the format of the new PPP, as well as the recommended changes within the new format. This will be achieved through the completion of an anonymous Semistructured Questionnaire style Interview to Educational Support Teachers within the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division. This is a short and anonymous Questionnaire that is anticipated to take 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

Potential Benefits: Being part of this study will help to gather information in regards to the new PPP template that was implemented in August 2008, as well as what changes to the template need to occur. In exchange for your time and effort, a $25 gift certificate to Amy's on Second Ave. Restaurant in Prince Albert, SK will be given to you.

Potential Risks: Since this is a simple paper pencil Questionnaire, there are minimal risks. You are NOT required to answer any of the questions that you are uncomfortable with. All participation is completely voluntary. You will be able to withdraw from the study until December 10, 2010. Anonymity, however, cannot be 100% assured due to the small sample size and the design of the study.

Confidentiality: All surveys will be completely anonymous but due to the small sample size and the design of the study, anonymity cannot be 100% assured. There will be, however, no way that your survey can be traced back to you directly and your coworkers and employer will not be able to find out what answers you gave. Please, DO NOT record your name or name of your school anywhere on the survey.

Right to Withdraw: Your Participation in this study is voluntary. It is not required for your job. You may choose to not participate by not responding to the recruitment email. Choosing to not participate in this study will NOT result in any type of penalty. You may answer only questions that you are comfortable with. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the research team. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason. However, withdrawal can only take place until December 10, 2010. After this date, it will be it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point. Please feel free to contact me at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on October 4, 2010 (#10-201). Any questions regarding your rights as a

participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (###-####). Out of town participants may call collect.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. By replying to this email, I will have consented to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may choose to not participate by not responding to this email, understanding that once the survey is submitted, it is impossible to remove my information after December 10, 2010.

Required Contact Information:

Heather R. Hayes
Address
City, SK
S6V ###
Phone: (306) ###-####
Email: email@email.ca

Tim Claypool
Address
University of Saskatchewan
City, SK
S7N ###
Phone: (306) ###-####
Email: email@email.ca
Fax: (306) ###-####

APPENDIX L
Semistructured Questionnaire Style Interview

Part One: Demographic Information

1. Are you male or female?

_____

2. How many years have you worked as an Educational Support Teacher (EST)?

_____

3. What experience within the school did you have before you moved into the EST role?

_____

_____

4. What percentage were you assigned in the EST role for the following school years:

2008/2009 school year _____

2009/2010 school year _____

_____

5. What grades did you primarily work with?

_____

6. How many Personal Program Plans (PPPs) were you responsible for during the 2008/2009 school year? 2009/2010 school year?

2008/2009 school year _____

2009/2010 school year _____

_____

7. What caused this number to be greater or fewer than previous years?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part Two: The SRSD's New PPP Template

*** Please think about your experience using the SRSD PPP template during the 2009/2010 school year when answering the following questions…**

****Please refrain from using names that might identify individuals, groups, or specific schools**

1. Who were the key people involved with writing the PPP and what were their roles? (i.e. writing, goal setting, collecting signatures, implementing, monitoring, reviewing…)

2. Describe the collaboration process used to develop the PPP.

3. On average, approximately how much time was spent (a) developing the PPP (b) implementing the PPP (c) monitoring the PPP (d) reviewing the PPP?

(a) _____

_____

_____

(b) _____

_____

_____

(c) _____

_____

_____

(d) _____

_____

_____

4. Was this more or less time spent then previous years? What caused it to be more or less from previous years?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. In your opinion, explain the main focus of the new PPP template.

6. What was the timeframe that the PPP was geared for? (i.e. monthly, school semester, school year, short term goals, long term goals…)

7. How effective do you think this timeframe was for (a) the student? (b) The school team? (c) The parents?

(a) _____

_____

_____

(b) _____

_____

_____

(c) _____

_____

_____

8. Describe how the PPP was used as a living document (i.e. when it was "pulled off the shelf", how it was used…).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. For what purpose was the PPP revisited?

10. Were the plans in the PPP relevant and accurately reflect the required daily learning for the student? Was the PPP an effective planning tool?

11. How did the template allow for the PPP to show that growth had occurred?

12. How did the PPP assist the student to achieve a higher level of independence in his or her learning?

13. How effectively did the PPP allow for communication of the student's program to be made with the student?

14. How did the PPP lend itself to communicate the student's program to the parents?

15. How effectively did the PPP allow for communication of the student's program to be made with the school support team?

16. How was this tool effective in monitoring and supporting the work with intensive needs students?

17. How did this PPP ensure that students were expected to achieve a high standard?

18. How did the team use the PPP to direct further teaching?

19. Explain what you liked best about the new PPP template.

20. What did you like least about the new PPP template? Why?

21. Overall, was the PPP an effective planning tool? Why or why not?

Part Three: Concluding Remarks

***Please refrain from using names that might identify individuals, groups, or specific schools**

1. Now that you have worked with the old PPP template and the new PPP template, what would you keep from the original PPP template? Why?

2. What would you keep from the new PPP template? Why?

3. What would you take from the old PPP template and add to the new PPP Template? Why?

4. What would you change about the new PPP template? Why?

5. What was the main difference that you found between the original PPP template and the new PPP template?

6. Has the new PPP template made it easier for you to manage your amount of PPPs that you are expected to be responsible for? If so, how?

7. What other recommendations would you make to add to the new PPP to make it the ideal document??

8. How has the new PPP template impacted your work with intensive needs students?

9. If you had the choice between the original PPP template and the new PPP template, which would you choose to use in the upcoming school year? Why would you choose that one?

10. Do you have any other questions or comments that you would like to add??

11. Pseudonym

APPENDIX M
Rubric

Standards Rubric

The standards rubric identifies the desired level of performance that the student will achieve by the end of the school year. Various levels of performance are described to illustrate the various levels of performance attained throughout the school year. The rubric identifies the facet(s) of understanding that the student will use to demonstrate understanding. Standards may include levels of independence, quality of work, and consistency.

Facets of Understanding: Identify the facet(s) of understanding that he/she will demonstrate in the performance task.

Description	Level 1 Criteria (Achieved Expectations)	Level 2 Criteria (High level of skill and knowledge acquisition-lacking transfer)	Level 3 Criteria (Acquiring some of the skills and knowledge)	Level 4 Criteria (Developing skills and knowledge)

Other Evidence of Success:

Throughout the learning plan the student will be required to demonstrate skill and knowledge acquisition. What evidence will provide you with this information?

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