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MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS
TRANSITIONING TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: PARENT AND STUDENT
PERSPECTIVES

by:

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A Thesis Proposal

Submitted in Partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Master of Education

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perspectives of parents of deaf and hard of hearing students who were ready to make the transition from elementary school to secondary school or who had recently done so. In addition, the objective was to converse with the deaf and hard of hearing students themselves and the parents in order to determine what the parents and children believed to be the benefits and potential barriers of the children's educational placements.

Qualitative research methods were used, including the use of an interview guide (Patton, 2002) and field notes. Data was collected using two separate focus groups, one group of three parents and one group of six students in grades nine or ten. All of the participants were oral deaf (hearing impaired students who could communicate orally) or hard of hearing students who attend the same school and who have all recently made the transition to secondary school. Both groups of participants reflected upon their past and present experiences regarding class placement, transition and learning in an inclusive environment. Data collection took place in a large urban centre in Northwestern Ontario. Throughout the research process, data analysis was continuous. Findings disclosed that students with hearing loss and their parents have similar concerns regarding inclusion, class placement and the transition of deaf and hard of hearing students from elementary to secondary school.

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CHAPTER ONE

Purpose

Description of Research Study

The educational placement of students who are deaf or hard of hearing is a topic that is rarely discussed in existing literature. The present qualitative research study lies within the field of special education, particularly dealing in the realm of oral deaf education students in mainstream schools who were ready to transition to secondary school or who had recently done so. Specifically, a focus group was conducted with a small group consisting of three parents of oral deaf students who had recently made the transition to secondary school along with six deaf or hard of hearing adolescents. The researcher attempted to determine what the parents and students believed to be the benefits and potential barriers of the adolescents' educational placements. Data was collected using small focus group interviews. This study was innovative in that it allowed parents and oral deaf students the occasion to convey their beliefs and viewpoints regarding the students' learning in a mainstream setting. The perspectives of all the participants offer integral knowledge to the area of deaf education and it also assists teachers and other school personnel to better educate and serve future children who are deaf or hard of hearing in mainstream schools. This study yielded unique and rich data that contributes positively to the field of deaf education.

Background/Rationale

The rationale for the research study is that there is little information available regarding the perspectives of deaf and hard of hearing students and their transition from elementary to secondary school. The process of transition can be quite difficult for any student (Hogansen et al., 2008); however, for students who are D/HH it can be a process that creates apprehension and

insecurity due to the uncertainty of what an upcoming school year may bring. It was necessary therefore, to involve the parents of D/HH students to assist in developing an understanding of the potential obstacles their children face when they are educated in a mainstream setting. Speaking to parents also provided the researcher with information pertaining to their children's personal experiences with the transition process and what they felt were the facilitators and possible hindrances of their class placement within an inclusive environment. This research focused on D/HH students who are educated within the regular school system with their hearing peers only. Students who are D/HH do have options available to them; however, for the purposes of this study, the D/HH students interviewed all attended a regular, mainstream secondary school.

This research involved two separate qualitative focus group interviews investigating the perspectives of deaf and hard of hearing students who were in either grade nine or ten and the perspectives of some of their parents. The student focus group consisted of six deaf or hard of hearing students and the parent focus group contained three parents. Both the student participants and the parent participants contributed insightful information in regards to the students' inclusive environment in a mainstream school. In addition, the participants were able to reflect back upon their experiences in elementary school and during their year of transition.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to determine what deaf and hard of hearing students and their parents believed to be the benefits and potential barriers to education in mainstream regular class placements. The following questions were used to guide the study:

1. (a) How do parents of D/HH students describe their child's level of inclusion within a mainstream class placement prior to and post transitioning? (b) How do D/HH children describe their level of inclusion within a mainstream class placement prior to and post transitioning?

2. (a) What specific concerns do parents have in regards to sending their D/HH child to a new and unfamiliar mainstream environment? (b) What specific concerns do D/HH children have in regards to attending a new and unfamiliar mainstream environment?
3. (a) According to parents of D/HH students, what similarities and or differences are apparent between the levels of support received in elementary school vs. secondary school for students who are D/HH? (b) According to D/HH students, what similarities and or differences are apparent between the levels of support received in elementary school vs. secondary school for students who are D/HH?

Significance

The field of deaf education is relatively small; therefore, research in this realm not only informs, but it educates people about oral deaf students and the issues they encounter. This qualitative research study is potentially valuable for many reasons. First, information regarding the inclusion of oral deaf students is beneficial to those educators pursuing qualifications to teach D/HH students and is also useful for special education educators, regular classroom teachers and administrators. Moreover, this study is intended to be of value to those involved in the education of exceptional students. It will hopefully provide those individuals with the knowledge to implement a successful integration program for those D/HH students ready to meet the challenges of secondary school. Additionally, this research will likely be of benefit to pre-service teachers who may come into contact with students who have a degree of hearing loss so that these teachers can better meet the students' educational needs as a pre-service teacher and also once they begin their teaching career. Furthermore, this research is of potential benefit in encouraging policy-makers to listen to and consider the perspectives of deaf and hard of hearing students and their parents when implementing policy initiatives. In addition, the research should contribute to the development of knowledge about best practices in inclusive and mainstream

education. Finally, this research will inform parents of young children with hearing loss who may be inexperienced in how to advocate for their children in the school system.

Limitations

This qualitative research study is subject to several limitations. For instance, the study examined the perspectives of a small group of parents of oral deaf students, along with a group of deaf and hard of hearing students themselves, thus representing only a small sample of individuals who were able to state their opinions. Therefore, generalizations cannot be made beyond the specific deaf and hard of hearing student sample that participated in the study, the grade levels involved, as well as program, school and school board involved in the research. As well, the data gathered is specific to the parents and deaf and hard of hearing students within an urban centre in Northwestern Ontario only, and not that of any other area in Ontario or beyond. As such, the findings in this study may not have been representative of how deaf and hard of hearing students and their parents regard the education of these students in other school districts. Also, within the focus groups, those participants who realized their viewpoint was a minority perspective may not have shared what they believed. Finally, this research study was qualitative in nature and therefore, the findings will be subject to varying interpretations. Nevertheless, the information provided gave the researcher insight into the participants' subjective world, which may resonate with the beliefs of other deaf and hard of hearing students and their parents beyond those involved in this study and who are equally concerned with the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstream schools.

Personal Ground/Assumptions

As a graduate of a comprehensive program for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, the researcher has a strong interest in the field of deaf education, a subsection in the area of

special education. Her interest stems from educating oral deaf students in a mainstream setting for the first two years of her teaching career and in the role of classroom teacher in her third year of teaching. It is within this capacity that the researcher witnessed the academic and social struggles that her students encountered on a daily basis. The researcher has made the assumption that the obstacles D/HH students face while in elementary school will continue as they progress through the higher grade levels as the academic work level increases and social circles begin to impact students increasingly. It was necessary then to discuss with parents of oral deaf students whether their child(ren) having a hearing loss affects their school placement and how so.

The researcher's personal philosophy is that oral D/HH students should be educated in the mainstream setting in order to obtain access to the same education as their hearing peers. This opportunity has been allowed ever since the spring of 1991 when the Minister of Education informed the Ontario legislature that exceptional pupils could be integrated into local community classrooms (Weber & Bennett, 2004). Without this right, oral D/HH students would have limited options available to them and be obliged to learn in segregated environments, where a sense of exclusion from mainstream society in general can often be experienced. It is, however, important to note that researchers have found that D/HH students may also suffer from social isolation and loneliness while in an inclusive environment (Eriks-Brophy et al., 2006). Parental perspectives therefore allowed the researcher to understand the benefits and weaknesses of mainstream education for D/HH students.

Definition of Terms

Various terms have been discussed throughout the literature and this qualitative study. In order to distinguish between each of them; the following operational terms, which are frequently used in the area of special education are as follows:

Deaf: a term referring to deaf or hard of hearing individuals who identify themselves as members of a sociolinguistic and cultural group and whose preferred language of communication is sign language (Canadian Hearing Society, 2004, p. 98).

Hard of hearing: describes a person who has a hearing loss, which may range from mild to profound and the usual means of communication is spoken language (Canadian Hearing Society, 2004, p. 99).

Oral deaf education: a method, which aims to teach children who are D/HH to listen and talk. The goal of this type of education is to mainstream children with hearing loss into classrooms with hearing children as soon as they are ready (Oral Deaf Education, 2002).

Cochlear implant: an electronic prosthetic device that is surgically implanted in the cochlear portion of the inner ear consisting of the following: an external microphone, worn at the ear, that converts sound into an electric signal; a speech processor that converts the electric signal into a distinctive code; and an implanted cochlear stimulator that receives the coded signal and delivers it to the electrodes positioned within the cochlea (Oral Deaf Education, 2002, p. V-8).

Differentiated instruction: an inclusive approach to the planning and the delivery of curriculum that responds to the needs of individual students or groups of students, by shaping the content, process, product and learning environment to enhance student success (e.g., different learning styles, cognitive abilities, second language, exceptionalities) (York Catholic District School Board, 2006, p.36).

Mainstream education: refers to the education of D/HH students in regular classrooms with students who are not hard of hearing (Stinson & Antia, 1999).

Transition plan: a school's written plan to assist the student in making a successful transition from school to work, further education, and community living, which identify goals that:

- are achievable by the student, given appropriate supports

- defines the actions that are necessary year by year to help the student achieve his or her goals
- clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the student, family, and others in carrying out these actions
- reflect actual opportunities and resources that are likely to be available after the student leaves school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002, p.3).

Identification, Placement, Review Committee (IPRC): a committee composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or a supervisory officer of the board, which meets and decides if a student should be identified as an exceptional pupil and, if so, the placement that will best meet the student's needs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001).

Individual Education Plan (IEP): a written plan; a working document that describes the strengths and needs of an individual exceptional pupil, the special education program and services established to meet that student's needs, and how the program and services will be delivered. It also describes the student's progress (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001, p. E4).

Teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing: a qualified teacher, who is additionally qualified to teach deaf and hard of hearing children. They provide support to deaf children, their parents and family and to other professionals who are involved with a child's education (National Deaf Children's Society, 2008).

Inclusion: an option for students with disabilities to pursue all of their curriculum within the regular school program with peers who do not have a disability; the acceptance, rather than the exclusion of children with various types of disabilities in the classroom, school and wider social community (Eriks-Brophy et al., 2006)

Modifications: changes made in the age-appropriate grade level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student's learning needs. These changes may involve developing

expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level and/or increasing or decreasing the number and/or complexity of the regular grade level curriculum expectations (York Catholic District School Board, 2006, p. 37).

American Sign Language (ASL): a sophisticated language with its own set of grammatical rules, quite different from spoken language and most emphatically not a translation of English into manually communicated words. It has its own vocabulary, its own word order, and its own history (Weber and Bennett, p.160).

Summary

This chapter discussed the research that was conducted along with the background and rationale for the study. The research questions that guided the entire study were included as well and will be revisited in the discussion chapter. The significance of the study provided the reasons for carrying out this specific research project involving an exploration of the benefits and barriers to educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing in mainstream settings. The personal ground/assumptions discussed provide information on the personal motivation behind the research. Finally, the definition of terms clearly explains the vernacular specific to those working in the field of special education involving the deaf and hard of hearing.

Chapter two is a review of the literature related to the fields of deaf education and inclusive education, with reference to the literature involving the transition from elementary school to secondary school for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This literature review will aim to summarize research within the fields of deaf education and inclusive education, with reference to the literature involving the move students make from elementary school to secondary school. First, studies regarding the possible benefits and potential barriers to educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) in mainstream settings will be discussed. Next, studies investigating the general process of transitioning to secondary school will be examined with a focus on those students who are D/HH. Finally, research on the parental perspectives of D/HH children's educational placement will be reviewed.

The terms deaf and hard of hearing are often misunderstood as it is usually assumed that the terms refer to those who have absolutely no hearing whatsoever, which is not typically the case as there is often some residual hearing. The Canadian Hearing Society (2004) distinguishes between deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The term Deaf, refers to "deaf or hard of hearing individuals who identify themselves as members of a socio-linguistic and cultural group and whose preferred language of communication is Sign Language" (p.98) whereas the term hard of hearing "describes a person who has a hearing loss which may range from mild to profound and the usual means for communication is spoken language (p.99).

According to the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing,

children who are educated with the oral approach develop listening skills with the use of current auditory technology, including digital hearing aids and cochlear implants, specific teaching strategies, and speech reading. Using this combination, children learn to speak much as children with normal hearing do, given the right intervention

(Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 2005, About Oral Deaf Education section, ¶ 2).

The effectiveness of the oral deaf education approach varies for individuals and is dependent upon many factors, such as the extent of an individual's hearing loss, whether or not the individual has been implanted with a cochlear implant and at what age, the quality and extent of speech therapy and the time it began along with the duration of the program (Oral Deaf Education, 2002).

Deaf and hard of hearing children who are educated using the oral approach are the central focus throughout this literature review as oral deaf students are typically those who attend regular mainstream schools with their hearing peers. Concerns dealing with these specific children are of the utmost importance as they often require much intervention in order to develop the necessary listening and academic skills required to begin to manage the demands of the regular classroom.

Inclusive Education with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

A great deal of literature is available concerning inclusive education on a broad scale. What is less readily available is literature involving inclusive education associated with D/HH students. The term inclusion refers to an option for students with disabilities to pursue their entire curriculum within the regular school program with peers who do not have a disability. Inclusion denotes the acceptance, rather than the exclusion of children with various types of disabilities in the classroom, school and wider social community (Eriks-Brophy et al., 2006). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) defines inclusion as

not only the practice of placing students with special needs in the regular classroom but ensuring that teachers assist every student to prepare for the highest degree of independence possible (p.2).

The term mainstreaming, used mostly by teachers of the D/HH, refers to the education of D/HH students in regular classrooms with students who are not hard of hearing (Stinson & Antia, 1999).

The prime rationale behind placing D/HH students in mainstream settings is that integrated students will have more possibilities for social relationships with those who are not D/HH, thus allowing D/HH students to obtain necessary pragmatic skills to help them communicate (Angelides & Avari, 2007; 2006/2007; Powers, 2001). Angelides and Avari (2007) also state that the partnership between educators involved in inclusive education is also a way to assist teachers in understanding the differences between students and to improve their attitudes concerning students who have academic challenges.

Several studies have explored the inclusion of D/HH students from the perspectives of teachers, students, and parents. In one study, Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) conducted focus groups to determine the factors that relate to inclusion in the school environment. Factors included those related (1) to teachers and administrators, (2) to the parents of students with hearing loss, (3) to hearing peers and (4) to the students with hearing loss themselves. All participants, including parents of children with hearing loss, young adults with hearing loss, itinerant teachers of the deaf and regular classroom teachers agreed that inclusion of students with hearing loss was an essentially positive experience; however, there were some factors that could be modified to enhance inclusion in the school setting. Teachers and administrators who were supportive of students, and used differentiated instruction when necessary and who had knowledge about integrated students' needs were found to have facilitated inclusion. Itinerant teachers were seen as the most important facilitator of inclusion as they were highly influential in assisting D/HH students with developing speech, language and academic skills. Parents who took an active role in their children's school lives and who were strong advocates proved also to be facilitators of

inclusion. On the negative side, Eriks-Brophy et al. also found that D/HH students often experienced social isolation and loneliness while in an inclusive environment and found that the isolation was attributed to the problems D/HH students may have encountered with common classroom activities. The researchers also added that attending the neighbourhood school with the same peers over a period of time is positively related to inclusion as hearing peers begin to understand the D/HH student, are able to explain hearing loss to others and to act as interpreters by translating misconstrued information when they are in social groups or settings.

Cambra (2002) investigated the opinions of 792 hearing students from ages 10 to 20 in 22 schools regarding the mainstreaming of deaf students. Questionnaires were used, and included demographic information (age, grade, and sex) as well as 19 attitudinal items that were responded to on a 5 point Likert-type scale. Findings indicated that hearing peers accepted mainstreamed D/HH students socially but that according to their hearing peers, they often had trouble when learning new concepts in the classroom. Results also showed that while mainstreaming deaf students with hearing peers on a full-time basis may allow for interaction between students; it does not guarantee that the students will socialize. Students who are D/HH may still face social segregation. Collaboration between teachers who were involved in teaching a student with hearing loss proved to be helpful to their teaching strategies. The researcher suggested that students be introduced to co-operative learning activities to help reinforce socialization among all students.

To determine the impact of the integration of D/HH students on the development of inclusive practices in Cyprus, Angelides and Avari (2007), studied inclusive education within a secondary school. They examined how the integration of students who were D/HH influenced inclusive practices in a broad sense for all students in attendance at the school. Observations and discussions were recorded and a total of nine interviews were conducted with teachers working

in the integration program. Teachers felt that working collectively in the program for D/HH students allowed them to develop and utilize more inclusive practices in their teaching.

Researchers noted that teachers were better able to communicate with one another and explore their own inclusive practices in this type of setting. In addition, the researchers found that teachers' collaborative efforts appeared to operate in a positive manner for both the general improvement of the school and for inclusion techniques to be applied in the classroom for all students.

In a two-phase study to investigate the experiences of D/HH students who graduated from either mainstream schools or special schools, Angelides and Avari (2006/2007) interviewed 20 D/HH students. Themes such as marginalization, exclusion, opportunities for communication, and interpersonal relations emerged from the data collection. The second phase of the study consisted of in-depth interviews with 4 people who were interested in providing the researchers with details about their experiences. Results indicated that mainstream schools appeared to be the preferred choice of most students; their reason being that attending mainstream schools allowed them better opportunities to learn than special schools. Those students who attended special schools found fault with the quality of education that was provided. Graduates who attended both schools for the deaf and mainstream schools claimed that mainstream schools had a higher academic level and that it provided more advantages. Deaf and hard of hearing students did not feel that special schools had quality education, consequently not being able to meet their needs and prepare them for their future; hence, they felt that mainstream schools were more effective in providing better education. The success of a segregated setting, however, will undoubtedly depend upon many interrelated factors such as the quality of the curriculum being delivered, teacher training, student opportunities for socialization with non-special needs children in various settings both in and out of the segregated setting (Angelides & Avari (2006/2007)).

Afzali-Nomali (1995) asked educators associated with full inclusion programs for D/HH students to evaluate their impressions of these programs for students who are either D/HH or hearing. An instrument to question participants about factors such as academic achievement, social adjustment, and self-confidence/esteem was created. The instrument also included 27 questions regarding educational conditions that were answered on a three-point scale. Results indicated that over two-thirds of the evaluators stated that the influence of inclusion on the academic accomplishment of students who were D/HH was either positive or strongly positive. The study also found that inclusion programs influenced D/HH students' social adjustment and self-confidence/esteem. The researcher concluded that inclusion programs in regular classrooms can be a successful educational method. The leading programs are those that provide social encouragement, a full range of placement options and those which guarantee that enough specialized support is accessible, especially in terms of availability of teachers of the deaf. Similarly, Bunch (1994) states,

full inclusion does not suggest that any student with special needs should be enrolled in a regular classroom unless that classroom is welcoming, unless that an individualized program designed to address the learning needs and styles of the child is put in place and unless the specialist support personnel, services, and materials necessary to support inclusion are available as and when needed. (p. 150).

Bunch also discusses what he claims to be the "fundamental characteristics of full inclusion" (p. 150), some of which include valuing of individual differences, whatever their degree, seeing all children as children and not labels, acknowledgement of the ability of regular teachers to be responsible for the education of all children, and equal collaboration of parents and of children with teachers in the educational decision-making process.

Stinson and Antia (1999) claim that teachers need to alter their support to target the specific needs of students who are D/HH, especially because there are many differences between students in an inclusive setting, whether it is with their communication skills, their proficiency in the English language or the way they display socially acceptable behaviour. Many D/HH students are however, quite capable of adjusting socially in an inclusive classroom. Luckner and Muir (2001) found that general education teachers claimed, “D/HH students had good social skills, which helped them acquire friends” (p.442).

Hung and Paul (2006) studied the perceptions of secondary school students regarding the inclusion of their D/HH peers. The majority of the students in the study were hearing individuals with some participants who were D/HH. Hearing students completed an instrument developed by the researchers entitled the *Inclusion of Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students Inventory* (IDHHSI). Results indicate that hearing students held positive attitudes toward inclusion, which may be attributed to an increase in contact between students who have disabilities and those who do not. Findings also showed that participants in the twelfth grade had the most positive attitudes toward the inclusion of D/HH students. These particular findings could be the result of the hearing students in the study having been exposed to the notion of inclusion of D/HH for quite some time.

Hawkins et al., (1994) state that inclusion has the ability to put special programs at risk, which would leave deaf students without other options to pursue for their education. Proponents of inclusion programs believe that settings excluding the regular classroom isolate and differentiate students with disabilities. Hawkins et al., however, note that deaf children who are placed in a mainstream environment will not always have occasions to communicate with and to interact with those who are not deaf. They also mention the importance of there being other deaf students in a classroom in order to prevent a deaf child from becoming estranged from those who

are not deaf. They do conclude, however, that what may be suitable for one student, may not be for others and that all options should be considered before choosing what may be appropriate. Conversely, Ellen (1994) argues that a child with a disability should be placed within the regular educational environment and should interact with those who are not disabled as much as it is educationally appropriate for the child with the disability. She further notes that a major element to inclusion is parental involvement in all decision making processes regarding the evaluation, placement and support services that their child may receive.

Stinson and Liu (1999) examined major issues pertaining to the participation of D/HH students in mainstream settings and their relationships with hearing students. In their first study, the researchers collected data qualitatively by conducting focus groups comprised of interpreters, teachers of the deaf and note-takers for the D/HH students. In their second study, the researchers repeated field observations of 4 D/HH students at the elementary level who were involved in small group activities with their hearing peers. Discussions from the focus groups illustrated that classroom teachers, interpreters, teachers of the deaf, hearing classmates and D/HH students themselves contributed to the participation of those who are D/HH. Specific barriers that get in the way of these D/HH groups of individuals along with strategies to promote participation were identified. Results from the focus groups were similar to the qualitative analyses of field observation data that was collected. The observations allowed for suitable accommodations that regular classroom teachers, teachers of the deaf, and interpreters could make to encourage D/HH students' better integration in the regular classroom.

Researchers Luckner and Muir (2002) offer suggestions for helping deaf students succeed in regular education classrooms. Their ten factors for the promotion of this type of success include the following:

family involvement, self-determination, extracurricular activities, friendships and social skills, self-advocacy skills, collaboration and communication with general education teachers, preteach, teach and post teach content vocabulary being learned in the general education classroom, collaboration with early identification and early intervention service providers, reading and high expectations (p. 23).

These suggestions can also be applied to those deaf and hard of hearing students in special schools or segregated settings. The authors further note that it is the right of every student who is deaf or hard of hearing to learn and socialize in a mainstream classroom at the local school.

Stinson, Liu, Saur and Long (1996) interviewed D/HH students who were mainstreamed about their perceptions in post-secondary classes regarding their communication ease, support services and attitudes of teachers and students toward them in the mainstream setting.

Participants included 50 male and 50 female D/HH students whose ages ranged from 18 to 36 and who were registered in the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTIF) and cross-registered at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). Students differed in their ease of communication with their hearing peers and professors. The researchers noted that the collaboration between the D/HH students and their teachers in recognizing and employing suitable resources for the D/HH students made the learning process possible. Analyses of interview data concluded that all deaf students found communicating with others in the mainstream classroom to be cognitively demanding. This may be due, in part, to the difficulty experienced by many D/HH students in localizing the origin of voices.

In his study, Allen (1992), provided cross tabulations of educational placement variables by chosen demographic characteristics in local schools and described the patterns of educational placement for subgroups of the D/HH students. Dependent variables included type of school, amount of academic integration with hearing students and the number of D/HH students

attending the same school. Independent variables included degree of hearing loss, age, ethnic and racial background and the presence of an additional handicap. Results suggested that subgroups differed greatly regarding educational placement patterns. The researcher found that only 10 percent of students in the area who had a profound hearing loss attended local schools and were integrated with hearing students for more than three hours per day, thus indicating that the inclusion of deaf students in mainstream settings was very low.

Deaf and hard of hearing students have much to deal with in terms of their hearing loss alone. Learning how to manage a mild to profound hearing loss can be a constant stress in a child's life. When faced with the challenges of being educated in the mainstream setting, additional tension can be added to D/HH students in terms of managing the curriculum along with the social aspect of school. As previously noted, from a student's perspective, an inclusive setting was believed to be a far more positive setting than a special school as in the latter students felt their education was lacking. The perception of education in a special school being inferior to that of inclusive settings is here mentioned only with reference to the specific studies in this review citing that finding and the specific samples of D/HH students in those studies. This negative experience may be the case for some D/HH students but not all. In elementary school in particular, students are included in the regular classroom with some type of support in place for them. However, secondary school may not be as inviting for D/HH students as fewer supports may be in place, causing them to rely more so on advocating for themselves, on more communication with their regular classroom teachers and on the support of family members. The majority of the inclusion literature available regarding D/HH students has a strong focus on the elementary level and less of an emphasis upon the secondary level. This finding implies much more research in the area of secondary school inclusion with D/HH students is necessary in order to track the supports made available to these students after they transition from elementary

school. The inclusion of D/HH students in mainstream schools is certainly a promising option for all parties involved. Both hearing students and those who are D/HH are able to learn from one another. Furthermore, regular classroom teachers become more knowledgeable in educating children with hearing loss, which in turn allows them to better accommodate students educationally who have other exceptionalities.

The inclusion of D/HH students in mainstream settings is certainly a controversial topic amongst educators in the fields of general and deaf education. In addition to concerns raised regarding the inclusion of students who are D/HH in mainstream settings is the process of transition, a procedure that involves not only students who are D/HH but the individuals who support their education, such as family members, educators, administrators and other school board officials (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002). This transition, for D/HH students who have been included in a mainstream classroom throughout their elementary years, may include the possibility of segregated or integrated classes for the first time.

Transition

For all students, transitioning from elementary to secondary school may be difficult, as students may not know what to expect from their new teachers and the general school environment (Akos, 2002; Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006; Zeedyk et al., 2003). There is no literature available specific to the transition from elementary school to secondary school for D/HH students. The following section will describe the transition from elementary to secondary school for students with exceptionalities on a broad level. For students with exceptionalities, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2002) states,

the process of transition refers to a school's written plan to assist the student in making a successful transition from school to work, further education, and community living... which identify goals that are achievable by the student, given appropriate supports,

defines the actions that are necessary year by year to help the student achieve his or her goals, clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the student, family, and others in carrying out these actions and reflect actual opportunities and resources that are likely to be available after the student leaves school (p.3).

In a study concerning student perceptions of the transition from elementary school to middle school, Akos (2002) noted that during transition years, psychological distress escalates in both boys and girls. Girls must also deal with the stress that peer relationships can cause; boys too, must deal with peer relationships in addition to other conflict and school pressure. Akos conducted a longitudinal analysis of student perceptions. Researchers first asked participants to pose questions about middle school and then asked participants to complete a 5-item questionnaire regarding their personal perspectives about middle school. Results indicated that students believed friends, parents, and teachers all aid in the process of transition but that it was important to include a variety of people in the process. Parents were more likely to caution their children about their upcoming transition rather than offering words of encouragement, thus providing little support. Alternatively, peers may not always offer correct or valuable information.

In seeking to determine the concerns and expectations of primary students, parents and teachers, Zeedyk et al. (2002) found that all groups believed bullying to be the largest concern upon entering secondary school, but that these worries begin to dissipate by the conclusion of the first semester. Other concerns included fears of getting lost, increased workload and peer relationships. Researchers also stated that responses from parents and elementary students ready to transition to secondary school had similar views about making the move. Students raised a number of concerns regarding the transition, highlighting the importance of having opportunities available for these concerns to be addressed. The creation of an orientation program where D/HH

students can obtain information may allow these students to feel more prepared and less stressed about making the transition to secondary school.

Deaf and hard of hearing students must also experience the process of transition, whether it is from elementary school to secondary school or from secondary school to the world beyond. The transition literature that exists regarding D/HH students specifically looks at the transition from post-secondary school to the work force; although not directly relevant, it may provide some insight into the experiences of D/HH students who are making the transition from elementary to secondary. It may be assumed that the process of transition is even more difficult for D/HH students as they are often concerned about being academically successful (Danek & Bushby, 1999) and perhaps the impact of their exceptionality in a larger and busier environment. Bowe (2003) claims that unsuccessful transitions occur due to two factors; (1) there is a focus on assessment practices along with an inclusion-driven focus upon preparing students for further education and (2) educators do not take time to investigate how many D/HH students actually are successful in educational programs upon graduation from high school, therefore, it is difficult to know who is actually successful. Research suggests that teachers must speak with previous D/HH graduates in order to better serve current students in the process of transition (Bowe, 2003; Schroedel, Watson, & Ashmore, 2003). Also, students should be assisted in learning how to self-advocate in order to receive the services they need.

Repetto and Coretta (1996), in their position paper on transition from elementary to secondary school in general and special education, promote a transition model that includes program planning and focuses on curriculum, location, future planning, multi-agency collaboration and a family and student focus. They also support the delivery of a transition model in both regular education classes and in special education. While this study is American, in Canada, and more specifically in Ontario, the Ministry of Education (2002) states,

for exceptional students who are age 14 or over and who are not identified solely as gifted...the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) must include a transition plan...for the student's transition from school to work, further education, and/or community living (p. 4).

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2000) further states that an exceptional student's transition plan, must include the following elements:

(1) specific goals for the student's transition to postsecondary activities, which must be realistic and must reflect the strengths, needs, and interests of the student; (2) the actions required, now and in the future, to achieve the stated goals. The actions identified must build on the student's identified strengths, needs, and interests; (3) the person or agency (the student, parents, educators, providers of specialized support and services, community agencies) responsible for or involved in completing or providing assistance in the completion of each of the identified actions; and (4) timelines for the implementation of each of the identified actions (p. 4).

While Garay (2003) conducted face-to-face interviews and online surveys with deaf students to help identify main services and experiences that facilitated a successful transition from secondary school to post-secondary school, his findings may be applicable to the transition from elementary school to secondary school. The study looked at students' participation in the process of the transition plan and its result on their decisions regarding their future aspirations. Results yielded several themes: (1) student participation in IEP meetings is essential and their input is key, (2) teachers must involve families in the transition process, (3) teachers need to be aware of parents' feelings, (4) transition planning should begin in middle school, and (5) transition planning must be comprehensive. Garay also suggested that teachers must explain the importance of the transition process to their deaf students along with educating them on how to

participate in such a meeting. Role playing opportunities are helpful and necessary for deaf students as they typically would be unfamiliar with what occurs at a meeting.

The process of transition can be intimidating for D/HH students. Not only may students who are D/HH question what a new environment will bestow upon them but the parents of these children may also be apprehensive about what may be in store for their child in terms of academics and social situations in a new and unfamiliar place. It is apparent throughout the literature that D/HH students are often included in their school environment more so during their elementary school years than during their secondary schooling. This finding poses a problem in terms of D/HH students' transition to secondary school because they may already be very apprehensive about the changes in environment taking place. Students and their parents must find ways to negotiate the transition and the many decisions that need to be made regarding placement in particular.

Parental Perceptions of School Services for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

The decision to include a student who is D/HH in a regular classroom is ultimately that of parents, who must take into consideration many factors to ensure their child will have a rewarding educational experience. In addition to this decision, parents must play an important role in the life and education of their D/HH children when the time arrives to make the transition from elementary school to secondary school.

The role of parents in the education of their D/HH children has been investigated in a number of studies. Researchers found that most parents of D/HH students believe that successful school inclusion depends in part, on them participating in their children's education, including advocating for services and being involved in both home and school-based activities (Eriks-Brophy et al., 2006; Reed, Antia & Kreimeyer, 2008).

Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) recently explored facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of oral deaf students from the parents' perspectives. Focus groups were conducted to assess participants' experiences with and their perceptions of their child's inclusion in regular classroom environments along with their recommendations related to effective inclusive policies and practices. Specifically, 24 parents of oral deaf young adults agreed to participate in three focus groups. Parents of children with hearing loss identified facilitators, which included assertiveness, advocacy and wanting to be involved in their child's education. Their findings indicated that parents of D/HH students believed being an aggressive and strong advocate in order to acquire the necessary school services for their children was critical in reaching the aims of inclusion. Involvement included becoming familiar with educational policies and procedures regarding class placement and evaluation of progress, membership on various committees, and attending program review meetings.

Parents believed that a positive relationship with itinerant teachers, classroom teachers and administration along with regular contact with these parties were necessary elements of successful inclusion for their child. The results of this study also illustrate that parents who took an active role in the education of their children and who were able to volunteer their time in the school, had an understanding of administrative policies and were better able to assist their oral deaf children with class assignments. Researchers also examined the barriers that were associated with parents and regular class inclusion, which included the following: Parents who lacked an understanding of the school system and who had no advocacy skills for their children. School staff observed some parents to have chronic complaints about having little time, skill or knowledge of teaching strategies to assist their children in the home environment. Another barrier that was revealed in the research was related to family finances in that the D/HH children

needing intensive support from one parent would require that parent to not have employment elsewhere (Eriks-Brophy et al., 2006).

Parents may or may not want to become involved in their children's education. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) state that parent involvement occurs because they have developed a role that includes involvement, because they can be effective in assisting their children to achieve academic success and they see opportunities available for them to be involved. Although this literature is linked to parents of children without any type of disability, it can be generalized to parents of D/HH students. The types of activities that parents choose to be involved in can be related to the parents' opinions regarding their own skills, interests and abilities. Likewise, parents should be able to develop a sense of value when helping their children to achieve school success.

In another study by Eriks-Brophy et al., (2007) researching the facilitators and barriers to the integration of orally educated children and youth with hearing loss into their families and communities, the researchers used focus groups once again to examine participants' perceptions of integration and their recommendations for the facilitation of inclusion. Twenty-four parents of young adults with hearing loss took part in four parent focus groups. The researchers noted that quite a few parents in their study claimed to make significant sacrifices, such as relocating in order to get their D/HH children the proper support needed to improve the D/HH child's speech and language acquisition.

Ellen (1994) shares her personal opinion on full inclusion as a parent of a deaf child. She claims parents and professionals must be advocates for D/HH children so that the education these students receive meets their individual needs. She also states that parental involvement in all aspects of decision making such as evaluation, placement and programming of a child is a necessary component of successful full inclusion.

With specific reference to students who are D/HH, Kluwin and Corbett (1998) studied the characteristics of D/HH students' care providers, the nature of their involvement and whether or not there was an association between these. They interviewed a total of 105 parents who were mostly African American or Hispanic with D/HH children who had been receiving some type of public assistance for at least one year. The parents interviewed were identified as belonging to one of following groups: younger mothers who were high school dropouts, older mothers who were high school dropouts, older mothers who were high school graduates, mothers who completed some college and other respondents. Kluwin and Corbett found that there were different ways that parents responded to a child's educational requirements. Researchers also noted that there was a relationship between: a) those parents who wanted to assist their D/HH child with his or her education and having the knowledge and skills to do so, and b) the ways in which parents responded to their child's needs. In addition, these researchers found that there were specific groups of parents who had the potential to assist with their children's needs. For example, the group of younger high school dropouts lacked knowledge of school culture and an awareness of resources to meet the needs of their children. The high school graduates had an interest in their child's well-being and saw the importance of education while also possessing some skills to assist with their child's learning. The college educated mothers, however, were involved in all aspects of their child's education.

Luetke-Stahlman and Hayes (1994) provide the reader with a lengthy set of recommendations so that parents ensure their children who are D/HH receive the necessary services that they require at school. They note that students who are D/HH should be assessed properly, there should be sufficient documentation in regards to their needs, the necessary supports should be in place, and appropriate placement should be proposed based on the students' needs. Recommendations regarding many different aspects of the school day and

services are addressed from the perspectives of the teacher personnel, administration, and other professionals who provide services to better educate students who are D/HH. The authors mention that parents must be strong advocates of their children in order to determine the proper supports and services in the school to help the child be academically successful. Parents and school personnel must work cooperatively to ensure the best possible services are in place based upon the child's specific needs. Advocates can also include the hearing peers of those students who are D/HH.

In a study by Luckner and Muir (2001), 19 parents were interviewed (14 mothers and 5 fathers) and asked why they thought their D/HH child had been successful at school. They responded that it was skilled and caring professionals, the support of their families, early identification and intervention, extracurricular activities, and the value of reading and perseverance that were the contributing factors to their child's good level of success. Parents highlighted the importance of family involvement such as taking their D/HH child to speech therapy and other appointments. They also indicated that enrolling their child in extracurricular activities gave their children more confidence.

Hadjikakou, Petridou and Stylianou (2008) investigated the viewpoints of secondary school oral D/HH students, along with the perspectives of their parents, teachers and head teachers, regarding their inclusion both academically and socially. Four questionnaires were given to the aforementioned participants, which were comprised of multiple choice questions and questions answered on a Likert-type scale. In their responses, participants emphasized that most D/HH students were able to manage the stress of the curriculum in a regular school setting. Parents, teachers and head teachers also mentioned that the D/HH students were attuned socially with other children. This study concluded also that modification of regular classroom work was an underlying contributor in the successful academic inclusion for D/HH students. Specifically,

parents of D/HH students had particular views in response to the questions researchers posed. The majority of parents felt that their children communicated quite well with the hearing children in their school. In regards to their children's academic inclusion, the majority of parents believed their D/HH children could cope very well with the demands of the regular school curriculum and that they could meet the requirements of the regular school. Concerning the social inclusion of their children, most parents believed their D/HH children socially integrated quite well with the hearing children. The findings of this investigation illustrate that parents' views about their D/HH children in regular school settings oftentimes can be quite positive.

Reed, Antia and Kreimeyer (2008), identified the facilitators and barriers to academic success of D/HH students in inclusive educational settings in their longitudinal study. From a group of 187 students, 25 D/HH students who attended general education classes and were enrolled in a study of academic progress were asked to participate in case studies. Interviews were conducted with teachers of the deaf, general education teachers, principals, parents, interpreters, and the D/HH students. This data was examined to facilitators and barriers to school success in the areas of child, family, and academic status. Researchers found facilitators to involve student self-advocacy and motivation, high family and school expectations, families' ability to assist with homework, and finally, good communication between professionals. Results showed that barriers included the inability of some parents to assist with homework tasks, a lack of consequences when homework was left incomplete, and a lack of communication with school personnel. Both students whose academic achievement was above and below average had many facilitators; however, below average students had numerous barriers.

Parents play a vital role in the education of their D/HH child and also importantly, in deciding upon the most appropriate educational placement to meet their child's needs. It is the perspectives of parents that truly assist in recognizing the educational options available to D/HH

students along with parental attitudes, beliefs and feelings regarding the inclusion of D/HH students in mainstream settings. The studies discussed, indicated that strong advocacy skills on the part of the parent are essential to obtaining necessary school services, along with collaborating with all teachers involved in the education of their D/HH children and becoming familiar with policies regarding class placement. It is evident through the literature that most studies involving parental perspectives of D/HH children's inclusion in mainstream schools have generally found positive parent responses. Thus, mainstreaming for D/HH children is perceived as a viable, effective option by many parents of D/HH children.

The parental perspectives of students who are D/HH contribute greatly to understanding how to implement the necessary steps for the successful transition of these children from elementary school to secondary school and their inclusion in mainstream settings. A strong partnership between parents and the professionals involved in the education of their D/HH students is imperative in making a smooth transition and to allow for a positive and productive educational environment. In reviewing the D/HH research literature, it is clear that insufficient literature exists regarding the transition of D/HH students to secondary school settings. This indicates the need for further investigation regarding this transition for D/HH students. The current research is then a contribution in that regard.

Conclusion

A review of the literature in the fields of deaf education, inclusive education and school transition has been examined. Parental perspectives regarding these issues have also been highlighted throughout this literature review to gain an understanding of their views and attitudes concerning the class placement options for their D/HH children. Studies have typically shown that inclusion at the elementary school level occurs more readily than in secondary school and that parents make the majority of decisions involving the class placement options for their

children during elementary school. However, what is unspecified throughout the literature are: a) the parental perspectives regarding their D/HH child's level of inclusion following the transition to secondary school; and b) parental perceptions regarding level of academic support within the secondary school environment for their D/HH children. What is also lacking is the viewpoint of the students themselves regarding this transition.

Accordingly, the present study explores parent and student perspectives regarding inclusive education for D/HH students and their transition from elementary to secondary school. This study will add significantly to the scant available literature by giving the accounts of deaf and hard of hearing students who have recently made the transition from elementary to secondary school along with the perspectives of their parents. The gathering of both points of view enhance the significance of the study's findings.

Chapter three presents an overview of the research methodology. It is a synopsis of the qualitative research design used throughout the research. Other aspects such as the setting, the participants, the focus group method, the data collection, ethical considerations and the analysis of the data are also described.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Overview of the Research Design

This qualitative research study examined the viewpoints of parents of deaf and hard of hearing students and the students themselves regarding the benefits and barriers to their class placements in a mainstream setting. The methods used for this study were two separate focus groups, one that included the parents and the other that included the students. Speaking to both groups of participants assisted the researcher to “capture perspectives accurately” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p.8). Both groups of participants were asked similar questions relating to class placements, transition, benefits and barriers related to placement. It was valuable to gather the distinct viewpoints. The students were very upfront and sincere about their feelings and expressed these without reservation. They stated straightforwardly what they thought regarding the questions asked at that time. The research design allowed for an intense discussion related to what deaf and hard of hearing students personally think about their lived experiences in a mainstream school environment. This study unraveled many themes, many of which were expected and some which were unanticipated. The parents also provided the researcher with forthright responses, which also contributed to the themes that emerged from the data.

Setting

This research study took place at two different locations in Northwestern Ontario. The student focus group interview was located in the hearing resource classroom at the secondary school where all of the student participants attend. The participants and the researcher were seated around a table with the digital audio-recorder on the table to document what was said. All six of the participants were registered in the ninth or tenth grade. The room consisted of a white board and two blackboards with various tables, where the students work. The parent focus group

interview was located in a classroom of the education building at a Northern Ontario university. Again, the participants and the researcher were seated around small tables. The room consisted of numerous tables and a blackboard.

Selection of the Participants

The participant selection requirements for each student participant were as follows: (1) they were identified as deaf or hard of hearing by the school board; (2) they were either in grade eight and about to make the transition to secondary school or in grades nine or ten and had recently done so; and (3) they attended school in a mainstream setting. The parent selection requirement was simply that they had a child who met the above requirements. In addition, all student participants were required to return their parent consent form to the researcher in order to be a participant.

The students who participated in this qualitative research study all attend the same school from a school board in Northwestern Ontario and are either in grade nine or ten. There were some difficulties that ensued in that the school board only allowed the researcher to conduct focus group interviews with deaf and hard of hearing students in one particular school and not with those who were in grade eight and ready to make the transition to secondary school. Due to this issue, only six students participated. In addition, the students who participated were those who were identified as being oral deaf or hard of hearing; as a result, it proved to be difficult in locating other D/HH participants as the researcher was not given permission to access other schools in which these students attend. All of the students brought forth a unique point of view specific to their own experiences and were very interested in participating in this research study. Their parent or guardian provided their consent before the research began. All participants were informed via the consent, prior to their participation, that as they would be participating in focus groups, they could choose to use pseudonyms during the focus group discussions but that it was

possible that other in the group may already know their identity. All participants were asked to keep the identities of all group members confidential, as would the researcher in reporting the study results.

Once the researcher obtained approval from the university's Research Ethics Board and before the research study began, it was necessary for the researcher to obtain signatures from the appropriate people involved. First, approval from the Education Officer at a particular school board was needed prior to entry into the school. Subsequently, the researcher required the approval from the principal of the specific secondary school involved. The teacher of the deaf in that particular school gave her approval next. Once approval was sought from the board and from the school level, the researcher obtained written consent from the parent and/or guardian of the student participant regarding the parent's and their child's participation, as well written consent from the students in regards to their own participation in the study.

The wait time associated with locating and acquiring approval of the abovementioned people was indeed an arduous task in the data collection process. As soon as approval was obtained, the researcher contacted the teacher of the deaf to set a mutually agreeable time for her students to participate. Then, the researcher contacted the parents of the student participants to inform them of the date and time of the focus group interview. A date and time was also scheduled for the parent focus group. The six deaf and hard of hearing students who participated in the study gave insightful information regarding their personal experiences about the benefits and potential barriers to the students' educational placements in mainstream settings.

The teacher of the deaf is a caring and hard-working individual who is dedicated to the needs of her students and is a strong advocate for the deaf and hard of hearing. She is a necessary and important connection between the regular classroom teachers and the deaf and hard of hearing students. This teacher assisted the researcher in that she mailed the information letters

and the consent forms (See Appendices A, B, C, D) to the parents/guardians of the students who are deaf and hard of hearing and to the students themselves. The consent forms included a place for both the parents and the students to sign to indicate that they wished to participate. In addition, the students had their own consent form to sign in order for them to have a sense of responsibility and to make the decision to participate separately from that of their parents, however, student participation was conditional on their parents having also given written consent to allow their children to participate.

The researcher did know the students prior to the commencement of this research study in the capacity of occasional teacher on numerous occasions at the particular school, in the specific department. Already having built a rapport with the students allowed them to feel at ease speaking to the researcher and in providing information about their educational experiences in a mainstream school environment.

Description of the Participants

The first focus group consisted of a total of six deaf and hard of hearing students, four of which were in grade nine and two who were in grade ten at the time of the study. Those students who were in grades nine and ten, who have recently made that transition were asked to participate (see Appendices C & D: Student Information Letter and Consent Form).

All of the students interviewed had received or were receiving support for one period from the teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing either in the first or second semester of the school year. Four of the participants were female and two of the participants were male, which allowed for differing viewpoints and good discussion between all participants. These students were asked to participate in a separate focus group interview and discussion from their parents and this provided an interesting comparative analysis. Speaking to the students themselves allowed for a first hand account of what they believed to be the benefits and potential barriers to

educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing in a mainstream regular class placement. All of the students included had sufficient oral communication capacities or were able to benefit sufficiently from hearing aids and/or a cochlear implant to participate fully in the focus group although some students may be classed as deaf (Appendices A, B, C, D).

The parents of the deaf and hard of hearing students were also interviewed in a separate focus group discussion setting in order for the researcher to learn what these parents believed to be the benefits and potential barriers to educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing in mainstream regular class placements. The offer to participate was extended to all parents in a local district school board (see Appendices A and B: Parent Information Letter and Consent Form) whose children have been identified as deaf or hard of hearing by the school board (based on medical information provided by parents to the Board's special education committee), and whose children are in the process of transitioning to secondary school or those who have recently done so. However, only three out of the possible six parents who had originally signed the consent forms arrived at the time of the focus group interview. The following tables will briefly describe each participant.

Table 1: Description of the Student Participants

Pseudonym and Grade	Description
<p style="text-align: center;">Amy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Grade: 9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amy was quite honest in her opinions and was not afraid to share her thoughts. She answered most questions but first made sure she understood what was being asked. • She noted that she does not mention that she has a hearing loss when she meets people for the first time. • Amy was receiving direct support from her teacher of the deaf during the second semester.
<p style="text-align: center;">Charlotte</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Grade: 9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlotte volunteered her responses to questions quite freely. She was informative and added more information after her initial response when warranted. • She noted that she is not embarrassed to tell people she

	<p>meets that she had a hearing loss.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlotte was able to articulate her answers to very clearly convey her thoughts. • She was receiving direct support from her teacher of the deaf during the second semester.
<p>Amanda Grade: 9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amanda was fairly quiet throughout the focus group; however, she did provide the researcher with her viewpoint regarding her personal experiences in grade eight and to the time of the focus group. • She is a very independent worker and was not receiving direct support from the teacher of the deaf during the second semester.
<p>Chris Grade: 9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris was very informative and was reflective about his school experiences thus far. He provided the researcher with his personal experiences regarding his transition and the issues he faced such as transportation. • Chris received direct support from the teacher of the deaf during the first semester but not during the second semester.
<p>David Grade: 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David was rather quiet throughout the focus group and often asked what we were discussing. He did provide some insight into his personal world but he did not elaborate unless asked. • David was receiving direct support from the teacher of the deaf during the second semester.
<p>Linda Grade: 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda was extremely quiet and for the most part offered information when spoken to directly. • She was identified as hard of hearing later on in her education. • Linda was receiving direct support from the teacher of the deaf during the second semester.

Table 2: Description of the Parent Participants

Pseudonym	Description
Jack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack is Charlotte's step-father. • He offered plenty of information regarding Charlotte's experiences in elementary school and in secondary school thus far. • He is very a very informed parent who knows what is happening in his daughter's education.
Hannah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah is Chris's mother. • She is heavily involved in Chris's academic life and seeks the necessary supports to assist her child. • She is a true advocate for her son and other deaf and hard

	of hearing children.
Patricia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patricia is David’s mother. • She offered her opinion on many occasions reflecting back to David’s elementary years. • She very much wants what is best for her son both academically and socially and wants to help him in any way possible.

Description of the Hearing Resource Department

The Hearing Resource department in this secondary school consists of one teacher of the deaf and a total of seven students. The department is a subsection of the special education department. The students are enrolled in either the academic stream or the college bound stream. They attend classes and have the support of an educational assistant available to them who take notes for the D/HH students via a laptop. The notes are summaries of what the regular classroom teachers say throughout the duration of class. The D/HH students also have the opportunity to take a credit course with their teacher of the deaf, where vocabulary from their regular classes are either pre-taught so that students are familiar with the concepts when they are taught in class. In addition, the teacher of the deaf reviews concepts that may be troublesome to the D/HH students and clarifies any other academic issues that may arise. Moreover, the D/HH students receive assignments as the teacher of the deaf sees fit.

Focus Group Method

The method that was used in this research study was focus group interviews, which are particularly useful when the topic to explore is general, and the purpose is either to stimulate talk from multiple perspectives from the group participants so that the researcher can learn what the range of views are (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 109).

This approach allowed the researcher to obtain various perspectives from both parent and student participants, which increased the reliability of the themes that emerged (Patton, 2002). Focus groups provide “high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views

in the context of the views of others” (Patton, 2002, p. 386). Participation in the focus groups was voluntary and limited to six to eight members per group. The discussion that results amongst participants in focus group interviews more easily allows for the expression of participant points of view rather than having the interview dominated by the researcher interviewing (Mertens, 2005).

The questions that the students were asked were specific to their experiences as deaf and hard of hearing students in a mainstream educational setting. The questions posed to the parents were similar but provided the opportunity for gathering adult viewpoints on the same issues. The interviews were semi-structured, thus allowing students and parents not only to answer the questions but also to add additional information to enhance their responses when necessary. Both the parent and student focus group discussions were conducted face-to-face. The duration of the student focus group was approximately one hour and the parent focus group took just under two hours, as the parent participants had much information to share also regarding their D/HH child’s placement experience in the elementary years. Both focus group discussions were audio-recorded and then transcribed in their entirety using pseudonyms and removing any information that would reveal the identity of the participants. The transcripts, audio recordings along with the notes taken at each focus group interview are strictly confidential and are being kept in a secure location at Lakehead University for a period of five years. The date, time, and locations of the focus groups and all information that was discussed were audio-recorded and/or written down in the form of notes. Quotations from the notes taken will be presented throughout this thesis, with pseudonyms assigned.

Data Collection

Face-to-face focus group interviews were conducted in order to collect data for this research study. Creswell (2003) states, “these interviews involve unstructured and generally

open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants” (p.188).

The researcher used interview guides as instruments for this research study (Appendices E and F). The interview guides explored questions relating to: a) the transition of deaf and hard of hearing students from elementary school to secondary school; b) mainstream class placements of these students and c) the role their parents play in their education. Patton (2002) states,

an interview guide lists the questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview...the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined (p. 343).

The researcher also used a digital voice recorder during the collection of data to ensure that no pertinent information was missed or lost. In addition, handwritten notes were taken during the course of the focus group (Creswell, 2003). The recording was transcribed in its entirety soon after the focus groups were completed.

Ethics

This study was conducted in accordance with the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board’s procedures and guidelines. Before data collection began, the participants were verbally made aware of the study’s purpose. Additionally, participants were notified of their rights throughout the study. Prior to the participants’ involvement in the focus group interviews, they were asked to read the information letters (Appendices A and C) and sign the informed consent forms (Appendices B and D). The researcher assured participants in writing that the following ethics guidelines would be adhered to: (1) the topic selected or study was non-controversial for participants involved and therefore, carried no potential negative effects. Reflection and consideration of a particular aspect of the participants’ lives may result in benefiting from

participation in this study; (2) participants' identity would be protected throughout this study by being anonymous to all except the researcher. Participants would be assigned a pseudonym, which would be used on all transcripts and in the final thesis write-up. All collected data is considered confidential. All other identifiable information such as the name of a school or treatment facility will be kept confidential and not appear in any write-up of results shared with others; (3) participants had the right to choose not to answer a question in the focus group interviews or end the interview early. Participants could also withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse consequences to the parent or child; (4) participants would be given the opportunity to retract anything they wanted from the transcription or to withdraw it altogether when offered the opportunity to review it and prior to the writing of the thesis or publication of group results; (5) All data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for 5 years (Lakehead University, 2007) with only the researcher and thesis supervisor having access; after which the data will then be destroyed; (6) to access the results of the proposed research study, participants may contact the researcher.

The data collection did not commence, nor were student or parent participants contacted until the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board had approved the application to conduct research with human subjects. Written consent was granted from the school board, principal, and teacher involved, as well as from all parent and student study participants involved prior to the commencement of the study and all Tri-Council ethical procedures were followed. Every effort has been made to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Both the parent and child study participants received information letters as well as consent forms that clearly outlined their rights including the voluntary nature of their participation, informed them of the fact that there was no anticipated potential harm and of the potential benefits of participation, provided information about storage of data, confidentiality of

their information, informed them that data will be reported with their identity concealed; informed them of their right to retract (remove) any segment of the transcribed focus group interviews or the whole interview pertaining to themselves, and their right to have a copy of the final research report. The researcher obtained informed consent from both the parent and student participants prior to the commencement of data collection. The consent forms allowed all participants to make an informed decision on whether or not they wanted to participate. All the information letters and consent forms (Appendices A, B, C, D) were sent to the potential participants prior to the focus group interviews.

The information that the students and the parents provided was kept in confidence. In order to maintain confidentiality, the names of those participating in the focus group interviews were not released to school personnel. Due to the nature of the methodology (focus groups), all student and parent participants did meet each other. However, parents and students were only introduced using first names (or pseudonyms if participants preferred) and the importance of keeping participants' identities private was stressed to all participants.

Throughout the duration of this study, the researcher was attentive and cautious to ensure that all information was accurate and true as the transcription of the data was completed. All participants were given the opportunity to review the information and redact segments or comments of their transcribed focus group interview if so desired. All findings were reported using specific quotations with no name attached to represent recurring themes from the comments made.

As previously mentioned, all data collected from this research study will be securely stored and kept confidential at Lakehead University for a period of five years and then properly destroyed. Also, this study was only conducted once the school board, education officer,

principal, teacher, as well as parent and student potential participants had given their written consent.

Data Analysis

The researcher used “an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data” (Creswell, 2003, p. 190) to analyze the data. An analysis of the research questions along with the interview guide and transcripts was completed using the constant-comparative method, which “calls on the researcher to seek verification for hypotheses that emerge throughout the study” (Mertens, 2005, p.242). A review of the data showed that various patterns materialized in the participant responses and the researcher was able to differentiate between those patterns by using the constant-comparative method.

The researcher coded the transcripts to determine the attitudes, beliefs and feelings that students and parents had about the inclusion of oral deaf students in the mainstream setting at the elementary and secondary school level. Coding refers to dividing text data, such as sentences or paragraphs into categories, and labeling those categories with a term based in the actual language of the participant (Creswell, 2003). The patterns that emerged were categorized under theme headings and later interpreted and an elaborated explanation provided.

Conclusion

This research study allowed both student and parent participants to discuss their personal experiences regarding the benefits and barriers to the education of deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstream settings. The methodology used in this study offered participants a chance to voice their beliefs and concerns regarding their education needs in such an inclusive environment. Both the parents and the deaf and hard of hearing students themselves were able to give their personal accounts on matters that affected them either in a positive or negative manner. This study also provided the D/HH students with a forum to articulate their opinions about their

educational experience, which are unfortunately not always dealt with. It is anticipated that the results of this study will inform all who work in educational settings with D/HH students and contribute to positively changing or improving the procedures that are in place for deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstream environments.

Chapter four presents a summary of the findings from the data collection stage of this research process. Numerous themes that relate to both the student participants and the parent participants have emerged from the data and will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

This chapter illustrates the findings from the research conducted. To make certain that students, teachers, board members or members of the school community cannot identify any of the participants, a description of both student and parent participants is included in Chapter 3 with a pseudonym attached to each individual and these pseudonyms are used in each chapter.

The student participants all attend the same secondary school. The students attend this particular school due to the fact that the hearing resource classroom is located there and because they are identified as either deaf or hard of hearing by their school board and entitled to the support of a teacher of the deaf, otherwise they would each have attended the secondary school located closest to their homes. A description of the program offered for these students is offered below.

Qualitative analysis permits the results of the data to be shown thematically. Patton (2002) states,

content analysis, sometimes refers to searching text for recurring words or themes. The process of searching for patterns or themes may be distinguished, respectively, as pattern analysis or theme analysis (p. 453).

Therefore, the data that resulted from the focus group interviews was transcribed and coded.

Bogdan and Biklen (2006), offer a process to develop a coding system. They state,

you search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics your data cover, and then you write down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. These words and phrases are coding categories (p. 173).

The themes that emerged from the data were arranged separately, according to parents of the deaf and hard of hearing students and the students themselves providing the responses. The themes that materialized from the student focus group interview include: (1) supports and accommodations; (2) EA (educational assistant) as facilitator and barrier; (3) parental advocacy;

(4) teacher characteristics; (5) professional collaboration; (6) peer interaction and socialization; (7) new school concerns and (8) transition incidences. The themes that emerged from the parent focus group involve: (1) academic supports; (2) EA and teacher of the deaf as barrier and facilitator; (3) parental and self-advocacy; (4) people skills/personality traits; (5) professional collaboration; (6) peer interaction and socialization; (7) lack of options and (8) transition incidences.

The data collected in this study was and is strictly confidential and it was imperative that confidentiality continued as the findings materialized. The findings that are explained in this chapter emerged from both the parents of the deaf and hard of hearing students and the students themselves and is personal (see Appendix K for complete transcripts). Furthermore, the actual names of all participants, educators and anyone else mentioned in the study have been kept confidential. Pseudonyms have been utilized as a measure of protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of everyone involved.

The use of focus group interviews to collect data regarding the benefits and barriers to deaf and hard of hearing students' education in mainstream placements generated much discussion and information. The following chart summarizes both the student and parent participants' responses to the questions posed. This chart also assisted the researcher in developing the themes that emerged from the research.

SUMMARY OF TRANSCRIPT DATA CHART

Definitions of Abbreviations in the Transcript Data Chart

HRU: Hearing Resource Unit (the classroom where D/HH students go to receive support from their teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing)

EA: educational assistant

T/DHH: teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing

FM system: frequency modulated system (assistive technology used to support a deaf or hard of hearing individual)

D/HH: Deaf and hard of hearing

SEAC: Special Education Advisory Committee

VOICE: an organization to offer support to families who are deaf or hard of hearing

QUESTION	STUDENT FOCUS GROUP	PARENT FOCUS GROUP
1 Class Placement	Describe your current class placement at school.	Describe your child's current class placement at school.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few students have one period in the HRU to go over their work EAs in most classes with the students Tests are written in the HRU if necessary Charlotte mentions, "We have one period with Mrs. P that helps us with our needs and subjects we need help in" (p. 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstream/regular classroom Mainstream/regular classroom with the exception of one period when students are with teacher of the deaf in the HRU.
2	What qualities must regular classroom teachers have in order to successfully include a D/HH child in his/her classroom?	What qualities must regular classroom teachers possess in order to successfully include a D/HH child in his/her classroom?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris states that teachers should "have patience and understanding" (p. 2) towards the student Face the student when talking, not the blackboard and not talk too fast David felt that classroom teachers should "not single the students out to make them feel weird" (p. 3). 	<p>The parents claimed that there were many qualities that regular classroom teachers should possess to include a D/HH child in his/her classroom. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information-seeking, enlightenment The ability to communicate and teach, not just pass the knowledge from a text. "They have to make sure the information is getting in 'cause our kids don't have a processing problem; they have an input issue" (Hannah, p. 24). Go to in-services to be informed about teaching kids with hearing loss. They should be flexible, dynamic, and differentiate instruction for all students to be successful. Teachers should want to learn the appropriate strategies for D/HH kids since they are useful for all students. Repeating answers for the students Not relying on the equipment
3	Describe your ideal learning environment.	Describe the ideal learning environment for your child.
	<p>Some of the factors that students mentioned would contribute to an ideal learning environment are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A quiet room Tennis balls on the chairs to minimize noise Smaller room with no bare walls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller schools The regular classroom, where they can interact with a variety of students Informing the entire school community is necessary. "I think that the whole school community needs to be aware. I mean, the lunch room ladies, the bus helpers etc." (Hannah, p. 27).
4	What services/supports have you received at school to help you with learning?	What services/supports has your child received at school to help him/her with the learning process?
	<p>Students mentioned the following as some of the supports that they receive to help them with their learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FM system EAs Laptops More time with the hearing resource teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computerized note takers Laptop, FM, and the specialist teacher of the deaf Closed captioning when watching movies Pre-teaching of curriculum material and the revision of it In-servicing the classroom teacher to properly service the D/HH kids EAs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time to complete tests 	
5	<p>Do you think the teacher of the deaf and the regular classroom teacher worked together with regards to you elementary school? Do the teacher of the deaf and your regular classroom teachers work together in high school?</p>	<p>Do you think the teacher of the deaf and the regular classroom teacher collaborated with one another regarding your child in elementary school? Do they collaborate in secondary school?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In elementary school, they did on some things but some, not all classroom teachers lacked knowledge in ways to teach them. • Half of the students said yes. One made sure of it so he could learn. Linda said yes but hated it because she had more work. • There was no consensus regarding whether or not there was any collaboration between the classroom teacher and T/DHH due to the short period of time the T/DHH visited at school the schools. • Most agreed that the T/DHH and the classroom teacher collaborate in high school • Charlotte mentioned, "in classes like English, Math, Geography and stuff but in gym and drama and arts they don't sit there and stick to you like a piece of glue or a fly" (p. 5). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In elementary school, one parent said it was hit and miss. Hannah, stated "It was dependent on the teacher, it seemed like every second year, it was great and every other year it was toe to toe every time for every little thing" (p. 31). • Maybe not so much at the end of the year when parents want to know who the next year's teacher will be (teacher of the deaf wants to find out but classroom teacher doesn't know exactly). • Pathways of communication seem to be breaking down (information is not being passed on as easily as it could be). • In secondary school, they collaborate well; however, the tech teacher still doesn't seem to get the information regarding kids who are deaf or hard of hearing.
6	<p>How has the collaboration or lack thereof affected your success?</p>	<p>How has the collaboration or lack thereof affected your child's success?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amy said it doesn't affect her one way or the other because "teachers are obviously not going to listen like not going to remember everything. They have like 100 other students they teach a day. They're not going to remember just to think of us and it just, I've noticed from when teachers did talk and didn't talk, there was no like there wasn't a difference or anything" (p. 8). • Teacher of the deaf as mediator and sometimes involved way too much in students' lives. • Can affect schooling because one can get stressed out a lot and disorganization ensues. • Affects student in different ways, i.e., one student may be more independent than another and doesn't see the T/DHH much now. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of collaboration affected the success of Hannah's child. "I don't like to go to the negative but it [what] just jumps into my head was that the kids felt that they were the problem and they didn't want to be a problem so they didn't say, they didn't complain, they didn't want to advocate because you know, they knew that they were a problem" (p. 35). • The collaboration has also contributed to Jack's step-daughter's academic success. He states, the collaboration has probably led to the success in most cases. Like I said, there was a few bumps in the road but overall, the collaboration, right from JK through, has probably without it, she wouldn't be where she is.
7	<p>Have you been in this type of program/placement throughout your entire education?</p>	<p>Has your child been in this type of program/placement throughout his/her education?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every student had an individual situation that occurred. The following was discussed: • Itinerant from JK to grade 3 and then resource withdrawal from grade 4 to grade 8 (Amy) • Grade 1 to grade 8 itinerant (Chris) approximately 2x per week • Charlotte started in JK with resource withdrawal for her elementary life. • Amanda began in SK had a couple different teachers throughout until grade 	<p>All situations varied as each individual's needs were met accordingly. The placements included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized resource room and also regular classroom with itinerant support • In the regular classroom for the majority of the day and then when they were at the grade when French began, they were pulled out at that time. • Regular classroom with withdrawal and the blocks of time were different over the years because it wasn't based on need but rather on what they could provide.

	<p>8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David had itinerant from JK to 8. • Linda had one in grade 8 because of late identification 	
8	<p>What are the benefits of you having an EA with you in the regular classroom? What are the challenges, if any, associated with having an EA?</p>	<p>What are the benefits of your child having an EA with him/her in the regular classroom? What are the challenges, if any, associated with having an EA?</p>
	<p>Benefits are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They help you; they won't let a student sit there having difficulties. • If you have to miss class, they have the notes for you and the work to do. • Repetition what the teacher says in class if they do not hear what was said • Typing notes to catch up. • Amy claimed there are no benefits to having an EA. <p>Challenges are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can sometimes be really nosy, due to being with the students for long periods of time. • They can sometimes cause conflict because other students want to know what they need an EA for. For example, "people will ask you who they are and you'll be like they're my EA and they'll be like, so you're retarded?" (p. 12). • Never leave the students alone, very clingy • Having an EA singles a student out. • Treat them differently • The general consensus is that students believe they're annoying but they still think they need them. • Conflicting relationships between students and EA support 	<p>Benefits are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They work closely together. • Making sure students understand instruction, revision and pre-teaching concepts/introduction of concepts • Note-taking in elementary school when the student is absent <p>Challenges are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have to really know the kids when they get older and know when to back off. • Knowing each other's signals (i.e., I need help now, I don't etc.) • They are unable to communicate to the classroom teacher what the kids really needed, what was and wasn't working in the classroom • Oftentimes they are in no position to tell the classroom teacher what he/she is doing well or not after observing. • In the early years, be there to help only. For example, "the challenges I see are in early years like in elementary school, they're an EA, not a babysitter, be there to help, not do it for them. You have to really, as a parent, watch for those signs that EAs do what they're supposed to" (Jack, p. 37).
9	<p>How do you interact with your hearing peers? Who would you say you associate more so with, others who are D/HH or your hearing peers?</p>	<p>How does your child interact with his/her hearing peers? Who would you say your child associates more so with, others who are D/HH or their hearing peers? Why do you think so?</p>
	<p>The consensus was that the D/HH students interact more with hearing peers and in the same way as any other student would, however,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They interact more with hearing peers • All but one student doesn't tell the hearing peers that they have a hearing loss because it's embarrassing. 	<p>The consensus here was that their children interact the same way whether or not the peers are hearing or hard of hearing. Examples of what was said are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patricia mentioned that lack of self-esteem may be holding David back a bit and making him insecure about whether he is just like the other kids at his school. He does associate with kids outside of school. All of David's friends are hearing. • Hannah stated that Chris is excluded socially due to the long bus drive every single day to and from school. He neglects to remind those kids who have gone to elementary school with him that he has a hearing loss because sometimes they forget. • Charlotte tells people that she's deaf and has no problem with that. Jack also mentions that Charlotte is a friend equally with hearing students and those who are deaf. • Hannah agrees with Jack; however if anything negative occurs, then Chris will blame it on having a hearing loss. For example, she states, "I would say both equally too but if something negative happens, it's because he's deaf- like his snowboard got stolen and his laptop on the school trip- why do

		people hate me because I'm deaf, you know, and that's the only time that comes up" (p. 41).
10 Transition	What are/were your positive experiences associated with your transition from elementary school to secondary school? What were/are the negative experiences?	What are/were your positive experiences associated with your child's transition from elementary school to secondary school? What were/are the negative experiences?
	<p>Positive Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making friends with another student who is also hard of hearing. Charlotte states, "well, I made friends with Amanda, that's my only positive one" (p. 11). • Having a lot more freedom • You get rid of annoying teachers and EAs from elementary school • The consensus was getting to visit the high school while in grade 8 to see what to expect by going into class with other hard of hearing students <p>Negative Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to the teacher of the deaf telling students in grade 8 that they need to be prepared for high school because they will have more of a struggle than hearing peers. "The hard of hearing teachers are talking about how you got to be prepared because you're going to have more of a struggle than normal people will and I got to the point where I was so stressed out about a week after high school I was really, really sick" (Charlotte, p. 17). • Transportation issues- bus ride is way too long for Chris. • David does not associate any negative experiences with transition. • The rest of the students were concerned with not knowing any other students at the school. 	<p>Positive Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff had Chris's best interest at heart. Hannah states, "the education and the staff, I knew that everyone had my son's best interest at heart, like that was very apparent and I felt comfortable enough just to vocalize all the things that were going on in my head. They weren't offering answers but they were very supportive, just listening because we had to come up with some kind of decision that was good for us so that was good that I had lots of different support to listen" (p. 42). • The staff at Charlotte's school made the transition run smoothly without any glitches in her grades or ability to complete assignments. • Jumping in to school life easily. • Being scared like any student going to grade 9 but also prepared to go. • Being an acquaintance of one of the guidance counselor was an advantage. • Teachers of the deaf are friends so it was fairly smooth. <p>Negative Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah felt, "I would have like to have known when all the grade 9's were attending the grade 9 thing, like we kind of did it separately and then at the end, like when all the kids from his class went to another school, he went too but there was also an opportunity for him to go when all you guys got to go, that was one missing link, it would have been nice to link that up (p. 42). • Getting answers from the guidance staff were often problematic in regards to whether or not the HRU credit would be applied.
11	What are some concerns you have had regarding your move to a new school environment? What contributed to those concerns?	What are some concerns you have had regarding your child moving to a new school environment? What contributed to those concerns?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making new friends was a major concern for most of the students • Being unsure that academic classes would be suitable. • David again, said he had no concerns regarding the move to high school and that he wanted to go to high school for the freedom. • Amy also had no true concerns. 	<p>Many concerns were mentioned. They are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social/emotional upheaval • Alcohol/drug problem, gang problem, fighting with groups • Are they safe? • The fact that he would be in classes with other deaf kids bothered one parent quite a bit at the beginning of the school year. • A lack of choice supports, no range of options • Board focused on elementary inclusion but seemed to segregate the kids in high school out of their home school to congregated setting • Was she going to get the same help that she had been receiving? • Adjustment, finding the appropriate peers, • Asking if transportation would be available and if it would be timely.
12	What/who do you think has/will help make the process of transition easier at the elementary	What/who do you think has/will facilitated the process of transition at the elementary level? At the secondary

	level? At the secondary level?	level?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consensus was getting to see what the school would be like prior to the new school year. Having the opportunity to see where the classrooms will be so they are not rushed and lost. Teachers need to be more positive about the process. 	<p>The consensus here was that parents facilitated the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents asking questions well in advance. For example, Hannah states, "we were thinking of it, like in grade 7. I was already looking for answers. What is our range of options for grade 9? What's out there? Now that there's a student going to W with a hearing loss (Chris), how are they going to restructure that to make sure that Chris has time with the teacher of the deaf at W? You know, asking and putting that in their ear, like having meetings with the school board and nothing ever came of it" (p. 46). In high school, the teacher of the deaf did for the most part, with one parent on board as well.
13	How did you/will you participate in your transition process at the elementary level? Were you asked for your input? Did you know that you are entitled to contribute to the plan?	How did you/will you participate in your child's transition process at the elementary level? Were you asked for your input? Were you aware that you are entitled to contribute to the plan?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coming to the school prior to the start to meet the teacher of the deaf. One student was involved in the transition meeting and asked for her opinion on what she wanted to do. "I went to one of the meetings at my school and they asked me if I wanted to- I had a choice of coming here or going to French and they asked me for my personal opinion about that" (Amanda, p. 20). One student claimed she was asked but that the teachers did what they wanted anyway. For example, Amy stated, "they ask you for your opinion but for me, it really doesn't matter what my opinion is- they ask you just to see what you say and they switch you opinion to what they want" (p. 20). Both (Linda and Chris) claimed that they were told that they had to go to their present high school even though they wanted to go to a different one. Amanda and Chris knew that they were entitled to participate, while the others did not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hannah initiated it because she had lots of background knowledge. Probably discussed daily as Jack's wife was at the school on a daily basis helping out the teacher of the deaf. Patricia can't recall because the time of the transition process was also the time of her son's Cochlear implant surgery. It wasn't discussed as a "transition plan" but many people were involved with it, emailing back and forth.
14	What are/were your concerns about entering secondary school? What supports will be/were made available to you?	What are/were your concerns regarding your child entering secondary school? What supports will be/were made available to him/her?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above # 11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different levels of supports in place Concerns regarding who would take over if/when the teacher of the deaf has a baby The more advanced curriculum The note taker
15 Parents	What do your parent(s) do to make your experience at school the best possible?	What do you do as a parent to make your child's experience at school the best possible?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everything. "Well, my mom goes to every single meeting or whatever. She goes to the SEAC meetings and the VOICE meetings and then she talks to teachers and she talks to the school board and she gets really involved with a whole bunch of stuff" (Chris, p. 22). 	<p>It was clear that these parents do a great deal to make their child's experience at school the best possible. Responses included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know everyone involved Make sure the household is running smoothly and feed the children proper food and ensure he is sleeping well.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More in the elementary years than now (Charlotte) • Linda said her parents do nothing. • Being very supportive and providing what is needed (Amanda). • Talking to the teachers of the deaf and classroom teacher to see what was best and not. • Amy claimed mom spoke to the teachers quite often. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be proactive, stay on top of things • Make sure people know who you are and you know who they are • Ask questions • Be more involved in what you child is studying • Role modeling, for example, Hannah stated, "I think we all model to be good advocates. Our goal is for them to be good self-advocates" (p. 49). • Talking positively about how important education is • Don't wait for a problem to arise.
16	How do your parents work together with your teacher(s) to make sure your needs are being met? Is this consistent throughout the school year?	How do you collaborate with your child's teacher(s) to ensure your child's needs are being met? Is this consistent throughout the school year?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents seem to be the link between students and teachers. "You can talk to your parents and tell them to tell the other teachers what you want and they don't listen to you but they listen to your parents so that's good" (Amy, p. 23). • Talking to teachers in every grade and in both semesters • Amanda and Charlotte both state that parents haven't had to step in during high school but will if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant feedback • Emails, phone calls, little notes • Only the teacher of the deaf who is communicating the most with parents
17	How do your parents participate to help you be academically successful at school?	How do you participate to help your child be academically successful at school?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consensus was that parents participate by helping their children with homework. • They ensure everything gets done. • Parents give ideas to them for projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah stated, "set up routine and early on, give good study habits, and taught them how to study, know the curriculum" (p. 50). • Parents sitting down with child to help with homework.

The above chart offers an in-depth look into the perspectives of both the student and parent participants. It denotes what they individually experienced in their lives thus far, the decisions they have made and the outcomes that followed. The following chart will highlight the main themes associated independently with the students and those specifically related to parents that emerged from the analysis of the transcriptions.

Themes Chart: Student Perspectives

Themes	Student Perspectives
1. Supports and Accommodations at School	The topic of supports and accommodations throughout the students' education was an aspect that was highly important to them all. When asked about the supports that they receive at school to help with their learning, the participants revealed that they had firm personal opinions. At the time of the focus group interview, some students mentioned that they had one class period with their teacher of the deaf, who reinforces the major concepts that are being learned in the students' regular classes. One student mentions that she has that particular class in order to "work

	<p>on stuff that I didn't know, that I need to work on" (Linda, Transcript #1, p. 2).</p> <p>When asked to describe their ideal learning environment, the students stated many characteristics of what it would be like. For example, a quiet room and a room that does not echo were two comments that were mentioned. Charlotte had a lot to say in relation to this topic. She states, "maybe get those balls on the bottom of chairs, smart people so they don't talk" and "when we're doing group work, split us up so we're not as close so we don't hear other people" (Transcript #1, p. 4).</p> <p>They also discussed the services and supports that they receive to accommodate their learning. The students expressed that they have educational assistants "in classes like English, Math, Geography and stuff but in gym and drama and arts they don't sit there and stick to you" (Charlotte, Transcript #1 p. 5). They also have one laptop for each of them, more time with the teacher of the deaf and to complete tests in the hearing resource unit.</p> <p>In terms of academic support from a teacher of the deaf, all of the students experienced different situations during elementary school in that some received itinerant support with varied periods of time each week while others had access to a teacher of the deaf every day for longer periods of time. David asserts, "I had an itinerant all the way through from grade one to grade 8" (Transcript #1, p. 11) while Charlotte states, "starting with JK, I was in the hearing resource unit my whole life" (Transcript #1, p. 10). Regardless of what type of support they received through their education, the students all seemed to know what they want and need in terms of assistance for their learning.</p>
2. EA as both Facilitator and Barrier	<p>The educational assistants (EAs) who work with the deaf and hard of hearing students have training in note taking in order to type notes as the regular classroom teacher lectures. These notes are then placed in a binder to be used when they review classroom work with the students. In discussing the academic support that they receive from their EAs, most students agreed that there were both advantages and disadvantages to having EAs. Students agreed that the EAs assist them. Linda states, "if you need any help, they help you; you're not just sitting there and stuck on something, if the teacher's busy, they can help you" (Linda, Transcript #1, p. 11). They also made reference to EAs taking notes for them when they are absent from school, which helps them to get caught up.</p> <p>Nonetheless, these students had some issues in regards to having an EA with them in the regular classroom. It is important to note that although they felt that EAs were needed, the students also contributed many reasons as to why EAs can be a barrier to their successful high school lives. Students felt that having an EA singled them out and that it was embarrassing to have someone in class with them. David asserts, "I don't have them in every single class cause I found that a problem and I didn't really need them. I think they should all stay at the back. When the class goes on, when the teacher's talking, you can't talk to them anyways, so</p>

	<p>what's the point of sitting beside them?" (Transcript #1, p. 12, 13, 14). David, although fairly quiet throughout the focus group, he did, however, seem to want to have his opinion heard in relation to this discussion. Moreover, high school life in general appeared to be a great concern to these students, thus having an EA with them makes them feel as though it creates a stigma that they are different than other students.</p>
3. Parental Advocacy	<p>The study revealed that most of the parents of these deaf and hard of hearing participants were true advocates for their children throughout elementary school and up until the focus group interview. Chris commented, "well, my mom goes to every single meeting. She goes to the SEAC meetings and the VOICE meetings and then she talks to teachers and she talks to the school board and she gets really involved with a whole bunch of stuff" (Transcript #1, p. 22). This student is clearly aware of what it is that his mother does to ensure that his needs are being met in the school system. David mentioned, "I guess my parents talked to my teachers and stuff and they talked to like, my hearing teachers and they'd talk about what's best and what's not best and what I need and what I don't need" (Transcript #1, p. 22). Other students agreed with the comments made and that if they were to run into problems in secondary school that their parents would be of assistance. One student however, claimed that her parents did not do anything to make her school experience the best possible. It was later noted, though that she did not develop a hearing loss until grade seven. It is interesting to note that one student thought, "you can talk to your parents and tell them to tell the other teachers what you want and they don't listen to you but they listen to your parents so that's good" (Transcript #1, p. 23). This quotation suggests that teachers may sometimes dismiss what a student may be asking and therefore, if a parent relays what the child wants, it may be more likely to happen. It was also very evident that parents of deaf and hard of hearing students advocate for what their children need whether it relates to their academic life or other.</p>
4. Teacher Characteristics	<p>Teachers may be looked upon as role models for all students. It is necessary, therefore, for classroom teachers to possess certain characteristics. When the student participants were asked what qualities they believed regular classroom teachers must have in order to successfully include a deaf or hard of hearing student in his or her classroom, they all provided plausible responses. One significant response was "to look at the student" (Amy, Transcript #1, p. 2) when talking to him or her and "to ask, like after class if we got everything, to have like notes and stuff" (Amy, Transcript #1, p.2). Amy refers to wanting the teacher to look at a deaf student when speaking so that the student is able to read the teacher's lips if needed.</p> <p>Another valuable response was that teachers should have the patience and understanding towards deaf students. This notion is imperative, as deaf students may not be completing assigned work, not because they do not know how but rather because they have not heard the entire instructions. Moreover, students felt that it was important that classroom</p>

	<p>teachers not single them out in class, in front of their hearing peers, including having them sit with other deaf students in the class, simply because they have a hearing loss. This idea seemed to trouble the students, as they did not understand why they had to be grouped together, instead of being looked at as an individual.</p>
<p>5. Professional Collaboration</p>	<p>Most students voiced their opinions regarding the importance of their teachers collaborating with one another along with other professionals involved in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. They had varied responses when asked if their teacher of the deaf and the regular classroom teacher worked together in elementary and secondary school. They also recognized that at certain times throughout their education, there was a lack of collaboration between professionals, which may or may not have affected their academic success. Amanda states, “well, they sort of did but, well, I only saw my hearing teacher maybe twice a week and during those times it was like, very short but then I was like a lot more independent at my school” (Transcript #1, p. 6). The time constraints that the itinerant teacher of the deaf had due to the number of schools on her caseload was the main reason that Amanda saw her just two times per week. Another student took it upon himself to ensure that his classroom teacher and teacher of the deaf spoke to one another so “it could be a better learning environment” or “easier to learn” (David, Transcript #1, p. 6).</p> <p>In regards to their high school teachers working together, the students mentioned that their teacher of the deaf checks in with the regular classroom teachers on a weekly basis to see how they handle the workload. When asked if the teachers’ collaboration or lack thereof affected the students’ success in school, one student’s comment resonated. She states, “to me, it doesn’t make a difference because teachers are obviously not going to listen, like not going to remember everything. They have like 100 other students they teacher a day. They’re not going to remember just to think of us and I’ve noticed from when teachers did talk and didn’t talk, there wasn’t a difference or anything” (Amy, Transcript #1, p.8).</p>
<p>6. Peer Interaction and Socialization</p>	<p>Peer interaction and socialization was a theme that emerged from the data. When asked how they interact with their hearing peers, many of them stated that they did so, just as anyone else would. None of these students need or use American Sign Language for the purpose of learning. Therefore, stating that they interact just like any other student would imply that they are regular high school students, just as any other, with the exception of a hearing loss. Amy says it best when she states, “I interact with them by talking to them and I don’t know what you mean though, I talk” (Transcript #1, p. 14). Others mentioned that they do not discuss the fact that they have a hearing loss because “it’s embarrassing” (Linda, Transcript #1, p.14). Perhaps David said it best when he remarks, “how do I interact with them? Normally” (Transcript #1, p. 15). For another student, in elementary school, the only option she had was to interact with hearing peers as she was the only student in her class with a</p>

	<p>hearing loss. She explains, “I would only hang out with hearing people so I didn’t hang out with people who had a hearing loss. It was coming to this school, was like my first time actually being communicated with hearing loss people” (Amanda, Transcript #1, p. 15). Charlotte was the only student who was not embarrassed about telling others that she has a hearing loss. She freely states, “I am not afraid to admit I have a hearing loss and so most of my friends are not hard of hearing. I only have a few that are in this class, like three or four so everybody in this world knows I have a hearing loss” (Transcript #1, p. 16). The statement Charlotte made is both intense and mature for her young age. Not hiding the fact that she has a hearing loss presents her straightforwardly and honestly to the new friends she meets at her school.</p>
7. New School Concerns	<p>Findings of this focus group interview indicate that the deaf and hard of hearing students, while in grade eight, had some apprehension in regards to attending a new school environment. While any student who is ready to attend a new school may have anxiety, some of these students claimed that there were both positive and negative experiences associated with the process of transitioning to high school. Charlotte mentions her positive experience, “we went into classes with people, with other hard of hearing students and then we had lunch here and we went into another class and then we went back home. We, like, spent the day here” (Transcript #1, p. 16). Another student wanted to attend high school. He states, “because it would be more freedom and easier to study because it was only four classes and you’re on your own pretty much” (David, Transcript #1, p. 18). Nevertheless, Charlotte also had an unpleasant experience during her transition process. She comments, “the hard of hearing teachers were talking about how you got to be prepared because you’re going to have more of a struggle than normal people will and I got to the point where I was so stressed out, about a week after high school started, I was really, really sick” (Transcript #1 p. 17). Other students state that they were concerned with making friends because they did not know anyone who was going to the school. Furthermore, students voiced other concerns. From being unsure whether or not they would be able to cope in the academic stream classes to being on a bus for unnecessary periods of time (Transcript #1 p. 17), these students had significant concerns prior to entering secondary school.</p>
8. Transition Incidences	<p>The student participants offered their opinions in regards to whether or not they were involved in the transition process during grade eight. While some were not involved directly in the procedure, others had the opportunity to sit with teachers in a more formal meeting to discuss options for secondary school. Amanda asserts, “I went to one of the meetings at my school and they asked me if I wanted to- I had a choice of coming here or going to French and they asked me for my personal opinion about that” (Transcript #1, p. 20). Any exceptional student is entitled to be a part of the transition meeting that should take place prior to students attending secondary school. It is a time where students can voice their concerns about their academics and set out a plan for future</p>

	<p>years. Another student mentioned that although teachers may ask for the students' opinions, they are not always heard; however, when asked about her specific situation, this student could not provide the researcher with an example. Chris was involved in an exceptional situation where he was planning to attend a different high school with his brother; however, plans fell through. He states, "I was gonna go to another school but they had no EAs" (Transcript #1, p. 20). Other students claimed they were directly told that they had to attend the school they currently attend. Linda remarks, "actually, yeah, I was told that I had to come here cause I wanted to go to another school cause most of my friends were going there and I didn't really like the fact that I had to come here" (Transcript #1, p. 20). Given that there were only six students involved in this study, there certainly were conflicting incidences related to the transition process at the different elementary schools these students attended.</p>
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Themes Chart: Parent Perspectives

Themes	Parent Perspectives
<p>1. Academic Supports</p>	<p>The topic of supports was quite prevalent throughout the focus group discussions with the parent participants. Some concern was voiced regarding the students' taking the resource course offered by the teacher of the deaf as one parent was unsure whether it would be relevant to his step-daughter's future career choice. He states, "I'm not sure if it's gonna be a credit, it's a credit course but it may not be a credit course that's applicable to what she wants to do in life but we thought we'd go with it for the first year to see how she made out" (Jack, Transcript #2, p. 1). Another participant mentioned that her son had that class in the first semester and not in the second semester, noting, "there's a considerable difference" (Hannah, Transcript #2, p. 1).</p> <p>In terms of support from teachers, Hannah articulates it best when she states, "our students still get the best teachers, like the teachers who are going to be the most flexible, those who will be the most dynamic, like I really see that" (Transcript #2, p. 2). Another parent mentioned that without that support from the teacher of the deaf, the students might be lost. Other viewpoints include that the best teachers throughout elementary school for deaf and hard of hearing students were those who differentiated instruction for all students, those who adapted to the classroom community, those who used different resources and those who wanted to acquire information about the exceptionality (Transcript #2, p. 2).</p> <p>The parent participants consider the theme of support to also include the school community. When everyone in the school, such as lunch supervisors and bus helpers are aware of the fact that there are students with a hearing loss and they know exactly who those students are, there is a sense of community support and assistance, if needed. This</p>

	<p>involvement would eliminate unnecessary problems from arising. Hannah states, “the classroom teacher should not be the only one with the information” (Transcript #2, p. 4).</p> <p>When asked what supports their children receive at school to help with their learning, they mentioned much of what the students talked about such as computerized note takers, laptops, FM system, closed captioning, having a specialist teacher of the deaf to pre-teach new concepts to the students and educating the regular classroom teachers with strategies to better teach students with hearing loss and the EA to be in class with them and can monitor the hearing equipment whenever necessary. Finally, support was offered during one parent’s journey in an attempt to get answers about her son’s transition to high school. Although no direct answers were given to her, she felt as though they supported her by listening. She remarks, “I knew that everyone had my son’s best interest at heart, like that was very apparent and I felt comfortable enough to vocalize all the things that were going on in my head. They weren’t offering answers but they were very supportive, just because we had to come up with some kind of decision that was good for us so that was good that I had lots of different support to listen” (Hannah, Transcript #2, p. 18).</p>
<p>2. EA and Teacher of the Deaf as Barrier and Facilitator</p>	<p>Throughout the dialogue with these parents, the theme of EAs and teachers of the deaf as barriers and facilitators emerged. Parents claimed that because EAs are often with students for extended periods of time throughout a typical school day, it is easy for students to develop a learned helplessness type of behavior, where students rely on their assistants to complete tasks rather than completing the tasks themselves. Jack explains, “it got to the point at home, wouldn’t tie her shoes; she was like seven or eight, button up her own pants, she wanted somebody to do everything for her so a light goes off and I said, this is coming from somewhere and I think I know the source. I called the principal, meeting, EA, don’t do everything for her, it stopped. She became independent. But, I think what happens is a lot of these EAs feel sorry for them so they do everything for them. You have to really, as a parent, watch for those signs that EAs do what they’re supposed to” (Transcript #2, p. 11).</p> <p>Additional barriers associated with having an EA with students in secondary school is best described when Hannah states, “but the problem with a lot of the EAs we had were they were unable to communicate to the classroom teacher what the kids really needed, what was working in the classroom, what wasn’t” (Transcript #2, p. 13). She further comments that once the students are older, EAs need to know the students they are working with well so they can send signals to one another, for example, “I need your support now, I don’t need your support now, let’s do this when we’re on our own, I’m comfortable with this, that kind of stuff” (Transcript #2, p. 13).</p>

	<p>One barrier to having an itinerant teacher of the deaf was the fact that students were only seen a couple of times a week and according to the parents, it was not based on the needs of the students but rather, on the services the board could provide (Transcript #2, p. 13). Due to the nature of an itinerant teacher's role, much time is spent on the travel to and from schools, which can often take away from beneficial instruction time. In addition to this type of barrier, one parent also mentioned that the itinerant teacher of the deaf rarely observed what was happening in the regular classroom upon arrival at the elementary school. This situation proved to be problematic in that the EA was the only person who consistently worked with her student; however, the classroom teacher was not relying on the EA for information regarding the student. This unfortunate circumstance led the parent to act as a liaison between the classroom teacher, teacher of the deaf and EA, which could have been avoided if all parties spoke more often (Transcript #2, p. 14).</p> <p>One parent claimed that an advantage to having a teacher of the deaf was that she often withdrew her student from class along with others for their guided reading program. This provided the regular classroom teacher with assistance that would not otherwise been received (Transcript #2, p. 14).</p>
3. Parental and Self-Advocacy	<p>The topic of advocacy emerged from the parents' discussion regarding their children. More specifically, discourse arose about parental advocacy and the different things these parents do to advocate for their children. "I think as parents we're doing a good job modeling how to do it for them and trying to give them opportunities to do it" (Hannah, Transcript #2, p. 5). This quotation proves to be true because these parents, in their own ways, seek what is best for their children in both academic and social situations. Another way that a parent had to advocate for her child was in the way of closed-captioning materials. The board claimed that to provide closed-captioning video materials was difficult; however, Hannah asserted that if a video is not accessible to all students then it is not acceptable (Transcript #2, p. 6). Parental advocacy also took place upon the transition from elementary school to secondary school. Hannah asserts, "we were thinking of it, like in grade seven. I was already looking for answers. What's out there?" (Transcript #2, p. 22).</p> <p>Another way that a parent advocates for her son, which was interesting, was to ensure that his home life is running smoothly. Patricia remarks, "I try to make sure he gets proper food and proper sleep and encourage. We have a thing, a certain routine, especially when he goes to hockey; I never have to be on his case. I don't demand that much from my children to do at home" (Transcript #2, p. 24). Patricia clearly does what she feels is best for her son. If he gets what his mother feels he needs at home, he is more likely to do well at school.</p> <p>In addition, being aware of what the students are studying at school is yet another way to be an advocate for them, according to Hannah (Transcript #2, p. 25).</p>

	<p>In regards to whether or not the students advocate for themselves, parents had differing viewpoints about their specific child. Patricia states, “David is an academically strong student so he’s shy and he’s not a very good advocate for himself but I think he needs to come out and needs to know himself, how to advocate instead of always leaning” (Transcript #2, p. 4). The students must know how to advocate for themselves for the simple fact that they need to seek what they need to help them, whether it is at school or in the community. Patricia states, “I’m trying to tell David because he’s so shy. I would like to teach him, and say, you know, I’m not stupid, there’s something wrong; I have a hearing problem. I would like him to go because he’s already fifteen turning sixteen. If he’s able to play hard hockey and go around Ontario, why can’t he go to one teacher and explain” (Transcript #2, p. 10). Hannah’s comment truly resonated when she mentioned that Chris’s grade five teacher did not want to wear the FM system because it gave him headaches; however, Chris, being just a young student, did not want to be a problem for his teacher and therefore, did not ask him to wear the assistive technology. This lack of self-advocacy on Chris’s part, allows those who are uneducated about hearing loss to proceed as per usual and not realize how they are negatively impacting the student (Transcript #2, p. 11).</p>
<p>4. People Skills/Personality Traits</p>	<p>Much discussion in the focus group interview reverted to dialogue about the personality traits of the professionals who educate or come in contact with the students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Hannah states, “This comes down to the people portion of it because different administrators approach it differently, and different teachers approach it differently. For our situation, the principal told me, ok, this is when we know the date, this is who your teacher’s gonna be so, almost every year, the PA day after the end of school, Chris and I would go in and more Chris went and said hi I’m Chris. I’m going to be in your class next year, I’m hard of hearing and this is a little package about me that you might want to look at over the summer” (Transcript #2, p. 7).</p> <p>The theme of people skills and personality traits was emphasized once again; this time in relation to parents having to speak to classroom teachers about their children’s hearing loss. Hannah explains it best. She states, “I said you know, tell me, have you taught a student with a hearing loss before? His eyes were like, it was a death sentence, cause they don’t know anything, which is totally understandable but the follow-up question never came!” (Transcript #2, p. 8). The teacher’s lack of questions for the parent indicates that classroom teachers do not have enough training in the area of exceptionalities. It is often up to the parent to educate the teacher, which can often be intimidating for the educator.</p> <p>In addition to speaking about the personality traits of regular classroom teachers, the parents began discussing the importance of professionals to be a facilitator when necessary and to be able to seek solutions to issues</p>

	<p>that arise. To be able to do so allows parents to put their trust into that teacher who is being of assistance. Hannah had a great deal to say. She asserts, “it comes down to personality and how people present themselves and what the message is that they want to get, like different people do that differently and if a person says oh I can’t, I don’t have access, there’s a way cause I have access, you have access so what are you gonna do about it? You know, this is your job, how are you going to get this information out? There’s the principal, the facilitator, the classroom teacher, the teacher of the deaf, the parent. Those five people can’t come together and figure out how to share information? The pathways of communication are breaking down” (Transcript #2, p. 8). The concerns this parent brought forth are issues that can easily be addressed if all professionals involved make an attempt to do whatever it takes to meet the needs of this population of exceptional students.</p> <p>In addition, parents expressed that they believed teachers should be able to communicate and teach deaf and hard of hearing students, be a seeker of information and become informed so that the students get the best possible education. In regards to the secondary teacher of the deaf, one parent states, you have a teacher of the deaf who has very good communication skills, an excellent personality, has a way of checking up to see what’s happening without putting people on guard or them taking offence and that’s what I mean about personality” (Hannah, Transcript #2, p. 15).</p>
5. Professional Collaboration	<p>When asked about collaboration between professionals in both elementary and secondary school, conversation ensued about the importance for professionals to collaborate with one another about the exceptional students they teach. One parent remarked, “hit and miss, you would think teachers would share, I mean, I’m sure they do but I mean, like really specific things but you also don’t want them to lock into, you want them to explore the child on their own too and not be predestined to have certain opinions about people” (Hannah, Transcript #2, p. 7). What should be noted however is that oftentimes, prior teachers may not want to share information about a student, for the sole purpose of misleading the receiving teacher about the student’s academic abilities. In secondary school, parents affirm that teachers collaborate well. Jack explains, “obviously it’s working because she loves her teachers and the teachers that she’s had, like her regular classroom teachers, just good teachers, whether it’s they put those kids in those classrooms with an individual purpose or we just got lucky” (Transcript #2, p. 9). He further states, “the collaboration has probably led to the success in most cases. The collaboration, right from JK through, without it, she wouldn’t be where she is today” (Jack, Transcript #2, p. 12). This powerful statement suggests that Jack’s step-daughter Charlotte has had good experiences throughout her education. In speaking with her, it was easily recognizable from her honesty and openness that she has had little trouble throughout her education. The success of a deaf or hard of</p>

	<p>hearing student truly only possible when everyone involved is doing what is best for the education of the student. Additionally, parents commented on how they, themselves, collaborate with teachers. Responses included ensuring that they communicate and provide feedback for one another through email, phone calls and notes.</p>
<p>6. Peer Interaction and Socialization</p>	<p>The study revealed that peer interaction and socialization proved to be of concern for different reasons. Jack asserts, “we’ve always taught her that she’s hard of hearing; she’s not stupid, so just go along with the rest of the kids” (Transcript #2, p. 3). However, Patricia states, “I think Daniel feels kind of isolated too but he doesn’t really have friends” (Transcript #2, p. 3). It is evident that the deaf and hard of hearing students have experienced different situations, specific to their own interactions with those who have normal hearing. A serious concern was discussed when Patricia states, “David is actually I think he’s holding back. He is staying on the side and he doesn’t have very good self-esteem or he’s not secure about himself to feel that he is the same and that came out when he was in that minor midget AAA program. He wouldn’t tell that. It felt that he was OK but after the whole year we found out he was much bullied there just because of the hearing problem. He wanted to know something and its echoing on the ice and in the change room so he was asking what and he wouldn’t get the clarification so at the end of the year they started like what, what, what, what, what. I didn’t know this. I was interviewed on CBC and they asked me how were the other hockey players, how did they treat, I said I think it was great and then when this came out he was sick and all of a sudden he started crying. He was bullied. Then you go into the shower without your sound processor, you can’t hear a thing and the boys are 15 and 16 and they start calling you names in the hallway of the high school in front of other guys and putting you down so he actually got like this” (Transcript #2, p. 16). This comment suggests that all students need to be educated about other students’ different exceptionalities so questions may be answered and fewer assumptions are made.</p> <p>In terms of socializing with others, Hannah mentions her son’s experience when on the school bus to and from school. She asserts, “Chris’s kind of, I don’t know, cause most of the socialization that happens for my kids is on the bus so he’s totally excluded you know, from ten after 7 until 5:30 at night from before school and after school he sits in the seat by himself on the bus all the kids he went to school with sit at the back. The kids he went to school with seem to get to a point where they have forgotten and he has neglected to remind them that he has a hearing loss so they’ve done the what, what, what and the I’m not going to repeat it again, that kind of stuff so he just doesn’t socialize with them anymore.” (Transcript #2, p. 16). It is therefore easier for this student to keep to himself, rather than have to continuously ask others for clarification about the topic of conversation.</p> <p>When parents were asked how their children interact with their hearing peers, one comment resonates. “if something negative happens, it’s</p>

	<p>because he's deaf- like his snowboard got stolen and his laptop on the school trip- why do people hate me because I'm deaf, you know, and that's the only time that comes; if something really emotional happens or if he's having a fight with his brother and it's usually about a misunderstanding or a mishearing, you know, that's not what I said, well, that's what I heard, those kinds of things" (Transcript #2, p. 17).</p>
7. Lack of Options	<p>Parents in this focus group alluded to the fact that the board does not provide enough options for students who are deaf and hard of hearing in certain areas. Patricia offers her view regarding the lack of options available to her son upon the beginning of a new school year. She states, "if you asked the principal, they were not sure who were going to be the teachers- the classroom teacher so every year what happened to us, we tried to go there earlier and nobody's there before the one day school starts and we wasted the two first weeks at school because it's a mess; they told us to come and meet them the third week" (Transcript #2, p. 7).</p> <p>Another parent discussed a significant concern, that being the lack of transportation options. She states, "the other thing was transportation, asking if transportation was going to be available, if it was going to be timely; he has been late to school every single day since he started and they haven't addressed it yet and everyone in the board, all the way up to the director knows about it and nothing's been done. That is detrimental to his hearing because they're more tired; they have to listen more. They're actually having to focus- that's a huge issue" (Hannah, Transcript #2, p. 21). When speaking with the deaf and hard of hearing students, Chris also mentioned transportation to be problematic.</p> <p>In terms of academic programming for these students, parents also felt that there was no range of options. "It was either this or nothing" (Hannah, Transcript #2, p. 20). Hannah further notes, "the board is really good at providing mainstream itinerant support in elementary and all of a sudden it goes blah in secondary and it's like the most crucial time" (Transcript #2, p. 22). It is evident that these parents have a vested interest in their children's education and programming and want the best options available to them; however, it is difficult to decide what is most appropriate when the board has little to offer.</p>
8. Transition Incidences	<p>As previously mentioned, the process of transition for any student can be unsettling; however, parents did not voice any major concerns in this regard. Instead, they discussed their personal situations, specific to their child. Jack asserts, "she made the transition smoothly without any glitches in her grades or ability to complete assignments" (Transcript #2, p. 18). Another parent agreed as she states, "He was familiar with the school before he ever came to the school but I think that's a trend that they're doing with all kids and I think it's great. I think it demystifies the while process; they try to get the kids in school when the school is in session as grade eights so they can get familiar. He jumped right into school life" (Transcript #2, p. 18). Nevertheless, there were some</p>

concerns in regards to the students' transition. One parent did state that she thought her son was scared upon entering high school even though he was prepared from elementary school. Parents also referenced having some problems with getting answers from the guidance department about whether or not the credit course with the teacher of the deaf would be legitimate. Furthermore, one parent alleged she had a difficult time when she and her son were investigating the possibility of two secondary schools and the services they provided. "One school was like, why are you coming here? Go to the other school. We can't offer your son anything. Eight weeks of calling the facilitator and no call back" (Transcript #2, p. 18). Finally, one concern that was emphasized was the fact that the board focuses on elementary school inclusion more so than in secondary school. Hannah adds, "all of a sudden they have segregated the kids out of their home schools to a congregated setting" (Transcript #2, p. 21). It is important to note, however, that she eventually changed her mind and sent Chris to the school with the hearing resource unit. "It came down to Chris saying it's good mom, I want to go so I was like fine, that's what we'll do because I needed to step back and have some autonomy and figure it out" (Hannah, Transcript #2, p. 23). What helps grade eight students in the preparation of entering secondary school remains in the hands of teachers and administrators at both the elementary and secondary levels. Their partnership allows for an effortless move with the least amount of stress possible for both students and parents.

Conclusion

Although the findings of this research study are based upon a small number of participants, the focus group interviews offered much rich qualitative data. In addition, the perspectives of parents of deaf and hard of hearing students along with the students themselves provided the researcher with their thoughts and feelings towards the students' inclusion in a mainstream class placement and in the general school community. The student participants expressed their views regarding their inclusion within a mainstream class placement in both elementary and secondary school, as did their parents. Parents further noted their concerns in relation to sending their children to a new and in some cases, a different school environment outside the local neighbourhood and further discussed the types of support their children received in elementary school and are receiving in secondary school. Both the parents and

students offered specific useful insights into their personal lives and experiences with the transition process involved in their D/HH children moving from elementary to secondary school.

The next chapter will offer an interpretation of the study's findings. In addition, the research questions will be revisited and the findings of this study will allow implications for theory, best practices and research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Interpretation

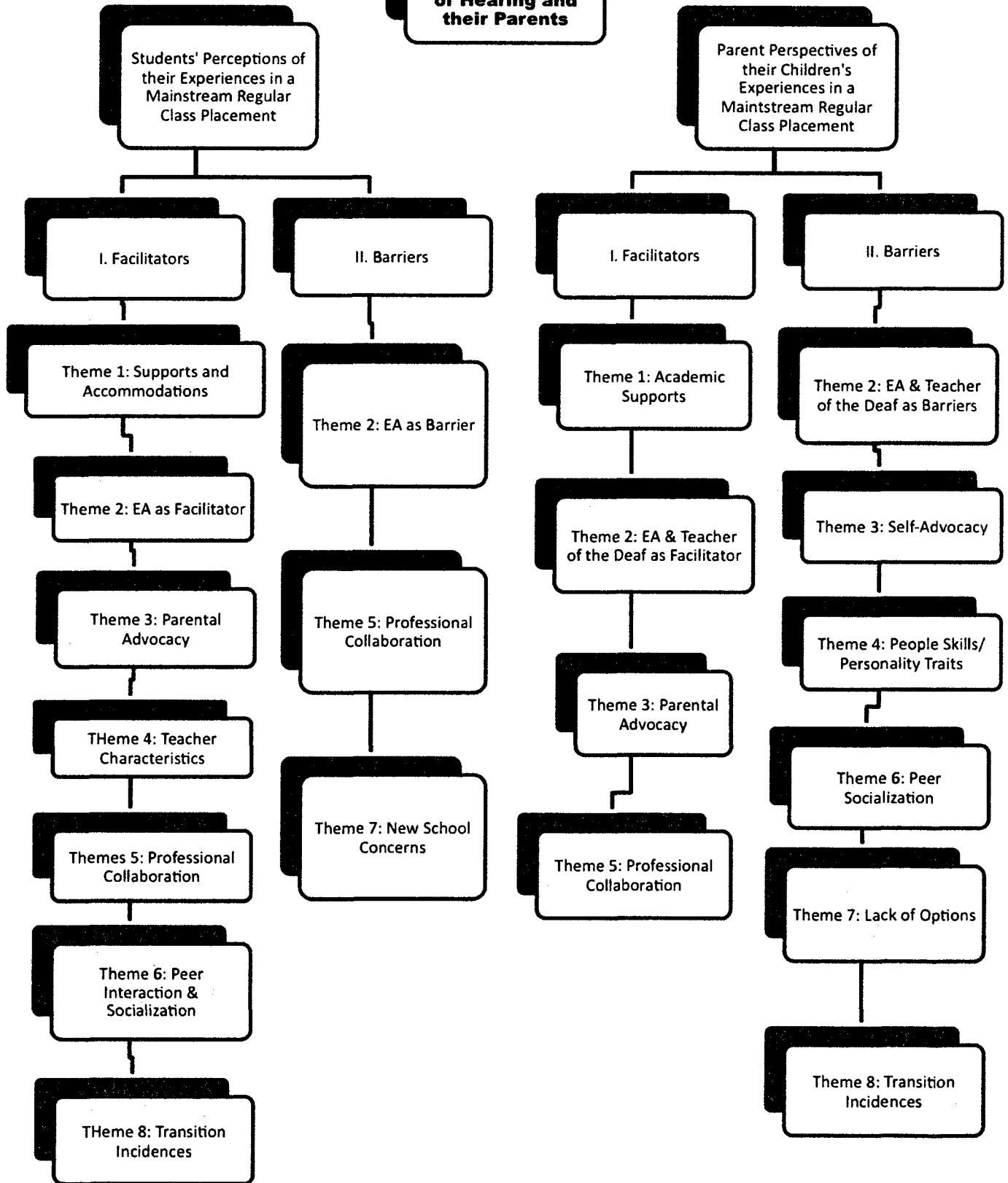
Throughout this chapter, the findings of this focus group interview with parents of deaf and hard of hearing students and the students themselves will be interpreted. Patton (2002) states,

interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world (p. 480).

The main findings of this study will be presented and interpreted in order to allow implications for theory, practice and further research. First, the aim of this chapter is to structure the themes and connect them to the existing research in the area of deaf education. Subsequently, the significance of the findings will be highlighted and suggestions for theory, future best practice and research for both parents of D/HH students and the students themselves will be made. Finally, this chapter will illustrate the first hand experiences and articulate the viewpoints of all participants involved.

In this present research study, the perspectives of D/HH students and their parents regarding the benefits and potential barriers to educating students who are D/HH in mainstream regular class placements were explored. Qualitative findings from the focus groups revealed a number of themes found below in Figure 1, Coding Flowchart for Data Collection. All student participants were enrolled in some type of mainstream placement throughout their elementary education. At the time of the study, all students were enrolled in a mainstream setting, having the option of taking a credit course with their teacher of the deaf to review concepts from their regular classes in addition to other prepared lessons. Both student and parent participants were able to consider the D/HH students' prior experiences in elementary school, which gave the researcher some further understanding about their specific situations in their schools.

The Perspectives of Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing and their Parents



Students' Perspectives Regarding the Facilitators of a Successful Mainstream Regular Class Placement

Supports and Accommodation

Student participants mentioned that they are entitled to a variety of supports to assist them within their classroom environment and with their academic needs, some of which include laptop computers, FM systems, a room with less reverberation and more time than their hearing peers to complete tests in the quiet hearing resource classroom (Transcript #1). Smaldino and Crandell (2000) support this finding. They mention that many classrooms have acoustical characteristics that can impair the transmission of speech so severely that all children in the classroom may have trouble hearing what the teacher may be saying. At the time of the focus group, all students were quite certain of what they appreciate in terms of the supports available to them in their mainstream classrooms.

Educational Assistant as Facilitator

One controversial topic that emerged from speaking to the student participants was that of the educational assistants who support them in the regular classroom. Most D/HH students articulated that even though they feel that having an EA in the classroom is embarrassing, they still believe they need one to help them with unfamiliar concepts that they learn in class. The implementation of EAs in the classroom is also useful to those students who struggle but who are not formerly identified as exceptional. Vlachou et al. (2006) noted in their study that students do hold preferences about where and by whom they should be taught and that most of the D/HH students preferred to be in the regular classroom. This finding suggests that students at the high school level have enough knowledge of themselves to determine what suits them best in the classroom and that having that extra support for them when needed is an extra reassurance that they will be academically successful.

Parental Advocacy

The theme of parental advocacy for deaf and hard of hearing students was a topic that revealed that parents of D/HH children often advocate for their children to ensure that these children receive the school services entitled to them. Students mention that their parents attend meetings, speak with their teachers on a regular basis and discuss what is best for them (Transcript #1). This finding is supported by Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) who found, parents of deaf and hard of hearing students used strategies to advocate for their children including becoming aware of educational policies and procedures relating to classroom placement, membership on local school board or parent committees, and attending program review committees. An interpretation of this finding is that most parents of deaf and hard of hearing students get involved in their children's lives and go that extra distance to assist their children in succeeding. This advocacy is especially useful to D/HH students in high school because D/HH secondary students sometimes do not advocate for themselves.

Teacher Characteristics

Regular classroom teachers who have deaf or hard of hearing students in their classrooms must have certain characteristics in order to successfully include these students, according to the D/HH students themselves. One student mentioned that teachers should be patient with them (Transcript #1). This finding is supported by Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) who found that classroom teachers who had positive attitudes toward including D/HH students in their classrooms and who were flexible in their attitudes towards assignments and testing, open to the suggestions of the itinerant teachers and sensitive to the needs of students with hearing loss were seen as essential to facilitating successful inclusion of D/HH students. This notion is accurate in that patience is required to teach all children, especially those who have exceptionalities. If

classroom teachers accept the fact that they will likely have a student with an exceptionality in their classrooms, they can better prepare for those students, gather the necessary resources to help support them and make contact with the specialist teacher to develop an appropriate plan at the beginning of the school year to educate the special needs student in the mainstream classroom.

Professional Collaboration

Professional collaboration between teacher colleagues is imperative so that all parties work together in partnership. Essentially, teachers can contribute suggestions to one another to best help students who are D/HH succeed in mainstream class placements. In the present study students also believed it was important for their teachers to collaborate with one another, especially the teacher of the deaf and the regular classroom teachers. It is the teacher of the deaf who often acts as a liaison between the classroom teacher, the students and the parents. Therefore, in part, the teacher of the deaf not only acts in the role of educator but that of a mediator. Fisher, Sax & Grove (2000) and O'Shea, Williams & Sattler (1999) support this finding. These researchers found that collaboration between teachers is fundamental to teacher effectiveness, meeting students' needs, providing adequate resources and developing student learning strategies. The collaboration between teachers also sends a message to the students that teachers are working together to support their learning in an inclusive setting.

Peer Interaction and Socialization

When discussing the interaction between students who are deaf and hard of hearing and their hearing peers, students explained that it was like that of any other group of students. None of the students in the focus group used American Sign Language to communicate as they all use spoken language to do so. Most students did mention, however, that out of embarrassment, they do not inform the students they meet about their hearing loss. This finding is supported by

Israelite, Ower and Goldstein (2002) who also found that some of the adolescents they interviewed claimed they conceal their hearing loss from their hearing peers in order to fit in and be like the other students. It is relevant to note that hearing peers do not have sufficient knowledge about hearing loss; therefore, they may have the opportunity to gain some information when interacting with those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Transition Incidences

Students who have been identified as exceptional have the right to be involved in the transition process when they are in grade eight and proceeding to secondary school. In the present study, some D/HH students elaborated on the fact that they were asked to discuss their transition and to give their input about the decisions to be made (Transcript #1). It is of great importance to include D/HH students in the transition meeting so that they contribute to their potential achievements in secondary school. This finding is supported by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2002), which states,

the student's personal commitment to the transition plan is vitally important to its success. Students' commitment will be enhanced through their meaningful involvement. Active involvement in transition planning may also assist the student to develop self-advocacy skills that will be beneficial to him or her throughout life (p. 11).

When the students' are involved in their school transition plan, they may demonstrate more of an interest and this may be helpful in addressing some of their insecurities about entering secondary school.

Students' Perspectives Regarding the Barriers of a Mainstream Regular Class Placement

Educational Assistants as Barriers

As mentioned previously, when speaking with the D/HH students, the theme of educational assistants was controversial. Students had mixed feelings about having an EA in the classroom with them. Although they mentioned that the EAs were helpful to them, they did, however, often mention as well that they felt it was embarrassing and that it singled them out. This finding is

supported by Bowers (1997) who found that in some cases students with special needs resent or even reject efforts to provide in-class support because they see such attention as in some way making them appear different from their peers. One approach to offset this effect involves the student withdrawing him or herself from the classroom whenever the itinerant teacher is to provide extra assistance. This notion easily applies to students who are D/HH and the students in the present study were able to do so as they were allowed to complete their work in the hearing resource unit with the assistance of either the educational assistant or the teacher of the deaf whenever the students felt the need to remove themselves from the classroom. Withdrawal from the class for special assistance, of course, has its own difficulties in that it may also set the D/HH students apart from peers. However, some D/HH students may prefer this option to having the EA assist them in the regular classroom.

Professional Collaboration

The viewpoints of the D/HH students suggested the theme of professional collaboration was both a facilitator and a barrier. However, this theme resonated with the researcher because the students mentioned that although it was important, it didn't always happen in elementary school due to time constraints and possibly the lack of planning. Furthermore, one student claimed that whether or not teachers collaborated with each other would not make a difference since high school teachers educate a considerable number of students and they do not always remember the specific needs of the deaf and hard of hearing students. The teacher of the deaf is likely the person who takes on the role of arbiter and who usually is the teacher who discusses the D/HH students' specific issues and provides the classroom teachers with strategies and knowledge about them. This assistance to the classroom teacher allows him or her to understand the strategies that need to be in place to successfully teach D/HH students. Findings from the present study can be compared to that of Fisher, Sax and Grove (2000) who found that regular

classroom teachers believed that resource teachers were great to have because of their hands-on assistance, their availability and approachability and because they made the classroom teachers feel more comfortable about having students with special needs in their classrooms.

New School Concerns

In discussing with the deaf and hard of hearing students the transition from grade eight to secondary school, the theme of new school concerns emerged. This theme proved to relate to a barrier to successful transition because some students claimed their deaf and hard of hearing specialist teachers did not prepare them fully and therefore, they had a great deal of anxiety about what to expect in grade nine. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2002) supports this finding and states, “the participation of professionals should not eclipse or diminish the role of the student” (p. 17). This issue is of high concern as D/HH students who are in the process of entering secondary school do not need any additional stress or apprehension that can cause potential problems in their education. All teachers should act as a support to the students, guide and reassure them of their concerns and encourage them to succeed.

Parents’ Perspectives Regarding the Facilitators of a Mainstream Regular Class Placement Academic Supports

The parents of the deaf and hard of hearing students regarded the theme of academic supports as a facilitator to the education and inclusion of their children. Assistive technology such as laptops, a frequency modulated system (FM) and closed captioning were mentioned as supports for their D/HH children’s daily learning in school. These supports were necessary for the students to have the best possible experience when learning in mainstream classes. A computerized note taker was also seen as a facilitator for these students’ learning. This finding is supported by Stinson et al. (2009) who found that D/HH secondary school students retained more lecture information when they viewed speech-to-text support and when they studied note

taker notes or a hard copy of the text after viewing the lecture, compared to when there was no opportunity to study the notes. The opportunity to have that extra assistance in the classroom is beneficial for D/HH students especially in the instances where they have missed important information that they may be responsible to know for assessment purposes.

EA and Teacher of the Deaf as Facilitators

Educational assistants and the teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing were considered to be facilitators and also barriers, which will be discussed later. Parents felt that the EAs were, at most times, the only people who worked with their children on a consistent basis and therefore, knowledgeable about what the child(ren) were working on in their classes and with what topics they required more assistance. Regarding teachers of the deaf in an itinerant role, they were seen as facilitators because they could withdraw the D/H student along with any other student that needed assistance with the same topic or concept being taught, thus offering the classroom teacher extra assistance that he or she would not have otherwise received. Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) support the finding that teachers of the deaf were seen as facilitators. They found that itinerant teachers were seen as facilitators also, as they developed individualized programming for the D/HH students, provided classroom teachers with information regarding the D/HH students and implemented the use of assistive technology for students.

In their study, when speaking with teacher aides, researchers Howard and Ford (2007) found that teacher aides were truly committed to the success of the D/HH students they worked with. Some participants claimed to be advocates for students when dealing with the classroom teachers; they spent more time with the D/HH students and they knew them better than teachers and took pleasure in the students' work. This finding aligns with the fact that parents view EAs to be helpful to their D/HH children. It is necessary to have someone the students can go to for that extra assistance when the classroom teacher is unavailable.

Parental Advocacy

The parents of the D/HH students felt their own advocacy for their children to be a facilitator to their children's academic success and inclusion in a mainstream class placement. These parents all had differing ways of advocating for their child; however, all methods appeared to work well in each family. For the parents, knowing what each individual child needed specifically in order to help them succeed in both the school setting and in a social setting was one element that parents were able to discern and then implement. This finding is supported by Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) who mention that parents get involved in the education of their children for the following reasons: (1) parents have developed a parental role construction that includes involvement, (2) parents have a positive sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school, and (3) parents perceive general opportunities and invitations for involvement from their children and their children's schools. Regardless of how a parent is advocating for his or her child, what is important is that the needs of the child are being met both academically and socially.

Professional Collaboration

The theme of professional collaboration was seen as a facilitator to the education and inclusion of D/HH students. Some parents felt that teachers collaborated more throughout secondary school than in elementary school, whereas another felt that there was consistent collaboration from elementary to secondary school. At the time of the discussion, the parents noted that everything had been working out well in terms of their children's academics. In terms of the classroom teachers' collaboration with the parents of the D/HH students, parents indicated that they use email, make phone calls and write notes to get in touch with one another to discuss any concerns and provide feedback. O'Shea et al., (1999) support this finding as they state that collaboration occurs when

teachers believe in diversity, meeting individual learner needs, and interacting with others to support shared decision making. Effective teachers strengthen alliances with students, parents, and peers, rather than achieve professional status by sequestering knowledge (p. 147).

It is evident that the parents of the D/HH students also want a teacher who meets the needs of their students and one who is willing to collaborate with parents to assist the child in the best way possible.

Parents' Perspectives Regarding the Barriers of a Mainstream Regular Class Placement

EA and Teacher of the Deaf as Barriers

The theme of educational assistants and the teacher of the deaf was not just regarded as a facilitator, as previously mentioned; however, it was also sometimes considered as a barrier to successful inclusion in the mainstream classroom. From the discussion, the researcher concluded that these parents want their children to be academically successful and in order to achieve that success, the students require just enough support from school services, without having those services be too overwhelming that the students become frustrated and disinterested. Parents mentioned that EAs were a challenge because oftentimes they do not know the student well enough, which makes it difficult for the EA to know when to provide support and when to retreat. Other challenges include the fact that EAs were sometimes unable to communicate to the classroom teacher what was and was not working in the classroom, which did not always help the learning situation. Also, parents recalled the challenges that their children faced in the elementary years with some EAs who did everything for their students rather than just assisting with the task at hand.

The teachers of the deaf who were seen as a barrier to the education of the D/HH students (or at least less than a facilitator) were typically itinerant teachers because they only saw their D/HH students on a weekly basis and parents felt that the service was based on what the school

board could provide rather than on the needs of the students. Eriks-Brophy et al., support the finding of some teachers as barriers to the successful school performance of D/HH students.

They found that parents believed

classroom teachers lacked information, preparation and / or interest in understanding the effects of hearing loss on communication development and academic performance or who were unwilling to invest the additional time and effort that might be required to teach these students effectively (p. 66).

Ultimately, the parents of the D/HH students want someone who can assist their children in the regular classroom when needed and when the students want and to know when to step aside if need be.

Self-Advocacy

According to the parents of the D/HH students, lack of student self-advocacy skills, where it was present, was a barrier to successful inclusion of their D/HH children in the mainstream class. The D/HH students must be able to seek what it is they need for themselves both at school and within the community (Transcript #2). Parents had differing points of view with respect to their individual child. Where one child is more apt to advocate for himself or herself, another may be a bit more timid and lack the skills necessary to obtain what he or she needs to be a successful learner. Reed et al., (2008) support the notion of students advocating for themselves. In their study parents commented on the ways in which students demonstrated self-advocacy such as learning to request clarification when necessary and taking the initiative to sit in positions that maximized access to communication. Being an advocate for themselves during secondary school will provide the D/HH students with more confidence and likely the drive to continue to advocate for themselves in their future in college, in university or in the workforce.

People Skills / Personality Traits

The theme of people skills / personality traits was looked upon as a barrier for many reasons. Parents were concerned about teachers who have never before taught a student with

hearing loss, and who do not seek the information available to them to best meet the needs of this population of students in the classroom. The lines of communication at times appear to be breaking down between the administration, the classroom teacher and teacher of the deaf, the parents and the facilitator of special education. If these people came together to collaborate with one another and shared information and resources then it is possible that classroom teachers may not feel that they do not know how to teach a student with hearing loss. Other concerns were that teachers need to seek the information they need rather than waiting for someone to provide it for them and to be able to communicate with those D/HH students in the classroom. O'Shea et al., (1999) support this finding as they believe that effective teachers strengthen partnerships with students, parents and peers rather than isolate themselves from those they serve (p. 147).

The parents believed that where there was lack of sufficient or effective peer interaction and socialization between the D/HH students and their hearing peers, this was a barrier to the education of their children for different reasons. Parents discussed how oftentimes D/HH children are isolated in a way because of their hearing loss and that it is difficult sometimes for them to make friends. Self-esteem was also discussed, specifically how it is possible for D/HH children to feel as though they do not measure up to their hearing peers. Furthermore, the issue of bullying was brought up and the fact that D/HH students may not inform anyone that they are being bullied but at the same time, they have difficulty dealing with these situations on their own. Focus group discussions also included the topic of socialization between D/HH students and hearing peers on the school bus ride to and from school. Sitting alone on a long bus ride completely excludes the D/HH individual and the parent of this child also claims that the others seem to have forgotten that her son has a hearing loss. What is even more of a concern is the fact that her son does nothing about it, meaning he does not remind his hearing peers that he has difficulty hearing them on the noisy school bus. Those students who are D/HH and dealing with

these kinds of situations need to realize that they are just as valuable as any other student. The theme of peer interaction / socialization among D/HH and hearing students is also noted by Wauters and Knoors (2007) who claim that there are differences between deaf and hearing children in social competence and their stability (p. 35).

Lack of Options

The theme of D/HH students having a lack of options in regards to what the school board provides for them in different areas of their school life surfaced throughout the discussion on more than one occasion. Parents felt that there was sometimes no organization in terms of which teacher would be teaching the grade that their child would be entering the upcoming September. This was often problematic in that students were not able to introduce themselves and properly provide teachers with any necessary information about them. In addition, parents also stated that the transportation options available to students were anything but effective. Being on a school bus for extended periods of time both to and from school would add to any D/HH student's exhaustion after a day of school. It was evident that the parents truly only want their children to have the best possible options available to them so that they can be successful.

Transition Incidences

The parents of the D/HH students saw the theme of transition incidences as a barrier to their children's move to a new school environment. When the D/HH students were in the process of making their transition from elementary school to secondary school, parents had a few concerns that needed to be dealt with. From dealing with school facilitators who do not always return calls to administration who at times did not offer much guidance or assistance, it was difficult to seek answers to the questions they had. One can conclude that this process would be fairly upsetting to any parent who is looking for the best options for his or her child. Hogansen et al., (2008) support this finding as they mention the importance of planning the transition process

from a youth-directed perspective so that educators and parents are able to help students become active in determining their own future (p. 231).

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

These two focus group interviews with both deaf and hard of hearing students and their parents, although small in participant numbers, provided the researcher with in-depth information regarding the inclusion and educational placements of D/HH students in mainstream settings. The first research question, it will be recalled, concerned how the parents of D/HH students describe their child's level of inclusion within a mainstream class placement prior to and post transitioning along with how the D/HH children themselves describe their level of inclusion within a mainstream class placement prior to and post transitioning. Discussion with the students indicated that they are included like the other students are included, with the exception of the class period(s) that they work solely with the teacher of the deaf. It was quite apparent that the students associate with hearing peers just as much as they associate with others who are D/HH prior to attending high school and up until the time of the focus group interview. Parents of the D/HH students indicated that their children associate with hearing peers along with others who have hearing loss; however, they did discuss some social problems that have occurred.

In terms of inclusion related to the students' academics, the D/HH students have been in a mainstream class placement for their entire academic career whether it has been on a withdrawal basis each day or on a weekly, itinerant basis. Students did not have a great deal to say about the level of inclusion in their elementary years compared to their high school years. However, each parent mentioned how much time their child spent out of the classroom, indicating that the D/HH students did remain in the regular classroom for lengthy periods of time. Some parents reported that the school board focused on elementary inclusion but seemed to segregate the D/HH students in high school placement out of their home school area and into an integrated setting in a new school.

The second research question concerned what specific concerns parents have in regards to sending their D/HH child to a new and unfamiliar mainstream environment along with what specific concerns D/HH children have in regards to attending a new and unfamiliar mainstream environment. The student responses suggested that they were concerned about making new friends, much like many students who are transitioning to secondary school. For the parents, however, they had many concerns, ranging from wondering if their child would get involved with the 'wrong crowd' to wondering if the level of support that the students had in elementary school from the school would be continued throughout secondary school.

The third and final research question concerned the perceived similarities and/or differences that both the parents of the D/HH students and the D/HH students themselves feel are apparent between the levels of support received in elementary school vs. secondary school for students who are D/HH. Both parent and student participants noted that there are different levels of support put in place for the students including FM systems, computerized note-takers, more time working with the teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing, educational assistants and other forms of assistive technology at the secondary level also. These responses suggest that the appropriate supports are put into place to ensure that the D/HH students have assistance if needed throughout the learning process.

Suggestions for Theory, Best Practice and Research

Although there is plenty of research in the area of inclusive education in a general sense, there is little regarding the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstream class placements; especially at the secondary school level. Further research must be conducted in order to gather more knowledge in how to best serve this particular population of students. The philosophies found in the literature on the inclusion of D/HH students are necessary, especially for those teaching these students. They are needed in order for educators to learn and implement

different strategies in teaching D/HH students more appropriately. Teachers must be prepared to be effective educators for all students. The theory found in the literature therefore influences the methods that are put into practice in the classroom.

Further, comprehensive research regarding the perspectives of parents of D/HH students along with the students themselves should also be conducted because it is essential to consider the viewpoints of those who are directly affected by the decisions made regarding the education of these students. Additional exploration concerning the issues that arise with respect to D/HH students integrated into mainstream class placements may lead to improvements in educational strategies over time with this special needs population group. Results from longer studies may provide teachers of the deaf, classroom teachers, special education teachers and administrators with potential resolutions for many of the issues D/HH students face. It is therefore noteworthy to mention that educators should remain current in their teaching practice by reading the literature on D/HH students in the mainstream in order to best serve them and to develop professionally as teachers. Any professional development in this area would certainly be beneficial to educators as it provides the knowledge and information needed to best educate students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The present study highlights some of the issues that D/HH students and their parents are most concerned with regarding the students' mainstream class placements at the secondary school level. Although this study was based on a small sample, the rich qualitative findings may be of significant value to other researchers wanting to examine the challenges D/HH students have in mainstream settings. It would be, in future studies, especially useful to also obtain the perspectives of both teachers of the deaf and regular classroom teachers in the elementary and secondary panels regarding issues that arise with deaf and hard of hearing students' class placement in mainstream settings and best practices in this field.

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Lakehead

UNIVERSITY

Appendix A: Parent Information Letter

March, 2009

Dear Parent:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lisa Tropea and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. In order to complete the requirements of the Master of Education program, I am conducting research that will lead to a completed thesis. As such, I would like to conduct research with a group of parents of deaf and hard of hearing students who are in the process of transitioning from elementary school to secondary school or who have recently done so in order to obtain their perspectives on their children's class placement in mainstream schools. I would also like to interview a group of eighth grade D/HH students who are ready to make the transition to secondary school and/or those who are in grades nine and ten who have recently made the transition and therefore also invite your child's participation.

I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group interview regarding your perspectives about the aforementioned topic. The focus group interview may potentially last for approximately one hour. I also request that you consider allowing your child to participate in a separate focus group comprised of D/HH children which session will also be for one hour.

In order to maintain confidentiality, the names of those participating in the focus group interviews will be introduced to each other by pseudonyms; however, some participants may already know each other therefore, they will be encouraged to keep the names of any familiar people confidential. There are no psychological, physical or social risks involved in this research. Participants may find the opportunity to participate in this research beneficial, as they will have the opportunity to share experiences with other parents. All participation is strictly voluntary, and participants may also withdraw from the study at any time.

Data collected from this study will remain confidential and will be kept in a secure location at Lakehead University for a period of five years. All of the findings from this study will be summarized and submitted to my supervisor in the Faculty of Education in the form of a completed thesis. The findings with the identity of the participants concealed may be presented to local school boards and at academic conferences and reported in academic journal articles. As the participant, please note that you have the right to retract any portion of the transcript pertaining to you.

Both my supervisor and I will be happy to answer any questions regarding this study. I can be reached at 807.344.2563 in Thunder Bay. My supervisor Dr. Sonja Grover can be reached through email at sgrover@lakeheadu.ca The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board can also be reached at 807.343.8283 should further questions arise.

Thank you,

Lisa Tropea

Appendix B: Parent Consent Form

My signature on this form indicates that I agree to participate in the study conducted by researcher, Lisa Tropea on MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS TRANSITIONING TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: PARENT AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES. This research study will include focus group interviews.

Signing below indicates that I understand the following:

- I am a volunteer in this study.
- I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- There are no psychological, physical or social risks involved in participating.
- All identifying information will be kept in strict confidentiality.
- Data collected will be analyzed by the researcher only.
- The data collected will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a period of five years and then destroyed.
- I will receive a summary of this research study upon request.
- I may choose not to answer any or all question during the focus group interview.
- I will have the opportunity to redact anything I do not wish included in the transcription of the focus group interview of myself or my child even though there will be pseudonyms used in the reporting of the data.
- I understand that the focus group in which I and/or my child participates will be audiotaped and transcribed but that the identity of the speakers of particular statements will be held in strictest confidence.
- I understand that I will keep the identity of focus group participants confidential.
- I understand the findings with the identity of the participants concealed may be presented to local school boards and at academic conferences and reported in academic journal articles.

I, _____ agree to participate in the interview.

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix C: Student Information Letter

March, 2009

Dear Student:

My name is Lisa Tropea and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. I am conducting a research study that will lead to me completing my Master of Education degree.

I am interested in finding out what parents of students who are deaf and hard of hearing along with deaf and hard of hearing students themselves have to say about moving from elementary school to high school, class placement and inclusion in your school.

I would like to invite you and your parent(s) to be a part of my research study by participating in a focus group interview. The focus group interview may last for approximately one hour. If you do agree to participate, you and your parent(s) can decide not to answer questions or to leave the research study at any time. I will not put your or your parent(s) names on any of the interview information, so no one at your school will know what you or your parents(s) have told me. You and your parent(s) may choose names other than your own to use during the focus groups. If you or your parent(s) do know any of the other participants in the focus groups, you must keep this information private. All of the information will be kept in a locked cabinet and only my supervisor and I will be able to look at it.

If you have any questions about this research, or need more information, you can reach me by email at lttropea@lakeheadu.ca

Thanks for your help!

Sincerely,

Lisa Tropea

Appendix D: Parent Consent Form for Child

My signature on this form indicates that I agree to allow **my child** to participate in the study conducted by researcher, Lisa Tropea on MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS TRANSITIONING TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: PARENT AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES. This research study will include focus group interviews.

Signing below indicates that I understand the following:

- My child is a volunteer in this study.
- My child can withdraw from the study at any time.
- There are no psychological, physical or social risks involved in participating.
- All identifying information will be kept in strict confidentiality.
- Data collected will be analyzed by the researcher only.
- The data collected will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a period of five years and then destroyed.
- I will receive a summary of this research study upon request.
- My child may choose not to answer any or all question during the focus group interview.
- I will have the opportunity to redact anything I do not wish included in the transcription of the focus group interview of myself or my child even though there will be pseudonyms used in the reporting of the data
- I understand that the focus group in which I and/or my child participates will be audiotaped and transcribed but that the identity of the speakers of particular statements will be held in strictest confidence.
- My child will keep the identity of other focus group participants confidential.
- I understand the findings with the identity of the participants concealed may be presented to local school boards and at academic conferences and reported in academic journal articles.

I, _____ agree to allow my child to participate in the interview.

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Student

Date

Appendix E: Interview Guide for Parent Focus Groups

Inclusion/Class Placement Questions

1. Describe your child's current class placement at school.
2. What qualities must regular classroom teachers possess in order to successfully include a D/HH child in his/her classroom?
3. Describe the ideal learning environment for your child.
4. What services/supports has your child received at school to help him/her with the learning process?
5. Do you think the teacher of the deaf and the regular classroom teacher collaborated with one another regarding your child in elementary school? Do they collaborate in secondary school?
6. How has the collaboration or lack thereof affected your child's success?
7. Has your child been in this type of program/placement throughout his/her education?
8. What are the benefits of your child having an EA with him/her in the regular classroom? What are the challenges, if any, associated with having an EA?
9. How does your child interact with his/her hearing peers? Who would you say your child associates more so with, others who are D/HH or their hearing peers?

Transition Questions

1. What are/were your positive experiences associated with your child's transition from elementary school to secondary school? What were/are the negative experiences?
2. What are some concerns you have had regarding your child moving to a new school environment? What contributed to those concerns?
3. What/who do you think has/will facilitated the process of transition at the elementary level? At the secondary level?
4. How did you/will you participate in your child's transition process at the elementary level? Were you asked for your input? Were you aware that you are entitled to contribute to the plan?
5. What are/were your concerns regarding your child entering secondary school? What supports will be/were made available to him/her?

Questions relating to Parents of D/HH Students

1. What do you do as a parent to make your child's experience at school the best possible?
2. How do you collaborate with your child's teacher(s) to ensure your child's needs are being met? Is this consistent throughout the school year?
3. How do you participate to help your child be academically successful at school?

Appendix F: Interview Guide for Student Focus Group

Inclusion/Class Placement Questions

10. Describe your current class placement at school.
11. What qualities must regular classroom teachers have in order to successfully include a D/HH child in his/her classroom?
12. Describe your ideal learning environment.
13. What services/supports have you received at school to help you with learning?
14. Do you think the teacher of the deaf and the regular classroom teacher worked together with regards to you elementary school? Do the teacher of the deaf and your regular classroom teachers work together in high school?
15. How has the collaboration or lack thereof affected your success?
16. Have you been in this type of program/placement throughout your entire education?
17. What are the benefits of you having an EA with you in the regular classroom? What are the challenges, if any, associated with having an EA?
18. How do you interact with your hearing peers? Who would you say you associate more so with, others who are D/HH or your hearing peers?

Transition Questions

6. What are/were your positive experiences associated with your transition from elementary school to secondary school? What were/are the negative experiences?
7. What are some concerns you have had regarding your move to a new school environment? What contributed to those concerns?
8. What/who do you think has/will help make the process of transition easier at the elementary level? At the secondary level?
9. How did you/will you participate in your transition process at the elementary level? Were you asked for your input? Did you know that you are entitled to contribute to the plan?
10. What are/were your concerns about entering secondary school? What supports will be/were made available to you?

Questions relating to Parents of D/HH Students

4. What do your parent(s) do to make your experience at school the best possible?
5. How do you parents work together with your teacher(s) to make sure your needs are being met? Is this consistent throughout the school year?
6. How do your parents participate to help you be academically successful at school?

Appendix G: Letter to Principal

To School Principal:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lisa Tropea and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. In order to complete the requirements of the Master of Education program, I am conducting research that will lead to a completed thesis. As such, I would like to conduct research with a group of deaf and hard of hearing students who are in the eighth grade and ready to make the transition from elementary school to secondary school and/or those who are in grades nine and ten and have recently done so in order to obtain their perspectives on their class placement in mainstream schools. I would like to ask your permission to conduct interviews with the deaf and hard of hearing students who fit the above criteria at your school.

I would like to invite deaf and hard of hearing students to participate in a focus group interview regarding their perspectives about the aforementioned topic. The focus group interview may potentially last for approximately one hour.

In order to maintain confidentiality, the school board name and the names of the schools will be kept in confidence. The names of those participating in the focus group interviews will be introduced to each other by pseudonyms; however, some participants may already know each other therefore, they will be encouraged to keep the names of any familiar people confidential. There are no psychological, physical or social risks involved in this research. Participants may find the opportunity to participate in this research beneficial, as they will have the opportunity to share experiences with other students. All participation is strictly voluntary, and participants may also withdraw from the study at any time.

Data collected from this study will remain confidential and will be kept in a secure location at Lakehead University for a period of five years. All of the findings from this study will be summarized and submitted to my supervisor in the Faculty of Education in the form of a completed thesis. The findings with the identity of the participants concealed may be presented to local school boards and at academic conferences and reported in academic journal articles. As participants, please note that they will have the right to retract any portion of the transcript pertaining to them.

Both my supervisor and I will be happy to answer any questions regarding this study. I can be reached at 807.344.2563 in Thunder Bay. My supervisor Dr. Sonja Grover can be reached through email at sgrover@lakeheadu.ca The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board can also be reached at 807.343.8283 should further questions arise.

Thank you,

Lisa Tropea

Appendix H: Principal Consent Form

My signature on this form indicates that I, as school principal, have a) read and understood the cover information letter addressed to the principal and principal's consent form regarding the study to be conducted by Lakehead University Masters student, Lisa Tropea titled MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS TRANSITIONING TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: PARENT AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES and b) agree to having volunteers for the study recruited from the school of which I am principal.

I _____ have read and understand that:

- The study has been approved by the school board research office for the school of which I am principal and by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board.
- This research study involves focus group interviews with the parents of deaf or hard of hearing students and/or their hearing impaired children.
- All participants are volunteers in this study and may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse consequences of any sort.
- There are no known or foreseeable psychological, physical or social risks involved in participating.
- All identifying information of the participants will be kept strictly confidential.
- The identity of the school board(s) with schools participating will be kept confidential.
- Data collected will be analyzed by the researcher only.
- The raw data collected including the audiotapes and any field notes will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a period of five years and then destroyed.
- Participants will receive a summary of this research study upon request.
- Participants may choose not to answer any or all questions during their focus group interview.
- Both adult and child participants will have the opportunity to redact anything they do not wish to be included in the transcription of the focus group interview(s) which pertains to themselves.
- Parent participants may redact any information they wish regarding themselves or their children from the transcription of the focus group interview(s).
- The focus group participants will be audiotaped only with their permission and that material transcribed but the identity of the speakers of particular statements will be held in strictest confidence.
- Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of the data and the data will be reported as grouped data except for quotes (using pseudonyms) which illustrate certain themes.
- The grouped data with participant identities concealed will be used to prepare a Lakehead University Masters of Education thesis.
- The findings of the study with any identifying information regarding the school and participants concealed may be reported in articles published in academic journals and/or via academic conference papers.
- A summary report of the findings with all participant and school identifying information concealed will be provided to the school(s) participating in the study.
- Participants will keep the identity of other focus group participants confidential.

Name of Principal

Date

Signature of Principal

Appendix I: Letter to Teacher

Dear Teacher:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lisa Tropea and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. In order to complete the requirements of the Master of Education program, I am conducting research that will lead to a completed thesis. As such, I would like to conduct research with a group of deaf and hard of hearing students who are in the eighth grade and ready to make the transition from elementary school to secondary school and/or those who are in grades nine and ten and have recently made the transition in order to obtain their perspectives on their class placement in mainstream schools. I would like to ask your permission to conduct interviews with the deaf and hard of hearing students who fit the above criteria at your school.

I would like to invite deaf and hard of hearing students to participate in a focus group interview regarding their perspectives about the aforementioned topic. The focus group interview may potentially last for approximately one hour.

In order to maintain confidentiality, the school board name and the names of the schools will be kept in confidence. The names of those participating in the focus group interviews will be introduced to each other by pseudonyms; however, some participants may already know each other therefore, they will be encouraged to keep the names of any familiar people confidential. There are no psychological, physical or social risks involved in this research. Participants may find the opportunity to participate in this research beneficial, as they will have the opportunity to share experiences with other students. All participation is strictly voluntary, and participants may also withdraw from the study at any time.

Data collected from this study will remain confidential and will be kept in a secure location at Lakehead University for a period of five years. All of the findings from this study will be summarized and submitted to my supervisor in the Faculty of Education in the form of a completed thesis. The findings with the identity of the participants concealed may be presented to local school boards and at academic conferences and reported in academic journal articles. As participants, please note that they will have the right to retract any portion of the transcript pertaining to them.

Both my supervisor and I will be happy to answer any questions regarding this study. I can be reached at 807.344.2563 in Thunder Bay. My supervisor Dr. Sonja Grover can be reached through email at sgrover@lakeheadu.ca The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board can also be reached at 807.343.8283 should further questions arise.

Thank you,

Lisa Tropea

Appendix J: Teacher Consent Form

My signature on this form indicates that I, as teacher, have a) read and understood the cover information letter addressed to the teacher and teacher's consent form regarding the study to be conducted by Lakehead University Masters student, Lisa Tropea titled MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS TRANSITIONING TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: PARENT AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES and b) agree to having volunteers for the study recruited from the school of which I am a teacher of the deaf.

I _____ have read and understand that:

- The study has been approved by the school board research office for the school of which I am principal and by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board.
- This research study involves focus group interviews with the parents of deaf or hard of hearing students and/or their hearing impaired children.
- All participants are volunteers in this study and may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse consequences of any sort.
- There are no known or foreseeable psychological, physical or social risks involved in participating.
- All identifying information of the participants will be kept strictly confidential.
- The identity of the school board(s) with schools participating will be kept confidential.
- Data collected will be analyzed by the researcher only.
- The raw data collected including the audiotapes and any field notes will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a period of five years and then destroyed.
- Participants will receive a summary of this research study upon request.
- Participants may choose not to answer any or all questions during their focus group interview.
- Both adult and child participants will have the opportunity to redact anything they do not wish to be included in the transcription of the focus group interview(s) which pertains to themselves.
- Parent participants may redact any information they wish regarding themselves or their children from the transcription of the focus group interview(s).
- The focus group participants will be audiotaped only with their permission and that material transcribed but the identity of the speakers of particular statements will be held in strictest confidence.
- Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of the data and the data will be reported as grouped data except for quotes (using pseudonyms) which illustrate certain themes.
- The grouped data with participant identities concealed will be used to prepare a Lakehead University Masters of Education thesis.
- The findings of the study with any identifying information regarding the school and participants concealed may be reported in articles published in academic journals and/or via academic conference papers.
- A summary report of the findings with all participant and school identifying information concealed will be provided to the school(s) participating in the study.
- Participants will keep the identity of other focus group participants confidential.

Name of Teacher

Date

Signature of Teacher

Appendix K Student Focus Group Transcription

LISA: Ok, these questions are going to be related to inclusion and class placement so a lot of kids with hearing loss as they're younger may or may not feel included in their regular classroom. I don't know if you guys have had that when you were younger or not. That's just usually what happens.

AMY: What did you say?

LISA: A lot of kids with hearing loss don't feel included in their classrooms.

AMY: Oh, yeah

LISA: Ok, so I want you guys to describe your current class placement here.

AMY: What do you mean, like?

LISA: What does your class placement include right now, like for example, in elementary school you might have had, you know you guys had, you were in the classroom and then you got taken out for a certain period. What's your current class placement now?

CHRIS: I'm involved in everything.

LISA: Ok, like what?

CHRIS: like gym, and all of my classes.

LISA: Ok.

CHARLOTTE: We have one period especially for um, our needs.

LISA: Ok, do you guys have an EA in the class with you?

CHARLOTTE: We have one period with Mrs. P that helps us with our needs and subjects we need help in.

DAVID: We get to write tests in here.

LISA: Ok, tell me more about the classes you have. Do you have EAs in your classes with you?

AMY: Um, yeah.

DAVID: Uh, yeah, I have an EA to help in some of my classes.

LISA: Only some?

DAVID: Yeah

LISA: Ok, next.

LINDA: What am I supposed to say?

LISA: You're here in the morning, right?

LINDA: (nodding)

LISA: For what? What do you do in the morning?

LINDA: Work on stuff that I didn't know, that I need to work on.

AMY: Same things and stuff

LISA: Ok, next question. Listen to the question. What qualities must regular classroom teachers have in order to successfully include a child who is deaf or hard of hearing in his or her classroom? Do you understand the question?

AMY: No

CHARLOTTE: No

LISA: What kind of qualities does a regular classroom teacher need to have to be able to include a kid with hearing loss in their classroom?

AMY: To look at the student, to look forward, not back and to ask, like after class if we got everything, to have like notes and stuff.

LISA: Have notes for the student?

AMY: Yeah

LISA: K, what else guys? What else does the teacher need to have to be able to support you guys in the classroom? Go ahead- shout it out.

CHRIS: Uh, have patience and understanding

LISA: Good

AMY: Yeah, have patience. I get yelled at a lot.

LISA: What else? Anybody have to add anything to that?

AMANDA: Try not to speak too fast.

LISA: Good

CHARLOTTE: Try not to look at the blackboard when talking

AMY: I said that.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, ok, well, I said it too.

LISA: That's fine. Um, what else?

CHARLOTTE: Keep stereos and windows closed and off.

LISA: Go ahead.

CHRIS: Have a nice loud voice and not like ahh.

LISA: What else? David? Think about, um, especially being in grade 8, coming here, like grade 8 to grade 9, is that really transitional year where you're going to jump forward, right, so you don't know what you're going to expect in high school. So, what qualities do you think that teacher needs then to you know, help you out so that you are ready? These are really good answers so far.

CHRIS: Um, to not single them out and make them feel like weird.

AMY: Yeah, that's a good one.

CHARLOTTE: That's a big issue.

LISA: Why?

DAVID: What is it?

LISA: Not singling you out in a classroom in front of all your other peers.

CHARLOTTE: Like we have to sit together, all three of us, eh? Not that I have a problem with that but...

AMY: Or like in the front, sitting in the front and also is a very big annoyance for me.

LISA: Ok, but do you think that sitting in the front is something that your teacher should, like in elementary school that's where I would have put someone so that you could hear better, right? Do you think it's a problem now?

AMY: Yes

LISA: Ok, next. Describe your ideal learning environment. So, ideal meaning what would be your best learning environment for someone who has a hearing loss?

AMANDA: quiet room

LISA: What else?

CHARLOTTE: When the classroom is quiet.

LISA: What else?

CHARLOTTE: Um, somewhere where it's not super big and is not a lot of bare walls so things don't echo.

LISA: What else do you need for an ideal learning environment? Think about chairs, what else?

CHARLOTTE: Maybe get those balls on the bottom of chairs. What do they call those things?

LISA: Hushh-ups. That's what they're called- Hushh-ups. What else? What else is an ideal learning environment so you can learn better in the classroom?

CHARLOTTE: Smart people so they don't talk; well; the smarter people tend to not talk as much as the not so smart.

LISA: Ok, um, anything else you want to add to the ideal learning environment? Think about your classrooms now in high school. What do you wish isn't happening in there?

CHARLOTTE: Well, a lot of like, moving around so we're not so close to each other when doing group work.

LISA: Say that again please.

CHARLOTTE: Like when we're doing group work, split us up so we're not as close so we don't hear other people.

LISA: Good. Ok, next question. What services or supports have you received at school to help you with learning? So think back to grade 8 as well and now.

AMY: FMs

CHARLOTTE: EAs, laptops

LISA: What else, there's got to be other things.

CHARLOTTE: More time with the hearing resource teacher.

LISA: What about in terms of test writing, that kind of stuff?

CHARLOTTE: We do them in here.

CHRIS: Um, we get like an extra half hour on the test or whatever.

LISA: Ok, what other things do you get? Like for example, do you get calculators when other students don't? Like that kind of stuff?

AMANDA: Not really

LISA: No? What other supports, anything else? And EAs, are they always in every class or not?

CHARLOTTE: In classes like English, Math, Geography and stuff but in gym and drama and arts they don't sit there and stick to you like a piece of glue or a fly.

LISA: Ok

DAVID: Get more time to write tests

LISA: Yeah, that's one that was already said.

DAVID: Sorry

LISA: That's ok. It's alright. Ok, next question- do you think the teacher of the deaf and the regular classroom teacher worked together with regards to you in elementary school?

AMY: Ok, explain that.

LISA: So, I'll just say that Mrs. S., you know who I'm talking about...ok, did she and your regular classroom teacher, whomever they were, your classroom teacher and the teacher of the deaf, did they work together when you were in elementary school?

AMY: Oh, um on some things they did but the teachers I don't think got enough knowledge.

LISA: Good, regular classroom teacher.

AMY: And they also forgot lots of stuff too so there was like no point in talking to them about it.

LISA: Not enough knowledge in regards to what? Hearing loss?

AMY: Uh no, yeah and like on ways to teach us, I guess.

CHARLOTTE: Not enough hands-on stuff.

LISA: Ok, so what else? What about those of you who were not at the same school as these two? Did your classroom teacher and your teacher of the deaf talk a lot?

CHRIS: Yeah

LISA: They did? And what about your classroom teacher, did they work together?

CHRIS: Yeah

LISA: You think so.

AMANDA: Not for me.

LISA: Did you both have the same teacher?

AMANDA: No

LISA: No, the same teacher of the deaf, I mean.

AMANDA: Yeah

LISA: Ok, so tell me your experience first.

AMANDA: Well, I only saw my hearing teacher maybe twice a week and during those times it was like very short but then I was like a lot more independent at my school.

LISA: So, are you're saying then that they didn't?

AMANDA: Well, they sort of did but...

LISA: They should have but what do you think the reason is for that?

AMANDA: I don't think they really had enough time like my hearing teacher didn't really have enough time to like stop and talk to my regular teacher.

LISA: Ok, not enough time. What about you? Do you think they talked? Why? How do you know?

DAVID: Well, I made sure that they did.

LISA: You did?

DAVID: Yeah

LISA: Really. You took it upon yourself?

DAVID: Yeah

LISA: Why?

DAVID: So, um, it could be a better learning environment

LISA: Ok

DAVID: Or easier to learn

LISA: What was your experience? I don't remember. I know who you had. In grade 8, did you have her?

LINDA: (nodding)

LISA: And did she talk to your classroom teacher?

LINDA: A lot. I didn't like it.

LISA: Ok, why?

LINDA: Cause I just didn't

AMY: You have to have reasons.

LINDA: Cause she'd tell my teacher like where she was going with me, which that was ok but like my teacher would tell her what work I had to work on and I just didn't like that cause she would already have work for me to do anyway.

LISA: Which teacher would already have work for you to do?

LINDA: The deaf and hard of hearing one.

LISA: Ok, so you're thinking because then it was double work?

LINDA: Yeah, it was.

LISA: Ok, what about now? Does your teacher of the deaf, and your regular classroom teachers work together in high school? Go ahead.

CHARLOTTE: What was the question? Sorry, I couldn't follow.

LISA: Do your teacher of the deaf and your regular classroom teachers now in high school work together?

CHRIS: Oh yeah

LISA: You think so?

CHRIS: I do, yeah.

LISA: Why and how?

CHRIS: Cause um...

LISA: How do you know that they are?

CHARLOTTE: At the beginning of the year we had to make brochures and they'd give it to our real teachers to tell them about us and also Mrs. P checks in with them once a week, just to ask how we're doing.

AMANDA: Does she really?

CHARLOTTE: That's how she knows everything.

AMANDA: I thought she just looked in the EA binder.

LISA: Ok, do you remember what you were going to say?

CHRIS: Um, they come here like and talk to her about stuff.

LISA: Does anybody else want to add anything? No? Are you listening? How has the collaboration or the lack of collaboration, (their working together) or the fact that they didn't work together or don't work together affect your success?

AMY: To me it doesn't make a difference.

LISA: Why?

AMY: Because teachers are obviously not going to listen like not going to remember everything. They have like 100 other students they teach a day. They're not going to remember just to think of us and it just, I've noticed from when teachers did talk and didn't talk, there was no like there wasn't a difference or anything.

LISA: No difference. Ok.

CHARLOTTE: I noticed like if the teachers with our deaf and hard of hearing teachers were talking and if you got into another fight with another hard of hearing student or something, they like shove you tow together to force you to get along and stuff.

LISA: Your hearing teacher does that? Ok.

CHARLOTTE: Do you agree Amy?

LISA: So that teacher is kind of a mediator, kind of controlling your situation in terms of your relationships with other people.

CHARLOTTE: And the normal teacher

AMY: And they're very much into your life and you don't get privacy.

CHARLOTTE: Uh huh. A normal teacher just says figure it out yourselves or just say just ignore her then.

DAVID: I'm confused

LISA: So basically what I'm asking is how has the fact that your teacher and your teacher of the deaf working together, right, how has that affected your success in school?

DAVID: Ok

LISA: So do you have anything to say for that?

DAVID: Yeah, I got that but I didn't get what they were talking about.

LISA: Oh, they were talking more about in relationships with friends and stuff.

CHARLOTTE: Well, it can affect your schooling cause you can get stressed out a lot.

LISA: That's basically what I want to know, so has, maybe when your teachers don't collaborate together, how does that affect your success?

CHARLOTTE: You can be unorganized and you don't know what you're doing and they don't know what you're doing so you get in fights and yeah.

AMANDA: It doesn't really affect me at all.

LISA: It doesn't affect you? Ok.

CHARLOTTE: Of course it doesn't; you're too independent

LISA: Ok, Amanda, can you explain that one? Why do you think it doesn't affect you? Cause you're independent?

AMANDA: Yeah, and like, I don't see my hearing teacher that much anymore.

LISA: Ok

AMANDA: I'm just like doing my work on my own already. I ask the teachers for help when I need it.

LISA: Ok, have you been in this type of program or placement throughout your entire education? So, from JK or SK whatever you started, has this been the norm for you?

AMY: Um, not like this type of like in a room. I've been with Ms. Unknown for practically my whole life since grade 3 and a little bit after that then Ms. S., I mean.

LISA: Oh, so she was the first teacher who was with you for a while and then...

AMY: Yeah, so from JK to grade 3 was not like

LISA: You had an itinerant teacher, right?

AMY: Yeah

LISA: To grade 3 itinerant

AMY: And then...

LISA: And then, after grade 4 on, you had withdrawal, right?

AMY: Yup

CHRIS: I had 4 different programs.

LISA: Programs?

CHRIS: Yeah

LISA: Why and how? So, in JK, what was it like, JK to what, what was it like?

CHRIS: I had them from grade one to grade 8

LISA: Grade 1 to grade 8 was itinerant

CHRIS: What do you mean?

LISA: That means one teacher comes to your school where you are for a couple like, half and hour, OK?

CHRIS: Yeah

LISA: How many times a week?

CHRIS: Um, like twice or once.

LISA: Two times approximately. Charlotte, I know yours.

CHARLOTTE: Uh, actually, I had it before school started.

LISA: Oh, ok. In terms, but ok, we're talking about just in terms of your education at school so the same as hers, right?

CHARLOTTE: Um, starting with JK, I was in the Hearing Resource Unit my whole life.

LISA: Oh, really?

CHARLOTTE: Yeah

LISA: And that was like withdrawal, the same way as you've been having? Ok, what about you Amanda?

AMANDA: I had one since SK, since I started in SK but I had a different one in SK and then in grade one, I had another one and I had her for my whole life.

LISA: Ok, so but basically you had an itinerant all the way through to grade 8? Ok, David-

DAVID: I had itinerant all the way through from grade one to grade 8.

LISA: One to eight. Did you go JK and SK?

DAVID: Yeah and I did have someone helping me.

LISA: But it wasn't an itinerant teacher? Maybe it was like an EA?

DAVID: No, I guess it was an itinerant teacher.

LISA: Yeah, ok, so that would be JK on.

CHARLOTTE: I had Mrs. H. Do you remember her?

LISA: I remember her. Ok, Linda, what about you?

LINDA: I just had one in grade 8 that was it.

LISA: You didn't have one in grades 7,6,5,4,3,2,1?

LINDA: No, cause I was at a different school before that, way before that.

LISA: And so no one saw you before then? When did they find out that you had a hearing loss?

LINDA: In grade like 7, at the beginning of the year.

LISA: Oh, ok. Well, that would be why. Alright, what are the benefits of you having an EA in your regular classroom? And what are the challenges if any, associated with having an EA? So, there are 2 questions.

LINDA: Oh, I can go on and on about that.

LISA: Ok, I know you can so please do but just hang on. First, let's answer the first part, what are the benefits, so what are the good things about having an EA first and then you can tell me all the bad things.

LINDA: K, well, they help you.

LISA: Go on

LINDA: Like if you need, I don't know, well, if you need any help, they help you, you're not just sitting there and stuck on something, if the teacher's busy they can help you.

LISA: Ok, what else? Benefits- these are all the benefits first.

CHRIS: If you like miss, then they can like have stuff for you to do.

LISA: To catch up?

CHRIS: Notes, yeah.

LISA: What else for benefits?

DAVID: If you miss a day, you know what went on.

CHARLOTTE: They write everything down for you, type everything.

AMANDA: If you missed a question, they can repeat it for you.

LISA: What else, anything else for the benefits?

CHARLOTTE: That's all I can think of.

LISA: Amy, do you have any benefits to having them?

AMY: No

LISA: No, you don't think there are any benefits? No, that's fine if you don't think that there are. That helps me. No benefits. Ok, now, this is the next part. Alright, I'll repeat this part of the question. What are the challenges, if any associated with having an EA? Go ahead Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: They're really nosy sometimes.

AMY: And they never, never leave you alone.

CHARLOTTE: They cause you conflicts sometimes, like people will ask you who they are and you'll be like they're my EA and they'll be like, so you're retarded?

LINDA: And it's embarrassing.

CHARLOTTE: They ask if you're retarded because you have an assistant with you.

AMY: And the teachers don't single you out anymore but that obviously singles out.

LISA: What singles you out, having the EA?

AMY: Yeah

LISA: David, do you feel like that too?

DAVID: Well, I don't have just them sit beside me

LISA: You don't have them- do you have them in the classroom?

DAVID: Yeah, but I don't have them in every single class cause I found that a problem and I didn't really need them.

CHRIS: There was an EA that I had in grade 6 and she thought I was retarded and it was really annoying cause every five seconds she would walk up and say, Chris, did you get this, did you get that, did you get this?

LISA: So she made you feel what?

AMY: Special

LINDA: Specially needed

CHRIS: It was really annoying.

LISA: So, you think they treat you differently?

CHRIS: Yeah, and then I got- she went somewhere else and then I was happy.

AMY: There's a specific EA here, I'm not gonna give you names. She has to sit in front of me so I can tap her shoulder if I need any help but there's no point in me doing that cause she sits there and she watches me like a hawk and I can't even look at my own paper cause her head has to be overtop of mine so she can see everything that I write and if she asks me for help, I'll say I don't

need any help and then she'll keep talking and talking and talking about it and you can't say leave me alone cause...

LINDA: Exactly

AMY: Because they get all offended.

LISA: Ok, so what's the general consensus here about having EAs in the classroom?

AMY: They're annoying

LINDA: Yes, right on. They don't leave you alone.

LISA: But do you still think you need them?

LINDA: Yes

CHARLOTTE: Yes

LISA: So it's kind of like a love/dislike relationship?

LINDA: Yes

AMY: No, it's like a hate relationship.

DAVID: I think they should all stay at the back.

LISA: Why David?

DAVID: Because, um, I don't really know why.

LISA: Do you think that they should sit at the back so they don't single you out?

DAVID: Yeah, they don't single you out and um, when they class goes on, when the teacher's talking, you can't talk to them anyways so what's the point of sitting beside them?

LISA: Ok, next question. How do you interact with your hearing peers?

LINDA: Oh my God, I could go on and on about that one.

LISA: Ok, first part of the question, is how do you interact with your hearing peers, so the people who do not have a hearing loss and who would you say you associate more with? Others who are deaf and hard of hearing or your hearing peers?

AMY: I interact with them by talking with them and I don't know what you mean though...I talk.

LISA: How do you talk with them, like what's your relationship like with them?

AMY: Um, well, it's normal I guess but I'm more closer to hearing people I guess, I don't know why I am but I am.

LISA: To people without a hearing loss?

AMY: Yeah, because they're not...I can't, it's rude. They're easier to talk to I guess because I don't really talk about my hearing loss anyways cause it's like I, it's just not there and what's the next question?

LISA: I'm going to go through everybody. Ok, Linda, how do you interact with your hearing peers?

LINDA: Ok, say the question again.

LISA: How do you interact with your hearing peers, the people who do not have a hearing loss?

LINDA: Well, um, I don't like telling other people I have a hearing loss cause it's embarrassing.

AMY: That's true, I agree.

LISA: So, let's say when you first got here in grade 9, you didn't tell anybody, tell other people that?

AMY: I still don't tell people.

LINDA: Neither do I; it's too embarrassing.

LISA: David, what about you? How do you interact with people without a hearing loss?

DAVID: How do I interact with them...normally.

LISA: Do you tell them that you have a hearing loss?

DAVID: No

CHRIS: I don't tell them.

AMY: I think it's obvious cause you have that robot thing

DAVID: Nice (sarcastic)

AMY: No, it's not a bad thing, it's just out there so...

LISA: Amy, for someone with a hearing loss...

AMY: No, because it, I had short hair, why would you have to tell them anyways?

CHARLOTTE: Cause maybe they're blind

AMY: No, I'm not putting you down, I have it too, trust me, I've been made fun of but I've had short hair so people are like oh yeah, you have hearing aids. They obviously know what they are.

LISA: Amanda, you're next. Go ahead.

AMANDA: Um, it's not that much different for me because I, throughout my years of elementary school I would only hang out with hearing people so I didn't hang out with people who had a hearing loss. It was coming to this school, was like my first time actually being communicated with hearing loss people.

CHRIS: Me too

AMY: I feel bad now, just to let you know.

LISA: Chris, you as well, always hung out with people without hearing loss?

CHRIS: Uh, yeah.

CHARLOTTE: I usually tell people right off the bat I have a hearing loss.

LISA: Really?

CHARLOTTE: I'm not afraid to admit I have a hearing loss and so most of my friends are not hard of hearing. I only have a few that are in this class, like three or four so everybody in this world knows I have a hearing loss.

LISA: Ok, now who would you say you associate more with?

CHARLOTTE: I think we all pretty much answered that question.

LISA: So you think it's people without hearing loss. Ok, these next questions are related to your move from elementary school to high school so you have to think back to that. Alright, what are or were your positive experiences associated with your transition- so just with your move from elementary school to high school- your positive experiences?

CHARLOTTE: I got none.

LISA: You have none Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE: Absolutely none. Well, I made friends with Amanda, that's my only positive one.

CHRIS: A lot more freedom

LISA: Ok, hang on though. I'm talking about the move though, your actual move to and from.

AMY: I don't get it.

CHARLOTTE: Ok, I have one. You get rid of the annoying EAs and teachers you used to have and you get to start over.

AMY: With new annoying EAs.

CHARLOTTE: So you get to switch off but then you have these ones for the next 4 years of your life.

LISA: Anything else? Your positive experiences associated with transition. So, for example, did your teacher, like, what did you guys do to come here. Did you guys come and visit here? Think about that. So, you had a visit? And did what?

CHARLOTTE: We went into classes with people.

LISA: Oh, did you, with other students?

CHARLOTTE: With other hard of hearing students.

LISA: And then what?

CHARLOTTE: And then we had lunch here and we went into another class and then we went back home. We like, spent the day here.

LISA: What were your negative experiences for the transition? Remember, transition.

CHARLOTTE: I'll start. The hard of hearing teachers are talking about how you got to be prepared because you're going to have more of a struggle than normal people will and I got to the point where I was so stressed out about a week after high school I was really, really sick, but also, considering I live on the other side of town, I should be going to another school so I don't have a lot of friends I can hang out with on the weekends cause they don't live near me.

LISA: To hang out in your area, you're saying?

CHARLOTTE: Yeah, we have to take a stupid taxi to this school and we've got a creep.

CHRIS: I live way out there past S.G., you probably don't even know where that is, it's like a 2 hour and a half bus ride there and back.

LISA: Ok, so what are the negative experiences then, are you telling me that that is part of it?

CHRIS: Yes, it's way too long.

LISA: Do you have to go on the bus every day?

CHRIS: Yeah

LISA: You don't get a ride in town?

CHRIS: Well, I could.

LISA: But usually it's the bus. Ok, anybody else have anything to say? Do you live far? No negative experiences coming to high school?

DAVID: No

CHRIS: Oh, I did not know anybody in this school, except maybe her.

LINDA: Neither did I; I knew maybe like one person. I was not impressed when I first started.

LISA: Ok, next question. What are some concerns you have had regarding your move to a new school environment? Remember, bringing yourself back to grade 8 now. What were your concerns?

AMANDA: Making new friends. That was one of the major ones.

CHRIS: Yeah

LINDA: Yeah, that was one of the big ones too for me.

CHARLOTTE: I'd be too stupid for the academic classes.

LISA: Is that what you thought too, making new friends? Was that one of your concerns in grade 8 coming to high school?

CHRIS: Yeah, it was.

LISA: For you?

DAVID: No

LISA: Did you have any concerns?

DAVID: No, not really

LISA: You were just A-Ok with coming to high school?

DAVID: I wanted to come to high school.

LISA: Ok, why?

DAVID: Because it would be more freedom and easier to study because it was only 4 classes and you're on your own pretty much.

LISA: Amy, what about you? Did you think it was going to be difficult making new friends?

AMY: No because...

LISA: Because you had some here already?

AMY: Yeah

AMANDA: I had some friends already too but I still

LISA: You still had that concern?

AMANDA: Yeah

AMY: I'm outgoing so I just talk, whatever so people like me. I'm kidding.

LISA: What do you think has or will help make the process of transition easier at elementary school? So, again, bring yourself back to those kids who are possibly coming here next year, or in September. So what do you think has made the process of transition easier at the elementary level or what will make it easier?

CHARLOTTE: Um, you're more independent.

LISA: Ok, but think back to if you're in grade 8, what's going to make that process easier for someone coming from elementary to high school?

CHARLOTTE: Oh, probably seeing the school and what it's like before actually going.

CHRIS: Yeah

CHARLOTTE: We got to do that.

CHRIS: And to know where all of your classrooms are so you don't have to rush and you can just walk and not be, like, I'm lost and just stand there.

AMANDA: Some teachers tell us the negative things about high school and some people get really stressed out about it.

AMY: Yeah, that's all they do though. They don't say anything positive about anything.

CHARLOTTE: They don't.

CHRIS: They just say it's twice as hard.

CHARLOTTE: And you might have a struggle making friends.

DAVID: They tell you that you have to handwrite.

AMY: Oh yeah, I remember that.

LINDA: Me too

DAVID: No, you don't, not at all.

AMY: And you have loads and loads of homework and teachers are mean and the kids here are mean, blah, blah, blah...

CHARLOTTE: And there's lots of like gossip- I haven't had any trouble in high school yet with friends and stuff.

LISA: How did you participate in your transition process? So what exactly happened where you were to get you ready to come here?

CHARLOTTE: I bought all my stuff, like a month early.

LISA: Think about the school though.

CHARLOTTE: Um, we came that one day, just to see what it's like...that's about it.

LISA: So how did you participate in your transition process, bought stuff early, what about at the school level, what did your hearing teacher tell you?

CHRIS: I came here with my mom and I met with Mrs. P, like the week before school started.

LISA: That's good. What else? Amanda? So, there are a couple questions in this big question. So, how did you participate? So, did they ask you anything as well, did they ask you for your input? So, usually, there's a transition process from elementary to secondary school where they have to put in a plan for everyone if there's someone with a hearing loss or any other kind of issue, right. So, were you asked for any sort of input yourselves?

AMANDA: Yeah

LISA: You were?

AMANDA: Yeah, I was. I went to one of the meetings at my school and they asked me if I wanted to- I had a choice of coming here or going to French and they asked me for my personal opinion about that.

AMY: I have one- they ask you for your opinion but for me, it really doesn't matter what my opinion is- they ask you just to see what you say and they switch you opinion to what they want.

CHARLOTTE: Yeah

LISA: Did this happen specifically to you?

AMY: Uh huh

LISA: So give me an example you wanted what and then what?

AMY: I don't know, I just know that they did that.

LISA: Did you get brought into a meeting of any kind?

LINDA: Me? I don't believe so.

LISA: So you were just told? Did anybody say you had to come to this school or anything like that?

LINDA: Actually yeah, I was told that I had to come here cause I wanted to go to another school cause most of my friends were going there and I didn't really like the fact that I had to come here.

CHRIS: I was gonna go to another school but they had no EAs and then I went to it with my brother and the guy, it was uh, it was one of those dudes who was talking and he's like 'the people that work here have to be more than teachers and they have to do all this other stuff – they can't just be teachers.

LISA: Next question. Did you know that you were entitled or able to contribute to that plan?

CHRIS: Yeah

LISA: You knew Chris.

CHARLOTTE: No

LISA: Nobody else?

CHARLOTTE: I don't think we had a choice because we never took French.

LISA: No, that's got nothing to do with French though- there's a plan set in place and then you get to give your input so you weren't told about that? David, were you told about this transition plan that you could give your input.

DAVID: Input on what?

LISA: Input on you moving to your school or anything

DAVID: Like give it to whom?

LISA: Like talking to your teachers or principal or anything like that.

DAVID: Mrs. P

LISA: Ok, but on the other end, like at elementary school.

DAVID: I guess not.

LISA: So Chris and Amanda were the only two? What were your concerns about entering secondary school? We kind of answered that. Ok, next questions. Now these are all questions related to your parents and being a parent with a kid who has a hearing loss, ok? What do your parents do to make your experience at school the best possible?

CHARLOTTE: Nothing

LINDA: Not really anything

LISA: Well, think back to not only now but in previous years as well, ok. So, think back to before hand as well. Chris?

CHRIS: Everything

LISA: Everything- like what? Give me a couple of examples.

CHRIS: Like in this school or public school?

LISA: Both, whatever you have.

CHRIS: Um, well, my mom goes to every single meeting or whatever. She goes to the SEAC meetings and the VOICE meetings and then she talks to teachers and she talks to the school board and she gets really involved with a whole bunch of stuff and yeah.

LISA: Anybody else? Think back and then now.

CHARLOTTE: My mom, when I was in elementary school I don't know what she did- she didn't really do anything but as the transition went on, she just told me not to worry- everything will be fine. She went to the meetings with Mrs. S.; she was in the hearing unit with Mrs. S. for like the last three years of my elementary life.

LISA: What else? Amanda

AMANDA: My parents were like really supportive of me and like uh, I always knew I could voice my concerns to my parents.

LISA: David, we're almost done.

DAVID: Uh, I guess my parents talked to my teachers and stuff and they talked to like, my hearing teachers and they'd talk about what's best and what's not best and what I need and what I don't need.

CHRIS: Yeah

LISA: Ok, Linda?

LINDA: Me? I have nothing to say.

LISA: Nothing for this one? They didn't help you in any way?

LINDA: No

LISA: But they didn't know until later but what happened when they found out?

LINDA: Nothing

LISA: Nothing much. Amy, your mom has helped you.

AMY: Has she? I guess she helps but I don't know what she does. She talks to the teachers 24/7 cause Mrs. S and her were like, best friends.

LISA: Yeah, they talked right, talked to teachers. Anybody else? What about your regular teachers?

AMY: Yeah, she talked to them too.

LISA: How do parents work together with teachers to make sure your needs are being met?

AMY: You can talk to your parents and tell them to tell the other teachers what you want and they don't listen to you but they listen to your parents so that's good.

LISA: So teachers will listen to parents

AMY: Uh huh

CHRIS: Yeah

LISA: Ok, Chris?

CHRIS: My mom went and talked to my grade...well, my teachers in every grade.

LISA: And in both semesters?

CHRIS: Yeah

CHARLOTTE: I haven't really needed like- I haven't had a lot of trouble so my mom hasn't needed to step in yet.

LISA: But will if she needs to, right?

CHARLOTTE: Yes, she would. Well, I hope she would.

LISA: Amanda, you haven't really had any trouble right. But, would they if they needed to.

AMANDA: I think so.

LISA: David, do you know what we're talking about?

DAVID: Yeah...I don't know.

LISA: Have they helped out or not? Just say what you think cause no one is going to know it's you that is saying it.

DAVID: Well, I don't care about that but I just don't know.

LISA: Linda, what about you?

LINDA: Nothing

LISA: Ok, this is the last question. How do your parents participate to help you be academically successful at school- like you, yourself. The other question was more so with your teachers but do they do anything to help you be academically successful at school- just think of you and your schoolwork. Amanda?

AMANDA: They help me with my homework.

CHRIS: Yeah, me too.

CHARLOTTE: I don't really need a lot of help though so...

CHRIS: They help me and they make sure I get everything done.

LISA: What else? Charlotte, what were you saying?

CHARLOTTE: I don't need a lot of help other than projects; my mother just gives me ideas of what to do and I usually do the ones they say.

LISA: Why is that? Because you think they are good ideas or it's just...

CHARLOTTE: Cause they're good ideas

AMANDA: When I was in elementary school I would- I used to have my mom like tell me what to write and I would just write down what I was told but now in high school I don't rely on my mom's help anymore with what to write, I just use her for like editing.

LISA: Amy?

AMY: I have nothing.

LISA: What about you?

LINDA: They just like force me to do my work and I don't want to do it like a lot. If I have homework and I don't want to do it, they make me do it.

AMY: Which is kind of a good thing...

LINDA: I know but I still hate it but it's still a good thing.

LISA: Ok. I think that's it. Thanks very much everyone for participating.

Parent Focus Group

LISA: These questions are going to be related to inclusion and class placement. I'm going to be writing. If you do agree with someone, you can just say 'I agree', throw out all your answers. If you don't agree, please do tell me that as well. Ok, first question. Describe you child's class placement.

HANNAH: Mainstream/regular classroom

JACK: Yeah, mainstream, regular classroom except for one period that she spends with Ms. You know who, which probably has good and bad cause I'm not sure if it's gonna be a credit- it's a credit course but it may not be a credit course that's applicable to what she wants to do in life but we thought we'd go with it for the first year to see how she made out.

HANNAH: And we did it for the first term and not the second and there's a noticeable difference.

PATRICIA: What do you mean with that?

HANNAH: My son is using that credit for the first semester but he didn't use it for the second and he's struggling this semester.

JACK: Whereas Charlotte is excelling. I was really surprised at her marks when we went for- higher than expected.

LISA: In the regular class?

JACK: Yeah, in the regular classes. I think that has a lot to do with the help she gets.

LISA: What qualities must regular classroom teachers possess in order to successfully include a deaf and hard of hearing child in the classroom.

HANNAH: Information-seeking, enlightenment

JACK: The ability to communicate and teach, not just pass knowledge from a textbook.

HANNAH: They have to make sure the information is getting in cause our kids don't have a processing problem; they have an input issue.

PATRICIA: They need to have for teachers at the beginning of the year that they know that they're talking to boards, that they know the facts.

LISA: So, like an in-service?

PATRICIA: Yeah, and that has to be at the beginning of the course. That's it's really in there.

JACK: I think though, at this school because they have the unit there, most of the teachers are well informed of the fact that they have to be clear and concise.

PATRICIA: I know E. usually educates them.

HANNAH: Our students still get the best teachers, like the teachers who are going to be the most flexible, those who will be the most dynamic, like I really see that cause I really see that cause I have kids I tutor from schools.

PATRICIA: It's lots to do with the thing that their teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing is there and she knows which teacher is working well with the deaf kids but if this would be that we just throw the kids in there without that support, I think they might be lost.

HANNAH: I would say through looking back over my kids' elementary years that the best teachers for my one son were just good teachers, you know, they did differentiated teaching for all the kids in the classroom. They used different resources, they adapted to the classroom community anyway, so they make good teachers for all the kids.

JACK: Yeah, like I was saying earlier- the grounding that she got in the primary- it was exactly teachers that loved to teach.

HANNAH: And adapt- I said to one parent, the best years that we had were when the teacher met us at the door looking for information when we were coming to give it to them. They wanted, you know, how's your child with this, what can we do to get more this or that, that kind of communication.

LISA: Questioning, what was best, right?

HANNAH: Yeah, cause the strategies that our kids need are good for all kids.

PATRICIA: That was I was about to just say.

HANNAH: You know, repeating answers, I had one teacher say to me, well, we don't do that, that's their job to listen. Wait a minute?

PATRICIA: But in a way these kids because of what they have got with deaf teacher and auditory therapy they have thought to be that the students they listen, they concentrate, the other kids selective hearing, whatever. They have so it seems to be that almost from everybody that they doing very well at school because they concentrate and they listen- that they have taught to listen and I guess to learn.

JACK: But I think they get, I don't know about- you guys probably got that with I don't remember her name, the one who goes to the schools, she probably had but my daughter had the other teacher for the whole time so I think that probably comes from them, right teaching them.

LISA: Cause they were in them for such longer periods of time?

JACK: I mean my daughter got that attention an hour to an hour and a half a day every day.

LISA: Yeah, like one on two or one on one

HANNAH: I still see a lot of gaps in Chris still cause he was a late diagnosis and he, you know, and the service at the beginning was really spotty and stuff like that so I do still see some gaps but...

JACK: The only issue we had with Charlotte at the beginning was the fact that she was paired up all through public school with a particular other student who didn't care and didn't want to try; one of the things when she went to high school was that now that stop because it was a lack of resources why they did it and time but it was almost like she was being held back by this other student but the transition has gone well.

LISA: Ok, describe the ideal learning environment for your child. What would be your ideal learning environment for them?

PATRICIA: Smaller schools

JACK: I feel just the regular classroom where they can interact and work with a variety of students. We've always taught her that she's hard of hearing; she's not stupid so- just go along with the rest of the kids.

HANNAH: And we've taught our son that too except when it came to the transition, all that went out the window so for us, that was a really hard thing so an ideal school would be a school where he could continue to attend with his peers and his family members as opposed to being up-routed at a really crucial time in his life.

PATRICIA: I think David feels kind of isolated too but he doesn't really have friends.

JACK: See, Charlotte, you know, most of the kids that she went to school with went on to this school so she's- those friendships have kind of dissolved and she's made new friends.

PATRICIA: Cause they separate, go to different classes.

JACK: So I can understand how all of a sudden your child is up-routed and sent to a completely different school, that'd be like us taking Charlotte and sending her to another school on her own. She would have no friends or anybody there.

PATRICIA: And then it depends on their personality, you know, if the child is outgoing

HANNAH: If the roles were reversed in my family, we wouldn't have done it- there's no way even still for the family sanity to have three kids at two different schools instead of three at three schools. He wouldn't do it and he didn't need to, why should he move.

JACK: If he had that option, they would have provided the transportation to keep the two of them together.

HANNAH: What was the question again?

LISA: Describe the ideal learning environment for your child.

HANNAH: I think that the whole school community needs to be aware. I mean, the lunch room ladies, the bus helpers, you know, a student getting a bus report because they weren't listening is ludicrous but that's what we get even though we do in-service and as a parent, I call and say this is the issue, you know, it's happening still because we're the expert, no one else is but there's also an obligation that there has to be some kind of consistency. The classroom teacher should not be the only one with the information and at the public school, it was really good cause the whole school community knew except the lunch room ladies so the lunch room ladies would be yelling at the students and giving them detentions because they didn't come when they were called- well, they can't hear you call them outside in the winder with a hat and a hood on, you know, and no one spoke to that individual, like, you know my son had to come home and I had to say exactly what happened, and I don't know why she was so mad, she was so mad at me and you know.

LISA: She's probably also thinking that stereotypical view of what high school kids are.

HANNAH: Well, this was in public school. But the busing issue still and I called and called and called and if you want that information you have to share it yourself.

LISA: With who?

HAHHAH: Wait a minute here, this is not my job; this is your job. Your job is to be responsible for the safety of the children. A safety issue is there's a barrier to communication that is your job to take care of but it wasn't, so of course you're going to do it.

PATRICIA: I don't know where it comes- my daughter changed school, David's older sister last fall she started another school and I have to say, in my opinion I haven't been that much at school but I somehow feel that her previous school, the kids, well, first of all, the building looks like a prison, they find like errors and mistakes in them and they just kind of like are doing their job and they are kind of like authority over the students and if my son went to the other school, it's a smaller school, even her attitude towards the school with everything, it's like school is great, the teachers are giving them awards, little things, coming to talk to them or giving them positive feedback so I've been actually thinking even though there's a hearing impaired unit at this school, should I change David to the other school just because of the atmosphere, their environment.

LISA: Does he know other students there?

PATRICIA: Uh, actually, most of the students in grade 8 went there because David is an academically strong student so...he's shy and he's not a very good advocate for himself but I

think he needs to come out and needs to know himself, how to advocate instead of always leaning.

JACK: He should hang out with Charlotte.

PATRICIA: She's good? Outgoing?

JACK: Oh yeah, but it's only because...don't be embarrassed.

LISA: That's actually something that was mentioned when I was talking to the students.

PATRICIA: He has been covering his ears because he doesn't want anyone to see it because at the beginning of grade 9 somebody pulled his sound processor off, what's this? Then he can't hear and he's like give it back to me, he's been bullied about it in his hockey, somebody threw his sound processor on the ground but after that he actually cut his hair shorter, I don't know if you noticed it. Good for Charlotte.

JACK: It's just because, you've got to deal with it the rest of your life, get used to it.

HANNAH: And it's personality too but I think as parents we're doing a good job modeling how to do it for them and trying to give them opportunities to do it, like it was everything I could do for Chris he wanted to take tech, the solution was but he wanted to stay academic English so I said Ok, you're not going to take the resource class so you're going to stay in academic English and you're going to take tech and we'll see how it goes. Well, he's using um, different strategies and interventions in English, gym and science and nothing in tech- well, he's failing tech. Like, it's the one course you wanted to take so it's funny, if he did a list of everything he does in all the classes and he chose not to do any of them in tech and he's failing tech, and I said, what does that say and he goes I guess I'm not paying attention I'm like but why do you think you're not paying attention, like it's so clear to me.

PATRICIA: That was once of the classes David had a hard time with. I think also it's noisy and the teacher there doesn't know how to deal with them.

HANNAH: Well, and I said to him, so why aren't you using the FM and the teacher's like, but it's not the teacher's responsibility to get it, it's Chris's. And Charlotte's not using it in that class either but she's doing fine.

JACK: She's not in that class.

HANNAH: She's not in the tech class?

JACK: No

PATRICIA: Isn't that where they do the metal and wood things and technology?

HANNAH: Computer skills- what's her last class? Anyway, it doesn't matter.

JACK: She has Phys. Ed, Science and English right now.

HANNAH: Oh, and there's the resource class, Ok.

JACK: We told her, you've got big goals, and tech is something you can take once you've got all your credits in grade 12 if you want to...

HANNAH: But Chris wants to figure out what he wants to do and one of them was, you know and I said to him, this doesn't look like it's what you want to do but I let it go because he needs to see that. He did not like that report card so, has anything changed? No, nothing's changed. He has, he's still not using it or whatever so it's something he has to experience now because when it come to something important like if he does want that job, he's gonna have to make the change but it was everything we could do to go like this and not say no, you're doing this right now.

JACK: I don't know if we're getting off topic but it was a discussion. She talked about tech and I gave her my opinion and I let her make her own choices and she decided to stick with the pure, applied sciences and math and English because if she wants to go to university, tech's not going to help you.

HANNAH: Well, Chris is taking the resource class next year.

LISA: What services or supports has your child received at school to help him or her with the learning process?

HANNAH: computerized note takers

JACK: laptop and the FM system and the specialist

PATRICIA: Yeah, the specialist teacher, that and the closed-captioning. I'm not sure if they are in every program, like civics ad all that?

HANNAH: They should, otherwise they shouldn't be using it. They should not be showing any visual material without captioning.

PATRICIA: I just saw a blank paper from Daniel's folder, when we were looking what he's missing and there's one page there was TV thing and there's 2 letters, I can't remember what they were but I thought he missed it because he probably couldn't hear it or something.

HANNAH: They should not be showing any VHS or DVD if it does not have captioning cause it's not accessible for all students. They just shouldn't be and if that's happening, it will stop.

PATRICIA: I'll ask about that again.

HANNAH: But that's a board thing. They have said that and they said that cause this is something that came up at the Special Education Advisory Committee, you know, it's hard to get

closed captioned items, then don't use them as a resource cause they're not accessible for all students- plain and simple. Students can't understand the accent, can't understand the speech, or lot of tech things are hard to understand anyway. It's just not an acceptable mode of communicating material.

PATRICIA: I don't think David knows that.

HANNAH: And is he going to say that, probably not. He's not going to say this is unfair.

PATRICIA: No, he won't.

JACK: Is there not an EA in every class with them?

PATRICIA: It depends on their IPRC, where you, you know request it, if the child needs it. David didn't want to have it, the EAs.

HANNAH: Chris has one for English, Science and for the Health portion of gym but not in tech.

LISA: We're going to get to EA questions.

HANNAH: Sorry, can we go back? What was the question again?

LISA: What services or supports has your child received at school to help him or her with the learning process?

HANNAH: Pre-teaching is a huge one

JACK: The what?

HANNAH: Pre-teaching the material, the revision and um, but just like teacher training, like the classroom teacher training, like the in-service, whatever it is, like on-going because without that portion, it doesn't really work.

LISA: Do you think the teacher of the deaf and the classroom teacher collaborated with one another regarding your child in elementary school? And the second part to that is, do they collaborate in secondary school?

HANNAH: Hit and miss.

LISA: Hit and miss, why?

HANNAH: It was dependent on the teacher, it seemed like every second year, it was great and every other year it was toe to toe every time for every little thing.

PATRICIA: I think the deaf children's teacher wanted to, they were ready to tell, you know the next year teacher but the teacher who finished the year, actually they didn't know exactly who

would have been- if you asked the principal, they were not sure who were going to be the teachers- the classroom teacher so every year what happened to us, we tried to go there earlier and nobody's there before the one day school starts and the 2 weeks actually we wasted the two first weeks at school because it's a mess, the teachers are trying to get to know the students and it's, they don't have really time, and they told us to come and meet them the third week or something so the child is actually lost.

HANNAH: This comes down to the people portion of it because different administrators approach it differently, different parents approach it differently, and different teachers approach it differently. For our situation, the principal told me Ok, this is when we know the date, this is who your teacher's gonna be so, almost every year, the PA day after the end of school Chris and I would go in and more Chris than me as he got older, he went and said hi, I'm Chris. I'm going to be in your class next year, I'm hard of hearing, and this is a little package about me that you might want to look at over the summer. And they would take it, so different administrators, if they're not going to let you in the door, cause the school was closed but we went because it's better for them to have the information then but our school didn't change so much, like they knew but the good teachers on those off years took the information they had and shared it across the hall and that's a personality thing.

PATRICIA: And it tells you, it's a small school- everybody knows each other quite closely, right?

HANNAH: Yeah, but you would think teachers would share, I mean I'm sure that they do but I mean like really specific things but you also don't want them to lock in to, you want them to explore the child on their own too and not be predestined to have certain opinions of people.

LISA: That's possibly why they didn't share that information.

HANNAH: So, you know because when we went to the high school open house and I went to the tech teacher, actually he was one person who I met. I said you know, tell me, have you taught a student with a hearing loss before and you know, my son's coming here. His eyes were like oh my God, it was like death sentence, like he was just like whoa and I'm like hold smokes- cause they don't know anything, which is totally understandable but the follow-up question never came! It was like, ok, this is what you need to know and as a parent, that's really...

JACK: I think the difference that we experienced with elementary school was the fact that Charlotte attended a school with a full time hearing resource unit where she had that, not only she had the one on one with a specialist; the teachers had that opportunity to have that support.

HANNAH: And that is a huge factor and that choice was offered to us. Chris could have gone to that school but um, that's unrealistic.

PATRICIA: We started like that, again because we moved to the country. We wanted to have both children in the neighborhood school because we had trouble at the beginning when we were in the city, one was at one school, one was at another and the taxi was going in a different direction and stuff. That was hard but then when we went to the country, they gonna go both to

the country school, we took our daughter out from French Immersion and David from the hearing resource unit.

HANNAH: It comes down to people skills. Anything is possible and our kids should not have to be pulled to get full benefit. The teachers of the deaf, different approaches can be used to share information. You know, if I'm hearing comments as a parent that I can't get in touch in the person or that person to share information. I'm like, well, in this world that's ridiculous- that is absolutely ridiculous to have that statement to throw it back at a parent to say I can't contact this person. This person, whatever, like that's ridiculous, so the parent goes and says this is what we're going to do everybody and that's not our job but it seems to be that we facilitate if it's an itinerant placement for our kids, we facilitate how it goes and it either goes well if people that are willing to seek solutions or it goes poorly when the door is shut on the parent.

LISA: And it also could be, like you were saying, that presence of that specialist teacher of the deaf is not there for long periods of time at those schools.

JACK: I can't remember; they got once a week or once a day.

HANNAH: Well, it varied. Three times a week, but it also comes down to personality and how people present themselves and what the message is that they want to get, like different people do that differently and if a person says oh, I can't, I don't have access, there's a way cause I have access, you have access so what are you gonna do about it? You know, this is your job, how are you going to get this information out? There's the principal, the facilitator, the classroom teacher, the teacher of the deaf, the parent. Those five people can't come together and figure out how to share information? Like, come on, so those kinds of things- those pathways of communication are breaking down on certain levels.

PATRICIA: And then it all depends on the personality of what other load they have- what other needy children they have in the classroom, you know, their family situation, how much they are able to take in the information and take one individual- I think it's also a hard thing- you can do it as a job- this is just my job to teach and I teach it this way.

JACK: I know it was, I'm not sure if you missed out- one of the earlier questions you asked about the resources that were available, is that in the high school or previous?

LISA: That's just in general.

JACK: The EA.

HANNAH: Oh yeah, absolutely. I'm surprised I forgot that because almost at every IPRC and IEP meeting I've said we're not starting until the EA is here.

PATRICIA: I have to say one of the EAs in the public school was better than any of the teachers.

JACK: Those people that do it because they love it not because they're getting a pension.

HANNAH: So that person is working with our students and the teacher may or may not go to that individual who has really good first hand knowledge of like, the equipment, like that's something about a good teacher from a previous question is not relying on the equipment, like knowing that the equipment isn't the be all, end all of the success of the student because we all know that it breaks down all the time.

JACK: Especially when you get FMs that are older than the kids

HANNAH: Hearing aids, Chris's back to crap again but using the resources that are right in front of them instead of hoarding you know, we've seen information hoarding where that does not, the situation you're in now seems to be where no one is communicating and who's at a loss, the child like does that need to be policy and procedure, apparently it does because people can't figure it out on their own.

LISA: So then in secondary, do you think they collaborate as well, or your answers are all just in general to both?

HANNAH: No, I think that they collaborate very well in secondary.

JACK: You probably have more contact, Charlotte's experience is so positive in high school so far that I don't know. Obviously it's working because she loves her teachers and the teachers that she's had like her regular classroom teachers

HANNAH: They're just good teachers.

JACK: Just good teachers, whether it's they put those kids in those classrooms with an individual purpose or we just got lucky.

HANNAH: I don't mean to say this in a negative way but I honestly don't think that the tech teacher's first struggle is, like he's really hands on so, the actual verbal communication delivery is not probably his strength so that's probably where the breakdown is whereas Chris needs to recognize that and make up the difference because of so many factors.

JACK: I'm not sure what it's like now, like I haven't but when I took shop class, we had machine shop, my machine shop teacher was one of my buddy's dad because we were rural area and he was a machinist at the steel mill in Hamilton for 25 years, retired, went to teacher's college for one year and became a teacher. I mean, he could run every machine in the place, true he was a good teacher but that's not gonna happen with everybody. So, maybe it's, are those teachers educated differently?

LISA: I think there's a different stream for technology teachers now. I don't know what it was like prior to; I'm not really sure.

HANNAH: But like the understanding has talked to all the teachers about the importance of technology but really understanding it, you know that, it's hard not to put yourself in that place.

PATRICIA: But do you think this is now the issue of just a teacher or Chris's technology?

HANNAH: I think it's both because, I think if the teacher really understood, they would recognize that this classroom is the one classroom that he really needed just for a safety issue. I mean, because Chris, for example, he's doing white-water kayaking right now. He wanted to white water kayak so he's white-water kayaking. He was on the Current River this weekend, no hearing aids, totally dangerous, totally safe because we've put all these things in place that he and the teacher are on board with I feel much more confident about that than the tech class because I don't think the understanding is there about the hearing loss with the tech teacher and Chris doesn't want to be different in the tech class.

PATRICIA: Yeah, that's the same thing with David.

HANNAH: So he's not using the technology and he's not talking to the teacher about it so he's missing out, like he missed handing in 5 assignments, that is totally not like him. He got 5 zeros. He's missing the information so to me, like all his other classes, everything's handed in, tech, the class he fought to keep, he's got 5 zeros cause he didn't hand stuff in and I'm like going, blink, blink, blink, hello, like he had to figure that out but also no phone call home, you know, the teacher, I met him and we had a conversation, like no phone call home after 5 zeros- like, what is going on?

PATRICIA: Well, the same thing when David was sick, he gets 36 out of 100, he never got, like he couldn't concentrate, I can't let him do the test again because everyone else will come and complain. I said, oh, he didn't know because he was so sick. He just goes in to school like this and tries to do the test- it was the first in his life. I'm trying to tell David because he's so shy that if this would be David in this tech class I would like to teach him and say, you know, I'm not stupid, there's something wrong- I have a hearing problem. I would like him to go because already 15 turning 16. If he's able to play hard hockey and go around Ontario, why can't he go one teacher and explain his problem. I got 5 zeros, I need to because I'm starting to get scared of the fact that all the things that I've done for them from JK up until now, when they go to university or college, are they able to, the professors, it's going to get worse. They need to be their advocator. They have a problem and they have to come out and just fight for themselves.

JACK: We're getting way off topic but I want to say something quickly. There's an EA, super person, one of the greatest people you'll ever meet but babied the kids.

HANNAH: Oh yeah, an enabler.

JACK: So it got to the point at home, it's like, wouldn't tie her shoes, we're talking she was like 7 or 8, button up her own pants, she wanted somebody to do everything for her so a light goes off and I said this is coming from somewhere and I think I know the source. I called the principal, meeting, EA- don't do everything for her, it stopped. She became independent.

HANNAH: It's a fine line.

PATRICIA: Did you every see the woman who wrote the book Wired for Sound? She was deaf and she went to university, she got everything without any help so I'm not saying that we don't need help.

JACK: But I think what happens is a lot of these EAs feel sorry for them so they do everything for them. Some of them do and we noticed that trend early and had it stopped and also on her IEP said no, she's not in a modified program, the only thing.

HANNAH: Yeah, absolutely not.

JACK: Well, they wanted it to be modified so you go through school, like my nephew had an IEP all through school, graduates and gets a diploma, goes to the apprenticeship program and applied to be a carpenter and they said to him you have to have a high school diploma. Well, I've got one right here, yeah but you have an IEP, your diploma is not worth the paper it's written on.

PATRICIA: Is that true?

HANNAH: That's not us; that's not our kids.

PATRICIA: Cause that's one question I asked few years ago.

JACK: But that was written in there very early on in the IEP. No, not modified, just state the fact that you have to accommodate her disability- no modification for her work, otherwise she's not gonna-

LISA: Ok, how has the collaboration or lack thereof affected your child's success? I know you've mentioned it- you can just throw them out there.

HANNAH: Ok, the lack thereof, I don't like to go to the negative but it just jumps into my head was that the kids felt that they were the problem and they didn't want to be a problem so they didn't say, they didn't complain, they didn't want to advocate because you know, they knew that they were a problem. I'm thinking of grade 5 where he gets headaches cause he wears the FM so I don't want to ask him to wear it. I can't hear a thing but I won't ask cause he complains cause it gives him a headache. You know, those kinds of things. But that's the perception, oh yeah, I have to wear Chris's FM. Chris, where's your FM and he's got it there but he won't ask him to wear it because he gets that, centering out, that kind of stuff.

PATRICIA: Our teacher was complaining about leaving the FM on her neck because it caused her a headache.

HANNAH: See, it's looking for solutions.

JACK: I think I forget the question.

LISA: Ok, I'll say it again. How has the collaboration or lack thereof affected your child's success?

JACK: The collaboration has probably led to the success in most cases. Like I said, there was a few bumps in the road but overall, the collaboration, right from JK through, has probably without it, she wouldn't be where she is.

HANNAH: Because if it's successful that means that everybody is participating to the education of the child. The information is being shared, the parent can call and say he was really happy about this, the teacher can call and say he's seemed really tired- is something going on, yes, he's got a cold and he's only wearing one hearing aid that's an issue so it's positive and meaningful collaboration then it's going to be successful communication which is only going to lead to the success of the student.

JACK: And I think a lot of that success comes from the fact that she was in a school with a fulltime hearing resource unit from JK on.

HANNAH: And I think for us, it still would have not been beneficial cause we're struggling with this now the transportation time knocks off an of that success cause 5 hours on a us not socializing on the bus because they can't hear and feeling ostracized, you know, not part of the group and stuff like that for 5 hours.

PATRICIA: It's also the physical, the whole being of the child. I found David being even with help and everything cause he lost the rest of his hearing grade 7 because he had the power hearing aids and tinnitus, he was really, really tired- his physical health was affected because he tried to concentrate so hard to lip reading and trying to catch what was said so at the end of the day he was exhausted.

JACK: Yeah, I don't think it's so much it affects the student like I mean, it's the fact that the whole school is geared to that so every and Charlotte wasn't the first nor will she be the last There's kids that are in university and I'm not sure how well they're doing but... Those teachers were prepared. They knew Amy and Charlotte were coming. There was a few in between and a few more behind them.

LISA: Ok, next question- has your child been in this type of program/placement throughout his/her education? So, let's start with elementary because I know she has and then...

PATRICIA: So we've had both actually, specialized resource room and then also regular classroom with itinerant support. I even started at before school. David was 2 years old when David got therapy there. I got educated with the therapy and he was three and then he started JK.

LISA: Ok, so David was in regular class with withdrawal and the hearing resource unit.

PATRICIA: It was different teachers, I'm trying to think what happened but he was in there all the time, he got help.

JACK: Well yeah, Charlotte, they were in the regular class majority of the day, they just had like an hour and once the kids got into where they started taking French Amy and Charlotte were exempt and they would spend that time with the teacher of the deaf.

PATRICIA: Yeah, same with David.

LISA: And then what about Chris?

HANNAH: Regular classroom with withdrawal and it was different over the years. First it was a week, once a week, twice a week, three times a week.

JACK: I guess it depends on how many places she had to go.

HANNAH: Not the need. It wasn't based on need. It was based on what they could provide.

LISA: What are the benefits of your child having an EA with him or her in the regular classroom and the second part, what are the challenges if any, associated with having an EA. So, let's go to the first part so what are the benefits?

HANNAH: The challenges of having an EA...

LISA: You want challenges first?

HANNAH: Yes, please. It's such a fine balance they need to know, especially as the kids get older ok, back off, the back off scenario, which benefits the school actually cause they've got an EA in the classroom for other kids who can't get EA support. They have to really know the kids and know, cause they're sending all kinds of signals, like I need your support now I don't need your support now. Let's do this when we're on our own, I'm comfortable with this, that kind of stuff, but the problem that a lot of the EAs we had were they were unable to communicate to the classroom teacher what the kids really needed, what was working in the classroom, what wasn't. They were observing and it was very clear what the teacher was doing well and what they weren't but they were in no position to give that feedback and the teacher most times did not want to hear that feedback, which is unfortunate because that would have been great, it would have been a side conversation you need to come into the classroom so I would come in and observe and then I would talk to the teacher and say listen, it's great that you have this aquarium and this fuzzy snowman blowing around and all this stuff but this something that we're going to have to remove and that came from the EA that she had tried to bring up and was just totally like, who are you, your opinion doesn't mean this.

JACK: See, we didn't run into that trouble because the whole school was geared to that.

LISA: And they worked closely together there as well.

PATRICIA: Even the students

JACK: The challenges I see are in early years like in elementary school, they're an EA, not a babysitter, be there to help, not do it for them. You have to really, as a parent, watch for those signs that EAs do what they're supposed to.

HANNAH: We never had it early.

JACK: She had one right from JK.

HANNAH: And see the EAs in the classroom, the teacher of the deaf was never in the classroom. The teacher of the deaf met the students at an assigned location so they never observed or very, very rarely what was happening in the classroom so the EA was the ground zero person and they aren't relying on for information except I found there was always information between the EA and I then I would go to the classroom teacher or I would go to the teacher of the deaf and be the liaison, which is ridiculous, but it's set up.

LISA: So as an itinerant teacher, you're saying she never went into the class and sat there for 15 minutes to see what was going on?

HANNAH: No

PATRICIA: Ours either, they had only parent/teacher meeting they would share something.

HANNAH: There were times where what she did was, which I thought was great was for part of the withdrawal time they were doing a guided reading program so she would take Chris's group out and they would do guided reading which was great, so she would work with the group which was a great way to use an extra resource but she didn't actually see, still not observing the classroom and you know, what was happening in the classroom.

LISA: The classroom teacher as well, they need that feedback from the person who is observing.

HANNAH: The ones that want it, the ones that don't want it think they're doing a great job.

LISA: But it depends, like you said on whom they want that information from.

HANNAH: I gave the teacher a survey and he checked off everything, like he was doing everything and he wasn't doing it. Like using certain equipment and using like overhead- he checked it all off like he was doing great and I was like you're not doing it so I took it to the principal, photocopies not corrected, tested on it so you know, zero, zero.

JACK: The benefits though are like to ensure comprehension; they comprehend the instructions.

HANNAH: Going over, pre-teaching

PATRICIA: I think for the EA for David was the note taking. I saw what she wrote and took notes from the lesson.

HANNAH: Right now for secondary?

PATRICIA: No, elementary school. Like year after year David would have the same students in the classroom and they were looking after him when there's a movie going, oh, there's no closed captioning, there's David, they pointed out to the teacher because they had been with him so much that if he was out, oh he's now out, they took notes but the EA, with her note taking, it was, she just wrote things and they were wonderful.

JACK: I just want to make another comment; it's kind of off topic but when I went to the parent teacher, I never got to go to the open house things, you know before they went, when they were in grade 8 when you got a chance to go to those open houses I never got to go because I was out of town working so the first time I was in certain school was parent teacher night. The faculty is young, overall it's young and I think that is a huge asset for the kids cause I remember these old teacher we had that were three years or less from retiring. They did not care anymore and I think the majority of these teachers are young, they're passionate and they like what they do.

HANNAH: And I think you have a teacher of the deaf who has very good communication skills, an excellent personality, has a way of checking up to see what's happening without putting people on guard or them taking offence and that's what I mean about personality, if I was a parent who came off aggressive and offensive, my kid would suffer for that or not be able to communicate.

JACK: Well, there's another thing I told Charlotte and she knows my personality. I said, you deal with it because you don't want me to show up at the school and deal with it cause you won't want to go to school the next day so you deal with it and usually, it was taken care of. It was only a couple times where I had to go in.

LISA: And ultimately she's going to have to deal with it later on in life.

HANNAH: And that's what we did too, you know, this tech thing, I haven't talked about going over, why do you think this is? I think I'm just going to leave it.

JACK: I coach youth curling. Your greatest learning experiences are your failures so it might be the best thing for him to fail a class.

HANNAH: He already said he's taking the hearing resource class next year.

PATRICIA: I think E. is quite good with them.

HANNAH: And I don't think she babies them and she doesn't ...you didn't hand that in, oh well, what do you expect me to go in and get them?

PATRICIA: She's nice but she's firm enough too.

JACK: I know there was a couple of the kids that didn't like her when they first went to that school cause she doesn't take any crap off of any of them. Look, this is the way it is and you

don't like it, too bad cause I think J. is a great teacher but in a way she kind of becomes like a big sister to them, especially to the girls.

LISA: Again, it's cause you're with them all the time.

HANNAH: Oh, and they've got, the teacher of the deaf have a vested interest in our kids, you can really see that relationship develop.

PATRICIA: She's deaf herself so she knows what they're going through.

LISA: How does your child interact with his or her hearing peers? How do your kids interact with the kids who don't have a hearing loss?

JACK: Simple answer- fine.

PATRICIA: David is actually I think he's holding back. He is staying on the side and he doesn't have very good self-esteem or he's not secure about himself to feel that he is the same and that came out when he was in that minor midget AAA program. He wouldn't tell that. It felt that he was OK but after the whole year we found out he was much bullied there just because of the hearing problem. He wanted to know something and its echoing on the ice and in the change room so he was asking what and he wouldn't get the clarification so at the end of the year they started like what, what, what, what, what. I didn't know this. I was interviewed on CBC and they asked me how were the other hockey players, how did they treat, I said I think it was great and then when this came out he was sick and all of a sudden he started crying. He was bullied. Then you go into the shower without your sound processor, you can't hear a thing and the boys are 15 and 16 and they start calling you names in the hallway of the high school in front of other guys and putting you down so he actually got like this.

HANNAH: Chris's kind of, I don't know, cause most of the socialization that happens for my kids is on the bus so he's totally excluded you know, from ten after 7 until 5:30 at night from before school and after school he sits in the seat by himself on the bus all the kids he went to school with sit at the back with his other brother and when they get off the bus at whitefish a couple of times I've been there to drop the kids off and he stands by himself but he's happy and more confident than his brother and he's got a few close friends. I want to white water kayak so he's not afraid to go meet people and have no problem.

PATRICIA: David has good friends out of school but not at school.

HANNAH: The kids he went to school with seem to get to a point where they have forgotten and he has neglected to remind them that he has a hearing loss so they've done the what, what, what and the I'm not going to repeat it again, that kind of stuff so he just doesn't socialize with them anymore.

JACK: I don't find that but Charlotte, she'll, not that you meet a lot of these kids but she's social, she talks about these friends that I know aren't in the hearing unit because I know the names.

HANNAH: Chris too, for sure there's a few kids like, it's not that he's isolated but I think that he's quickly realized that the kids he grew up with forget that he has a hearing loss that he can't hear on the bus and if he would just throw out there, duh, I'm deaf, right, I can't hear you, oh yeah, right.

JACK: Charlotte's not afraid to say that; I'm deaf, not stupid.

HANNAH: But the thing is because they talk, sometimes you answer well as you talk and sometimes you don't; it's hard to understand.

JACK: See, Charlotte's advantage too is her speech is fine whereas Chris has a little bit of that, I don't know what you call it.

LISA: deaf speech

JACK: It's that monotone...I'm not trying to be mean. Chris has it, not much, a little bit, whereas Charlotte learned to talk before she lost her hearing.

LISA: Yeah, it's different situations, right?

JACK: Most people don't even know. I've worked with guys for years and she'd come to the office. I'd say, oh yeah, she's deaf, really?

HANNAH: And that's part of our kids- that's part of their scenario, they're oral deaf kids, like people are like, do you sign? People really just don't understand.

PATRICIA: Yeah, do they sign?

LISA: If I say I teach kids with hearing loss, they say, oh, so you sign? No, I'll say and they are just so confused. That's the situation. So, who would you say your child associates more with, others who are deaf and hard of hearing or their hearing peers? Why do you think so?

PATRICIA: David- all his friends are hearing.

JACK: I would say both equally.

HANNAH: I would say both equally too but if something negative happens, it's because he's deaf- like his snowboard got stolen and his laptop on the school trip- why do people hate me because I'm deaf, you know, and that's the only time that comes; if something really emotional happens or if he's having a fight with his brother and it's usually about a misunderstanding or a mishearing, you know, that's not what I said, well, that's what I heard, those kinds of things, where he's really, there's no barriers.

JACK: I don't know about at school. I know Charlotte has a pretty good school relationship with Amanda but her best friend is a kid who used to live on our street and moved away and they're still best friends and they probably will be fore the rest of their lives.

HANNAH: Chris's best friends are probably Charlotte at school and these two kids in their tech class.

JACK: So I don't know, I mean, I can't really say if she favors one or the other.

PATRICIA: David doesn't really have, he goes to the unit. I don't really know how they see each other, at what time.

HANNAH: Lunch, not always. Chris has a lot of confidence too for a kid with a hearing loss. He's just out there; he's trying all kinds of things. His confidence is really high whereas his brother, and I don't compare them but it's very evident that he's in a little box. He would rather watch his brother white water kayak, I'm like, let's go get a boat, let's go in and it's the worst possible situation, in a boat, with rocks and rushing water but he's in there and he actually took the instructor and said, say it again, which is great but he's doing it. I think he feels good. You see, the teacher of the deaf used to tell him that he would marry someone like him and I have to say this, at the transition meeting from grade 8 to high school, the teacher of the deaf said he needs to be with others like him and I just about flipped the table over, cause I was like, coming from you, like what are you saying? Things that she was putting on him, I love her dearly but it's not written in stone that oh, he wants to know why he's the only one, those kinds of things can be answered. He's the only one who wears hearing aids but he's not the only adolescent boy or all these other things so anyway, the one on one teacher of the deaf thing is something we can talk about.

LISA: These next few questions involve just transition only so I'll ask them and when Jack comes back, I'll repeat them. What were your positive experiences associated with your child's transition from elementary to secondary school and then, what were your negative experiences. So, which shall we start with?

HANNAH: Positive- the education and the staff, I knew that everyone had my son's best interest at heart, like that was very apparent and I felt comfortable enough just to vocalize all the things that were going on in my head. They weren't offering answers but they were very supportive, just listening because we had to come up with some kind of decision that was good for us so that was good that I had lots of different support to listen.

LISA: The question is what were your positive experiences associated with your child's transition from elementary school to secondary school and then what were the negative experiences, if any?

JACK: I don't know. The positive was that she made the transition smoothly without any glitches in her grades or ability to complete assignments.

HANNAH: I agree with that; he jumped right into school life, classroom was good.

PATRICIA: I think David was scared, like normally, just like anyone who starts grade 9, to go to high school but I think they were prepared.

HANNAH: He was familiar with the school before he ever came to the school but I think that's a trend that they're doing with all kids and I think it's great. I think it demystifies the whole process; they try to get the kids in school when the school is in session, they get the kids in the school only as grade 8's so they can get familiar so they don't have that, you know...

LISA: They know where to go a little bit.

HANNAH: Family of schools having all the elementary schools come and participate in high school life whether it's a play etc.

JACK: And then they have current students showing them around

PATRICIA: If the child decides to go to another high school, what would have been the help there?

HANNAH: I think they would have the same grade 9 initiation program.

LISA: Definitely

JACK: That's board wide.

HANNAH: The problem was, I just remembered, was that I would have like to have known when all the grade 9's were attending the grade 9 thing, like we kind of did it separately and then at the end we did it the same, like when all the kids from his class went to another school, he went too but there was also an opportunity for him to go when all you guys got to go, that was one missing link, it would have been nice to link that up. Like, we went on our own then we were part of the BBQ and all that stuff but that was something that you know, he probably would have recognized some kids too.

JACK: And that was the advantage of being at the school she was at because it's the same zone where the kids are going to go there anyways.

LISA: So do any negative experiences stick out?

HANNAH: Read the question again.

LISA: What were the negative experiences associated with your child's transition from elementary to secondary?

JACK: There was a little bit of problems from getting answers from the guidance staff of how exactly this resource unit credit was going to apply, whether it was really legitimate, you know, some of the people we talked to just didn't have the answers to the questions we were asking.

PATRICIA: I don't find the kids' high school, like the staff, the secretaries there, it's not very friendly- I don't know, you go to the office and you stand there for 5 minutes and they turn their backs to you.

JACK: I have another advantage. The guidance counselor, I curl with him, I see him twice a week.

PATRICIA: Is that the shorter guy cause there's a shorter guy who just freaked out to my daughter when she wanted to change schools. Two times that was her counselor and he said why do you have to switch- he was actually mean.

JACK: Being proactive

HANNAH: I found that too, people could not give me answers so our situation was we were investigating 2 campuses and services and possible outcome. One school was like, why are you coming here? Go to the other school and I was like, what? We can't offer your son anything, what? So, that was, right off the bat, I'm like as if I'm going to leave him to the wolves here, you know. They come out.

LISA: That's not something you want to hear.

HANNAH: Well, we don't know what to do with him. Just like, those kinds of answers, it's like what does he need, we'll see what we could do, 8 weeks calling the facilitator of special ed. and no answer back and her saying, I tried to call you back- that is baloney and now she's the vice principal at the kids' school.

PATRICIA: Is that Mrs. L?

HANNAH: No, but I'm starting in January because I know that I need to make a decision on a piece of paper in February and it's like la did a, if you have a parent calling you, hello, it's a gift- that was frustrating.

JACK: Everything was kind of smooth for Charlotte because the teachers of the deaf are friends.

HANNAH: Every step of the way, I think though and I don't know whether it's ok because I try, for SEAC, thinking about all situations. It might only take a parent one time to get a call- well; I guess we'll just do this.

LISA: And that depends on the personality too.

HANNAH: That's right but that's not fair to the child and that's an unfair advantage and that's not in the kid's best interest.

LISA: Ok, what were some concerns you have had regarding your child moving to a new school environment so this is back to grade 8 going to high school?

HANNAH: Social/emotional upheaval

PATRICIA: Alcohol/drug problem, gang problem, fighting with groups

HANNAH: Will he turn to drugs and alcohol cause he's no longer with his brother and friends. Honestly, I'm a loner.

PATRICIA: I do, I'm not worrying about every moment or I'm not crazy about it but I have this feeling when I'm sending my kids to the school bus, do I see them, are they safe? I don't know. I pick them up every day from school and it's such a show in the parking lot, I'm not very fond of the atmosphere.

JACK: It's no different than it was 25 years ago.

HANNAH: The first day of school when it was a half-day, I picked up Chris. There were a couple of girls outside and they were fumbling with their cigarettes and they were like, oh, you dropped the drugs and I'm like, ohh. That's in your head and you know your kids. If our kids are struggling, like for us to make a decision and take Chris out of his group and send him to a school where he know nobody, those are high stress situations but we also know our kids. Is it necessary, does it have to be this way? I'm not hearing anyone say let's look at options.

JACK: See, the nice thing for Chris is that 4 or 5 of them started at together so you have an instant little support group.

HANNAH: Which is true but I didn't know how all that was going to work out right, and to tell you the truth, when I heard he was in a class with 3 other deaf and hard of hearing kids, I was pissed because this was like a congregated classroom. I was pissed.

PATRICIA: Yeah, David doesn't like that. He's pretty isolated himself. He didn't like it at all when we had to have a meeting with parents with Linda because it's an age thing, it's a girl and she was totally different than David. A year ago when he started it, now, like he's grown a little, like matured but it's uh, he said I don't necessarily want us to study together, I want to study independently.

HANNAH: Chris is really positively affected by Charlotte, which is great cause they're in classes together.

LISA: So what contributed to you having those concerns, just regular parent stuff or specific to the kids because of their hearing loss?

HANNAH: Lack of choice in supports. There was no range of options. It was either this or nothing. Ok, it was the elementary itinerant teacher who would come to the school and try to fit into that scenario and that was not going to work for me. That was going to be a negative experience just knowing her and how she was able to function in the last few years with Chris, with the teacher that he had, he was very difficult and she did not do well in that situation; it was personally traumatic for her so to go in to a high school scenario, it would have just been not good.

JACK: I can't remember the specifics of the question.

LISA: What were the concerns you had before they went to high school and what contributed to those concerns?

HANNAH: I think concern that the board was so focused on elementary inclusion and then all of a sudden they have segregated the kids out of their home schools to a congregated setting.

JACK: As far as the social aspect of the school, I had no fear because she was going with kids she knew. The social issues, I didn't have an issue with her starting school as far as her fitting in because she never had a problem with that. Our concerns were kind of whether she was going to get the same help that she was getting all along.

HANNAH: And ours was there was so many things, you know, adjustment, peer, finding appropriate peers, the other thing was transportation, asking if transportation was going to be available, if it was going to be timely; he has been late to school every single day since he started and they haven't addressed it yet and everyone in the board, all the way up to the director knows about it and nothing's being done- if you're gonna provide a program so it's because he goes from W to C to H and we asked for him to be on that taxi.

JACK: To meet him at one of those stops to pick him up and they won't do it?

HANNAH: No

JACK: It's right there. I could chuck a rock from my house to C.

PATRICIA: Nothing works logically.

HANNAH: So that was oh no, it's not a problem, it's never a problem, well, it continues to be a problem so you're five hours on the bus.

PATRICIA: 5 hours every day?

HANNAH: It's not even just him; it's all the French Immersion kids as well so they're providing a specialized program but they're not doing their end of the bargain. My kid's up, rested, dressed, ready for school and you can't get him to school on time? That's your issue- so that's a huge thing. That is detrimental to his hearing because they're more tired; they have to listen more. They're actually having to focus- that's a huge issue. They said it would be fine but it's not so it's been an on-going thing this whole time.

LISA: Ok, next question. What or whom do you think has facilitated the process of transition at the elementary level? So go back...

HANNAH: Me

JACK: Yeah, parents, cause you have to take the time to go to these events.

HANNAH: We were thinking of it, like in grade 7. I was already looking for answers. What are our range of options for grade 9? What's out there? Now that there's a student going to W with a hearing loss (Chris), how are they going to restructure that to make sure that Chris has time with the teacher of the deaf at W? You know, asking and putting that in their ear, like having meetings with the school board and nothing ever came of it.

LISA: What about at the secondary level? Who facilitated that process?

HANNAH: E did but I was already on board, way before that because I was thinking.

JACK: Ours was really pretty smooth.

HANNAH: And there was a natural flow for you whereas for us, there wasn't. There was an assumption by the people; like Chris's classroom teacher had no idea that he would go to the school he's at, like he just had no idea. The board is really good at providing mainstream itinerant support in the elementary and all of a sudden it goes blah in secondary and it's like the most crucial time. His classroom teacher had no clue and he thought he was doing a good job with strategies and he needed support in that so he was pissed off actually cause he said he put his neck out on the line when I asked him in front of the superintendent, do you think Chris would do well at W cause I wanted them to make accommodations for him at W. He said, oh yeah, he'd be fine. Then I realized what he was saying was he'd be fine cause he didn't realize all the background that everyone else but him was putting into Chris's education. So, it would have been a struggle because there was no groundwork laid out as it was at H.

JACK: And all this becomes an issue because of geography and no other reason because you live 30 miles out of town and I live in the city.

HANNAH: But also, funding- I mean, if you look at what I was asking the board, there's students who are- there's a student with a hearing loss at HC and one at C and there was one at W. Ok, my next question is do they receive support and what does it look like? If they don't, are they successful? If they don't is it because there isn't any or is it because they chose not to like, what's the picture look like?

PATRICIA: What does it look like? What do they say?

HANNAH: They don't know- well, we can find out cause I can ask through SEAC and they can give information back but they don't know.

JACK: We were told that she would get some kind of help at C but it wouldn't be the same, at the same level. They just kind of gave me that glossed over answer and they force you to send your kid to that school. It didn't make any difference to us.

PATRICIA: Is there someone in C in that special program?

There was last year, I don't know the grades though but are they successful? What kind of supports? All kinds of things. What's the hearing loss? Are they using an FM? Are they

unilateral? Bilateral? What? Like, they should know and also, they're mandated by the government to provide a range of placements.

LISA: How did you participate in your child's transition process at the elementary level? Were you asked for your input? Were you aware that you were entitled to contribute to the plan?

HANNAH: I initiated it only because I had lots of background knowledge, like if I was a regular parent.

LISA: You wouldn't know that. You are entitled to sit with your child's teacher and figure out for kids who are in any sort of special education program are entitled to sit with that teacher and figure out those options, like where they're going to go and what supports will be available to them.

HANNAH: With the classroom teacher, the facilitator, the school principal, the receiving teacher, the receiving facilitator, the receiving principal.

JACK: I'm not sure cause I wasn't so involved but my wife spent a lot of time there with J. so I'm sure it was discussed daily.

HANNAH: This would have been a separate- it would have been in March, April or May, an IPRC meeting maybe or some kind of...

PATRICIA: That was the time when David was having the Cochlear implant surgery so I must be messed up.

HANNAH: To be honest, it's really funny cause I was going through stuff just kind of refreshing my memory. I just sent E. the signed portion of the IEP from December for this year, which was the minutes from the case conference that we had for Chris's placement meeting last year. So it was the transition plan, I don't remember reading it, like getting it, like it was such an emotional time. I was so fraught with worry about what would be the best fit for him and what did he want to do, you know, the fact that for the family, what would be best that it was almost like when we found out that he had a diagnosis of the severe hearing loss. It was that emotional. I'd always advocated mainstream and he should go to W. That's where he should be but will he achieve success? Not just coast along and get so cause he's doing well in school now but with support, right. Our kids do well with support so it came down to Chris saying it's good mom, I want to go to H. so I was like fine, that's what we'll do because I needed two step back and have some autonomy and figure it out.

PATRICIA: It was May 2007 when David got Cochlear implant, like we went to Sick Kids that June, we had his surgery so I can't remember.

HANNAH: It was never discussed as a transition plan. We all knew what was being discussed cause we were all emailing about this class, those types of thing but legally they have to do it, they have to have a transition plan but being so well versed in all of that policy and procedure, I don't remember anyone every saying to me we're discussing the transition plan. This is a meeting about a transition plan so when I read his IEP last night, I saw the transition plan. It was

like a, what the outcome should be, and who's responsible for it. I was like wow and I was looking for it.

PATRICIA: Is it somewhere in the records?

LISA: It will be in his OSR definitely.

HANNAH: It should be in his IEP for fall of 2007.

PATRICIA: I did have a meeting with Linda, her mom and David, me and E. but I can't remember what is in the spring or fall.

HANNAH: It would have been a private meeting. It would have been just your family. It would have been separate; it's legal.

JACK: Was it with E?

HANNAH: E. has input, K has input, the classroom teacher.

JACK: Just to make it easy, I'm sure there was lots of discussion and everything was all cause we discussed it at home. Answers were easy to come to and it just happened. I'm sure L. and J. discussed it lots. I was out of town most of that time.

LISA: What were your concerns regarding your child entering secondary school? You answered that already. What supports- oh, I thought I was going to get parents whose kids were in grade 8 but the board won't let me talk to them.

HANNAH: It's funny that they should do that because wouldn't it help them do their job better? They don't want to hear a range of placement.

PATRICIA: They want something more to be funded.

HANNAH: We talked about the level of supports being in place, the more advanced curriculum, the note taker thing, how that was going to work cause we talked to parents before us and the note taker sitting at the same desk as the student isn't gonna work for our kid, those kinds of things. Maternity leave- if the teacher was a huge thing for us too, like really. Seriously, it works well now but if E. has a baby and L. is in Toronto, there is no one to fill the gap so what's the plan? They don't have one.

LISA: And they don't.

HANNAH: But we're lucky that we have such a, like our board is very open and they are good compared to horror stories from across the country. They really are and we're lucky because we have a really good rapport with our teachers of the deaf. Just because we're such a small community there's such an overlap and it's really easy to make those connections for the kids but it puts teachers of the deaf or EAs in an awkward position because you can get information from

them and for whatever reason the board doesn't listen to what they say. It has to come from a parent and stomp, stomp, stomp and we can get what they've been asking for a year. It's ridiculous.

LISA: Ok, I only have 3 more questions. These are questions relating to parents of kids with hearing loss. What do you do as a parent to make your child's experience at school possible?

HANNAH: Get to know everyone involved.

PATRICIA: I try to make sure that the household running and he gets proper food and proper sleep and encourage. We go a lot around the kitchen. Maybe I baby him too much but we have a thing- a certain routine, especially when he goes to hockey, I never have to be on his case, have you done your homework cause he's very like that it's basically running the- I don't demand that much from my children to do at home or cleaning the house or doing the laundry or doing the food. That's crazy cause that's exactly the babying. He actually doesn't have time so...

JACK: Just being proactive, ensure people know who you are and you know who they are... just kind of ask the questions.

LISA: Get the supports that your child needs.

HANNAH: I think too, like any parent, if you know what's going on and what's happening even what they're doing in school like you know for English, say, this has been ever since they have started school, instead of asking how's English, you say did you finish chapter 5 on *To Kill a Mockingbird* or did you watch that segment of the film and that's what I find because with Chris, especially too, also for B. it also leads to good discussion, you know a few things about what's going on.

JACK: Yeah, there's no issues with Charlotte.

PATRICIA: But I think I hate the question when I ask how was school?

JACK: Charlotte hates long weekends cause she doesn't get to go to school. She hates the summer.

PATRICIA: Oh my.

LISA: Well, that's because she gets bored after and her routine is gone.

JACK: And that's the problem. She always gone to school on the other side of town so she has no friends in the neighborhood other than this best friend that lived 2 doors down and then they moved.

HANNAH: What was the question again?

LISA: What do you do as a parent to make your child's experience at school the best possible?

HANNAH: I think we all model to be good advocates. Our goal is for them to be good self-advocates so by...

PATRICIA: Talking and talking positive about school, how important education...

JACK: Being proactive staying on top of things. Can't wait for a problem cause it takes them so long to find a solution so stay on top of it- make sure.

PATRICIA: It's funny though, I haven't done much to my older child. She's so independent. She walked to JK since then done everything by herself.

JACK: Kids that live 3 blocks from the school get picked up by a school bus.

PATRICIA: Yeah, I can't understand that either.

HANNAH: My kid would have to get on the bus at 7 o'clock to pick up a student who lived next to the school because the bus had to go down 2 km turn around to pick up that student. It doesn't make any sense.

LISA: This question I think I've kind of asked already but how do you collaborate with your child's teacher to ensure your child's needs are being met and is this consistent throughout the school year?

HANNAH: Constant feedback

PATRICIA: Emails, phone calls little notes. The only teacher who actually communicates is E. and now the English teacher. It's unbelievable when the vice principal asks, she made a whole page Dear David, of all the things to hand in, what he missed and stuff, these are due when, the name. The science teacher, there's a bunch of papers David missed Tuesday, the exam when he comes to school he needs to do it.

LISA: How do you participate to help your child be academically successful at school?

HANNAH: Set up routine and early on, give good study habits, taught them how to study, know the curriculum.

PATRICIA: And we do help, he doesn't need that much help but now, with the piling up the work he was getting frustrated so my husband is good with the- he was studying to be a pilot and stuff he just sits down and goes and helps- we just take the time and don't get frustrated and just help.

JACK: She doesn't ask for help.

HANNAH: He doesn't ask for help either but he gets really frustrated. When he gets exhausted he starts to stutter. He just crashes- he's just like overwhelmed. This is what you need to do, how are you gonna try that?

PATRICIA: One thing at a time.

JACK: I think that's a- they get in a rush and they're not comprehending what they're reading sometimes, like the instructions.

PATRICIA: I think science has lots of- it's nothing with their IQ level; the terminology, when it comes as a pile up, now I saw in 2 weeks, oh my goodness, all these words, for me it's also a language issue but for- I saw that it's too much. I don't understand that, what does it mean? Explanations and stuff- there are probably many words they haven't heard before and David has a delay still in language but that's a hearing impaired child.

HANNAH: Homework time, dictionary is on the table. How do you spell that? Where's the dictionary? In grade 4, we realized that Chris didn't know the alphabet because he was diagnosed and he also was aided in grade one; they had already learned the alphabet and he was singing to my belly because his brother was in there and he was just making up this blah, blah, blah and I'm like, how can you use a dictionary if you don't know the alphabet? And he was mortified because of course everyone knows the alphabet in grade 4 so we just had a poster, we had an alphabet line on the table, on the wall- I mentioned it to the teacher and discretely just put it on the board and drilled it into him because he did not know his alphabet because he learned it before he got aided.

PATRICIA: And all of a sudden the gaps come out like idioms like I don't use the sayings because I never grew up with them so actually, K was trying- I told her things that I can't do at home. I said if there is a saying he's like, he takes it literally.

LISA: But lots of kids are like that- they just don't get those.

HANNAH: It is like being in a foreign country though, like the whole nuance of language and a joke; it's very similar, I would imagine to- like I remember going to Quebec and the Quebecois French didn't make sense to me cause we learned Parisienne French and I kept thinking I was being insulted but it was just their slang and their idioms and everything. That's what the kids must feel sometimes.

LISA: That's it folks. Thank you for participating in this study.