The impact of IDEA 1997 on teachers' beliefs and collaborative practices as participants on IEP teams at one middle school

Mary Ann Walsh Schroeder

University of Northern Iowa

Copyright ©1999 Mary Ann Walsh Schroeder

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/etd

Part of the Special Education and Teaching Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation

Schroeder, Mary Ann Walsh, "The impact of IDEA 1997 on teachers' beliefs and collaborative practices as participants on IEP teams at one middle school" (1999). Dissertations and Theses @ UNI. 750.

https://scholarworks.uni.edu/etd/750

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations and Theses @ UNI by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
THE IMPACT OF IDEA 1997
ON TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES
AS PARTICIPANTS ON IEP TEAMS
AT ONE MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Dissertation
Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
Approved:

Dr. Susan Etscheidt, Chair
Dr. Robert Boody, Committee Member
Dr. Linda Fitzgerald, Committee Member
Dr. Margaret Ishler-Bose, Committee Member
Dr. Gene Lutz, Committee Member

Mary Ann Walsh Schroeder
University of Northern Iowa
December 1999
THE IMPACT OF IDEA 1997
ON TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES
AS PARTICIPANTS ON IEP TEAMS
AT ONE MIDDLE SCHOOL

An Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved

______________________________
Susan Etscheidt, Chair

______________________________
Dr. Susan Etscheidt, Chair

______________________________
John Somervill
Dean of the Graduate College

Mary Ann Walsh Schroeder
University of Northern Iowa
December 1999
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the impact of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 on teachers' beliefs and collaborative practices as participants on IEP Teams at one middle school. Regular educators are now required to serve as members of IEP Teams for students identified with special needs, the majority of whom will now be served in the regular classroom. Collaboration, the process of interactions between regular and special educators to provide instruction in inclusive settings, was the practice investigated. This study examines laws and policies, teachers' beliefs, supports and barriers, collaborative practices, and evidence of change over the first year of compliance to IDEA 1997.

Questions investigated include the following:

1. How is IDEA 1997 being interpreted by the Pleasantview School District and Hawthorne Building Plan?
2. What do educators perceive as supports for collaboration? What do educators perceive as barriers?
3. What are the beliefs and collaborative practices of the teachers regarding students with special needs in inclusive settings?
4. Will the teachers change collaboration beliefs and practices over the first year of IDEA 1997 compliance?

The study was conducted at Hawthorne Middle School in the Pleasantview School District. A survey of area schools indicated collaboration as a common model employed in middle schools. Constant-comparative analysis was used to assess the data collected in focus group interviews from Fall 1998 through Spring 1999.

Identified collaboration supports were willingness to change, professional development, faculty expertise, shared commitment, administrative support, and collaboration planning time. Collaboration barriers were lack of time and teacher empowerment, ambiguity of roles, adherence to the dual system of teaching students
with disabilities, and job security concerns. Teachers believed that most students benefited from inclusion and collaboration. They indicated belief later in the study that the Hawthorne staff possessed collaboration skills regardless of imposed restrictions. Implications for further study are presented.
This work is dedicated to my lifelong mentor, dear friend, and mother,
Rosemary Walsh,
who taught me that to ask questions is to learn.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the members of my dissertation committee. Sincere gratitude is reserved for Dr. Susan Etscheidt, chairperson of my dissertation committee, who focused my efforts throughout the dissertation journey. I also extend my thanks to Dr. Margaret Ishler-Bosse, my advisor, for her guidance and expertise throughout my doctoral program. My gratitude is further extended to Dr. Linda Fitzgerald, Dr. Robert Boody, and Dr. Gene Lutz, dissertation committee members, for their personal encouragement and professional guidance.

My sincere appreciation goes to my family, Dale, Maggie, and Katie for their patience and constant encouragement during this time.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I PROBLEM AND SETTING</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indications for Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Special Education in the United States</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-20th Century History</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 19th / Early 20th Century History</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid 20th Century History</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 20th Century History</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary History of Special Education</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation and Legal Requirements</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IEP</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IEP Team</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of the IEP</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP Meetings</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least Restrictive Environment: LRE</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Summary</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Reported Beliefs and Practices Regarding Serving Students with Special Needs</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Change</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Beliefs, Change, and Collaboration</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development and Collaboration</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors Conducive to Collaboration</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Models</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of Collaboration</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Summary</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to Research Questions</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Factors</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Activities</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Site</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Selection</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Data</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Interview Techniques</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant -Comparative Analysis Technique</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Concerns</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Acceptance</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Limitations</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology Summary</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW ANALYSIS</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: Laws and Policies</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA 1997</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive collaboration</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultive collaboration</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3b summary</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4: Change</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in teacher beliefs and collaborative practice</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Number</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Water</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Melody</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Willing</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Able</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Leader</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence changes: Documents and policy</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interviews: Change over time</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: Laws and Policies</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2a: Collaboration Supports</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2b: Barriers to Collaboration</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3a: Teacher Beliefs</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3b: Collaborative Practices at Hawthorne</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration models</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and LRE</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors conducive to collaboration</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits to collaboration</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
PROBLEM AND SETTING

Recent legislation has extended the responsibility of the regular education teacher to participate more intensely in the education of students with disabilities in the regular educational setting. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires educators to be involved in the development, instrumentation, and evaluation of educational programs for students with disabilities (20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(B). Educational literature and trends document that regular education and special education maintained distinct and separate domains in the education of students with special needs for many years.

In the beginning of the 20th century until the 1950s, special education was purposefully exclusionary in efforts to meet the needs of this population outside of the regular education stream. Children with disabilities were either totally excluded from public education or educated in separate classrooms, and sometimes in separate facilities (Benner, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner 1997). Regular educators had no professional obligations to educate those with disabilities. In the 1950s, the Civil Rights Movement had great influence on the thinking of persons with disabilities in their quest for fairness and justice (Rothstein, 1995).

Deinstitutionalization was the trend in the 1960s and 70s and its focus was to move persons from institutions for the disabled into smaller community homes. This movement had its share of advocates and opponents, but served as a catalyst for integrating persons with disabilities into a society that had previously excluded them (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997). As before, regular
educators were unaffected by and disconnected from education of those with disabilities.

In 1975 the passage of PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, was a response to legislative concerns of this questionable separation and the recognition of the importance of a public education for all children. Legislative events which began in 1975 championed the cause of students with disabilities denied their rights to free and public education. Approximately one million children with disabilities were entirely excluded from the United States public education system before the law was enacted, and more than 50% of the 8 million children with disabilities in this country did not receive appropriate educational services to ensure full equality of opportunity (20 U.S.C. § 1400(b)(1)-(4).

Students with special needs were supported under the new law to seek and receive free and public education, regardless of ability. The law mandated that students with disabilities had the right to nondiscriminatory evaluation, a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (LRE), parental participation in educational planning and procedural safeguards. The mechanism for change was the Individual Education Program (IEP). Despite lawmakers' ambitious intent to minimize exclusion of those with disabilities, the dual systems of regular and special education continued to a great degree. Regular educators maintained their practice of little contact with students in special education (Takes, 1993).

The 1980s reflected the Regular Education Initiative (REI) championed by Madeline Will (1986), former Assistant Secretary of Education. This initiative promoted the concept of shared responsibility between the regular education teacher and the special education teacher in the educational pursuits of those
with mild to moderate disabilities. The merger of the regular educator's responsibilities and efforts with those of the special educator raised new anticipation for convergence and reform of the dual systems of education.

Many educators have questioned the effectiveness of the separate channel system of regular and special education. The assumption that these students are best served in exclusionary settings has been challenged (Ferguson, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; McLeskey & Waldron, 1996). Many educational advocates have proposed that the regular education classroom could provide all or the majority of supports for students with special needs (Stainback, S., Stainback, W., East, & Sapon-Shevin, 1994).

Iowa's response to the REI was the Renewed Service Delivery System (RSDS) which was proposed in 1988 to encourage improvements in education of those with special needs closer to the regular education setting (Staff, 1988, cited in Takes, 1993). Area Education Agencies (AEAs) in Iowa were formed to provide special education services to school districts in response to PL 94-142. AEAs also encouraged and realized many RSDS projects, in which special educators and regular educators team taught approved topics and projects collaboratively. This plan was important in the process of breaking down the dividing walls between regular and special education (Takes, 1993). Alternatives were emerging, and collaboration of regular and special educators was on the rise. This type of movement and REI in general had supporters and opponents from both fields of special and regular education. The response of regular educators was varied and inconsistent (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

In 1990 PL 94-142 was amended and renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Major changes included a change in the language of the law from "handicapped student" to "student with a disability," to
emphasize the importance of the person first, and a required transition plan for all students with disabilities to be in place by age 16 for each student. The IDEA maintained a strong focus on a free and appropriate public education and the LRE (Ysseldyke, Allgozzine, & Thurlow, 1992). This reinforced one of the most compelling movements in special education history: to merge the efforts of both the regular and the special educator, serving students primarily in the regular education setting.

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 strengthened the role of parents in educational planning, emphasized access and progress in the regular curriculum for students with disabilities, and expanded the role of the regular education teacher in the IEP. The regular educator as a member of the Individual Education Program (IEP) Team is required to develop, deliver, and evaluate the educational program for students with disabilities (Yell & Shriner, 1997a).

These legislative initiatives have had a significant impact service provisions available for students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Schools in the United States now serve this population of learners with a continuum of service options which range from full inclusion in regular education settings to more restrictive placements. The roles and responsibilities of the special and regular service providers vary in efforts to educate these students, but service has primarily functioned in separate settings and models. In the United States, public schools have educated approximately 5.5 million students with identified special education needs, making them eligible for special education services. During the 1995-96 school year, the number of students served in Resource Room model of partial regular class participation and partial pull out special education service was 29.4%.
The percentage of students served in the regular classroom with collaboration assistance for this same reporting period was 43.4%. A small percentage (4.4%) of students were educated in most restrictive environments of home, separate facility, hospitals or residential settings (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

According to Tiegerman-Farber and Radziewicz (1998), inclusion is the term for a model of service espoused most recently by the IDEA Amendments of 1997, requiring schools to place students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent possible. Inclusion is described as integration of students with and without disabilities, whether or not the students with disabilities can meet traditional academic standards.

Advocates of inclusion operate on the assumption that removal of students from the regular education classroom fosters dependency, stigmatization, and disruption to their education in the regular class. Expectations for students in the regular classroom should be adjusted to meet the ability level of each individual student if he or she is not capable of satisfying curricular standards of that classroom (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996; York-Barr, Schultz, Doyle, Kronberg, & Crossett, 1996).

Opponents to inclusion claim that such adjustments deny the rights of individuals who need smaller classes and individual accommodations and strategies to have educational success (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). National professional groups such as Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and National Education Association (NEA) range from total support to total opposition of the inclusion movement (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher, & Saumell, 1996).
Inclusion is opposed by some on the grounds that students have learned better and faster in smaller groups and structured special environments geared to their learning rate and style (Roberts & Mather, 1995). Other commentators suggest that the regular classroom is not always the LRE for some students (Kauffman, Lloyd, Baker, & Reidel, 1995). A vital concern is that regular educators are not prepared, nor do they have the support services to meet the needs of the student with special needs in their regular education classroom (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996). Adding students who require special considerations and instruction may hinder the learning of others in the group. Also, the necessary money, personnel and equipment required for successful inclusion of students with disabilities may be insufficient (Vaughn, Schumm, Gordon, & Rothlein, 1994).

Collaboration is defined as the process of cooperative interactions between regular and special educators to provide instruction in inclusive settings (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 1998). With legislative requirements and a national trend moving toward inclusionary practice, regular educators' roles are extended to meet the varying needs of students with disabilities in the regular curriculum and classroom. Special educators have long served as consultants and instructors in exclusionary settings such as resource rooms and self contained classrooms (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). The legislative requirements mandate that regular educators and special educators are to function as collaborative teams, as educators strive to serve all students in the least restrictive environment. Researchers suggest that as of the early 1990s many special educators were positively directed to collaborate with special educators in cooperative efforts to plan and implement IEPs in the LRE.
They reportedly operated on the premise that the delivery system would be enhanced positively through collaboration (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998).

Application of collaboration research to collaborative teaching practices by teams of regular and special educators showed progress in the regular classroom for students with special needs. This lent support for collaborative efforts on the part of both regular and special educators in support of a single system of education (Vergason & Andregg, 1991).

Collaboration success is attributed to several key factors: voluntary participation and choice of partners are identified. Communication, both oral and written, common vision, and shared planning time are reported as crucial to collaboration success. Other success factors include positive team participation skills, problem solving initiative, specific and valid feedback, professional consensus to manage conflict and confrontation, and celebrations and recognition for successful collaborative teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995; Dougherty, 1994; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Sapon-Shevin, 1996; Stainback et al., 1994; Wang & Reynolds, 1996; Will, 1986). Lack of communication, inadequate planning time and lack of administrative support are identified as barriers to collaboration (McLeskey & Waldron, 1996; Reeve & Hallahan, 1994; Schumm & Vaughn, 1995).

Successful collaboration models in the United States reportedly exist in three forms: instructional collaboration, supportive collaboration, and consultative collaboration (Adams & Cessna, 1992; Friend & Cook, 1992; Rainforth, York, & MacDonald, 1992; Stevens & Slavin, 1995). In these forms of collaboration, researchers report that teachers employ personal styles, beliefs, philosophies, teamwork, and professional expertise to create and maintain successful collaboration opportunities (Cronin, 1996; Stainback, W., Stainback,

Benefits of collaboration for students are reported to include richer educational experiences, reduction of stigmatization by exclusion and labels, social immersion, and mutual respect for peers, both disabled and non-disabled (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Friend & Cook, 1992; Gable, Arllen, & Cook, 1993; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Smith, 1998; Smith et al., 1998; Stevens & Slavin, 1995).

Benefits for professionals in collaboration settings include reduction of stress and isolation, increased opportunities to work with more students exhibiting a wider spectrum of abilities, increased levels of teachers' patience with students, improved and increased planning opportunities, and enhanced understanding and respect for students with disabilities (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Gable, Arllen, et al., 1993; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Putnam, Spiegel, & Bruininks, 1995; Safran & Safran, 1996).

Recent legislative mandates and emerging trends in special education service models have indicated studies investigating teacher beliefs as they relate to serving students with special needs in the regular education classroom (Vaughn et al., 1994). Studies on the topic, such as offered by Kagan (1992), defined teacher beliefs as "implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught" (p. 66). It is logical to pursue this line of research toward successful collaboration, as reported teacher beliefs shape practice (Vaughn et al., 1994).
In a study conducted with special and regular educators as to their perceptions and opinions surrounding the REI, both groups generally believed that students with mild disabilities have a basic right to an education in the regular classroom. They also expressed optimism that the regular class teachers accepted responsibility for these students. The teachers did not show belief in the construction and effective use of individual learning plans in the regular classroom. Although the teachers showed positive support for the rights of students with mild disabilities and agreed that IEPs are appropriate, less than one third of the respondents agreed that the regular classroom with special education consultant services was the most effective setting for educating students with mild disabilities (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991).

Research indicates that regular educators expected students with special needs to come to class prepared in the same ways as students without disabilities, use the same materials as non-disabled peers, and fit in with the rest of the class (Vaughn & Schumm, 1992). It has been noted that teacher behavior and expectations for students included in the regular classroom are the same for students with and without disabilities (McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager, & Lee, 1993).

Vaughn et al. (1994) reported that teachers were interested in meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities, although they often felt ill prepared to do so. Teachers in the regular education classroom perceived adaptations as more desirable than feasible (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991).

Results of a recent longitudinal study indicated that, despite teachers' initial negative reactions to the placement of a child with severe disabilities in their classroom, the majority of teachers in the study described transforming experiences after a year. The participants reported collaboration experiences
with positive adjectives such as “successful,” “interesting,” “amazed,”
“wonderful,” replacing cautious, negative initial terms, such as “nervous,”
“leery,” “apprehensive,” “unqualified” (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman,
& Schattman, 1993). Gaps existed among teacher beliefs, skills, and practices
at all levels of education regarding teaching students with special needs in the
regular classroom (Vaughn et al., 1994).

Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, and Nania (1990) reported that many
teachers at both elementary and secondary levels showed little change in
instructional methods when serving students with disabilities in their regular
classroom. Any adaptations, if occurring at all, were made spontaneously
during instruction.

In summary, the IDEA of 1997 requires special educators and regular
educators to collaborate in meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the
least restrictive environment. Yet the impact of the IDEA collaboration mandate
has not been systematically studied. What are the reported beliefs and
collaboration practices of teachers as they endeavor to meet the IEP
requirements of IDEA 1997?

**Indications for Study**

As local school districts attempt to implement the mandates of the IDEA
Amendments of 1997, the regular educator is now required to serve as a
member of the IEP Team for students identified with special needs, the majority
of whom will be served in the regular classroom. It is necessary to examine the
responsibilities and needs of the regular educator to best fulfill this new role.

The special educator’s role may include those of co-teacher, support
teacher, and collaboration facilitator for the regular education teacher. These
roles presented further challenges to the IEP Team as new paradigms replace
traditional methods. The administrator and parents were encouraged to participate on the IEP Team in more dynamic roles.

It was necessary to examine teacher beliefs regarding collaboration as they related to serving students with special needs in the regular classroom. Teacher beliefs are defined as tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions regarding students themselves, the classroom, and the education process (Kagan, 1992). Beliefs are often relatively stable and resistive to change (Fullan, 1991). As beliefs often drive practice, it was relevant to this study to consider reported teacher beliefs and subsequent collaborative practices. Many teachers studied reported ambivalent feelings toward integration and collaboration (Larrivee & Cook, 1979; Vaughn & Schumm, 1994).

The indications for change as reported in studies on teacher beliefs and practice for collaboration will affect teacher preservice programs at colleges and universities as we prepare upcoming teachers for education in the new millennium. It will also have an impact on current instructional and consultative practices in schools as teachers in the field are prepared to receive and serve students with disabilities in the regular classroom. The ultimate goal remains to best serve all children in the least restrictive environment successfully and in compliance with the law. Teacher beliefs often drive practice, and the new laws indicate that practice may well require change if collaboration is to be effective.

The information obtained in this research will benefit many of the stakeholders in the education of students with special needs in the least restrictive environment. The regular education teacher’s new role poses a challenge for the teachers themselves to be served and supported in the proposed educational endeavor, as well as to serve all students in their care. To date, professional development of regular educators to assume this new
responsibility has been limited (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996). The outcomes of this study contribute to addressing the needs and responsibilities of educators and to identifying topics for professional development (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Phillips, & Karns, 1995; Roberts & Mather, 1995; Tumbull & Turnbull, 1998).

Studies indicated that teachers often believed that collaboration for including students with special needs in the regular classroom is desirable but often not feasible (Ysseldyke et al., 1992). Views and perceptions of regular educators appear to have important effects on classroom practices.

This study indicated the need for investigation of the impact of laws and regulations which indicate collaborative team efforts on teacher reported beliefs and practice, and subsequent change in beliefs and practice. Collaboration, the process of interactions between regular and special educators to provide instruction in an inclusive setting, was the educational practice investigated in this study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the impact of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 on the teachers' reported beliefs and practices as a participant on the IEP Team in collaborative and inclusive settings at middle school level. Middle school level was chosen for the study due to interdepartmental scheduling and instruction models, requiring more teachers to be involved in each child's educational program.

**Research Questions**

This investigation prompted the researcher to utilize the following research questions:
1. How are the new law and policy being interpreted and articulated by the Pleasantview School District and Hawthorne Building Plan?

2. What do educators perceive to be supports for collaboration regarding law and policy defining inclusion of students with special needs? What do educators perceive to be barriers to collaboration?

3. What are the reported beliefs and collaborative practices of the teachers in regard to laws and policies mandating collaboration for teaching students with special needs in inclusive settings?

4. Will the teachers in the study change their reported beliefs and practices toward collaboration over the first year of inclusion in the Pleasantview School District?

**Definition of Terms**

In order to provide clarity for the significant terms used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

1. Collaboration--The process of problem solving by team members each of whom contributes his or her knowledge and skills and is viewed as having equal status in the education of students with disabilities in inclusive settings (adapted from Rainforth et al., 1997).

2. Continuum of services--A model which provides placement and programming options for students with disabilities along a continuum of least-to-most restrictive placements (Smith et al., 1998).

3. Deinstitutionalization--Decreasing the number of individuals with mental retardation living in large congregate facilities (Smith, 1998).

4. General Curriculum--A description of the standards and benchmarks adopted by a Local Education Agency (LEA) or schools within the LEA that
apply to ALL children. It is applicable to children with disabilities as well as non-disabled children and related to the content of the curriculum and not to the setting in which it will be used. It is the basis of planning instruction for ALL students (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

5. IDEA 97--Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (Public Law 105-17) reauthorized and made significant changes to IDEA of 1990. The primary provisions are to ensure free and appropriate public education that meets the unique needs of students with disabilities and prepare them for independent living and employment. It was created to assess and ensure effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities(20 U.S.C. §1401 et. seq.).

6. Inclusion--The educational philosophy that students with disabilities are best educated when integrated with non-disabled peers in regular education classrooms with Individual Education Programs to insure success. (Villa, Thousand, & Chappel, 1996).

7. Inclusive Education--The practice of providing education to a child with a disability within the regular education classroom, with the supports and accommodations needed by that student. This inclusion usually takes place in the student's home school (Power-deFur & Orelove, 1997).

8. Individual Education Program (IEP)--A written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the IEP Team at least annually, to include present level of educational performance, annual measurable goals and objectives, related services, description of any barriers to inclusion, assessment methods, transition plan for those over 14, parent approval and communication information (Smith et al., 1998).
9. Individualized Education Program Team (IEP Team)—A group of individuals composed of parents or guardians of the student with a disability, at least one regular education teacher of the child, at least one special education teacher, an LEA representative knowledgeable regarding special education and regular curriculum, an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, and others with knowledge or expertise regarding the child, to include related special service personnel, as appropriate, and at the discretion of the parent or agency. The IEP team is responsible for initiating and conducting meetings for the specific purposes of developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP of a child with a disability (20 U.S.C. §1414 (d)(1)(B)).

10. Integration—Students with identified special needs who are educated primarily in self contained classes attend a class or classes with non-disabled peers, for the purpose of academic or behavioral instruction. The student has full or partial access to the mainstream society. This was the educational response to the Regular Education Initiative (Takes, 1993; Will, 1986).

11. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)—To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 U.S.C. § 1412(A)(5)(a)).

12. Mainstreaming—Including students with special needs in regular education classrooms for some or all of their day (Smith, 1998).

14. Regular Education Initiative (REI)—The educational philosophy that regular education should be primarily responsible for the education of students with disabilities (adapted from Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

15. Renewed Service Delivery System (RSDS)—Iowa’s interpretation of the federal Regular Education Initiative of the 1980s. Special education teachers were encouraged to collaborate with regular education teachers supporting approved projects in classrooms in which students with special needs were mainstreamed (Takes, 1993).

16. Service alternative models—Educational settings which vary in amount of time and intensity of service to meet the needs of students with special needs in the least restrictive environment as decided by the IEP Team (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997).

16. Transition—A coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. These include post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

17. Special Education—Specially designed instruction provided at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings, and instruction in physical education (20 U.S.C. § 1401(a)(25)).

Note. Pseudonyms have been used for all persons and places directly involved in this study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Special Education in the United States

Pre-20th Century History

Special education in the United States is a complex historical tapestry, with its roots in the 1700s and 1800s. Research indicates that inclusionary settings were rare, but some did exist in the early years of our country. Groce (1985) reported a unique situation on Martha's Vineyard in the 18th and 19th century, where the population had a two hundred year history of high incidence of hereditary deafness. The communities adapted to the situation by creating a sign language, and most residents learned and used it successfully. The Vineyarders did not see deafness as a handicapping condition and made modifications, and lived full and meaningful lives.

As early as 1817, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet began the American Institute for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, later changed to Gallaudet University for the Deaf. The House of Refuge was founded in New York City in 1825, the first refuge for juvenile delinquents and those with behavioral maladies in the United States. Samuel Gridley Howe started the New England Asylum for the Blind in 1832. In 1848 Howe also founded the Massachusetts School for Idiots and Feebleminded Persons. Seguin founded the first professional organization, the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiots and Feebleminded Persons in 1876 (Barr, 1913; Smith, 1998). This title evolved into the American Association on Mental Deficiency, and today exists as the American Association on Mental Retardation. The Cleveland Public Schools were the first in the nation to open two special education day classes in 1878 (Sarason & Doris, 1979). Philadelphia claims
the first hospital for the physically disabled, Home of the Merciful Savior, in 1884. The National Education Association (NEA) began a division for persons interested in children with special needs in 1897, but it disbanded in 1918 to allow for reorganization. Elizabeth Farrell started ungraded classes in New York City in 1898 to serve “backward students” in a settlement house setting initiated to serve the poor, unskilled, and less able, and also assist immigrants (Smith, 1998).

**Late 19th / Early 20th Century History**

In the early 1900s, the movement to educate persons with disabilities emerged from the disciplines of psychology and sociology. The development and use of tests for mental ability in the first years of this century, conducted by psychologists eager to study thinking and learning, had an impact on the formation of special education.

Studies on the effects of disability on families and their communities opened the door for sociologists and anthropologists to further contribute to the metamorphosis of special education (Benner, 1998; Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997; Kanner, 1964; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

The public school system of the United States historically has its philosophy and guiding principles reflecting “the dreams and ideals of a melting pot society, adjusting through litigation and legislation” (Zionts, 1997, p. 3). The history of special education in the United States shares these same catalysts along its historical journey, although at a slower, more challenging pace. Special education found its present profile and substance through federal law, civil rights movements, and resulting court cases, as well as the evolutionary influences of politics and society (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Smith et al., 1998).
Individuals, institutions, and organizations began advocating the cause of those with disabilities early in the 19th century, helping lay the foundation for the future system of serving students with special needs. The New Jersey Training School for Feebleminded Boys and Girls began summer training courses for teachers in 1905. Elizabeth Farrell, New York City teacher in the 1920s, joined forces with the city superintendent of schools to foster the cause of students with special needs, and, after initiating ungraded classes to include students who did not meet grade level criteria for one reason or another in 1898, founded the Council for Exceptional Children, a professional organization still in existence today. Maria Montessori published her research on teaching children with disabilities in 1912 (Smith, 1998).

By the early 1900s most states had at least one residential institution for persons with disabilities to live. Until the 1950s most persons with disabilities were, kept at home, not educated in any formal way, or sent to institutions or private facilities for custodial care.

Professional organizations were becoming realities. In 1935, the American Speech and Hearing Association was formed. In 1949, the United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) organization was founded. The Association for Retarded Citizens began in 1950, now called the Association for Retarded Citizens of the United States (ARC-US; Smith, 1998).

Mid 20th Century History

In the 1950s, the country experienced civil rights movements of minorities demanding equal treatment under the law and in society. These movements represented a major catalyst for questioning and examining the rights of persons with disabilities, who emerged as a powerful faction of American society (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Rothstein, 1995). Effective parent
organizations gathered impetus in the 1950s, joining forces with concerned professionals in education, medicine and the social sciences. Power yielded influence. As confirmed by the outcome of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954, the Fourteenth Amendment of our federal Constitution protected the right of all citizens against discrimination of any kind (Rothstein, 1995; Yell, 1995). This decision confirmed that practices which discriminate against children of color, forcing separate schooling, are against the law.

Soon after, the same law was applied to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The courtroom became the emancipatory field, and to date, the stages where the rights of those with disabilities are championed and formed to preserve civil and educational rights. The 1950s and 1960s began an era of upward mobility, however not without struggle for persons with disabilities, to gain fair and equal treatment under the law (Rothstein, 1995; Yell, 1995).

Deinstitutionalization and normalization became trends during the 1960s and 70s for special education, and many institutionalized persons with severe disabilities returned to their homes to be raised by their families and communities. This effort was fired by reports of gross inadequacies in some, but not all, of the institutions (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997). Reactive to deinstitutionalization, some critics felt that the movement was not always in the best interest of people with disabilities, removing them from the care needed to survive safely. Many concerned parents and professionals were not willing to give up the care they had been receiving for those with disabilities (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1992). Students with moderate disabilities were included in regular classes with little or no identification of their needs. This practice resulted in students with mild to moderate disabilities receiving few to no modifications or adaptations. They were present in the classrooms, but remained unserved.
In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) required that children with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the LRE:

The state has established procedures to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or the removal of handicapped children from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplemental aids and services can not be achieved satisfactorily. (20 U.S.C. § 1412 (5)(B))

The passage of this law mandated integration of students with disabilities into regular classes with non-disabled peers. It also served as the legal foundation for persons with disabilities to receive a free and public education in the least restrictive environment. The very name of the law reflects the language of the day, and required states to educate all students regardless of disability (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). The major components of this landmark legislation included guarantee of free and appropriate education for all (FAPE), ages 6 through 17. The law further mandates the creation, review, and revision of an Individual Education Program (IEP) for each student receiving special education services. The law also requires placement in the least restrictive environment. Details outlining parents' rights are also included in the law (Sherwood, 1990; Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz, 1998; Ysseldyke et al., 1992). IDEA 1990, a turning point for those with disabilities, finally addressed the issue of where this population would be educated, not simply if they would be educated, as was the case a quarter of a century earlier.

As a result of PL 94-142 passage, many students with mild disabilities began a new era in the regular classroom and saw success. The non-disabled
setting became known as the least restrictive environment (LRE; Power-deFur & Orelove, 1997; Smith et al., 1998; Takes, 1993). School districts created accommodations in the form of separate classes and separate schools for those with more severe disabilities, which, at the time, was considered a move forward, in that these students with greater needs had previously been denied public education in any form. This law set the groundwork for the inclusion movement, even though the term *inclusion* does not appear in the law itself (Power-deFur & Orelove, 1997).

Normalization was a growing philosophy in the United States in the 1970s, and the educational trend to move away from separate classes for those with special needs was gaining favor with many educators. Bank-Mikkelson is credited with introducing the concept of normalization to the special education movement as early as 1959 (Smith, 1998). Later, in 1969, Bengt Nirge of Sweden coined the term *normalization*, and he brought this movement with him to the United States in 1972 (Biklen, 1985). Normalization is viewed as an essential dimension of special education. Nirge refers to a normal life pattern, normal day, year, and life rhythms (Smith, 1998). Tiegerman-Farber and Radziewicz (1998) explain normalization for the child with disabilities in terms of "identification of activities, educational experiences, and social interactions that simulate realistic and ongoing environmental events" (p. 4).

The means and the end were the same in efforts to provide the most normal experience for persons with disabilities, achieved by placing these students into the regular education classroom. The short term goal was to provide as near as possible normal activities likened to those of non-disabled peers. The long term goal was to provide for the smoothest transition possible into society in general (Hallahan & Kauffman 1997; Smith et al., 1998).
Advocacy continued to rise as normalization movements gained strength, with the founding of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, now the Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), started in 1963. It was followed by institution of the Epilepsy Foundation of America in 1968 (Smith, 1998). Other groups formed into the 1980s and 90s, focusing on the quest for civil rights and the development of the disability culture (Longmore, 1995). In recent years the Council for Citizens with Disabilities was instrumental in shaping the Americans with Disabilities Act and contributed to the recent IDEA (Smith, 1998). There exist today many formal and informal advocacy and support groups formed for and by adults with disabilities.

Late 20th Century History

The 1980s gave rise to the next trend to affect special education, called the Regular Education Initiative (REI). The movement was championed by Madeline Will (1986), former Assistant Secretary of Education, who publicly questioned the dual system that separated regular and special education. The heart of this commitment is the search for ways to serve as many of these children as possible in the regular classroom by encouraging special education to form a partnership with regular education. The objective of this partnership for special education and other special programs is to use their knowledge and expertise to support regular education in educating children with learning problems. (Will, 1986)

In reviewing the current status of special education and inclusion, Smith et al. (1998) defined the evolution of educating students with disabilities in this country as having gone through three specific phases: relative isolation before the 1950s, integration and mainstreaming in the 1960s and 70s, and inclusion since the 1980s. REI is viewed by some as a major first step in the inclusion movement (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Schumm & Vaughn, 1991; Will, 1986).
REI launched the inclusion phase of students with special needs into the arena of regular education. The difference between the integration phase and the inclusion phase was that during the latter, the assumption was that the students with disabilities belonged there. Although the students who benefited were primarily those with mild disabilities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997), a great step had been successfully taken, a major milestone achieved.

Another noted advance of the 1980s toward the cause of free and public education for all was accomplished with the passage of PL 99-457. This law in 1986 amended the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, extending the law to cover children birth through 5 years with disabilities (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.). Clarification of student placement in the local neighborhood school was safeguarded through this new legislation. The dual systems of regular and special education were merging. States were further required to establish funding guidelines, and states' responsibilities for policy and procedures were further defined (Pruitt, 1997; Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz, 1998).

In the late 1980s, the U.S. Office of Education offered an opportunity to individual states to apply for statewide Systems Change Grants. Initial requests for funding centered around proposals to move students in segregated settings back into the mainstream of the regular education facilities (Power-deFur & Orelove, 1997). Iowa's response to the REI and the offer to apply for the statewide Systems Change Grant was the RSDS, Renewed Service Delivery System, proposed in 1988 to encourage improvements in the delivery of education of those with special needs closer to the regular education setting (Staff, 1988, cited in in Takes, 1993). Area Education Agencies (AEA) in Iowa encouraged and realized many excellent RSDS projects in which special
educators and regular educators succeeded in collaboratively teaching students with and without disabilities. The product was as important as the process of breaking down the dividing walls between regular and special education (Takes, 1993). Alternatives were emerging, students with disabilities were being served in the regular classroom in greater number, and collaboration of regular and special educators was on the rise. This type of movement and REI in general had supporters and opponents from both fields of special and regular education (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

A significant number of education researchers and practitioners challenged the dual systems of special education and regular education in the 1980s. Stainback and Stainback (1984) espoused the merger of special and regular education early in the decade and would be joined by many other voices in the educational, medical, and social science fields. Supporters of the inclusion movement identified such claims as basic rights of all individuals to have equal opportunity to live normally and attend school with non-disabled peers, to participate as fully as possible (Ferguson, 1995; McNulty, Connolly, Wilson, & Brewer, 1996). Many researchers claimed that all students will benefit from having students with special needs in the regular classroom (Ferguson, 1995; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; McLeskey & Waldron, 1996; Ryndak, Downing, Morrison, & Williams, 1996; Stainback et al., 1994; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Teaching methods and strategies utilized in special education classrooms were found not to differ so drastically from those used in regular classes (Mercer, Lane, Jordon, Allsopp, & Eisele, 1996). Labels and stigmatization caused further handicap for students who left the regular education classroom to attend resource or pullout programs (Wang & Reynolds, 1996). Service models which required students to leave the
classroom for prescriptive services deny the students much valuable instructional time and socialization in the regular classroom (Sapon-Shevin, 1996).

Others advise that inclusion be carefully approached, with such considerations as stated by the Council for Exceptional Children (1993), claiming that students with disabilities are denied their right to individualized education and denied a right to their individuality as a person with a disability. A continuum of services should be in place to assist the students who are not appropriately served in the regular classroom. This would meet the needs of the student who learns best in small group or individual settings (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Kauffman et al., 1995). These researchers point out that the LRE may not always be the regular education classroom, and that some students do require an individualized program with special considerations for success, particularly those with behavioral or emotional disabilities. Regular education teachers are not always prepared to meet the needs of students with special needs in their classrooms. Also, there are no limitations on the percentage of students with special needs that may be assigned to a particular class (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).

Professional organizations have voiced their concerns over the inclusion issue. The spectrum of support for inclusive education ranges from total and unrestricted support from the Association of Persons With Severe Handicaps (1991), to cautious regard for continuum of services while supporting inclusion (Council for Exceptional Persons, 1993), through concern for the provision of needed services (Learning Disabilities Association, 1993), to the guarded caution of the American Federation of Teachers (1994) and the National
Education Association (1994), supporting appropriate inclusion (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).

**Contemporary History of Special Education**

President George Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This law required employers to make certain accommodations deemed reasonable and necessary for persons with disabilities to work and use public transportation and facilities (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). The act was considered a landmark decision and provided another major stepping stone in the journey of those with disabilities for equal and fair treatment under the law (Rothstein, 1995; Yell, 1995). The area not addressed in this act was education.

In 1990, PL 101-476 reauthorized, amended and renamed PL 94-142 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Its primary developments were to initiate the inclusion movement, to change terminology from "handicapped children" to "children with disabilities" and to confirm two new categories of disability, traumatic brain injury and autism as eligible categories for special education services. Service provision for those in preschool and in post secondary transition were outlined and mandated into law (Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz, 1998; Ysseldyke et al., 1992). For the regular education teacher, this law meant that students will be served as much as possible in the regular education classroom (Smith et al., 1998).

President William Clinton signed into law an amended version of IDEA in June of 1997, PL 105-17, which is known as IDEA 1997. The major emphasis is on the role of the regular educator to accept students with special needs into the regular education curriculum and classroom. In addition to this, the regular education teacher must now assume the role of IEP Team participant and to assist in the creation, review and revision of the IEP. Other major issues
address assessment of students with special needs, transition, discipline, training of paraprofessionals, and mediation (20 U.S.C. § 1414; Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Smith et al., 1998; Yell & Shriner, 1997a, 1997b).

**The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997**

**Legislation and Legal Requirements**

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 contain many provisions concerning the IEP, IEP Team, and LRE. This review examined those requirements which affect the roles and responsibilities of both special and regular educators to create, implement, and monitor the IEP. Discipline of students with disabilities, assessment procedures, and procedural safeguards to the students and parents was discussed briefly.

This review of literature addresses the law from the federal level, to State of Iowa level, to the local Area Education Agency (AEA) level. Federal law citations from IDEA 1997 are identified by (20 U.S.C). The proposed Code of Federal Regulations are cited as (34 C.F.R.). Both U.S.C. and C.F.R. citations appear in numerical order. At the State of Iowa law level, the Iowa Administrative Code (IAC,1995) may be cited as well as the Iowa Rules of Special Education. The review also contains directives articulated in the Iowa Department of Education IEP Guidebook (1998). This document was published by the State of Iowa for use by local AEAs to inservice special education personnel on the changes in the IEP process in response to IDEA Amendments of 1997. Specific IEP documents in current use at the local level reflect the new regulations. Published positions of professional education organizations are readily available in current related literature and Internet.
The IDEA 1997 is an enacted public law, also called a statute on an act. Since statutes passed by Congress are generally broad, Congress delegates power to administrative agencies to create specific regulations. To implement the laws, the regulations, also calls rules or guidelines, supply specifics to the general content of the law and provide procedures by which the law can be enforced (Yell, 1995). The regulations for IDEA 1997 provide the specific requirements for implementation of the IDEA.

The Iowa Statutes pertaining to special education are also brief and broad. Similarly, the regulations, or rules for special education, provide specific guidelines for implementation in Iowa.

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 are presented in four parts. The four areas and primary components are the following:

Part A: General Provisions:
--definitions, specific terms, current and related research findings/general purposes of the IDEA Amendments of 1997.

Part B: Assistance for the education of all children with disabilities:
--eligibility of students as defined by the SEA (state Education Associations) and LEA (Local Education Association). Grant opportunities and details are included, as well as procedural safeguards to protect the rights of students with disabilities in that state.

Part C: Infants and Toddlers with disabilities:
--specific measures and programs for states to utilize to best meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities. Incentives for these proposed programs are outlined.

Part D: National activities for improvement of education for children with disabilities:
--discretionary or support projects and programs, responsive to areas of concern for improvement of education for children with disabilities. Opportunities for requesting and qualifying for state education grants toward this improvement of educational opportunities for students with disabilities include research,
inservicing of personnel, technical assistance, parent inservice and training, information dispersal, and development of technology. (Yell & Shriner, 1997a, p. 2)

This study will focus on changes in Sections A and B as they relate to the IEP, IEP Team, and LRE.

Purpose

The IDEA of 1997 reaffirms the educational rights of individuals with disabilities in educational settings:

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the rights of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational rights for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, and independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. (20 U.S.C. § 1400(c)(1))

The education of children with disabilities can be more effective by:

(A) Having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible:

(B) Strengthening the roles of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home:

(C) Coordinating this Act with other local, educational service agency, state, and federal school improvement efforts in order to ensure that such children benefit from such efforts and that special education can become a service for such children rather than a place where they are sent. (20 U.S.C. 1400 (A)(1)(c)(5))

(D) Providing appropriate special education and related services and aids in the regular classroom to such children, wherever appropriate. (20 U.S.C. § 1400 (c) (5)(D))

“Service rather than a place” implies dynamic planning, review, revision and evaluation of education efforts for students with special needs. This is the thrust of the new law, encompassing the drive and impetus of the laws which
precede it in the history of special education since mid century, as noted earlier in this review of the literature. The law gives reaffirmation of the assumption that the students *belong* in the regular classroom, as espoused by Will (1986) and others throughout the late 20th century history of special education legislation.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) states that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 U.S.C. § 1412(A)(5)(a)).

The words *to the maximum extent appropriate* have been the target of attack by several national professional organizations representing parents and teachers since IDEA 1990, in their opposition to blanket inclusion for all students (American Federation of Teachers, 1996, 1997; Council for Exceptional Children, 1993, 1997; Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Learning Disabilities Association, 1993; National Education Association, 1994; Shankar, 1994). A continuum of alternative placements for students with special needs is strongly urged by these organizations and individuals. For LRE, the law requires

(E) high quality, intensive professional development for all personnel to ensure skills and knowledge necessary to enable them --

(i) to meet developmental goals and, to the maximum extent possible, those challenging expectations that have been established for all children: and

(ii) to be prepared to lead productive independent adult lives, to the maximum extent possible. (20 U.S.C. § 1400 (c)(5)(E)(i)-(ii)(c)(5)(E) (i and ii)
This component of the law reflects concerns from many researchers and educators as an area which has not been adequately addressed and implemented by national, state, and local education efforts to date. Negative attitudes of teachers were reported regarding feelings of incompetence, fear, anger, and frustration about being forced to accept included students (Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz, 1998; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Some teachers qualify their negative feelings toward this movement, identifying the fact that the choice they made was to teach regular education, not special education (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).

A study done in a Texas school district where most of the students with special needs attended regular classes, indicated that this practice altered the content and scope that teachers could teach, methods they used, and nature and duration of student teacher interactions (Baines, Baines, & Masterson, 1994). The American Federation of Teachers (1994) called for a moratorium on inclusion reactive to concerns of lack of teacher preparation in this area. Researchers were reporting the need for inservice opportunities to promote successful inclusion for both students with special needs as well as effects on non-disabled peers (Sapon-Shevin, 1996).

Other studies indicated that many teachers believed that students have a right to be educated with non-disabled peers. Many teachers believe that they are skilled, accommodating, and willing to serve on IEP Teams in all aspects of planning and implementation of appropriate education for students with special needs (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Power-deFur & Orelove, 1997).

The area of need for teacher inservice and skill development in serving students with disabilities through collaborative efforts is indicated in research to be one of the most important aspects of the regular educator's role in serving
identified students as well as non-disabled peers (Sapon-Shevin, 1996; Stainback et al., 1996). Adequate personnel preparation is essential if the IDEA is to achieve its primary purpose: to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services resigned to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living (20 U.S.C. §1400 (d)(1)(A)).

**The IEP**

A priority in the IDEA 1997 legislation lies in the improvement of both performance and achievement of this population of children now to be served primarily in the regular curriculum in regular classrooms of the public schools (Yell & Shriner, 1997a, 1997b). Reflecting this finding and guiding principle, Congress has addressed major changes in the IEP process, the IEP Team, and LRE.

At all levels, federal and state, the IEP components are consistently listed and described. The IEP is a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the IEP Team no less than annually to include: (a) present level of educational performance, (b) annual measurable goals and objectives, (c) special education and related services, (d) description of the least restrictive environment and the plan for participation in the regular curriculum with non-disabled peers, (e) dates, frequency, location, and duration of services, (f) assessment methods, (g) transition plan for those over 14 years of age, and (h) process monitors and parent reporting procedures (20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(a)(i-viii)); IAC 281-41.67(1),(2),(3),(4),(5),(6),(7) & (8)).
At the state and local level, Iowa interprets the IEP further, describing it as "a process and a product which documents that the student is receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with all federal and state requirements" (Iowa Department of Education, 1998). The guidebook states that the guiding principle behind the IEP concern family vision:

The student's and family's vision for the future is important. It has the purpose of assuring that students will be educated to the maximum extent possible with non-disabled peers. The IEP process is described as a collaborative process, developed in relationship to the general curriculum by the IEP Team. The IEP process involves on-going progress monitoring and decision making. Decision making is focused on solution, based on student needs and used to improve student results. (Iowa Department of Education, 1998, pp. 4-7)

One important statement in the IDEA was that all provisions, including IEPs, became effective on July 1, 1998 (20 USC § 1414(d)). This mandate caused an uproar with educators who claimed that the proposed compliance date would have traded efficiency and accuracy for expediency. Department of Education Secretary Riley received a letter from the National Education Association President, Robert Chase, in conjunction with the Council for Exceptional Children Executive Director Nancy Safer, to request a postponement of the original compliance date of July 1, 1998 for ALL IEPs to meet the new criteria. The date stood for new IEPs written from that date.

Their plea stated:

We are pleased with the majority of the IEP changes in the IDEA Amendments of 1997. They will improve the communication between parents, regular education teachers and special education teachers, as well as lead to higher expectations and significantly improved student achievement. Please do not force this process to begin until we in the field have had an opportunity to study and implement the regulations for which we will be held accountable. To do so will lead to major chaos and will, in our estimation, not be good for anyone. (personal communication to Chase and Safer, April 28, 1998 in a memorandum to Chief of State
School Officers from Judith Heumann and Thomas Hehir, Assistant Secretaries to the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services)

Consideration was made, and the proposal was reworded to pertain to all new IEPs and rewritten IEPs after the new July 1, 1998 date to reflect the new mandates.

This change in date for compliance of existing IEP maintenance greatly affected the role of the regular and special educators to provide quality, relevant, and current IEP documents for students. As indicated in this literature review on teacher beliefs and change, time to comply is a major barrier to overcome in this endeavor, as is lack of inservice on the topic (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).

The IEP Team

The IDEA of 1997 requires that the IEP Team includes:

(1) the parents of the child with a disability:

(2) at least one regular education teacher (if the child is, or may be, participating in regular education):

(3) at least one special education teacher or, if appropriate, at least one special education provider of the child:

(4) a representative of the local education agency (LEA) who meets certain specified requirements such as ability to represent the agency and local school authority to justify the team recommendations and maintain compliance to the law:

(5) an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results:

(6) at the discretion of the parents or agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel:
(7) and, if appropriate, the child is to be included at the meeting.
(20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(B))

The regulations explain that an LEA may designate one or more of the regular educators of the students to attend the IEP Team meeting. Input from teachers not attending the meeting is to be sought by the LEA, and those teachers must receive results of the meeting, to include a copy of the current IEP (U.S.C.20 § 1400 et seq.).

State and local articulation of this component restates that the IEP Team consists of a group of people who come together at an IEP meeting in order to develop, review, and revise a student's IEP. Each member has a clearly defined role. The members are knowledgeable about the student and about services which may well benefit the student. Local interpretation points out that although individuals on the team may change, the roles stay the same (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

Iowa identifies and defines the role of each required IEP Team participant. The parents are equal participants on the team who provide critical information about the child's abilities, interests, performance, and history. The parents participate in the discussions and decisions regarding the child's need for special education services, assist in decisions regarding the placement of the child into the regular curriculum, participation in state and district assessments, and provision of specific services available to the child, by which agency, and in which setting.

The role of the student as participant on the IEP Team should be discussed before the meeting by LEA representatives, school personnel and parents before the actual meeting takes place. The student included in
the IEP meeting must have prior knowledge and coaching as to the nature and purpose of the IEP and the IEP meeting (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

At the discretion of the student or the public agency, the parents may attend the meetings as individuals who have knowledge or special expertise in regarding the child (Iowa Department of Education, 1998). Others who may qualify are relatives, teachers, professionals from other fields, and advocates familiar with and approved by the student.

The state and local agencies in Iowa define the role of the special educator on the IEP Team as the person responsible for implementing the IEP. State standards outline that this participant may be the teacher qualified to deliver special education in the student's area of suspected disability or another special education provider of service considered as special education under applicable state standard (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

The state and local definition for a regular education teacher as a member of the IEP Team is an educator who is, or may become, responsible for implementing the IEP. The purpose of this member of the team is to participate in discussions of how best to teach the student in the regular classroom and regular curriculum. In the case of a student having more than one teacher, the local LEA is to designate a regular educator to serve as IEP Team participant. Those not in attendance are to receive copies of the results of the IEP meeting and the IEP (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

This focus is relevant to the study because the regular educator is required to assume a new role in educating students with special needs. Inservice and time are indicated to accomplish successful collaboration in the regular classroom (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998).
Studies have indicated that many teachers did not attempt to meet IEP guidelines, modify or adapt any classroom procedures or expectations for any students with disabilities (Ysseldyke et al., 1990). Others indicated that adapted techniques were highly desirable, yet practice did not follow the belief in some classrooms with mainstreamed students (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987, 1997; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Tumbull & Turnbull, 1998). This study investigated the question of whether or not these factors were provided to the collaborating teachers, as outlined in the IDEA 1997.

**Development of the IEP**

In the development of the IEP, the IEP Team was directed to specifically note the strengths of the student, concerns of the parents for enhancing the child's education, as well as most recent evaluative measures of the child's performance and ability (20 U.S.C. § 1400). State of Iowa interpretation of this proposed regulation resulted in a new required section of the IEP called Student and Family Vision Statement. According to the Iowa IEP Guidebook (1998), a vision is a statement describing the student's and family's hopes for the future. The IEP Team is responsible to record a summary of the discussions regarding student and family vision in the current staffing report and IEP. This is an ongoing procedure to be reviewed and/or revised as subsequent meetings concerning the child (Iowa Department of Education, 1998). The IEP Team is further obligated to assess whether or not the child's behavior impedes learning and propose intervention strategies. They must propose and implement behavioral accommodations and:

1. Consider special factors for behavior: IEP Team shall in the case of the child whose behavior impedes his or her learning, or that of others, consider, when appropriate, strategies, including positive behavior
interventions, strategies, and supports to address the behavior. 
(20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(3)(i))

If behavior is a major concern and need, the IEP Team must consider legal and appropriate options to address this need of the child, which must then be documented by a statement in the child's IEP. Behavior considerations are causing school systems to follow the law closely to ensure the rights of all students (Yell & Shriner, 1997a, 1997b).

The Iowa IEP Guidebook further articulates this requirement, identifying a host of interfering behaviors which span the range of impeding students' learning, self or others, to addressing the issue of a student who faces disciplinary actions requiring removal from the educational setting for more than 10 days. This state and local guidebook describes the need for systematic assessment and program planning, addressing behavioral needs of the student as an ongoing process. This is to be done by the IEP Team during the IEP meeting. The Iowa IEP Guidebook also outlines essential elements of a Behavior Intervention Plan. Social, emotional, and behavioral aspects of need are inherent in ongoing assessment and programing (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

Studies at the secondary level indicate that while the majority of regular education teachers felt successful in teaching students with disabilities in the regular classrooms, over one third of them received no prior or ongoing preparation or professional development for this collaboration, and less than one half had been involved in development of the IEP (Rojewski & Pollard, 1993). Other findings indicated that teachers did willingly make specialized adaptations when advised to do so by IEP Teams when support was given to them (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bishop, 1992; Sapon-Shevin, 1996). The role of the
regular educator in the development, implementation, and evaluation of IEPs has become a critical issue in response to compliance efforts of schools to IDEA 1997 (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Sapon-Shevin, 1996).

IEP Meetings

The IDEA of 1997 specifically states the plan and process for IEP Meetings for all identified students: Each public agency is responsible for initiating and conducting meetings for the purpose of developing, reviewing or revising the IEP of a child with a disability (20 U.S.C. § 1414 (d)(3)).

The IEP Team also reviews the child's IEP periodically, but not less than annually, to determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved (20 U.S.C. § 1414 (d)(3)).

At the state and local levels this regulation is articulated to specifically emphasize that the IEP is a living document and the IEP Team puts the IEP into effect before providing special education and related services to the child, revises the document when necessary, and reviews it at least annually (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

The regular education teacher's role in these meetings is clearly required and defined:

The regular education teacher of the student with disabilities is a member of the IEP Team, shall, to the extent appropriate, participate in the development of the IEP of the child, including determination of appropriate positive behavioral intervention strategies, and the determination of supplemental aids and services, program modifications, and support for school personnel. (20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(3)(C))

It is logical that if regular education teachers are mandated to be members of the IEP Team and perform the functions outlined above, they must believe that collaboration is a positive model and understand that many teaching practices are shaped by beliefs. Researchers indicated that teachers
believed that the success of professional development supporting collaboration relied upon several factors: administrative support at both local and district level, openness and trust between administrators and teachers, participation in cooperative endeavors free of evaluation, existence of distinct focus and shared language, provision of needed resources, and promotion of school change to support collaboration (Fuchs et al., 1995; Roberts & Mather, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). These findings directed the study to further articulate and investigate the new roles of the teachers in collaborative endeavors.

Least Restrictive Environment: LRE

Once the IEP Team has been assembled and the IEP has been developed, IDEA 1997 directs that children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special education, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 USC § 1412 (a)(5)(A)).

These supplementary aids and services may include other supports to be provided in regular education classes or other regular education-related settings. The purpose of these would be to enable children with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate (20 USC § 1401 (a)(29)).

The Iowa Administrative Code outlines this same proposal (281-41.67(1) as a statement of the specific special education and related services to be provided to the eligible individual and the extent that the individual will be able to participate in regular education programs (p. 25). In IAC 281-41.70(2), least restrictive environment considerations prompt the team to answer four pertinent
questions regarding the student's participation in the regular curriculum. These are reflective of those required in IDEA 1997 and include the following concepts:

1. What accommodations, modifications, and adaptations does the individual require?
2. Why can't these accommodations, modifications, and adaptations be provided in the general classroom?
3. Is there a potential detriment to the individual if served in the general classroom?
4. How will the individual's participation in the general classroom impact other students? (20 U.S.C.§ 1400 et seq.).

The State of Iowa has adopted these propositions outlining IEP content. In addition, they have added a fifth area of inquiry to above list:

5. What specific systemic supports are needed to assist the teacher and other personnel to provide these accommodations, modifications and adaptations? (Iowa Department of Education, 1998, p. 95).

This last question provides opportunity for the regular education teacher to receive relevant and necessary information and support to assist students with special needs in their classroom. This study will investigate the practice of or lack of support in collaboration efforts mandated by law. Research identified lack of time to collaborate as one of the major barriers to the success of collaboration in schools. Lack of communication, limited or nonexistent planning time opportunities, and lack of administrative support were identified as primary barriers to collaboration success (McCrorry & McLeskey, 1997; Reeve & Hallahan, 1994; Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).
Legal Summary

In summary, the IDEA Amendments of 1997 affected the roles and responsibilities of the regular educator as a member of the IEP Team in several ways:

1. Regular educators are members of the IEP Team. This requires them to be an active participant in the development, review and revision of the IEP of students with disabilities served through collaborative measures.

2. Regular educators will develop, review and revise the IEP as member of teams comprised of parents, administrators, and students themselves in collaborative interactions. This requires them to maintain open lines of communication, participate in IEP Team meetings, and implement interventions and adaptations recommended by Team members.

3. Placement in the regular education classroom with access to the regular classroom and regular curriculum is strongly mandated by law from federal, state, and local level. This requires the regular educator to adapt and modify classroom expectations to meet the needs and ability levels of the students with disabilities in the regular classroom.

Collaboration with special educators and other team members is indicated. What are the needs of the regular educator as they become members of the IEP Team? What are the supports and barriers to collaboration? What are the reported beliefs and collaboration practices of educators? Will educators change their collaboration beliefs and practices over the first year of compliance?
The requirements of the new law are clear. Federal and state regulations added specific details to these regulations. The issue which is less clear is the way in which local school districts are planning to implement the law and how educators' reported beliefs and reported practices will impact the implementation of the new law in local schools. The review of literature will investigate educators' reported beliefs, collaboration practices currently practiced in schools, and educators and change. These aspects are important contributors to the investigation of educators' reported beliefs and practices as members of IEP Teams in collaborative settings, in compliance to IDEA 1997.

**Teacher Reported Beliefs and Collaborative Practices Regarding Serving Students with Special Needs**

According to Fullan (1991), what teachers think and do are major catalysts for educational change. This section of review of literature includes the findings on teacher beliefs in general, and more specifically what teachers think about serving students with special needs. Presented in chronological occurrence, this investigation followed the historical landmarks of special education in the United States in respect to law, educational reform, professional development efforts, and collaboration practices.

Teacher belief was defined in a broad sense as tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions regarding students served, the classroom itself, and the curriculum espoused or required in that particular setting (Kagan, 1992). King, Warren, and Peart (1988) reported teacher perceptions of the most satisfying and the most stressful aspects of their profession. Satisfying aspects included, among others, working with young students, helping students individually with personal academic problems, and interaction, support, and collaboration with colleagues. Stressful aspects included, among others, time demands, student
apathy, negative attitudes, and large class sizes. Kagan (1992) states that "in a land without bearings, teachers create and internalize their own maps" (p. 66).

Kagan emphasized the need for teachers to develop a firm belief system, which arises from the classroom experience. These reported beliefs often involved many uncertainties present within the territory of teaching. Teaching requires the teacher to solve problems, utilizing many forms of creativity.

Teacher practices are driven by personal and professional belief systems. Kagan reported that these circumstances make teaching an intensely private affair (1992). This personal form of knowledge called teacher belief emerges as implicit assumptions about students, the nature and dynamics of learning, the classroom environment and climate, and subject content.

Studies showed that teacher beliefs were relatively stable and resistive to change (Fullan, 1991). Teacher beliefs were found to share the commonality of congruent teaching styles which are consistently evident across grade levels and subject areas (Kagan, 1992). Teachers were not always cognizant of their own beliefs and did not always possess a common language with which to express their beliefs. As a result, teachers were often unwilling or unable to express beliefs publicly. Earlier studies regarding teacher beliefs in general indicate that teachers, reactive to the many factors beyond their control in the classroom, preferred the autonomy and isolation of the classroom. They reported that the autonomous classroom represented a safe, predictable environment in agreement with beliefs within their control (Leiberman, 1982). Negative attitudes were the result of this isolation in many cases, and teachers were not immune. Researchers, in their quest to evaluate teacher beliefs, sought to provide evidence suggesting that certain teacher beliefs were related to desirable student outcomes (Kagan, 1992).
In 1979, our educational system was in the process of articulating PL 94-142, the national effort to promote regular class placement for the student with special needs. This trend was based on the fact that special class placements were not reaping the positive outcomes predicted earlier for their success. Also, while integration and mainstreaming had been imposed through litigation and legislation, the attitudes and practices of the classroom teacher were considered far more potent variables in providing a successful school experience for a student with a disability (Larrivee, 1981).

Research surveys in the late 1970s following PL 94-142 investigated regular education teachers' attitudes toward the mainstreaming effort. Findings indicated that administrators and those not directly involved in the actual classroom instruction process were more in favor of the practice, while classroom teachers closest to the student had ambivalent feelings toward integration and a higher incidence of negative attitudes toward the practice (Larrivee & Cook 1979). Teacher attitudes were investigated in relation to gender, age, experience, and number of courses completed in special education. Results showed little conclusive evidence connecting beliefs of regular education teachers and collaborative practice methods when teaching students with disabilities (Larrivee & Cook, 1979).

Other surveys employed variables considered relevant to the attitudes of teachers. Examples include fixed environmental variables such as grade level taught, class size, school size, and school setting. Also considered were teacher perception variables, such as degree of past success with students with special needs, level of administrative support, and available support services. These were examined for relationship to teacher attitude toward special needs. Results showed that the higher the grade level taught, the less positive the
attitude of the teacher to serve those with special needs. Junior high school teachers exhibited the greatest need for professional development in the area of mainstreaming students with special needs. Teacher perceptions of success, level of administrative support, and the availability of support services were all significant in forming teacher attitudes in educating those with special needs (Larrivee & Cook, 1979).

The 1980s saw the emergence of the Regular Education Initiative (Will, 1986). Much research was done to investigate and promote instructional services for students with special needs within the regular classroom (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; Reynolds et al., 1987; Stainback & Stainback 1984; Will, 1986). A study conducted to identify the major attitudes and beliefs of regular and special educators in the REI movement indicated that neither regular nor special educators exhibited general dissatisfaction with delivery services system in which the resource room served most of the mainstreamed students for part of their day at school. Regular education teachers showed preference for the pull-out model over the consultative model. The pull out model involves removing the student from the regular education classroom for a time to receive specialized prescriptive instruction from the special educator. The latter model sends the special educator to consult and collaborate with the regular education teacher, keeping the child in the regular classroom (Semmel et al., 1991).

Many of the teachers surveyed believed that student success was not a likely outcome under REI reform. Many believed that the inclusion of a student with mild disabilities in the regular classroom would disrupt the balance of instructional time for non-disabled students as well as students with disabilities (Semmel et al., 1991). A decrease in attainment of district curriculum objectives
was foreseen by many regular and special educators to be a result of placement of students with special needs into the regular classroom. The most pessimistic attitudes were from regular educators directly responsible for meeting district deadlines and goals. Teachers' beliefs in their lack of ability to adapt instruction were clearly a barrier to collaboration in light of this investigation. Regular classroom teachers felt unskilled to make these adaptations in spite of the fact that research proponents of REI suggested that no special instructional techniques were needed for educating those with disabilities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; Reynolds et al., 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). Teachers surveyed indicated disagreement, expressing belief that the regular classroom was not the appropriate place to educate those with disabilities.

In opposition to much of the REI supporting research, teachers indicated belief that placement of students with special needs in the regular classroom would not, in their estimation, improve socialization, but foster stigmatization (Semmel et al., 1991). Stigmatization was believed to occur from repeated failure in the mainstream classroom just as readily as from being pulled out of the classroom for individualized instruction with the special educator (Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988).

The study further indicated that teachers did feel a shared responsibility for students with special needs in their classrooms, contradictory to the belief that the dual system of education was still separating regular and special education, as previously reported by Gartner and Lipsky (1987) and others. Cooperation between the regular and special educators was indicated in this study to be dynamic and functioning positively. Both regular and special educators reported the general belief that students with mild disabilities had a
basic right to be educated in the regular classroom with their peers. However, the same group indicated disagreement that an individual education plan, as outlined in REI, could be constructed and efficiently utilized in the regular classroom (Semmel et al., 1991). Conclusions indicate that placing students in the regular classroom may not elicit positive results if the teacher’s beliefs, perceptions, and expectations for the students’ behavior and performance were negative.

One collaborative effort in the early 1990s involved investigation of teachers’ views and beliefs in and acceptance of specific strategies used in the classroom to assist with student behavior and learning problems. Teachers indicated trust and belief in effective, simple interventions such as employing a certain signal to redirect a student’s attention and manipulation of tangible rewards (Johnson & Pugach, 1990). Teachers indicated beliefs that these essential intervention skills were needed to best accommodate students with learning and behavior problems in the regular classroom. Johnson and Pugach (1990) chose to investigate teachers’ perceptions and beliefs regarding these and other reasonable classroom interventions for students with mild behavioral and academic needs. The findings indicate that teachers did not use these strategies with regularity, even when provided professional development on the topic. Concerns and fears of the teachers were indicated as the reason they did not engage the strategies in effective ways and measures (Johnson & Pugach, 1990). Researchers reported that there existed a weak relationship between teacher beliefs and actual employment of intervention strategies toward successful mainstreaming.

A study conducted by Ysseldyke et al. (1990), investigated practices and opinions regarding structural arrangements and adaptive instruction for
students with mild handicaps. Results of the survey provided little indication that instructional methods were changed in any way by regular education teachers to meet the needs of students with mild handicaps in their classrooms. Adapted instructional techniques were viewed as highly desirable by the participants, yet this belief was not carried to practice in the classrooms. Teachers were either unable to make accommodations or did not conceptualize the changes at all. Many participants reported that if there were no students with special needs in their classroom, little or nothing would change, as little or no change had been made at all. This raised many questions as to the need for energized efforts toward mainstreaming (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; Reynolds et al., 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Will, 1986).

From the perspective of the special educator, to balance the beliefs and perspectives of the regular educator as reported in this study, early findings indicated that most special educators in the early 1990s were in favor of improving relations with the regular educator, working cooperatively with the regular educator, and believed that the delivery system of special education services might well be improved through implementation of the least restrictive alternative (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998). Efforts to apply research to enhance regular classroom experiences for students with special needs indicated that the efforts must be embraced by educators, both in regular and special capacities, supporting a single system of education (Vergason & Andregg, 1991).

Schumm and Vaughn (1991) presented research findings about the regular educator's perspectives on making adaptations for mainstreamed students in the reform movement following the IDEA of 1990. The study indicates concern regarding the willingness of the classroom teachers to
implement adaptations and modifications as outlined in the IEP of a student with special needs in the regular classroom, even when teachers believed themselves to be ready to comply. Teachers, particularly at secondary level, felt compelled to meet district expectations for content goals and objectives, and expressed belief that this effort was not compatible with meeting IEP needs of students with disabilities.

The study investigated teacher's beliefs and willingness to adapt changes in the regular classroom for students with special needs by classifying certain suggested adaptations as "desirable" and/or "feasible." Teacher responses indicated beliefs that desirable adaptations included provision of reinforcement and encouragement, establishment of a personal relationship with the mainstreamed students, and involvement of the mainstreamed students in whole class activities. Beliefs of least desirable adaptations included long range individual planning, adjustment of the physical environment, adaptation of regular materials, use of alternative materials, and adapted grading practices.

Beliefs of most feasible adaptations included willingness to establish individualized routines for the mainstreamed students, provision of reinforcement and encouragement, establishment of expectations, and involvement of mainstreamed students in whole class activities. Upon analysis, these required little if any individualization.

Least feasible adaptations were believed to be communication with mainstreamed students, adaptation of regular materials, use of computers, and provision individual instruction. Schumm and Vaughn (1991) noted that elementary teachers believed more strongly that computer use to enhance learning was more feasible. Middle school teachers expressed belief that
communicating with the special education teacher and establishing expectations for the mainstreamed students was less desirable than did high school teachers. While teachers reportedly considered it possible to provide appropriate supports such as collaboration and consultation programs, researchers indicate that it is the belief system and willingness of teachers to accept or reject the responsibility for making necessary adaptations for mainstreamed students in their classrooms (Jenkins, Pious, & Jewell, 1990).

Fad and Ryser (1993) further explored the belief system of regular educators as they perceived social and behavioral compliance and success in their students, both with and without disabilities. The variables for success according to the belief system of the regular educator need to be determined, as these represent evidence of success now and in the future for both students and collaborating teachers. Beliefs served as indicators for interventions and adaptations in the classroom, both academically and socially. Social and behavioral competencies are certainly transitional goals, a major focus of the IEP process (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

Teachers' beliefs in the competencies of peer relations, work habits, and coping skills were examined (Fad & Reyser, 1993). Regular education teachers were in the position to enlighten the administration and special educators of the expected social competencies they believed to be indicators of student success in school and the future. The study suggested further that regular education teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and subjective evaluations of the students may well change in positive directions if students possessed expected social and behavioral skills for the regular classroom.

Studies at the secondary level indicated that while the majority of the participants felt successful in teaching students with special needs in the
regular classroom, over one third of them received no prior instruction or preparation in this endeavor (Rojewski & Pollard, 1993). Rojewski and Pollard (1993) suggested three explanations for teacher beliefs and perceptions: they were learned, emergent from frequent contact with persons or occurrences, or resulted from cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance was offered as the explanation for many regular educators' perceptions and beliefs about teaching students with special needs. They believed that all students deserved education with non-disabled peers, yet held negative views on teaching such students. Responding with minimal effort out of guilt and in order to resolve the discomfort they felt for excluding some students, they gradually adopted positive views of inclusion and mainstreaming. This study reported inconclusive findings of many related studies which regarded teacher beliefs and perceptions as evidence of conflicting teacher views and beliefs on this subject (Larrivee, 1981; Larrivee & Cook, 1979).

Stewart (1983) concluded that teacher perceptions improved in positive correlation to related professional development, while the opposite was found by Rogers (1987). Rogers argued that perceptions and beliefs had no positive or negative relation to training and inservice, years experience, experience with students with disabilities, or certification. Rogers found that up to half of regular secondary vocational teachers had received no inservice or training in meeting needs of students with disabilities. Findings were moderately positive in other studies, indicating that the majority of secondary teachers fostered positive beliefs and perceptions toward students with disabilities (Okolo & Sitlington, 1988; Rojewski & Pollard, 1993). Results of these studies indicated that secondary educators formed their beliefs and perceptions based on traditional roles in the classroom, perceived barriers to inclusion and mainstreaming, and
beliefs and opinions about the responsibility for teaching those with disabilities that was not traditionally theirs (Rojewski & Pollard, 1993).

McIntosh et al. (1993) concluded that teachers developed negative beliefs of the abilities of students with learning disabilities who did not volunteer in class. These teachers perceived these students as inactive learners who were disengaged and passive with minimal self monitoring. Professional development as well as preservice preparation were proposed as effective efforts to promote positive beliefs and perceptions of regular educators toward those with disabilities in the regular classroom (Okolo & Sitlington, 1988; Rojewski & Pollard, 1993).

Studies conducted on the outcomes of 1990 IDEA added to the growing store of research regarding teacher beliefs toward serving students with special education needs. This research contributed information from theoretical domains as well as on the concrete level, regarding student placement in regular education (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1991; York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Noff, & Caughey, 1992).

In a study of actual experiences of regular educators teaching students with severe disabilities in the regular classroom, a transformation of increased ownership, in varying stages, and involvement with the student with severe disabilities occurred over the course of the school year (Giangreco et al., 1993). Teachers participating in the study challenged the students, their original expectations, and themselves. Responsibility for the student's educational experience and communication with the student increased. Negative, pessimistic comments representing initial reactions to inclusion were replaced by positive descriptors such as "positive," "successful," "amazed." Survey responses verified the descriptors documented here.
Transformations were gradual and progressive, according to the researchers. Teachers reported a metamorphosis from solely viewing the disability to addressing the child. Shared framework of expectations and goals, physical presence, validation of the teacher's contribution, and teamwork were reported by participants as catalysts to the transformation of beliefs (Giangreco et al., 1993). From a common initial negative reaction and minimal involvement level in serving students with disabilities in the regular classroom, seventeen of nineteen teacher participants experienced change in a positive direction.

In 1994, Vaughn et al. conducted a study of regular educators' beliefs, skills, and practices in planning for mainstreamed students with learning disabilities. The willingness and abilities of the regular education teacher were identified as necessary elements to success in teaching mainstreamed students (Stainback & Stainback, 1991). Yet others indicated that many teachers did not have the training to teach such students in the regular classroom in the regular curriculum (Vaughn & Schumm, 1992). Teachers reported having stability of beliefs and resistance to change, even though there existed lack of agreement on the definition of belief and on methods employed to measure them (Kagan, 1992). Vaughn et al. (1994) assumed the veracity of teacher self reports regarding their beliefs, skills, and practice regarding teaching students with disabilities in the regular classroom.

Teachers were more willing and likely to make adaptations "on their feet" than to engage in preplanning (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996). Teachers believed that students, including those with disabilities, should come to class prepared to learn the same material as others. Researchers reported beliefs and practices by elementary teachers which included individualized
instruction for students, as directed by the IEP, occurred at a higher rate than middle school teachers, who used small group instruction as the main adaptation. IEP use was low at both levels. Test adaptations were articulated as simply reading the test to the student and not by altering content. High school teachers' responses showed similar results. They were, however, willing to help outside of class as long as the student initiated the request for help (Vaughn et al., 1994). Teachers reported having beliefs and skills to adapt materials and activities but often did not transfer this to their practice.

Regarding adaptations in the regular classroom for students with special needs, Fuchs et al. (1992) reported categorization of adaptations to include routine adaptations, the extent to which teachers altered their original routines to fit the needs of identified students, and specialized adaptations, how teachers modified planned instruction beyond their routine adaptations to meet IEP needs of students. The findings indicated that many teachers made specialized adaptations when advised to do so with support. They continued the practice after viewing student success and began using adaptations for the entire class, not just students with identified special needs. Their beliefs had changed to value the specialized adaptations as students progressed. Those not given the directive or support to utilize specialized adaptations were uninventive in their adaptations, and lack of student progress strengthened the beliefs of teachers that adaptations were unnecessary to their classroom instructional routines to any great degree (Fuchs et al., 1992; Sapon-Shevin, 1996). Regular education teachers' perceptions of the importance of meaningful adaptation in instruction has become a critical issue in light of the 1990 IDEA and inclusive schools movement, according to some studies (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Sapon-Shevin 1996).
Teacher beliefs regarding their perceptions of skills necessary to meet the full range of student needs with high incidence disabilities of learning disabilities and behavior disorders were investigated by Vaughn and Schumm (1995). This information was used to design appropriate professional development to meet the challenges of the inclusive classroom. Teachers reported that they did not believe they possessed the skills, knowledge base, or confidence required to teach students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Teachers reported that they did not make adaptations in the classrooms because adaptations were time consuming in respect to planning and difficult to implement when classroom order had to be maintained. Further, teachers reported that adaptations compromised the content and pace of instruction for those non-disabled students, brought undue attention to those with disability challenges, and did not prepare the students for the real world.

Adaptations were largely incidental, inconsistent, idiosyncratic, and not in harmony with their perception of IEP directives (McIntosh et al., 1993). Regular educators surveyed felt isolated and perceived little or no support from personnel or materials (Vaughn & Schumm, 1992, 1995). When professional development was offered, teachers expressed beliefs that they needed to have information and modeling from special education experts rather than collaboration among regular and special educators.

Many teachers believed that they had already received adequate teacher preparation in attaining their certification and were unwilling to commit to extensive professional development in the area of modifying and adapting for students with special needs. A common response was that the teachers chose to teach regular education, and did not wish to teach special education,
although most expressed empathy for this population (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995).

The researchers identified inclusion as one of the least understood and emotionally laden topics in education today (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Teachers expressed fear and lack of crucial mainstreaming skills, and uncertainty regarding their ability to fulfill their new role. The researchers cautioned that expert advice be given to regular education teachers, but also emphasized the need for teachers' personal knowledge and beliefs to be entwined with new knowledge (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995).

Investigations of teachers' accommodations for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) indicated that teachers selected interventions and accommodations that they believed to be within their professional control (Zentall & Stormont-Spurgin, 1995).

Willingness to accept students with disabilities into their classroom was based on their perceptions of conditions, adaptations, and modifications. Conclusions supported the notion that teachers should be given the authority to choose accommodations, and that these adaptations should be evaluated in regard to their social validity in serving mainstreamed students with ADHD (Zentall & Stormont-Spurgin, 1995). Further findings showed that the number of years of teaching experience did not explain teacher perceptions of past success and failure concerning inclusive accommodations. Nor was there a link between professional longevity and willingness or reluctance to try new adaptations and modifications (Zentall & Stormont-Spurgin, 1995). Similar findings were reported by Rogers (1987) almost a decade earlier.

This study also reported findings that secondary teachers believed and practiced willingness and successful engineering of the classroom environment
and adaptation of independent activities. Elementary teachers expressed positive beliefs in their utilization of alternative materials, goals, and beneficial classroom grouping techniques (Zentall & Stormont-Spurgin, 1995). The researchers noted that these findings are contradictory to Ysseldyke et al. (1990), with the explanation that many of the activities at secondary level used with students with ADHD are less developmentally correct for younger students. Interestingly, the study suggests that the type of position of the teacher, full or part time, did influence teacher beliefs of success in implementing accommodations, teacher willingness, and resistance to venture adaptations and modifications (Zentall & Stormont-Spurgin, 1995).

The inclusion movement has created conflict in educational communities since the passage of IDEA 1990, and many valiant efforts have been made toward planning for and implementing school practices to reflect the reform (Giangreco et al., 1993). A study on inclusive classroom practices indicated that some regular educators have taken a proactive stand to defend their beliefs that they do indeed possess the necessary skills and abilities to teach students with disabilities in the regular classroom with success (King-Sears, 1995). This was a positive turn on reports that teachers did not believe themselves to possess the capabilities to educate this population in the regular classroom and regular curriculum (Glatthom, 1990; Semmel et al., 1991).

King-Sears (1995) stated that successful interventions in inclusive classrooms did not automatically appear magically and proficiently in the professional repertoire of educators in the schools today. The researcher examined teacher beliefs, stating that the prerequisites for successful implementation of inclusive practices included awareness of proven techniques, preparation, practice, and support. Research indicated that there
was a discrepancy between what educators know they should do and what they actually do in classrooms. What was known and what was done was not always the same when teaching students with disabilities (King-Sears, 1995).

Suggested methods for increasing educators' perceptions of their comfort levels with inclusive practices included inservice training, ongoing partnerships with universities and school systems, collaboration with researchers, attendance at professional conferences, setting goals for inclusive practice, development of support networks, both formal and informal, empowerment of educators in problem solving and decision making regarding preparation, technical assistance during implementation, and shared experiences with other schools and programs. Only when beliefs change and behaviors change, will change occur in inclusive efforts by regular educators. This has been a common research indication throughout this investigation of the barriers and conflicts that maintain the dual system of education (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987, 1997; Stainback & Stainback, 1991; York et al., 1992).

Educators who believe in inclusive collaborative practices can increase colleagues' comfort levels with these measures, thus improving success stories for students with disabilities in the regular classroom (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998).

With the 1997 Amendments to the IDEA, it is interesting to note the collective voice of teacher beliefs regarding the practice of teaching students with special needs in the regular classroom, as represented in professional and parent organizations related to teaching in general, and special needs in many cases. Interpretations of the inclusion movement have been documented and published for the members of these organizations as statements of common beliefs and missions (AFT, 1994; CEC, 1993; LDA 1993; NEA, 1994).
The range of positions regarding inclusive efforts spans the gamut from maximum, unqualified support for total inclusion, to cautious concern for the movement, to defense of retention of the continuum of service for students with special needs as return to the regular classroom gains momentum. The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps promoted the movement without question or qualification (Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 1991). The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) offered support for the inclusive movement, but cautioned for a continuum of service opportunities be maintained (CEC, 1993). This position was shared with the National Association of State Boards of Education (1992). The Council for Learning Disabilities (LDA), and others, focused on students with learning disabilities, voicing alarmed concern that necessary prescriptive services be maintained for individualized and appropriate educational opportunities. These may indicate more restrictive placement than is proposed by the IDEA 1997 in their professional opinion (LDA, 1993; Division for Learning Disabilities [DLD-CEC], 1993; Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1993).

Finally, the concern for the increased responsibilities and new roles of educators serving such populations in the regular classroom and the impact of inclusive measures on students was voiced by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in 1994 and 1996, who declared a moratorium on inclusion, as did the National Education Association (NEA) in 1989 and 1998. These two organizations joined forces with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) in 1998 to petition the Federal Department of Education to extend the compliance date for new IEPs until July 1998, requiring only new and updated IEPs to be affected. This move was initiated to promote quality of the new regulations over expedience.
Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al. (1996) addressed the evolution of the inclusion movement and the energized debate literature as having a missing element, the views of the regular educator. Their investigation of this missing link was driven by the belief that the regular educator is significantly affected by inclusive practice implementation. Through focus group interview techniques, non-threatening and permissive, educators were asked to share understanding or lack of inclusive practice with researchers and colleagues. They were encouraged to voice concerns, emotions and beliefs regarding the practice (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).

Findings indicated that teachers varied in their understanding of inclusive practice, and in this effort they sought a concrete operational definition of inclusion. Pressure was applied by the professional organizations for the Federal Government to define inclusion operationally, as the time to include by law drew near. Role definitions and outlined expectations were unclear. Educators expressed supportive beliefs that removal of labels would be a positive benefit for students.

However, many teachers felt strongly that imposed inclusion promoted negative reactions and beliefs about the success of the inclusion effort, and skepticism was a common view held by many of the participants as a result. Teachers expressed the need to form a united stand to protect their rights and beliefs, to have a voice in the reform. Feelings were often expressed as fears of academic failure of students, lawsuits, work overload, and imposed role changes at the local level for the regular educator (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996). Teachers expressed their beliefs that administrators were not aware of the full impact of inclusion as they made administrative decisions. Feelings of lack of empowerment by the teachers were commonly reported. The
researchers summed up the teacher's collective belief that inclusion was promoted by people who did not work in the classrooms and were unaware of the procedures and consequences of implementing practices they establish (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).

Large class size was perceived by teachers as one of the greatest barriers to successful inclusive efforts. Time to plan for and provide these adaptations was implicated as a major barrier as well. Additional resources and personnel were believed to be assets to the inclusion efforts, but trust that these would materialize was thin. Teachers' views on *not choosing* to be special educators were commonly expressed, as indicated in this investigation (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996) and earlier studies (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995).

Teachers' views indicated concerns and fears related to factors of funding, accountability for teaching both students with disabilities and the non-disabled students fairly and effectively, parent reactions, facility maintenance, grading and assessment, negative and positive aspects of team teaching, as well as further stigmatization of students with special needs who might be embarrassed by adaptations in presence of non-disabled peers (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).

Responses from teachers did indicate optimistic beliefs that successful inclusion and collaboration might and should be achieved through open and consistent communication and cooperative learning, as was indicated by earlier studies reporting the benefits of professional development (Glatthorn, 1990; Jenkins et al., 1990; Johnson & Pugach, 1990; Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; McIntosh et al., 1993; Reynolds et al., 1987; Rojewski & Pollard, 1993; Vergason & Andregg, 1991; Ysseldyke et al., 1990; Will, 1986).
In summary, teacher beliefs toward educating students with special needs in the regular classroom indicated many considerations to inform teachers, parents, and personnel as to the goals of inclusion, definition of roles and responsibilities, rationale of plan concurrent with the student's IEP, identification of resources and supports, reduction of class size, teacher preparation, opportunity to volunteer to collaborate and include students with disabilities (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996). As IDEA Amendments of 1997 are articulated in our nation's schools, optimism that inclusive and collaborative efforts to serve students with special needs in the regular classroom and regular curriculum will reflect positive research indications as we strive to teach all students appropriately in the least restrictive environment.

Research indicated that teachers' beliefs are stable and resistive to change (Fullan, 1991). Regular education teachers' beliefs were reflected in their practice (Kagan, 1992). Attitudes and and practices of the classroom teacher were considered more potent to collaborative inclusion success than legislation and policy (Larrivee, 1981). Teachers reported ambivalent feelings toward serving students with disabilities in the regular classroom in early studies (Larrivee & Cook, 1979). More contemporary studies indicated that teachers had concerns and fears about serving this population in the regular classroom (Johnson & Pugach, 1990). Adaptations and modifications were believed by many to be desirable but not feasible (Ysseldyke et al., 1990).

Research indicated that best collaborative practice relied on positive teacher beliefs that students can be served in the regular classroom with non-disabled peers (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Teachers reportedly selected and implemented interventions and accommodations they believed to be in their control. A number of elementary teachers expressed positive beliefs in
utilization of alternative materials, goals, and beneficial classroom grouping techniques. Studies indicated that the type of position the teacher held, full or part time, did influence teachers' beliefs in the success offered through collaborative measures (Zentall & Stormont-Spurgin, 1995). Also, studies showed that some regular education teachers had taken a proactive stand that they did indeed believe that they possessed the required skills to educate students with special needs in the regular classroom (King-Sears, 1995).

Finally, it was indicated in the research that teacher beliefs and practices may be incongruent with collaborative techniques as required by law. Further research investigated the relationship of teacher beliefs and change, as collaborative strategies had not been reported as a common occurrence between regular educators and special educators in collaborative endeavors. The next section links reported teacher beliefs about collaboration to teacher change research. The indication is that reported beliefs may well need to change to support the new practice of collaboration required by IDEA.

**Teacher Change**

Fullan states that change is a fact of life in schools (1991). The impact of change is how we as individuals deal with the reality that change is so commonplace in our lives, we spend little time examining its meaning as it happens in our personal and professional lives. Actual change involves passing through many issues and zones of uncertainty (Schon, 1971).

Regarding teachers and change, Fullan (1991) offered the simple yet complex thought that educational change happens, or does not, in direct response to what teachers think and do, or do not think, and do not do. He defined change as personal experience in which the journey involves coming to terms with optimism that rewards are minimally equal to input (p. 117).
Fullan identified specific criteria by which teachers decide in what capacities they will allow change: the degree to which change fills an identified need causes students to learn to promised standards; the degree to which teachers' personal and professional investments are clearly delineated to effect the change, to include time, energy, new learning, generation of enthusiasm, competence, and priorities; social acceptance and interaction success (1991). Other perspectives on the criteria for change include those of Bos (1995), who suggested that, given the conclusion that schools and teachers change, the qualities sought should include effectiveness of goal attainment, fidelity to intention, and longevity.

Change in teachers' beliefs and practices happen when they relate directly to the classroom experience: resistance or refusal to change occurs when the agendas for change stem from sources foreign to the realities of the classroom. Fullan suggests that change is a process, not an event (1991).

Studies conducted with teachers who are asked to educate students with special needs in the regular classroom were asked to make changes in practice, which may also have indicated change in beliefs. Participation was defined as the catalyst for change in a study conducted to investigate teacher attitudes and change (Giangreco et al., 1993; Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes, 1995). Transforming experiences promoted ownership of and involvement with students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Other studies reported the value of teacher collaboration and inservice opportunities to supersede that of inclusion preplanning (Kozleski & Jackson, 1993). Studies showed the change of teachers over time in inclusive settings to include a journey through varied degrees of tolerance, acceptance, support, and advocacy (Rainforth et al., 1997; Salisbury, Palombaro, & Hollowood, 1993; York et al., 1992).
Janney et al. (1995) suggested that the factors responsible for changes in teachers toward mainstreaming and inclusive efforts were that teacher beliefs had been the cornerstone for development of strategic plans and actions, thus reducing resistance to change through reduced cost investment by teachers. Revision of basic guiding principles and goals as the inclusionary journey evolved were noted as collaboration and change supports. Teacher empowerment demanded clarification of specific investments and costs for implementation of expected changes, and developed sooner when existing beliefs did not have to be abandoned, but rather were built upon (Janney et al., 1995).

Skrtic (1991) implied that change in the established school culture to include students with special needs in the regular classroom presented a challenge to the existing status quo of the schools, due to the traditional acceptance of the dual system of regular education and special education. Thousand and Villa (1990) suggested that this dilemma can trace its roots in teacher preparation programs which maintained the dual system of regular and special education and did not teach these professionals to be collaborators.

Teachers execute the requirements of their professional role in the classroom as they best understand them. Personal experiences and journeys, when undertaken in supportive surroundings, can change beliefs, attitudes, and ultimately practices over time (Janney et al., 1995). There must exist opportunities to practice, refine, and own new skills in the context of the change both personally and professionally within the school culture as an evolutionary and successful experiences in which all stakeholders are learners.
Change is assisted by employment of systematic procedures by leaders to bring about change (Wisniewski & Alper, 1994). Change does not happen solely reactive to laws and mandates. Process for change from the standpoint of the leader may include network development, resource assessment to include options for implementation, implementation of the new process, and dynamic channels for ongoing feedback, and renewal of personal and professional investment on the part of all players.

Change does not happen without the element of time (Fullan, 1991). Change takes years, not months, as often reported in research (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Teachers are now viewed as major players in educational change, as they come as informed agents, problem solvers, and collaborators in the process of change (Englert & Tarrant, 1995). Increased levels of fidelity and longevity occurred as a result of teacher-researcher communication.

Key elements to change are time and trust (Fullan, 1991). Fullan strongly suggests that prescribed fixes to educational issues do not exist (1993). How and why teachers change beliefs and practices were investigated as reported factors for successful collaboration, both in planning and implementation (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Gable, Hendrickson, et al., 1993; Glatthorn, 1990; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Stevens & Slavin, 1995).

Collaboration

Teacher Beliefs, Change, and Collaboration

The consideration of teacher beliefs and willingness to change is of great importance for professional development of collaborative practices (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Fad & Reyser, 1993; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). Views and perceptions of educators had important effects on classroom practices as did reflection of these beliefs. Reflection was noted in
the research as an uninvestigated practice, that when employed, reportedly enhanced positive collaboration beliefs. Reflection on teacher beliefs and practice indicated more attention than had been given in professional development of educators' pursuits collaborative practices (Fadl & Reyser, 1993).

Knowing what teachers believed about serving students with special needs in the regular classroom raised an important question. How do school districts best engage regular and special educators to collaborate successfully to serve students with disabilities in the regular classroom (Glatthorn, 1990)? Beliefs of the regular and special educators have turned to positive classroom practice as the result of such actions in the form of professional development, according to this study. Inservice efforts reportedly dispelled beliefs of some regular educators who previously viewed the role of the resource teacher as ineffectual and insignificant to the success of the child with special needs in the regular classroom, indicated in Glatthorn's study (1990).

Knowing how and why teachers change beliefs and practice was important for collaboration planning and implementation (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Following are specific factors conducive to linking beliefs, change indications and collaborative pursuits effectively as required by the law, to include professional development.

Professional Development and Collaboration

Teachers believed that the success of professional development supporting collaboration relied upon several factors: administrative support at both local and district level, openness and trust between administrators and teachers, participation in cooperative endeavors free of evaluation, existence of distinct focus and shared language, provision of needed resources, and
promotion of school change to support collaboration (Fuchs et al., 1995; Roberts & Mather, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). These pursuits for professional development toward collaboration, promoting the guiding factors of REI and mandated later by IDEA 1990, affected teachers' perceptions of their own roles and responsibilities as well as their beliefs that regular and special educators can and will work together with parity (Glatthorn, 1990). The outcomes would be shaped by changed and supported teacher beliefs as they promoted true collaboration and active participation in such activities as peer coaching and supervision, professional dialogues, and curriculum development planned for the success of all students (Glatthorn, 1990).

Early findings indicated that most special educators in the early 1990s were positively directed to collaborate with regular educators and operated on the premise that the delivery system of special education services would be enhanced positively through implementation of the least restrictive alternative (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998). Efforts to apply research to enhance regular classroom experiences for students with special needs, supporting a single system of education, confirmed the need for collaborative efforts on the part of all educators, both in regular and special capacities (Vergason & Andregg, 1991).

Factors Conducive to Collaboration

Teachers identified factors which promoted collaboration success (Cook & Friend, 1995; Dougherty, 1994; Evans, Townsend, Duchnowski, & Hocutt, 1996; Friend, Reising, & Cook, 1993; Reinhiller, 1996; Sapon-Shevin, 1996; Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998). Freedom to choose a collaborative partner rather than mandatory assignment to a team was reported as important to the success of the collaborative endeavor.
Communication, both oral and written, was also identified as a crucial factor, with common vision and shared planning time identified as paramount issues to collaboration success. Co-planning was identified as necessary to ensure ease of strategy adaptation, natural linkage to existing regular curriculum, use in group instruction, and emphasis on direct instruction of skills (Gable, Arllen, et al., 1993; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996; Raywid, 1993; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995).

Other factors identified included team participation skills, problem solving initiative, opportunities for valid feedback which is specific, immediate, and objective. Credit for ideas and accomplishments of team members was noted as a factor of collaboration success. Professional consensus to manage conflict and confrontation was identified as a contributor to collaborative progress. Formative group efforts to resolve issues confronting the team were reported as beneficial also.

Lack of communication, limited or nonexistent planning time opportunities, and lack of administrative support were identified as primary barriers to collaboration success (McCrary & McLeskey, 1997; Reeve & Hallahan, 1994; Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996).

Collaboration Models

Meeting the needs of diverse learners has always been a formidable challenge to educators (Choate, 1993; Dougherty, 1994; Fad & Reyser, 1993; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Hines, 1994; Kruger, Struzzio, Watts, & Vacca, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Reinhiller, 1996; Scott et al., 1998; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Van Dyke, Pitonyak, & Gilley, 1997). Planning relevant instruction for students with documented special needs was not identified as the regular
educator's primary concern in collaborative settings. The special educator already had the expertise of planning relevant instruction and strategies for students with special needs. The reported special educator's priority was not to be the regular curriculum expert, as that was the role of the regular educator. The skills noted as most necessary for successful implementation were teachers' abilities to communicate and collaborate (Cronin, 1996; Van Dyke et al., 1997). Learning to function as a team that communicated effectively and dealt with change were primary skills for collaborative teachers to acquire. The group needed to function with an ongoing schedule, as well as in crisis situations, to deal with events that may arise which challenged the stability of the regular classroom. The team needed to stay enthused and energized. This focused the dynamics of the process on the teacher team primarily, with less direct involvement from administrators (Rainforth et al., 1997).

Models of collaboration emerged from schools such as those in Montgomery County, Virginia (Adamson, Matthews, & Schuller, 1990; Van Dyke et al., 1997). This and other models identified three models for collaborative effort for serving students with special needs in the regular classroom.

*Instructional collaboration* occurs when the IEP directs the special educator to supply specialized instruction in specific contexts, subjects and/or times of the school day. This instruction may conform to the topic and context of that taught in the regular curriculum, but is delivered by the special educator to teach to the ability level, learning rate and style of the student with identified needs (Adamson et al., 1990; Van Dyke et al., 1997).

*Supportive collaboration model* comprises the efforts of the regular and special educators in the regular classroom in cooperative teaching efforts, adapting and modifying instruction for those who require it, within the same
physical space (Adams & Cessna, 1993; Friend & Cook, 1992; Stevens & Slavin, 1995). Cooperative teaching can take the form of complimentary instruction, team teaching, and supportive learning activities. In these forms of collaboration, researchers reported that teachers agreed that personal styles and philosophies played a key role in collaboration success. Social skill instruction was noted to be a curricular area conducive to collaboration practice (Cronin, 1996; Stainback et al., 1996; Warger & Rutherford, 1993).

Communication was repeatedly identified as a necessary ingredient for successful collaborative practice, to foster optimum planning and implementation success, both for students and professionals (Friend et al., 1993; Reeve & Hallahan, 1994; Vaughn et al., 1994, 1995; Walther-Thomas & Carter, 1993).

Insights of co-teachers identified the following as visionary metaphors for successful co-teaching. First, the special educator is an equal colleague, not to be utilized as a paraprofessional. Collaboration is based on parity, shared responsibility and mutual accountability.

Secondly, collaborative teams generate teaming dynamics, brainstorming opportunities, and formative energy. Third, two teachers, sharing unique skills and characteristics, allow students who need individual guidance or redirection to be served without disrupting the rest of the class unnecessarily (Adams & Cessna, 1993; Brody, 1994).

A successful strategy in the Montgomery, Virginia, Schools, the consultative collaboration model, included the creation of a consulting teacher position in each school, who served as a leader for special education. The role required the consultant teacher to ensure that services were delivered in compliance with federal and state regulations. Meetings for eligibility and
monitoring the IEP process from referral to development were chaired by this individual. This professional also provided on-site technical assistance to teachers, administrators, students and parents. Crisis intervention, model teaching, facilitation of collaboration among professional instructional teams and ongoing staff development within the building were also implemented by this professional (Adams & Cessna, 1993).

Some special education collaboration consultants performed their duties on an itinerant basis. They traveled between schools and provided training and support to the regular education teacher and instructional assistants. They provided adapted instruction plans, facilitated positive peer interactions for identified students and classmates, worked directly with identified students, and modeled teaching interventions for instructional assistants. They assisted the regular classroom teacher in facilitating parent involvement and participation in the instructional program.

Special and regular education educators new to collaborative settings tended to go through three phases as they refined the process of working together. The first was represented by parallel teaching, where some students met with the regular educator, and some with the special educator. The next step was the cooperative phase, or co-teaching, where teachers took turns presenting portions of each unit to the entire group or small groups (Dalheim, 1994). As professional relationships emerged, mutual respect developed, teacher skills and styles complimented the learning process, planning became more efficient, and the collaborative phase was achieved (Cibrowski, 1992; McLeskey & Waldron, 1996; Van Dyke et al., 1997). These and other researchers noted that, as the roles and responsibilities emerged and refined, it occasionally became necessary to request assistance and clarification from
divisions of special education or even state level administrators to deal with regulations and policies that were disincentives or barriers to collaborative educational programming. In approaching these barriers, the team occasionally was granted waivers from regulations when the success of the student was the desired outcome. It was therefore important for team members to be aware of the federal, state and local policies which regulated education of students with and without disabilities (VanDyke et al., 1997).

Benefits of Collaboration

Studies identified benefits of successful collaboration to include provision of additional levels of service for more students, both identified and non-disabled students (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Gable, Hendrickson, et al., 1993; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Stevens & Slavin, 1995). This practice allowed more students to be included in the regular curriculum as the least restrictive environment. Students felt less stigmatized or singled out when collaborative measures were employed. Students without disabilities benefited from peer interactions and social skill development. Regular educators reported higher levels of respect for students with identified needs and more willingness to be involved in these students' education (Friend & Cook, 1992; Johnston, 1994; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Reeve & Hallahan, 1994).

Professional benefits of collaboration were identified as increased opportunity to work with more students and to see them demonstrate a wider spectrum of abilities. Teacher isolation was reduced in the collaborative process. Teacher stress likewise was reportedly reduced. Collaborative meeting times increased in frequency over time. Teachers came to a new and positive level of understanding of students identified with special needs and viewed their abilities in more and diverse settings. Regular education teachers

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
reported increased levels of patience in working with the students with special needs and with the collaborative teachers (Gable, Hendrickson, et al., 1993; Putman et al., 1995; Reeve & Hallahan, 1994; Safran & Safran, 1996).

**Collaboration Summary**

In summary, collaboration is one process of serving students with special needs in the regular curriculum as the least restrictive environment. Regular and special educators share vision, parity, resources, and responsibilities in positive collaborative practice. Teacher beliefs about serving students with special needs in the regular classroom were indicated as catalysts to successful outcomes. Professional development geared to the collaborative process has been shown to enhance professional practices, and student success for both non-disabled and students with identified needs occurs. Identified factors for successful collaboration reportedly included choice of partner, communication, and time to plan. Other important factors included team participation skills, problem solving, feedback opportunities, member value, and consensus. Successful collaboration models included several formats: instructional collaboration, supportive collaboration, and consultative collaboration.

Reported benefits to collaboration were many. Student success was identified in social, academic and psychological areas for all students in the regular curriculum and classroom. Students were less stigmatized when labels were minimized and exclusion was reduced or eliminated.

Professionals reported higher levels of respect for students with identified needs and more willingness to be part of the collaborative process. Teacher isolation and stress levels were reportedly reduced. Collaborative meeting opportunities increased. Teachers reported increased levels of patience when working with this population of students and the collaboration teams.
This review of literature attempts to link teachers' reported beliefs and practices of serving students with special needs in the regular classroom, as required by IDEA. Collaboration among regular and special educators in this endeavor depends on the extent to which teachers share beliefs that collaboration is a worthwhile and feasible endeavor. Teacher beliefs often drive practice, as reported in research, so for some educators a change of beliefs and collaborative practice is indicated. Teachers' beliefs drive practice, so collaboration success depends on many teachers' willingness to change to meet the needs of students with special needs in the regular classroom in compliance with the new IDEA of 1997.

Return to Research Questions

In response to the review of literature presented, the initial research questions continue to surface as logical and pertinent avenues of inquiry. What are the laws and guiding documents which require the regular educator to serve on IEP Teams in collaborative settings to educate students with special needs in the regular classroom? How are they being implemented at the local level? What do educators perceive as the supports and barriers to collaboration? How are the needs of the regular educator being met to assume this new role? What are the reported beliefs and collaborative practices of educators in this endeavor? Will the teachers change beliefs and practices in the first year of compliance?
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY
Study Factors

Factors considered in developing the methodology for this study included preliminary activities, timeliness, site choice, participant selection, and time sampling.

Preliminary Activities

During the summer of 1998 I attended local AEA meetings conducted to create a new Individual Education Program (IEP) format for the local schools reflecting legislated changes. Five committees of special educators addressed different sections of IEP format revision. Every word, phrase, and page layout was chosen carefully and revised several times for relevance, meaning, efficiency, and ultimately, compliance to State of Iowa mandates. The new document had to follow state guidelines derived from the new IDEA 1997, and sections were identified where AEAs were allowed to articulate items tailored to their specific constituents and needs. Committee participants included support staff and AEA administrators, local (LEA) administrators, and selected teachers from the Pleasantview School District. The IEP format was in experienced hands.

As I observed these efforts to redesign the IEP, one question remained unanswered. How were special education teachers and the regular education teachers to be informed of and prepared for their new roles? As no answer seemed apparent, I chose to pursue this topic as a formal qualitative study.

Timeliness was a critical factor of this study. As of July 1, 1998, IDEA Amendments of 1997 required regular educators to serve as members of the IEP Team as responsible contributors to the IEP development, review, and
revision (20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq.; Iowa Department of Education, 1998). The Hawthorne Middle School Building Plan mentioned previously, reflecting federal, state, and local recommendations, defines the role of the regular educator to include identification of specific student concerns, implementation of accommodations and modifications in the regular classroom, and collaboration with the special education staff in monitoring progress of students unable to meet academic and behavioral setting demands of the regular education classroom and curriculum. These educators were further required to utilize the building problem-solving procedures. Regular educators were also responsible for securing additional time to meet with other staff members to discuss modifications, adaptations, student progress, and other areas of concern. As evidenced in initial exploratory meetings at Hawthorne, this was not a reality.

Opportunity to conduct interviews immediately following the compliance date provided a unique opportunity for a timely investigation. This study investigated teacher beliefs and collaborative practices, supports and barriers, and evidence of change as the teachers became collaborative members of the IEP Teams at Hawthorne.

Study Site

Pleasantview School District is one of the largest districts in the state. It had recently pulled out of the AEA instructional pool. This pool provided teachers for those with special needs, consultants, and support teams. This action was taken as a cost cutting effort and also to comply with IDEA 1997, according to the Director of Special Needs for Pleasantview District. Students with special needs were to be included in regular education curriculum as much as possible with non-disabled peers. This action resulted in the
Pleasantview District absorbing the former AEA teachers of special education into their teacher pool. Support services remained within the AEA.

I petitioned the Pleasantview School District in July 1998 to conduct a study during the 1998-99 school year at a middle school in search of answers to the research questions noted earlier. Permission was granted, and since the Pleasantview Director of Special Needs was on the IEP rewriting committee, I was able to establish positive rapport with him during the sessions. He agreed that the new law and inclusion measures might well cause both special and regular teachers to be concerned. He expressed interest in my proposed area of study. Procedures were followed for my petition, and permission was granted in August, 1998.

Hawthorne Middle School was selected because it represented a typical middle school in the Pleasantview School District in regard to teacher longevity, teacher expertise, and the percentage of students with identified special needs. Hawthorne has a faculty of 26 teachers, six of whom teach in special education. Six of the faculty have taught at Hawthorne for less than 10 years. Twenty faculty members have taught at Hawthorne for 10 years or more. There are currently 612 students at Hawthorne, and 42 are identified with special needs.

A contributing factor for choosing Hawthorne included consideration of two other middle schools in the district. Western Hills Middle School was slated to close in Fall 1999 due to budget cuts, student enrollment decline, and deteriorating physical condition of the aged building. Teachers at this facility may not have been focused on innovation and change under these circumstances. Senator Middle School faculty is well known to this researcher, having collaborated often to conduct student programs and teacher inservice opportunities. Neutrality of the researcher would be in jeopardy at this site.
Hawthorne faculty were relatively anonymous to the researcher. Glesne and Peshkin (1993) suggest that researcher familiarity with setting and/or participants may well set up expectations that may constrain effective data collection.

Hawthorne was selected as the site on this criteria. Pleasantview Community Schools, embracing inclusion and collaboration in compliance with IDEA 1997 for the 1998-99 school year, was a viable community for study.

Middle school level was chosen for the study. Collaboration is the common model employed in area middle schools, both urban and rural. Middle school was reported to be a viable setting for collaboration, as inclusion practices fit well within the middle school environment, where extremes are normal, where growth is dynamic, and where the need to be alike and find common ground is crucial to self-esteem (Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). Collaboration research supports the investigation of these dynamics.

My initial visits to the study site in October 1998 were to explore options for designing the actual study which was conducted through Spring 1999. Following these initial visits, it became clear that a qualitative study would be appropriate. The openness of qualitative interview allowed the researcher to investigate the world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and always in a state of change (Glesne & Peshkin, 1993). It was the intent of this researcher to pursue the topic of educators' beliefs, collaborative practices, and change as participants of the IEP Team at Hawthorne Middle School.

**Participant Selection**

I visited the Hawthorne staff on a workday in August 1998 before the first day of school. I was given 10 minutes to present my study. I used an overhead visual presentation, calling attention to the IDEA Amendments of 1997,
Pleasantview School goals, AEA goals, and the Hawthorne Building Plan goals which all related to the implementation of IDEA 1997. I did not directly ask the question, “How will you be informed of your new role as members of the IEP Team in collaborative settings?” I decided that the topic and question should emerge in the focus group interviews throughout the study.

As a result, I initially received eight volunteers who agreed to meet once a month. They expressed interest in using the experience to air concerns as well as receive Phase Three credit and compensation for their participation. Phase Three is an incentive program sponsored by the State Department of Education to encourage teachers to pursue avenues for improvement of teaching skills. Teachers are paid for participation in approved Phase III projects.

The responding group of volunteers consisted of three special educators, one counselor, one music teacher, one science teacher, and two math teachers, one of whom reportedly “jumped ship from special education,” seeking job security. Two of the original group had to drop out because of schedule conflicts.

Participants were identified by pseudonyms throughout the study and included the following individuals:

1. Mrs. Leader, school guidance counselor, had been teaching classes and providing counseling services at Hawthorne for over 10 years. She served on problem solving committees as outlined in the Hawthorne Building Plan

2. Mrs. Number was a veteran math teacher who had been teaching this subject for over 20 years at middle school level. She reported no inclusion or collaboration experience previous to the study.
3. Mrs. Melody was a vocal music teacher who had been teaching at Hawthorne for over 10 years. She had included students with special needs during this time with varied levels of assistance and collaboration.

4. Mrs. Willing was a special education teacher who had taught in the district for over 10 years as an AEA employee serving students in resource and pull out models. She had been teaching at Hawthorne for six years.

5. Mrs. Able was a special education teacher who had been teaching at Hawthorne for over 10 years. She served students in both resource and pull out models.

6. Mrs. Water was a general education science teacher who had been teaching at Hawthorne for about 10 years as a special educator. She switched positions to become a regular education teacher in reaction to special education changes mandated by IDEA 1997.

7. Mrs. Dale Boone was the building administrator at Hawthorne Middle School during the year of study. She had been administrator in the district for over 10 years. This was her first year as principal at Hawthorne.

Archival Data

Individual buildings in the Pleasantview district were directed to formulate a building plan in 1996 to address services for students with special needs. I examined the Hawthorne Building Plan. I studied the guidelines, policies, role and responsibility definitions, resources, and time lines for serving students with disabilities at Hawthorne Middle School. Other sections addressed and outlined structure and process of special education services as they integrated with other programs and services at Hawthorne. Support for this endeavor could take the form of inservice, collaboration planning time, access to AEA support staff, and technology. The Hawthorne Building Plan served as
one source of questions generated for the study. The Hawthorne Building Plan appears in Appendix A.

**Focus Group Interview Techniques**

The methodology employed to conduct this study at Hawthorne regarding the impact of IDEA 1997 on beliefs and collaborative practices of the teachers as participants on the IEP Teams utilized focus group interview techniques. This methodology has been shown to provide educators and those in the social sciences with a strong, efficient tool by which to conduct qualitative investigation. The methodology can provide relevant data in the areas of beliefs, concerns, perceptions and feelings of small groups who interact for a common purpose (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996).

The focus group interview technique allows the researcher to investigate pertinent data to explain not just the “what”, but also the “why” and “how” of collaboration (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). This technique was employed to investigate collaboration and teacher beliefs regarding the new roles of educators under IDEA 1997 at Hawthorne Middle School.

Characteristics of focus group interviews for education research and the results of participation by Hawthorne faculty are the following:

1. **A focus group is comprised of persons with a common thread or goal, whose expertise and experiences relate closely to the topic being researched.** The Hawthorne focus group was comprised of volunteers from both regular and special education backgrounds.

2. **The size of a focus group, typically less than 12, promotes shared vision and common traits.** The Hawthorne focus group initially had eight participants, and six completed the study over the course of the year.
3. **Participant responses are elicited by a trained moderator with pertinent questions and relevant probes.** The researcher studied archival data such as the IDEA 1998 and the Hawthorne Building Plan. A review of pertinent literature to develop research questions was conducted to include teacher beliefs, collaborative practices, and teacher change.

4. **Feelings, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas are the data being researched from the group.** The Hawthorne interview questions were semi-structured for the focus group interviews and investigated changes in beliefs, perceptions, and practices.

5. **The purpose of a focus group is not consensus, but identification of beliefs, thoughts, and ideas of a select group.** It is not to form generalizations as quantitative information (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). The Hawthorne focus groups were conducted to investigate individual beliefs and collaboration practices of teachers serving students with special needs at one school.

   The use of a focus group interview is effective in eliciting pertinent information from those directly involved in the topic to be investigated (Greenbaum, 1998). Hawthorne teachers reported information regarding their beliefs and collaborative practices in the classrooms.

   Focus group interviews can be used alone or with other qualitative or quantitative methodologies to achieve a myriad of findings. Breadth and depth of information is possible through use of this technique (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996; Brotherson, 1994). Hawthorne focus group interviews resulted in initial research questions which changed over time to reflect relevant categories for analysis derived from the collected data.

   Focus group interviews were conducted at Hawthorne Middle School from Fall 1998 through Spring 1999 on a monthly schedule. Initial research
questions were based on research (Rojewski & Pollard, 1993; Sherwood, 1990; Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996; Zentall & Stormont-Spurgin, 1995), archival data, and questions which evolved in the focus group discussions and analyses. The initial research questions included the following:

1. How are the new law and policy being interpreted and articulated by the Pleasantview School District and Hawthorne Building Plan?

2. What do educators perceive to be supports for collaboration regarding law and policy defining inclusion of students with special needs? What do educators perceive to be barriers to collaboration?

3. What are the reported beliefs and collaborative practices of the teachers in regard to laws and policies mandating collaboration for teaching students with special needs in inclusive settings?

4. Will the teachers in the study change their reported beliefs and practices toward collaboration over the first year of inclusion in the Pleasantview School District?

Ongoing focus group interviews reflected changes to initial research questions as relevant categories evolved in the data. An example of significant change in research question #2 regarding teachers' reported supports and barriers for collaboration included the following November and January focus group interview questions:

The Hawthorne Building Plan states that all staff need support in designing and providing the accommodations and modifications necessary to meet needs of all students. This may be in the form of inservice, preparation and time, AEA team access, and technology. How has this played out here? Have you had any professional development regarding collaboration since last we met? You report that you are not being given the tools needed for collaboration. Can you name your supports for collaboration? (November 1998)
Focus group questions for January were revised to reflect data collected in November related to the same research question:

Has the district intervened in any way to support collaboration efforts here at Hawthorne to your knowledge since last we met? What supports have you been given for planning time needed for inclusion? What is the current role of the AEA to support collaboration currently? As we roll into spring, what plans are you making for collaboration into the next school year? Do you think collaboration efforts will get needed supports? (January 1999)

The May focus group interview, the final meeting of the group for this study, contained questions based on research question #2 which were revised to reflect data analysis through the preceding months:

You as a group reported the supports for collaboration of teachers as historic acceptance of mainstreaming, administrative support, expertise and experience of staff, and shared commitment to serve all students. Are these still your reported supports? (May 1999)

Consensus of the group on any question was not the goal, as experts for this form of investigation strongly concur (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Borg et al., 1993; Greenbaum, 1998; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Prepared interview questions were viewed as tentative to allow the qualitative methodology to pursue emerging, unexpected avenues of inquiry during the focus group interviews. Focus group interview questions appear in Appendix C.

**Constant-Comparative Analysis Technique**

The constant-comparative technique was employed. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and others recommend that all qualitative studies involved the combination of data collection with analysis. The constant-comparative method is an ongoing analysis approach for data collected through focus group interviews. The approach requires the researcher to pose initial questions to the group, analyze the data, conduct subsequent interviews with revised
questions, and continually analyze the new data. Analysis and data collection occur in a pulsating fashion (Bogden & Biklen, 1992). Analysis began early in the Hawthorne study, was ongoing during the study, and was nearly completed by the end of data collection in May of 1999. The constant-comparative method, using the same participants for the entire project, was utilized in this investigation of regular educator beliefs and practices over time as they served on IEP Teams in collaborative settings.

Bogden and Biklen (1992) suggest procedural steps in the constant-comparative method. The Hawthorne study followed the procedures for ongoing data collection and analysis:

1. **Begin collection of data.** Data collection began in October of 1998 at Hawthorne Middle School. Initial research questions were posed to the group of volunteer participants. Questions for all focus group interviews appear in Appendix C. Responses to questions were audio taped. The meeting was also videotaped to insure correct voice identification. Data from the audio tapes was then transcribed. Anecdotal notes and memos were made by the researcher immediately following this and all meetings, as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and others. These initial notes were added to the October data to aid in identification of key words.

2. **Sift the data for key issues, recurring events, or activities in the data which become the focus of the group.** Initial research questions posed to Hawthorne participants evoked responses containing key words and phrases extracted from the data. A folder was prepared by the researcher for each key word and phrase, and relevant excerpts from the focus group transcripts were documented in the appropriate folders, labeled as the “keyword folders.” Sample key words were “lack of time,” “willingness,” “expecting support.” The
documented key words and phrases were then assigned meaning by the researcher relevant to the initial research questions, as suggested by Bogden and Biklen (1992) and others. Relevant keywords and phrases were interpreted as incidents which led to coding categories.

3. Collect data for analysis of incidents which support the categories of focus allowing for diversity of dimensions under the focus. Hawthorne participants willingly offered varied responses to research questions during each focus group interview, providing diversity to the focus. Consensus of the group was not a factor for focus group interviews, as supported in literature (Bogden & Biklen, 1992).

4. Document and describe categories being investigated, allowing for new incidents. Participant folders were created to document incidents which explained each individual's collaboration beliefs, practices, and changes. It was beneficial to know what, why, and how each participant contributed to the whole. These data were used to analyze the group data and to justify the tone and direction of subsequent focus group questions. This step varied from those of Bogden and Biklen as individual participant data was utilized as a coded category.

Incidents became categories in constant comparative method. Categories emerged from ongoing analysis of the keywords, phrases, and incidents in the data. Emerging and recurring categories were identified from incidents reported in the data from focus group interviews at Hawthorne. The criteria used to identify incidents as categories included frequency of a specific response across participants and individual participants across time, the salience of the response, and interpretation of nonverbal communication and body language of the participants during focus groups and across time.
Coded categories identified in the early months of the study included perceived supports for teacher collaboration (sc), perceived barriers to teacher collaboration (bc), teacher beliefs (tb), collaboration experiences (ex), collaboration practices (pr), and teacher change (ch). Evidence of each of these categories in the data was documented in a third set of folders, the category folders. Categories and subcategories assigned to each category were used in ongoing analysis of responses using constant-comparative methods.

Excerpts from transcribed focus group interviews were added to the appropriate category folder, dated, and cited. Researcher comments and memos were added to these excerpts to assign meaning and further relevance to previous data, and to revise subsequent focus group interview questions. Investigation, clarification, and possible validation of new categories were ongoing research goals via the constant-comparative approach.

5. **Analyze the data to identify basic social processes and relationships.** Group interactions observed during focus group interviews were documented and coded in a fourth set of data folders coded as interaction folders. Focus group interviews provided opportunity to observe social processes of teachers at Hawthorne promoting collaboration as members of IEP Teams. These data differed from other reported interaction data occurring outside of focus group interviews due to the fact that interaction was observed by the researcher in real time. This step varied from those suggested by Bogden and Biklen. The participants solved several problems related to inclusion and collaboration among themselves during the focus group interviews.

An example of interaction occurred when the group shared their opinions and perceptions through candid dialogue among themselves concerning
guarded trust for support in October data, disillusionment and anger in the mid months of study, and redefinition of roles and expertise in the last months of the study. These changes were identified using the constant-comparative approach for data analysis. Data collected and coded in the key word, individual, category, and interaction folders were referenced and cross referenced often to investigate and validate relevant categories and justify revised questions. I had to look back to move forward.

6. Revise research questions for each focus group interview which reflect constant-comparative analysis of data. Coding of data continued as a progressive process of sorting and defining responses in transcripts, researcher memos, and documented analyses during the course of the Hawthorne study. Categories led to subcategories. Often, subcategories were further sorted for specific meaning. Glesne and Peshkin (1993, p. 132) refer to this method as "entering the code mines." It was not uncommon to identify an incident by more than one category. As answers to the research questions were being sought, coding offered opportunities for integrated validation and relevance of the findings regarding the impact of IDEA 1997 on teachers' beliefs and collaborative practices at one middle school. Identified categories in the data gathered at Hawthorne were investigated in subsequent meetings to validate relevance to the research questions. Relevance to collected data was assessed through key words, incidents, and coded categories. Revised questions for future focus group interviews were a result of the ongoing assessment of categories, a continuous process in the constant comparative method used in the Hawthorne study.
Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that these steps in the constant-comparative approach occur simultaneously, requiring ongoing data collection and coding throughout the study. This process was followed by the researcher during the Hawthorne study with some variance.

7. Member check was conducted to summarize participant responses following each focus group interview. Member check, as explained by Glesne and Peshkin (1993) and others, is a brief clarification and summary of the group responses to prepared and spontaneous questions of the focus group interview just completed. Member check was conducted at the close of each interview to clarify and validate meaning and relevance of responses to the focus group questions. This step was added to those of Bogden and Biklen and served as opportunity to promote trust and collegiality among the focus group participants and between participants and researcher. This step varied from those suggested by Bogden and Biklen who used member check at the close of the study. Interpretation of member check responses further validated accuracy of the collected data. The majority of member check questions received no further comments from participants other than affirmation. Body language and tone of voice suggested participant appreciation for the opportunity to have comments documented and thoughts shared with colleagues.

During the May focus group interview, member check questions investigated responses of the group over the course of the entire study. Again, affirmation of the group was noted. During several of the member checks, it was noted that participants offered words of appreciation to the researcher for the opportunity to share concerns, otherwise unavailable.

The constant-comparative method was used to analyze data collected in focus group interviews at Hawthorne Middle School in the first year of
compliance to IDEA 1997. Analysis of data began early in the study, was ongoing, and was nearly completed by the end of the Hawthorne study in May 1999. At the end of the study in May 1999, a reflective review of the coded data was conducted in reverse order of the months of focus group data to retrace the evidence of change over time, and note variability in reasons for change. Research questions remained the basis for relevance of data. Data collection and analysis were ongoing. Unexpected findings emerged from the data, which had not been reported in the literature reviewed for this study.

Research Concerns

One issue of concern with conducting a study about middle school regarding collaboration was that I am a special educator in a collaborative setting at a rural middle school 15 miles from Pleasantview District. I am employed by the same AEA and had worked in the Pleasantview district from 1975 through 1994 at an elementary school across town from Hawthorne as a teacher of self contained students with learning disabilities. The AEA is the former employer of all Pleasantview special education staff, to include Hawthorne before the 1997 pull out of instructional personnel from the AEA. This factor made the thoughts of study risky, challenging, and worthwhile. It was difficult to separate myself totally from the situation. In choosing qualitative research I was not forced to do this. And as the study progressed, I found my background to be an asset in understanding the plight of the teachers participating in the study.

Another concern was the debated issue as to whether the researcher should be an advocate of the issue at hand. To take a position on the topic would have caused trust to be suspect, according to researchers (Glesne & Peshkin, 1993). It was strongly suggested by these researchers to maintain a
nonadvocacy, nonprescriptive role as the study unfolded. My choice of this nonadvocacy neutrality fostered a relationship of reciprocity, trust, mutual respect, and learning. This is the role I chose to assume in the study at Hawthorne Middle School, investigating the impact of IDEA 1997 on educators as members of the IEP Teams in collaborative settings.

Researcher Acceptance

The study participants in the exploratory interviews conducted in Fall 1998 appeared accepting and trusting the researcher and were willing to participate. The first meeting resulted in extreme group cohesiveness and affirmation of the positive dynamics at Hawthorne in serving students with special needs in the regular classroom through collaboration. The second meeting resulted in more candid statements regarding concerns and issues not conducive to collaboration success at Hawthorne. Occasional phone calls from participants were received by the researcher concerning questions and interpretation of legal mandates and literature reference questions. Small holiday gifts of food were sent by the researcher to the participants. Written messages were received in which each person expressed thanks for the opportunity to meet in the focus groups. It appeared that the researcher served as a process consultant throughout focus group interviews. Participants may have been more aware of collaboration issues than nonparticipating staff.

Study Limitations

Traditional limitations of the study include the following:

1. Limited time existed for the investigation, although the study was projected to investigate initial collaboration practices in Pleasantview School District. Research supports that true change takes at least 2 years to occur (Fullan, 1991).
2. Limitation existed in that there was one school investigated for this study. The implications for findings to relate the general population of educators were limited.

3. Limitation existed in that the participants were all volunteers. No selection criteria were employed other than educator status at Hawthorne.

Methodology Summary

The intent of this study was to investigate the impact of IDEA 1997 on teachers' beliefs and practices as participants on the IEP Team at one middle school. This occurred through focus group interviews held monthly to identify reported beliefs, practices, perceived supports and barriers to collaboration at Hawthorne Middle School in the Pleasantview Community School District. The constant-comparitive method of ongoing data collection and analysis was utilized to identify and investigate common and recurring categories related to initial research questions.

Responses in the data were coded into categories to analyze group interactions and changes over time. Categories emerged from key words, phrases, and incidents to identify and verify beliefs, collaborative practices, and change over time. Coding and sub coding of categories aided analysis of the data.

This qualitative study investigated the impact of IDEA 1997 on educators as participants on IEP Teams at middle school level during the first year of compliance.
CHAPTER IV

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the data collected during the first year of compliance to IDEA Amendments of 1997 at Hawthorne Middle School in the Pleasantview, Iowa School District. This new law requires teachers to collaborate actively on IEP Teams to serve students with special needs in the regular classroom as much as possible and where appropriate. The study investigated teachers' reported beliefs and collaborative practices in attempts to comply with the new federal law at the local level in the first year. This chapter describes these results of qualitative inquiry emerging from initial research questions and focus group interviews utilized in this study.

Research Questions

Initial research questions were written to investigate IDEA 1997 compliance and teacher concerns, reported beliefs, and collaborative practices. The four research questions were the following:

1. How are the IDEA 1997 and policies for compliance being articulated and implemented by the Pleasantview Community School District and Hawthorne Building Plan?

2. What are the teachers' perceived supports for collaboration compliance? What are the perceived barriers to collaboration?

3. What are the reported beliefs and collaborative practices of teachers in regard to laws and policies mandating collaboration for teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings?

4. Will the teachers in the study change their reported beliefs and collaborative practices over the first year of compliance to IDEA 1997?
Findings

Question 1: Laws and Policies

How are the laws and policies being interpreted and articulated by the Pleasantview Community School District and Hawthorne Middle School?

Laws and policies which formed the structure for inclusion and collaboration at Hawthorne Middle School were identified as the following:

1. IDEA 1997
2. Pleasantview Community School District policy on inclusion
3. The Hawthorne Building Plan

IDEA 1997. Focus group interview participants who are special educators commented that the IDEA 1997 was the main reason that the Pleasantview School District mandated inclusion of students with special needs into regular classrooms.

Mrs. Able, special educator, commented in the first focus group interview that her knowledge of the new law was limited:

I don’t know if it has anything to do with the new law or not, but I see kids this year who are fully included, who were only partly included last year, and they are doing great. We should have done this for these kids a longtime ago. Is this the law? (October 1998)

The teachers representing regular education were unaware of the federal law, IDEA 1997, but attributed the inclusion mandates to district policy, budget cuts, and the Hawthorne Building Plan.

Mrs. Leader commented on the perspective of the regular educator regarding IDEA 1997:

I’m not as familiar with the laws as I hope to be once the district addresses the changes with us. But I know we operate at the building level on the day to day things we need to do, and so far, Mrs. Boone, the principal, has been supportive and trusting of our efforts in problem
solving. That’s what the district has told us to use. The federal law is probably what they use for their guidelines. Who knows? That isn’t something we’ve been trained to know or use. (October 1998)

The original law in 1975, PL 94-142, was identified by Mrs. Water as a turning point for educating students with special needs.

The law passed in 1975, the Education for all Handicapped Children, I think, was federally funded, and that provided time and money and hope for training teachers for the changes. I would hope that the new IDEA would surely do the same, although they are state funded. (October 1998)

I think the laws will help, but I think it will take time, and probably parent reaction and maybe even lawsuits to missed or changed services. We have to remember that the laws are safeguards for change, but they don't always put the ways and means for compliance in motion. The laws have been the driving force in modern treatment of students with disabilities. We have to trust they will help us out as teachers. It takes time. (October 1998)

Participants commented on the reactions to laws that had changed the face of special education services. Mrs. Able noted her confidence that the IDEA was going to help:

I think the law has had an impact so far this year and we've only been in school a month. Kids who used to be integrated for only a few classes as of last year are out in the regular curriculum full time now. A couple of them are not really showing too much progress, but four of them are doing a super great job by doing things this new way. We should have done this for them a long time ago. It's the best thing that could have happened. (October 1998)

The focus group indicated acceptance of the plan, but voiced increasing lack of confidence that they had been given the resources necessary to carry out the plan. This concern increased as the study progressed through the first year of compliance.
Review of the data from October 1998 through May 1999 revealed no further comments or references to IDEA 1997 by the group, except when asked questions directly about the impact of the law on teacher beliefs and practice. The question was posed throughout the focus group interviews. The responses were consistently brief and suggested that participants believed they were uninvolved with the law. Mrs. Melody commented on the absence of IDEA knowledge:

"Who knows?" (October 1998).

Mrs. Number offered her perception of IDEA as it affects her teaching practices:

"We don't have any information on it" (October 1998).

Mrs. Willing commented on her understanding of the new law from special education inservice training in August of 1998:

AEA inservice last August said AEA is responsible for the new IEP forms, and we special education teachers will continue to take care of the IEPs. We've done this since the IEPs came around, so it's nothing new. We are feeling confident that this is our job still. (October 1998)

"We've heard nothing since the August inservice" (November 1998).

The participants from regular education had little or no knowledge of IDEA 1997, as verified in these comments. Special educators had some understanding of the new law, most of which resulted from the August 1998 special education IEP inservice.

**Pleasantview policy: The IEP.** IDEA 1997 specifies that the IEP is a written document that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the IEP Team. According to the law, the IEP Team must include at least one regular educator involved in the student's education. Focus group interview participants from special education indicated that this policy has been in effect in the
Pleasantview District and at Hawthorne this year, but that the IEP Teams were not formally identified or permanently maintained. The special educators in the building have been and continue to be the primary caretaker of the IEPs in the district, as has occurred since 1975.

Mrs. Willing commented on the established practice by special educators to maintain the IEPs in the district:

*We've always been in charge of the IEPs at the building level. The AEA support team used to and still does use them for 3 year reevaluations and such, but we have always been the gatekeepers here at the building level. It's just one of the hidden responsibilities we have that take a lot of time to maintain.* (October 1998)

When it is necessary to develop, review, or revise an IEP in a mandated Annual Review or reevaluation, an available regular education teacher who had been participating in collaborative practice with one of the special educators was asked to join the meeting. Voluntary participation of regular educators as members of IEP Teams had been the Pleasantview District policy and practice this year at Hawthorne, and the special educators reported that they usually asked someone on their building team to be the regular education representative at the meeting. IEP meetings were held right after students were dismissed so as to be within contractual time, as indicated by Mrs. Willing. Regular educators responded willingly and positively, according to the special educators, but all participants in the focus group expressed preference for more ongoing collaboration opportunities other than that required for IEP Team meeting participation in Pleasantview School District. Mrs. Willing commented:

*As far as writing an IEP, we just pass on the existing information to the regular teachers. Last year I had a regular educator sit in on all my IEP conferences, but I had to schedule them around, you know, conference time. So I started about 4 weeks before the regular conferences at school, so I could free up the teachers. The conference times are short...*
and there’s so much else to cover besides the IEP. We keep the IEP in shape, and we also have come up with a nifty student accommodation plan for the survival of the regular class teachers and for the success of the student on an everyday basis. (October 1998)

Mrs. Able also commented on her IEP activities in compliance to Pleasantview district policy:

So my situation is kind of the same, but I was lucky the team leader sat in on all my IEP meetings last year. As Mrs. Willing said, we have a plan written for the teachers in the beginning of the year, so the regular teachers know what’s going on. And they don’t have time to be in the meetings all the time. And they don’t have time to keep up with all the paperwork in the IEP file. (October 1998)

This compliant tone of response was heard throughout the months of study from all participants, both regular and special educators. Comments included such words as “understanding,” “easier,” “makes more sense,” “involved,” “painless so far.” Some teachers were less willing to comment about their experience on an IEP Team early in the year, as not all of the regular educators in the group had experienced IEP meeting participation yet.

Pleasantview policy: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). LRE requires that students with special needs will be educated, to the maximum extent appropriate, with children who are not disabled. Pleasantview School District policy requires the return of students with mild and moderate disabilities, formerly mainstreamed (Level 1) or in self contained classes with some integration (Level 2) to be included in the regular education classes.

Mrs. Willing commented on the return of Levels 1 and 2 students to regular classrooms:

Kids who were integrated last year for only one or two classes are out full time now. We should have done this for them a long time ago. It only makes good sense and almost everyone agrees. It’s the best thing, and we need to make it the best for all, teachers and kids. (October 1998)
Mrs. Leader commented early in the study regarding district policy for including students with disabilities in the regular classroom:

The district set the policy for this inclusion. The way I see it, they have to give us the tools to pull it off. (October 1998)

Others offered nonverbal compliance with affirmative nods of heads to this statement. The teachers repeatedly reported their belief that time to plan, workable student numbers, and professional development and guidance were on the horizon for the district to supply for the teachers.

**Hawthorne Building Plan.** The Hawthorne Building Plan was written by Hawthorne staff in spring of 1997 to outline building policies for serving students with special needs. It states building plans for education concerning students with disabilities. The plan appears in Appendix A.

The Hawthorne Plan was initially considered a support for collaboration. It states that:

Students with special needs will be served in the regular classroom in the general curriculum where appropriate. (Spring 1997)

Teachers commented that the Hawthorne Plan had benefits in speeding up some processes to place students into appropriate settings. Mrs. Leader gave her comments on the benefits of having the Hawthorne Plan in place:

The Hawthorne Plan gives us as teams a little more control over the timeliness of needed changes here at school. If we want to get things done, we don’t have to go through the lengthy process we had before. But the building plan only helps us move kids out of restrictive programs. It is a big hassle and lengthy procedure to bring a student who is struggling in the mainstream back into a more restrictive program. The law is forcing us to stretch as professionals to meet the needs in the regular classrooms as much as possible. It’s a complete shift. (November 1998)
Mrs. Willing commented on her perceptions of the Hawthorne Building Plan:

I was on the committee that wrote the Hawthorne Building Plan. We felt that if we stated something in the plan, then it would happen. They'd have to honor it. If it's on paper, they've got no choice other than provide the time and resources. We felt empowered at the time. But now it's as though it doesn't exist or make any difference. That was then and this is now. (November 1998)

Mrs. Number voiced a negative view regarding the Hawthorne Plan:

It was written by a small group of people making wishful decisions for those of us in the trenches. (November 1998)

Later in the study, Mrs. Able voiced her opinion regarding the decreased authority held by the Hawthorne Plan:

The building plan has become fragmented because of personalities and agendas. It is not as powerful as we'd like it to be. The plan isn't behind us. (April 1999)

The Hawthorne Building Plan outlines expected avenues of problem solving, integration of building support services for students, and outlines the role of the instructional staff to serve students who exhibit special needs. The plan appears in Appendix A. The document includes processes for identifying needs, adjusting curriculum, seeking building resources, problem solving, developing accommodations and interventions, and implementing and evaluating interventions. The group agreed that teachers are willing to follow the plan, but that they have received no professional development in this endeavor. The building plan states that:

All staff need support in designing and providing accommodations and modifications to meet the needs of all students. This may be in the form of inservice, preparation and collaboration time, access to AEA support staff, and technology. (Hawthorne Building Plan, 1997, p. 4)
The Hawthorne Building Plan identified collaboration in 5 instances:

1. All staff need support in collaboration and preparation time (p. 60).

2. Special education teachers' expertise includes collaboration (p. 8).

3. The special education teacher may work collaboratively with general educators to develop accommodations and strategies to meet the needs of students (p. 10).

4. Collaboration will be defined by the individual teachers (p. 10).

5. Ongoing formalized communication process between administrators, AEA personnel, and general and special education is crucial for the success of this building plan. This will require time scheduled for collaborative purposes (p. 10).

When these collaboration issues written in the Hawthorne Plan were reviewed in the focus group interviews both in fall and spring, respondents affirmed unanimously that the statements were a valid and specific list of beliefs and needed resources, but they all agreed that the plan did not give them the authority or avenue to procure resources needed for successful collaboration.

Mrs. Able offered her opinions regarding the Hawthorne Plan often during the months of the focus group interviews:

What happened to all the planning the AEA support team said would be ours? They made it sound so important then. So where is it? (February 1999). The plan isn’t behind us. (April 1999)

The group participants indicated at every focus group meeting that this promise of support had not become reality for designing, accommodating, or modifying curriculum for students with special needs now in the regular classroom. They continued to report through the entire year of study that inservice, preparation and time for collaboration had yet to occur, and that their hopes turned to disillusionment. The Hawthorne Plan apparently did not possess the authority to secure collaboration resources for teachers. Ultimately,
as voiced by the group, when the needs of the teachers were not being met, the needs of students with disabilities were not being met.

Mrs. Leader commented on the disillusionment she felt toward the district and the ineffectual Hawthorne Building Plan:

It's not just the special needs thing, but the whole communication thing in general. No one talks to us unless it's a new project, or we're not up to par on a deadline for a document, but we rarely have an open forum for any of our concerns. It's downright insulting if you ask me. (February 1999)

**Question 1 summary.** How are IDEA 1997 and policies for compliance being articulated and implemented by Pleasantview School District? Inclusion was mandated by IDEA, and collaboration was encouraged by the Pleasantview School District. The district policy directed individual schools to develop and follow a building plan to accommodate students with disabilities in the LRE, which for most students was the regular classrooms. The Hawthorne Building Plan was initially considered a guarantee for needed resources. Views of support would later emerge as barriers to collaboration as the teachers expressed loss of confidence in the Hawthorne Building Plan and district policies as the year progressed.

**Question 2a: Collaboration Supports**

What were the reported supports for collaboration at Hawthorne Middle School?

Analysis of the data indicated the following categories concerning perceived supports for collaboration at Hawthorne:

1. Historical acceptance of mainstreaming
2. Administrative support for collaboration
3. Shared commitment to serve students with disabilities

4. The collective expertise and experience of the Hawthorne faculty

**Historical acceptance of mainstreaming.** Teachers responded consistently throughout the study that a major support for collaboration was based on historic faculty acceptance of mainstreaming as an educational practice since the mid 1980s. Hawthorne had been practicing varied levels of mainstreaming of students with mild identified disabilities for about 10 years. Students with moderate to more severe disabilities were educated primarily in self contained classes or classes with limited integration to regular classes until 1996. Mrs. Able commented on teacher beliefs:

> For the most part, classroom teachers here at Hawthorne believe that students with disabilities belong in the regular classrooms. We don't really have a choice. But then, most of us have been working together for so long that we don't question it. We just get to it. It happens on the go, and we don't send the kids home so we can adjust the system of how and whom we teach. There's a few who don't agree, but they tolerate the fact that the kids are here to stay. (October 1998)

The teachers were willing at best, and tolerant at least, to accept and employ practices of educating students with special needs in regular classes for part of the day, with an understanding that the responsibilities for IEP compliance, grading, assessments and adaptations were maintained by the special educators. Mrs. Willing, special education teacher, added her comments about the historic acceptance of mainstreaming:

> I have always assured the regular ed teachers who teach the kids with the IEPs that it's my job to make sure the student fits in somehow. I let them know that I will be in charge of what the child needs that is extra and above what the others need to be successful. I'll be in charge of assignment completion and quality, and any modifications that need to be made. This includes modifying the grades and any assessment needing to be given. They are comfortable with that for the most part.
We are all learning the new system, actually waiting for direction on how it should be developing. (October 1998)

Mrs. Able commented:

The faculty here as a whole has been mostly accepting over the past 10 years to mainstream students with special needs. Some have been tolerant, and very few resistive. Whether we agreed or not that they belonged there was not an option. What you did with them (the mainstreamed students with special needs) was an effort to give them a chance to learn, and it wasn't the responsibility of the regular teacher that they learned or not. It was the job of the special ed teacher. (November 1998)

Nonverbal body language data, such as heads nodding affirmatively, contributed to identification of this category of established acceptance of mainstreaming at Hawthorne. Traditional acceptance of mainstreaming for the past 10 years influenced current collaboration efforts, according to repeated responses from participants. Teachers' practice of accepting students with special needs into their classrooms laid the foundation for collaboration, as indicated in their professional opinions. No one voiced any negative perceptions of this category.

Since 1997, when the special educators joined the Pleasantview School District teacher pool, students with mild and moderate disabilities were mainstreamed for most or all of their day into regular education classrooms. The teachers were willing to comply but relied heavily on the special educators for guidance and interventions for accommodating the students with special needs. The faculty's established acceptance of mainstreaming practices to include and teach this population was viewed as the main collaboration support by the Hawthorne participants consistently through the focus group interviews.
Mrs. Able offered validation for the category of established acceptance of mainstreaming as a support for collaboration:

We were a pilot study for this kind of stuff (mainstreaming) years back, and we’ve gotten to the point where we expect mainstreaming to happen. Somehow we have found the time to get the job done, and no one questions whether it’s an option to have those kids in the classrooms when regular ed teachers aren’t trained as special educators. It wasn’t such a big issue in the past, and collaboration probably won’t be such a big deal now. But the big deal is putting level 2 kids in the regular classrooms. (November 1998)

Level 2 students are defined in the Hawthorne Building Plan as previously self contained students with little integration to regular classes. Level 1 students are those who are served in the regular classroom with resource or collaboration assistance by special education personnel. Level 3 students are currently served in self contained classrooms due to the severity of their special needs, according to the Hawthorne Plan.

IDEA 1997 requires that regular educators serve as participants on IEP Teams for students with special needs. This includes contributing to and attending IEP meetings, the purpose of which are to develop, review, and revise IEPs. Mrs. Willing described how the established acceptance of mainstreaming included her role as facilitator:

I schedule IEP meetings for the parents and Team members right after the kids go home in the afternoon. I ask someone who is accepting of the role, mostly teachers who have one of us (special education teachers) in their rooms for part of the day. That way it’s not scary, and the teachers have something to contribute that we both understand and have observed. It works as a team effort that way. (November 1998)

The category of support from established acceptance of mainstreaming was brought to the table at all early focus group interviews. The category was supported by repeated references of all participants except Mrs. Number. This
educator admitted later in the study that she had not had any collaboration experiences until fall of 1998. She reported that she was silent on the subject until January 1999 after having a successful 3 month collaborative experience as represented by her previous comments.

**Building administrative support.** The new administrator at Hawthorne, Mrs. Dale Boone, was described by the participants as supportive of collaboration efforts and compliance. She indicated trust in the decisions made by the teams at Hawthorne to be in the best interest of the students and also to be in compliance to the Hawthorne Plan, Pleasantview District goals, and IDEA 1997. Mrs. Boone did not attend all team meetings, but expressed trust in the teams to make valid decisions regarding students with special needs in the regular classrooms.

Administrative support is necessary for collaboration and inclusion success. Comment was made by Mrs. Leader early in the study that the new building principal, Mrs. Boone, was perceived as supportive of the collaboration effort. Mrs. Number commented that the building administrator was supportive of building efforts in general, and collaborative efforts specifically:

She is doing more than we ever had done before to let the teachers use problem solving. (April 1999)

Mrs. Able summed up the willingness of the building administrator to attempt to find time for teams to meet:

She is under jurisdiction from downtown to have so much time for this and that committee. She'll try to waive some of that to give us time to meet as teams. There is so much to cover. We still don't have enough time to plan for collaboration, but she (Mrs. Boone) tries. (March 1999)
Mrs. Leader commented on the efforts of the building administrator to relieve some of the stress and role ambiguity brought on by the collaboration mandate:

She (Mrs. Boone) said to us at a staff meeting that we need to take away the guilt that we're not serving the special ed kids when we work with the non-disabled kids, and vice versa. I believe she'll be very supportive. She's not a new kid on the block in this district. She knows the kids and the parents and the dedication level of the teachers. (November 1998)

Mrs. Able commented on the administrative support from the new principal:

I don't think the fact that we have a new principal in the building this year has had any negative effect on the traditional faculty support for special education here. I think we've taken the administrative change calmly and routinely, not as a cold jolt. She (Mrs. Boone) has not shaken any of the special education practices or protocol here. (November 1998)

This change of administrator has been much less threatening than the fact that AEA is no longer a direct authority here. AEA support teams are simply consultative. And I have to say that Mrs. Boone has kept up with the established special education practices so far. She has told us that we need to do what is necessary for the students who are now included in regular classes for the first year. She also said that she trusts that the teams will facilitate best practices for inclusion and collaboration. I am grateful for this, but still don't have all the answers as to how it's supposed to happen. (March 1999)

Hawthorne participants indicated minimal involvement of the administrator in decisions and actual practice in classrooms as a support for collaboration and yet, the participants sensed her support. Mrs. Leader commented on the fact that the building administrator supported collaborative efforts of the professionals at Hawthorne: I haven't heard her (Mrs. Boone) repeat her comment again about getting rid of the guilt we feel giving our attentions to different kids at different times. But her actions speak louder than words here. She is evidently a caring person. She depends on us to make decisions and do what's best for the kids.

When a decision is being made at the beginning of this year, I would at first run and check things out with her before going on. But she assured us that we were the authorities in our teams to make decisions regarding
the kids with special needs in the building on a day to day basis and the
major issues of programming. That's a load off our shoulders. A new
principal has her own ways, and we didn't want to take liberties.
(November 1998)

Mrs. Melody commented as to her interpretation of the original comment
regarding "getting rid of the guilt" and administrative support:

We hoped it meant that we teachers shouldn't feel guilty that we can't
reach all kids all the time. You know, we spend time with the kids that
need extra help, have IEPs or whatever, and need modifications. These
take time. And in doing so we ignore the kids who learn on the first try.
We switch scenes, and it's the same guilt. I think that's what Mrs. Boone
meant by the statement, and I for one appreciate that fact that she
understands that it's not an easy job. I like the way she does things.
(January 1999)

These comments from the teachers indicated trust for the administrator's
concerns and support in the collaboration effort at Hawthorne.
Acknowledgement of the value of teachers' skills and experience is another
factor identified as conducive to collaboration in the literature and by the
participants at Hawthorne. From Mrs. Leader's comments, Mrs. Boone was
supportive of the efforts of the teachers to comply to IDEA 1997.

It was evident over the course of the study that Mrs. Leader was in closer
communication with Mrs. Boone, as would be expected in her role as Guidance
Counselor at Hawthorne. Mrs. Leader spoke with strong conviction that Mrs.
Boone supported and trusted teacher efforts toward collaboration compliance.
Mrs. Leader usually responded to questions of policy first in focus interviews.
The other teachers evidentially looked to this counselor for leadership and
authority. When Mrs. Leader was absent in January, the others responded
more readily to focus group questions than in previous meetings in which Mrs.
Leader usually was first to respond. The participants' responses during Mrs.
Leader's absence in January concerned the classroom perspective more so than Mrs. Leader, who spoke for building policies and overviews. Their responses still indicated their perceived support from administration at the building level.

**Shared commitment.** Shared commitment was identified by the participants as a support for collaboration, a coded category. The focus group participants identified situations where collaboration of teachers was needed and somehow accomplished over lunch hour, passing in halls, even talking in the rest room. Mrs. Melody described the current methods of sharing information about students in informal ways:

> We share the good and fun things. But we also share the concerns, and it causes us to find a time, whether it's in the lunchroom, hall, or rest room. We can make it happen. (March 1999)

Mrs. Water shared her opinion that the district assumed time for collaboration would occur due to professionalism of the staff:

> I think it's an assumption on the district's part that they know we are professionals and will find time to meet and plan above and beyond our other duties. (January 1999)

Mrs. Willing commented on realities of finding time to meet with colleagues, despite the fact that no planning time was assured by Hawthorne Building Plan or Pleasantview District policy:

> I think they believe that if they don't offer a specific amount of time for collaboration planning and policies, that we as professionals will find the time. They look at us as professionals who will put the needs of kids above the contract, and it will happen. (January 1999)

The participants reported their optimism in the willingness of Hawthorne colleagues to comply with collaboration practices, based on past acceptance of mainstreaming and shared commitment to serve students.
Mrs. Water commented early in the study supporting the category of shared commitment of faculty to the success of collaboration:

I know collaboration can work here. But we have to be aware that it is not a time saver, nor can it survive on less people. In fact, it requires more time and more people. I truly believe that two heads are better than one. If we are all on the same wavelength, we can do almost anything. (October 1998)

Mrs. Melody made comments regarding the Hawthorne staff, which verified the category of shared commitment:

For music teachers, I have to say that inclusion and collaboration are like the icing on the cake. It means everyone is included. Collaboration is even better because there are then two people in the room. It’s an improvement from what we had before. Before we started collaborating on student needs, you could go for months and not even know there was a special ed kid in the room, or what his needs were. The child only will do half the work, and you wonder why. And now we know sooner what the needs are. And we can do something together to meet them. (October 1998)

Teachers need to support each other in any new effort which involves the kids we teach. That’s why we’re here, for the kids. It doesn’t matter if you’re music, math, science, or special ed. We teachers need to stick together and remind ourselves of the good things we do. And we have always come through here. (November, 1998)

Everyone does better! And besides the fact that two heads are better than one, we have someone else in the room to share funny events or stories. We teachers need that. We need to share the fun parts too. It makes it so much nicer to come back and do it again. I don’t know what I’d do without my friends here. (November 1998)

As a music teacher I see all students. And because of that, I’ve learned the value of asking people about certain kids. I’ve learned to listen to them and watch what they do with these kids. It has been a gradual experience for me because of my colleagues sharing the same visions and expectations for kids to be successful. (February 1999)

And so the new law hasn’t been as threatening to me as it might have been. We’re really lucky here compared to other places. (March 1999)
As expressed by Mrs. Melody across the months of focus group interviews, there was a developmental progression of shared commitment among the participants and their colleagues. The group voiced convictions that teamwork is superior to single performance in collaboration efforts. They expressed optimism that they were as a staff capable of collaboration, and that the building administrator expressed confidence in the staff to perform this task effectively and in compliance to the law. Mrs. Melody showed consistent optimism that collaboration had been and would continue to be a benefit for the music classes she taught, in which all students participated.

Mrs. Water gave her opinion of shared commitment and teaming efforts for collaboration early in the study as an ongoing goal for Hawthorne:

True collaboration teaming happens when we struggle, have some tough decisions and deadlines, but when it works, we all gain. I depend on my cohorts to help me do my part teaching all kids. It’s the situations that work that give us the guts to try something new. This collaboration issue definitely fits the bill. (November 1998)

Mrs. Able commented on shared commitment to successful collaboration with this statement:

Lord knows what changes will happen next year. I’ll bet there will be little or no change in the levels of assistance we get, or don’t get. It’s a good thing we trust each other and have confidence in our collective skills to decide what collaboration is here. (January 1999)

Mrs. Able indicated her beliefs that collaboration was a positive avenue for teachers to pursue when serving students with special needs in the regular classrooms:

The bottom line is that we do what’s best for kids. And if we don’t, we are in the wrong profession. (January 1999)
Mrs. Leader added strong additional testimonial to the shared commitment factor of collegial trust when asked to name supports for collaboration:

There are so many little things that teachers do for the kids with and without special needs. We never see it all. It would be impossible. People, teachers, come and go on the dot of a contract. But they do good things and leave that behind. We never know how much we help. It's a good thing to remember when other things get us down. (February 1999)

Mrs. Leader summed up the positive conviction, as a benefit to collaboration, that shared commitment to teach students with special needs existed at Hawthorne:

We know who we are, and we know if things are going to get done, we have to make decisions. No one is only regular ed or only special ed or only music, math or guidance. We are the faculty at Hawthorne. We bite the bullet, and do what is best for kids. That's the good part. The not so good part is that we don't get the tools we need. The resources are scarce, and it's fortunate for all that the people here are stronger than the system right now. (March 1999)

Mrs. Melody, the music teacher expressed her approval of shared commitment through teaming for collaboration:

Teamwork is something I've always believed in, but as a music teacher I don't get to see many people in the classroom. They can't take the teaming concept away from us. I've so enjoyed the opportunity to have another teacher in the room with me this year in collaboration. It helps the kids, and boosts my spirits too. We'll always be better when we can share. We share the good and fun things. But we also share the concerns, and it causes us to find a time, whether it's in the lunchroom, hall or rest room. We can make it happen. We are a team. (March 1999)

These comments validate the category of shared commitment of the teachers to the collaboration effort at Hawthorne through the months of study. Trust in professionalism of the faculty was indicated as the emerging category from these responses to the question of identifying supports to collaboration at
Hawthorne Middle School. Mrs. Able summed up the belief that shared commitment of staff to the collaboration effort was a major support of the practice:

We are Hawthorne. If it's going to work, it will be this group and this faculty who make it work. The laws and the plans and the mandates and the downtown authority don't make a difference in the world if we don't make this work. I'm glad I work here. We can and will make it work. (April 1999)

**Expertise and experience.** Participants indicated that support for collaboration at Hawthorne was supported by the fact that the staff had extensive competence in teaching and served many roles in their years at Hawthorne. Special educators in the focus group had served in such models as self contained classrooms with and without integration, and resource room models. The professional experiences of both regular and special educators were identified by participants as supports for collaboration to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the regular classrooms.

Mrs. Melody, music instructor, expressed her opinions regarding the skill levels of the special education staff in providing student accommodation plans to all collaborating teachers:

I really like what our special education teachers have done putting together the accommodation plans for the kids with special needs this year. They are helpful for me, a specialist. Maybe I'll have 20 of them (students with special needs) in a day, and I can just flip through the plan book and see the plan for that kid, and I know exactly what class they come from. When they take a test, I can just know this strategy works for this one, that strategy works for that one. (November 1998)

Without this plan, it would be impossible for me to meet their needs. I know they don't have to provide it, but it is surely welcomed in my room. I think they deserve a lot of credit for doing this. We all need to give them the credit. (November 1998)
The student accommodation plans had utilized mainstreaming practices before collaboration was mandated at Hawthorne, according to reports from the focus group in the focus group interviews. The special educators in the group nodded with affirmation and apparent nonverbal appreciation for her comments. However, they exchanged glances with strained facial expressions and audible sighs suggesting weariness at the enormity of the task of filling out student accommodation plans weekly. It was evident in their nonverbal responses that their skills and expertise were being spread thinly across many educational challenges resulting from inclusion and collaboration efforts. When asked if this perception were true, both special educators nodded affirmatively. Mrs. Melody patted Mrs. Able on the hand in apparent sympathetic acknowledgement of extensive needs facing a limited number of special educators.

The teachers expressed positive comments regarding the extra work the special education teachers were attempting for the benefit of included students. The student accommodation plans were not required. Support for collaboration was again acknowledged in the skill levels and practices of the special educators in the group, specifically the student accommodation plans.

The group participants repeatedly acknowledged the expertise of the special educators as a collaboration support at every focus group interview. The accolades were qualified in instances of professional practices serving identified and non-identified students at Hawthorne. The extensive range of needs exhibited by individual students was making continual professional demands on the expertise of individuals and teams alike. Mrs. Number, who noticeably refrained from offering comments on collaborative supports until mid-study, contributed positive comments about collaborative experiences with one
special educator and included students with special needs into Mrs. Number's math class in January:

I know I'm beginning to feel more comfortable teaching now that I know about the IEP and the goals. I've had the opportunity to have Kay and her kids (special educator and several students mainstreamed into Mrs. Number's math classes) in the class now. And to think I was not going to do this earlier in the year. Kay made things clearer for me now and I know what to expect from the kids and from the other teachers on a more knowledgeable level. It's been an eye opener for me and I finally see what it's all about. (January 1999)

This comment was made in January 1999. It was the first comment made by this teacher about collaboration. It occurred after 3 months of participation in a collaborative teaching endeavor. Mrs. Number and Kay, special education collaborating teacher, taught a daily math class together. Gains were noted in both participation and math skills of students, both those identified with special needs and those without. Mrs. Number had not previously offered comments about collaboration practices at Hawthorne until January.

The experience and expertise of the staff at Hawthorne to serve students with disabilities in various service alternative models was evident in the professional history of these special educators and was reported as a successful support for meeting the needs of the students with disabilities by group participants. Teacher expertise and experience was identified as a support for collaboration several times each meeting by the regular educators in the focus group interviews as indicated in the data.

Question 2a summary. In summary, identified supports for collaboration were identified as established acceptance of mainstreaming, as Hawthorne had participated in this effort for over 10 years. Administrative support was evident, as Mrs. Boone trusted the groups to make decisions in the problem solving
meetings as before. Shared commitment was evident in teacher comments that all students deserved fair educational opportunities. Expertise and experience was identified by the group as a support for collaboration, as both regular and special educators had taught many service models with success to date.

**Question 2b: Barriers to Collaboration**

What are the reported barriers to collaboration at Hawthorne Middle School?

The primary category in the data generated from this question was unpreparedness for change. The data supporting this category referenced the following:

1. Ambiguity of roles
2. Lack of professional development
3. Adherence to the dual system of special and regular education
4. Lack of time to plan and implement collaboration
5. Lack of teacher empowerment to change negative conditions
6. Job security

**Ambiguity of roles.** Ambiguity of teacher roles for compliance with the mandates of IDEA 1997 was expressed as a barrier to compliance most strongly throughout the early and middle months of the study. Every one of the six participants indicated a lack of clear role description in the collaboration process sometime during the study, often more than once.

Mrs. Number, math teacher with no previous collaboration experience, made her opinion clear at the onset of the study:

I went to college to be a math teacher. I did not choose to teach the special education classes or I would have gone to school for that. There are others who are good at those ways of teaching, and now I'm being
told, not asked, to teach the students from special education in the same classes as the regular students. I am not magic. I am a good math teacher. But lately, I’m frustrated because I’m told I have to do this new way, and yet I get no help. I don’t know best how to teach those kids by myself. I feel I’ve contributed much to kids in math for many years. This change is not good for teacher morale, if you ask me. (October 1998)

Good education tells me it doesn’t do me a bit of good to stand there and teach this kid sixth grade math when he doesn’t understand fifth grade math. I can try forever, and he’ll keep coming up with a “u” grade and know no more when he gets through. We need to know it’s ok to go back with these kids and pick up the skills they never learned. They’re lost. We’re lost. We can’t teach them if no one teaches us how it’s supposed to be. (November 1998)

Merry Melody, music teacher, expressed her confusion with the new role she was being asked to fulfill as a collaborating teacher:

These meetings are a great time to share stories and situations. We don’t get time to sit and relax and talk things through very often. It is a good time for me to remind myself that I’m not alone in the things that frustrate me, or that I’m not alone in feeling that all of a sudden my best isn’t good enough. That shouldn’t happen. I know I’m a good music teacher. (November 1998)

One participant, Mrs. Willing, summed up her feelings of role ambiguity as a barrier to collaboration:

How do we know we are doing a good job? We know what the kids need to be successful, but the district is telling us the standards and benchmarks are for all kids, but the IEP tells us the individual kids need individual treatment of programs. The standards and benchmarks don’t give us time or space to allow the child to really learn concepts before we’re forced to move on, knowing the child hasn’t learned. (November 1998)

It’s frustrating, because I do what I think I should be doing for the child, and we’re looking over shoulders wondering if we are in trouble for not following the standards and benchmarks for the class. What’s more important? Do we teach the way we know works for that child, as in the IEP, or do we push them on to meet the standard? My teaching philosophy tells me to look to the child first and last! When will they tell us what our jobs are now? (November 1998)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Mrs. Able, the other participating teacher from special education added her reported confusion regarding the roles professionals were expected to fill in collaboration:

My ornery nature takes over sometimes. I feel and know I'm doing my best. If it's not good enough, then they can fire me. I'm doing what I think kids need and if it doesn't fit the plan, then fire me. It's hard sometimes not to shut down. It's like they're not telling me what I'm supposed to do or what I'm accountable for. If they can't tell me what I'm accountable for then I'm going to do what I think is right for the kids. And I'll probably ask these people to do this with me. And they will. (February, 1999)

The teachers were reporting confusion as to what they were expected to do for the students identified with IEPs. No longer did they have the AEA direct line of support and administration directing protocol and practice. The void was considered to be detrimental to the success of children by the teachers, because they themselves did not have a clear direction as to the parameters of their roles. The teachers were discouraged with the lack of clarification of teachers' expected roles in collaboration. The comments listed above validated the category of role ambiguity as a barrier to collaboration at Hawthorne.

Mrs. Number questioned her own abilities to collaborate successfully without a clear definition of the role she was expected to fill:

I have students who have IEPs in my class and no one to help out. I don't know what they know, or how to find out what they know. And I've got no one to help me figure this out. All I know is that they're not learning. And there is no answer or help in sight. (October 1998)

As the study progressed through the winter months of the school year into the spring, the participants voiced less bewilderment regarding ambiguous collaboration roles. Instead they began to examine expertise of colleagues, as they engaged in more self directed attempts at collaboration planning and practice.
Mrs. Willing commented on the changes she witnessed later in the school year as teachers made progress toward collaboration:

Things are paying off when it comes to collaborating with the classroom teachers. I was a wreck at first, but now I see they’re doing such a good job, I am reassured. (April 1999)

I see things I never dreamed that teachers would do or allow, and I’m glad I was so adamant that they make these changes. I continue to tell them that the fair thing to do. (April 1999)

That’s my job and I’m going to do whatever it takes. And I know I’m not alone in that around here. (March 1999)

Lack of professional development. Lack of professional development as a factor of unpreparedness for change was reported by the participants as a barrier to collaboration. Teachers commented that between October and November of 1998 the faculty had been given one hour of team meeting time and no professional development. One teacher commented that the need to share time and plans are real, yet “the time never comes.” Other participants shared similar perceptions that the need for professional development in addition to the need for planning time was necessary and long overdue. Mrs. Water voiced her concerns over the lack of professional development for the regular educators. She had switched her position from special education to regular education this school year:

There are so many kids with different needs out there. We used to test them, decide on the best place, and then get on with the education process. It’s different now. For whatever reasons, we have kids with so many different levels of problems from home to school, that we have to be magicians to cover them all. I understand how frustrating these are for the special ed people who have had training. No two kids are alike. I now know how frustrating it is for the regular educators now that I am one, and I can’t imagine a day goes by that I don’t have to tap into my special ed skills to help kids. I can’t imagine how regular teachers do this without the training of some kind of ongoing training. (November 1998)
Mrs. Melody added her comments regarding lack of professional development and the resulting feelings of inadequacy among teachers:

You know, it's just assumed that a good teacher does the right things. They try this, try that, and if that doesn't work, they try something else. And if they're lucky, there's someone else they can ask help from. We are all in the same boat. You do what you need to, and you don't give up. We succeed because they (students) succeed, and if they're failing, so are we. And right now, we're failing them because we don't know how this collaboration scheme is supposed to work. Someone out there needs to fill us in and train us. We don't have time to waste either. (November 1998)

Mrs. Number shared concerns regarding questioning her own teaching skills for students with disabilities:

I just hope there's time to learn the new things. I know I never had that kind of training in special education. I didn't want to do anything else. I didn't like it when the special ed laws changed. I'm not prepared. Many of us aren't. How will this change happen without training us? When? (November 1998)

As the school year progressed into the winter months, several special education teachers in the building requested a meeting with the Director of Special Needs to provide inservice for teachers regarding collaboration efforts. The meeting occurred in January 1999 as a cluster meeting of special educators. This meeting was not a typical occurrence in the district. The special education teachers usually joined a subject specific cluster to promote inclusive planning. But the district middle school special educators were at a loss as a group as to how to comply with the collaboration mandate.

Mrs. Able commented on the results of the requested inservice meeting in February 1999:

And so we were given a meeting. I don't know whether or not you'd call this an intervention or professional development or what. We called him (Director of Special Needs) and he came out. It wasn't mandatory that
we all attend, and so not all the special staff was there. We did have a pretty fair discussion. (February 1999)

My suggestion to him was that we have three focus areas: our concerns, what's working, and what's not. It was more than just a gripe session. We talked about a number of things, and I felt he went away from the meeting with a better picture of what's going on out there. Here we are clamoring for professional development, and we end up explaining the situation to him. We hoped it would make a dent. (February 1999)

The general consensus from all the special ed staff was that there has not been anywhere near enough direction from the district for us to know how to deal with all this. From our perspectives, we are trying to meet the standards and benchmarks, and inclusion, while trying to follow the IEPs, trying to get regular educators involved in the IEP meetings. It's just a pretty big dilemma for us. (February 1999)

We addressed the concern that we are being spread too thin, and we were under the understanding that this would not happen, when we discussed this whole plan last year. But then we had a big scare thrown at us. We were thrown a projection that they are planning to cut the 6.25 special needs teachers to 3.72 for next year. (February 1999)

And that is so scary. We're barely covering the ground this year with the thought of us being cut in half. Now the latest projection is to cut us back to six. This is better, but the kind of thing that Mrs. Number is talking about is real. I believe that the district has a skewed perception of collaboration and that inclusion is just going to take care of these kids naturally as resource kids. (February 1999)

Three fourths of the kids on of my roster come from self contained classes. These are not resource kids, not by any stretch of the imagination. And I feel the district believes that these students can be addressed and handled as resource kids are, with minor accommodations and modifications in the regular classes. Their needs are a lot greater than the district realizes, and there are inklings that they are not going to recognize the need for or allow for necessary teacher power. They don't see the need. (February 1999)

The issue was never really addressed at the cluster meeting. The issue was skirted, never hit on the head. It needs to be at some point soon, and I see the district turning their back on us. (February 1999)
A month later, the special education teachers indicated that they were getting no assistance or answers to requests for verification of procedures. Again, no response was given by the district to respond to their requests for professional development. Mrs. Able summed up her professional development concerns as well as those of her colleagues:

We have called for verification on situations and issues we have about our students with IEPs, both those included in the regular classrooms and those with more severe needs. The year is almost over, and it is now time for annual reviews of the IEPs. And we can't get direction as to how to write the goals and objectives of these kids to match the inclusion and collaboration mandates. We don't know how to match the standards and benchmarks of the school to the IEPs. No answers are given. (March 1999)

These comments identify the lack of professional development as a barrier to collaboration by the teachers in the study. They voiced collective opinions that students need teachers who are trained in teaching styles which meet the learning style of the students with special needs. Teachers felt insecure to take on the roles of collaborators because they felt they lacked the skills. Professional development is requested to meet the goal of inclusion and collaboration, in their opinions. Lack of professional development is a barrier to collaboration as a factor of unpreparedness for the change.

Adherence to the dual system of education. Adherence to the dual system of education was identified by the participants as a barrier to collaboration, related to the coded category of unpreparedness for change. One teacher in particular, Mrs. Water, answered focus group questions often from her perspective as a regular educator, and then commented from her perspective as a special educator.
Her answers from the perspective of a regular educator were markedly different from those offered from her special educator point of view. This is one instance of validation of the existence of the dual system which existed at Hawthorne. She identified the issue of unavailable time for collaborative planning and implementation as a concern primarily for the regular educator. Her explanation was that the regular educator may not have the skills or time to modify and adapt for students with special needs in the regular classroom. There would be definite consequence for all student success if the issue for planning time were not resolved. From the perspective of the special educator she identified lack of time to plan as a management issue, because of the extensive paperwork, preparation of modification materials, and professional inservice of colleagues. These concerns resulted in her change of positions from special education to regular education and in the dual system of education. She stated:

When I went to the special education meeting in the beginning of this year, I was overwhelmed with the new forms and expectations. I started the year in special education, and then I sort of jumped ship. I when to the special ed meeting, and that was it for me. My situation is changed. I went over to the regular education side. I'm worried with what I sense and hear, that the number of identified special education students will drop because they're not going to staff any new ones in. We'll have less special ed trained staff. Time will be lost by cutting down numbers. I feel that collaboration needs more time instead of time saver. (April 1999)

Mrs. Water's comments on the dual system of education overlapped often with job security concerns. In our January meeting, Mrs. Water commented on her perspectives of collaboration as an intensive effort:

I know collaboration can work, but it's not a time saver. Nor is it a situation that can survive on less people. It takes more people and time. I still believe that two people are better than one. But I had to go with my
instincts and jump ship. No one cares if I’m special ed or regular ed, as long as I do my job. (January 1999)

Other teachers spoke from the perspective of their particular discipline as regular or special educator. Concerns were voiced often from the regular educators that they were not trained to teach special education. Special educators reported that they did not know how the regular teachers could provide the levels of education needed by some of the students with special needs and still reach the rest of the class to meet standards and benchmarks of Hawthorne.

Mrs. Number was vocal about her perceptions of her professional abilities to teach students with special needs:

How do I modify for these kids? I went to college to teach math. I did not choose to be a special educator. I don’t know if kids can learn sometimes or not. I am not a special educator. It was clear in my mind at the time that math was my area, and that the schools would accept me for these skills. (October 1998)

Teachers responded that they had received no professional development to assist them in collaboration efforts at Hawthorne. Requests for inservice were not resolved by the end of the school year. The teachers expressed frustration and lack of confidence in the district.

Lack of planning time. This factor was clearly and repeatedly indicated by focus group participants. There was no time allotted to plan for or provide professional development for collaboration. The teachers had faculty meetings twice a month, cluster meetings twice a year, team meetings once a week. No time was given for collaboration planning during any of these meetings. The Hawthorne Building Plan suggested but did not guarantee planning time or professional development for inclusion or collaboration.
As verification for the category of unpreparedness for the change, the teachers counted one hour of planning time given in the fall of 1998, and no time since then to plan collaborative measures. They repeatedly reported lack of time as a barrier to collaboration. “It’s a shame we don’t have time to plan,” shared Mrs. Able in January. Mrs. Melody spoke to the group and received nonverbal agreement through nodding of heads when she stated her comments about lack of time:

We have no time. We meet in the teachers’ lounge during lunch if we have the same schedule. We grab each other as we pass in the halls. Why, we even talk in the ladies’ room. Do you think that’s what the government meant by finding time to collaborate? (November 1998)

Mrs. Leader commented on her efforts to find time to collaborate with colleagues:

Sometimes I run along side someone running down the hall and we throw a few ideas to each other as we run. (November 1998)

Mrs. Able summed up her thoughts on the lack of planning time in February of 1999:

Time, rules, and unclarified directives are the barriers I see. That is the bottom line. When the central administrators get it together that the standards and benchmarks are a challenge by themselves, but then add in the IEP goals and objectives compliance, and the whole apple cart upsets. How many times do we have to pick up the apples? When do we have time for this? (February 1999)

Mrs. Melody continued the discussion from her perspective as a music teacher:

We wish we could just sit down and make a plan and follow it, adjust it, and be the good teachers and colleagues we know we are. We can’t be left in the dark or spread too thin. It’s not fair to kids and it’s not fair to us. Luckily, we all work together here. Otherwise it would just be a bust. Collaboration is a good thing, but it won’t work if we don’t know how to
use it. It's like getting a new computer, but having no time to read the instructions to learn how the thing works. (February 1999)

Consultative collaboration in the form of planning time was practiced by the teachers on an informal basis only. Teachers reported one hour collaborative planning hour in September 1998, 15 minutes collaborative planning time with the ESL teacher in October, and one hour in November. There was no time for collaboration planning in the winter or spring months of 1998-99 school year. The time identified in the Hawthorne Building Plan to collaborate did not become reality. Consultative collaboration occurred at informal times such as passing in the hall, over lunch and in the restrooms, according to Mrs. Willing:

Last year I felt much better about keeping in touch with teachers, and I've lost a lot of contact time, but there's no answer I see. I'm playing catch up all the time. (November 1998)

I don't know how you feel about it, but our lunch sessions are really good. You may or may not agree that our lunch talks are not bitch sessions. I feel like we work with people who care and the lunch time can be constructive. You know how bad it can be when people get on a down pitch and complain and moan. (November 1998)

Lack of time was reported as a barrier to collaboration practice at Hawthorne at every meeting when the question was asked. Similar concerned responses came from the special educators and regular educators alike.

Lack of teacher empowerment. A final identified barrier to collaboration coded within the category of unpreparedness for change was lack of teacher empowerment to procure needed time and resources. A representative comment was offered by Mrs. Willing regarding the original intention of the plan and the current status of the dynamics of the plan as related to teacher empowerment. She stated:
I was on the committee that wrote the Hawthorne Building Plan. We felt that if we stated something in the plan, then it would happen. They'd have to honor it. If it's on paper, they've got no choice other than provide the time and resources. We felt empowered at the time. But now it's as though it doesn't exist or make any difference. That was then and this is now. (November, 1998)

Mrs. Able added:

You know, I read all these articles about collaboration, and they make it sound like it works some places. I wonder if it will ever happen? (January 1999)

Mrs. Number added her comments on the limited power of the teachers to follow the building plan:

That plan was constructed by a group of people with a deadline who couldn't agree on many of the issues. But they had to get it done. They were given a sample of a building plan and told to create a similar one for Hawthorne. It didn't then, and it doesn't now give us teachers any authority to get what we need to do our jobs, whether it be working with collaboration or any of the other thousand and one things we're required to do. (January 1999)

It was evident in the responses that the teachers lacked empowerment to obtain needed time and resources for collaboration as mandated by the district in response to IDEA 1997. When asked if there were any ways to get needed time and resources for collaboration, Mrs. Leader responded, "I don't see any."

When asked if the three monthly meetings allowed time for collaboration planning, she again noted, "Most of this time is needed for catching up on building business and our own classrooms. It's impossible."

Mrs. Melody expressed concern over the fact that she had to take lunch duty every day, and if she had this time available for students, she could deliver services such as test reading, team teach, and plan instruction relevant to all learning styles (November 1998).
In the early months of the study, the participants expressed some optimism that the teachers would procure needed time and resources.

Mrs. Leader gave her comments on the benefits of the Hawthorne Plan:

The Hawthorne Plan gives us as teams a little more control over the timeliness of needed changes here at school. (October 1998)

Over the winter months and into spring, the plan was mentioned less and less as a safeguarding document, and more and more as an outdated document that had been instrumental in outlining the inclusion philosophy of the school with no further relevance or authority regarding collaboration.

Mrs. Willing commented on her perceptions of the Hawthorne Building Plan:

We felt that if we stated something in the plan, then it would actually happen. We felt empowered at the time. But now it is as though it doesn't exist. (November, 1998)

Mrs. Number voiced a negative view regarding the Hawthorne Plan:

The Building Plan was written by a small group of people making wishful decisions. (November 1998)

Later in the study, Mrs. Able voiced her opinion regarding the declining authority of teachers in spite of the Hawthorne Plan:

It is not as powerful as we'd like it to be. The plan just isn't behind us like we had hoped. (April 1999)

No specific guarantees for obtaining needed time or resources for collaboration were reported by the group. Inclusion was described in the building plan. The law to include students with disabilities was stated clearly. The resources necessary for compliance were not available to the teachers.

Job security. Participants expressed beliefs that job security was a barrier to the inclusion and collaboration movement at Hawthorne. Mrs. Water
was first to initiate the category of job security threats at the initial meeting in October 1998. She believed that extended job responsibilities as a special educator at Hawthorne caused her to change positions. She resigned as special educator after over 10 years to become a middle school science teacher. She spoke about the amount of information disseminated at the mandatory inservice in August 1998 regarding the new IEP forms and requirements as being the deciding factor for her choice to change.

Mrs. Water considered her position as a special educator was in jeopardy for several reasons:

I have taught special education now for almost 20 years. Now my situation is changed. I'm regular education, and there are no special education kids in my room per say. That's not to say we don't have any needs. (October 1998)

I was hoping that this school district would move to more special ed teachers. I'm worried with what I sense and hear, that numbers are going to drop, and we will have less trained special ed staff. Time will be lost by cutting down numbers. I really feel that collaboration is needing more time instead of being a time saver. (October 1998)

In my former district there were four classes per grade, and two of the four had two teachers all the time. It worked well, even when the teams didn’t work so well together. I still felt that two people were better than one. (October 1998)

The other participants nodded heads in agreement and appeared to listen attentively to her comments, as evidenced by body language and eye contact. Mrs. Water continued to express her concern with job security:

All I can think of is when PL 94-142 was passed, when I got into special education, it was mostly federally funded, and now I think we are mostly state funded. And I think this has caused a huge gap in time and money and services available. (October 1998)

What we have to do, it's so huge, that's why I was so turned off at that beginning meeting, training for new IEPs. There’s no way any
human being can keep track of that much stuff for such a long time and still teach worth anything. And you know, at the same time you know you can be sued if you don’t do those things within a certain time frame. That’s partly why I was glad to jump ship. (October 1998)

These comments indicate that Mrs. Water believed that the expectations for special educators in the Pleasantview district were unrealistic. She felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities of inclusion and collaboration, IEP development, review, and revision. She spoke in water-related terms, which continued throughout the year of study. She expressed her opinion that special education positions were being reduced in the district, and that she felt compelled to accept a regular education position when it became an option in fall of 1998.

I believe that positions are being lost. We need to have enough people to do this job. These professionals have to be here all year, not just on a consultative schedule. We can’t afford to lose staff trained in special ed when the kids still have needs, whether identified or not. (October 1998)

The issue of job security as a barrier was incorporated into the prepared questions for the next focus group interview in November 1998. Questions related to the topic of job security elicited comments from other participants, as well as further comments from Mrs. Water. Mrs. Number punctuated her comments with upraised palms regarding her beliefs that job security might well be an issue at Hawthorne in light of inclusion mandates:

I hear a lot of teachers who are saying they are not trained to teach special needs. What is going to happen to us if no one trains us how to do this? I don’t think the people who make these laws and rules realize that most of us are not trained in the ways of special ed, and we don’t know what those kids need. We are not trained. (October 1998)

Mrs. Willing added her belief that special educators were not given the time to assist regular educators with the demands of teaching students with
special needs in the regular classrooms. Further, it was feared that this inability to spread themselves so thinly would affect their job security:

We should be able to help the regular ed teachers on a regular basis. But there is not time. And still the district says we should be doing this. Any teacher should be able to come to me and say, 'Jimmy Joe is doing something I've never seen before. I need help.' And I should have the time to give the help, or at least discuss it together and come up with a plan. (October 1998)

The district says I'm supposed to do this. But they give me no time to do it. Am I setting myself up for a bad evaluation? Will it affect my job status? I'm doing the best I can from the special ed side, as I'm sure you are, Mrs. Number, from the regular ed side. How do we do it all? Where is the plan? (October 1998)

Mrs. Water commented again in November about her decision to "jump ship" to regular education for job security reasons:

When I came in the fall and noticed how few identified students there were going to be due to the inclusion thing, I really felt they were going to phase me out. Not that these guys want to phase me out, but the district and the numbers would speak for themselves. I feared for my job. (November 1998)

Mrs. Willing added her comments to the discussion on job security and reduced identified student numbers:

It's taking place at Wesley High right now, and I can see it just trickling down to us here at middle school. There were two classes over there that had long term special ed subs in place. What they did is release the subs and the other special needs teachers had to assume these kids onto their rosters. That scares me. My contract says I can teach level 1 or 2 students. What's to stop the district from expecting more from me? (November 1998)

And also the case loads could be so big, it scares me to think of next year. But if you want a job, you have to go along with it. I'd have Level 2 kids on my roster, that means more modifications. Level 1 means resource, Level 2 is self contained. But now they're out in the classrooms most of the time, and they are not grouped together. We're being spread too thin if you ask me. Our job descriptions in the
Hawthorne Plan don't seem to mean much these days. They keep adding more and more. (November 1998)

Mrs. Able reported her concerns regarding job security threats brought on by the inclusion movement at Hawthorne:

That's a big problem right now for all of us in special ed. Level 2 kids are now treated like Level 1 kids, and the classrooms aren't always the best place for them. My teachers haven't jumped on the bandwagon like Mrs. Willing's. Seventh grades have a larger number of identified students with needs, and some of them can't find success. They go in and out of classes and schedules and don't have one person looking over them. (October 1998)

We are working with our hands tied, and the parameters of the job just get bigger. I wonder when the proverbial shoe is going to drop, and we will be accountable for more things than minutes in a day. What do they think we are? Super women? (November 1998)

Mrs. Able reported later in the study that special educators were assuming responsibility for unidentified students, but that these numbers were not showing up on district special education rosters. These rosters had been historically used as data for retaining special education teacher numbers in proportion to those students with IEPs whom they served. Mrs. Able added these comments regarding her concern:

We worked with a lot more at risk kids, not just those with IEPs and identified needs. But it's like we cut off our nose to spite our face. We worked not just with special needs kids, but at risk kids too. Well, we didn't identify the 'at riskers' on our rosters, and our identified numbers of kids with IEPs are down, so they cut staff. We worked our way out of jobs. Can you believe it? We did our jobs so well, we worked ourselves out of a job. We already lost one part time teacher, and then Mrs. Water went regular ed. She was not replaced. (November 1998)

If we didn't work with the at risk kids, they would have been identified in special ed, our roster numbers would be up, and we wouldn't have lost special ed staff. But we did our jobs so well the kids and needs are still here unidentified, but our special ed staff numbers are cut. It's an historical thing here. I only see it getting worse. (November 1998)
Mrs. Willing continued the thought from her perspective on job security as a barrier to collaboration:

We work so much with the at risk kids, we lose teachers. Classes are more challenging. We burn out. It's a sad story. No wonder Mrs. Water jumped ship. (November 1998)

The teachers had heard Mrs. Water refer to her job transition in water-related metaphors, and some were now using them too.

Mrs. Water offered her comments regarding the impending future of special education and regular education

I can see it coming. The special education department will be phased out. It will be every man for himself out there. It's inevitable. The law is going to be the reason they use to phase us out. There is no need for special educators if there are no kids with special needs. Our ship will sink. (February 1999)

This inclusion movement starts with jeopardizing the special education staff. I believe it will continue to affect every facet of the educational system in the near future as special education services are phased out and regular educators take on students with an amazingly broad range of abilities. It's inevitable. We're up the creek without a paddle, and the waves haven't even begun to get big. (April 1999)

Her comments were candid, water-related, and delivered with no retort from the group. Nonverbal head nodding indicated affirmation that the group agreed that the future of special education and roles of special education teachers at Hawthorne were now vague and in jeopardy.

Mrs. Willing added more specific concerns regarding job security:

You know, they keep saying that we're not going to be identifying many kids now that we will be including them. And the number of identified kids will drop, so our formal numbers will drop. But we also serve the at risk kids, whose numbers are increasing. They don't count when they calculate our special education numbers. We're not going to stop helping them. But our jobs are in jeopardy when the special ed numbers go down. I don't think they'll replace Mrs. Able when she leaves in June. Not good news. (April 1999)
These comments from the teachers indicate job security as a barrier to inclusion and collaboration. Teachers were concerned with job security in varying degrees as they attempted to collaborate with limited resources.

**Question 2b summary.** Barriers to collaboration existed at Hawthorne. Teachers expressed concern in role ambiguity in that job expectations outlined in the Hawthorne Building Plan were no longer the expected practice. Lack of needed resources was evident in the absence of time to plan and collaborate. Limited teacher empowerment was felt by participants, who commented that they had no arena in which to address these concerns at Hawthorne or in the Pleasantview District. Job security was reported by participants to be a real concern related to collaboration. Teachers believed special education was to be phased out, and that jobs would be eliminated. Barriers reported by participants were restricting collaboration success at Hawthorne.

**Question 3a: Teachers' Beliefs**

What are the reported beliefs of educators regarding collaboration?

Analysis of the data collected from the focus group interviews indicated that the participants held the following beliefs:

1. Most students can benefit from inclusion and collaboration.
2. Teachers must have support to collaborate successfully
3. Teachers can promote collaboration with available resources

**Collaboration benefits most students.** The Hawthorne Building Plan Beliefs state the following:

We believe curriculum and instruction should be based on developmentally appropriate learning activities which:

-- provide for individual differences
-- provide frequent opportunities for success
-- include special services and resources, which continue to explore and develop general education options that provide
opportunities for students with disabilities to reenter into the full
general education setting. (Spring 1997, p. 213)

Hawthorne's intent is to ensure that reasonable and appropriate services
are provided to each student based on individual need. Problem solving
is a critical component of this model. It is also our intent to educate
students in the least restrictive environment in which the student can
maintain success. (Spring 1997, p. 214)

Participants unanimously agreed that they believe that inclusion and
collaboration practices are appropriate for most students. Mrs. Willing
commented early in the study that she believed that most students can benefit
from inclusion and collaboration practices:

Four kids who were self contained were put out into the regular
curriculum last year and they are just doing super. They are about full
time now. We should have done this for them a long time ago. It's the
best thing that could have happened for them. (October 1998)

She commented that although these four students found success through
inclusion and collaboration, others were not so successful, in her opinion:

I have to be honest, though and say that there are a few who are
overwhelmed and really need to go back. They are just floundering.
They really need to go back to the old way of teaching them outside the
regular classroom. But it looks to me that that is not going to happen.
(October 1998)

Mrs. Water added her belief that most students, not all, were benefiting
from inclusion and collaboration:

It's this least restrictive environment thing. Sometimes the regular
classroom is not the least restrictive environment. I've seen this happen
before. They are drowning. They do not adjust. They are drowning.
(October 1998)

They're not just treading water, they are going under again and again. It
doesn't work for everyone, but it's a life saver for most. (October 1998)
Mrs. Water's water-related comments repeatedly validated her belief that inclusion and collaboration were good for most students with special needs, but they proved detrimental to some who needed a more restrictive environment.

Belief that students benefit from collaborative teaching was stated by Mrs. Able at the first meeting:

Two heads are better than one. We can reach more students with two of us in the room. Even taking in the disruptions, I believe that everyone does better when we can collaborate in the classroom. (October 1998)

Mrs. Melody, music instructor, shared her beliefs that most students can benefit from collaboration in any form:

For music teachers, collaboration in the classroom is like icing on the cake. It means everyone is included. Collaboration is even better for students when two teachers are in the room. We teachers can know sooner what the student needs, and help him or her succeed. I believe that most kids can do better this way. (October 1998)

Some kids need to know how they're doing every minute or so, and that what they're doing is ok. One person can't possibly get to that kid as often as they need it, and when you finally do, the moment for learning is lost. With two people in there, it's easier for us and better for them. But usually we don't have this. (October 1998)

Participants reiterated their beliefs that most, not all, students can benefit from collaboration often. Mrs. Number had few comments at the initial meeting in October, but did offer her response indicating that she believed that many students with disabilities did not belong in the regular classroom:

I was just thinking that there are those students that are disruptive, not just to themselves, but to others too, and that's bad for everyone. They don't belong in my class. It's not fair to others. (October 1998)

She commented that she had not experienced collaboration in her professional practice. Her comment indicates that she had limited understanding about disabilities other than behavioral needs. She initially
believed that students with disabilities did not belong in the regular classroom. It was Mrs. Number who indicated the most positive change regarding her beliefs about collaboration by the end of the study. Her early responses also indicate that she believed that she did not possess the abilities to teach students with disabilities in her math classes.

Mrs. Leader qualified her belief that not all students can benefit from inclusion and collaboration:

I think there is such a drastic change from the elementary experience for kids who go cold turkey into the real world of middle school. They're exposed to too much freedom too fast, and too much responsibility. These few are not ready for the regular curriculum. (October 1998)

Mrs. Water added her perspectives that some children are not ready for the freedom and responsibilities of middle school inclusion:

It's like a double whammy for some of the kids. Changing too many variables at once doesn't work for them all. Changing classes, teachers, and schedules is not the best thing for some of them at all in my opinion. (October 1998)

Mrs. Willing believed that some students were not benefiting from inclusion and collaboration:

It's much too much too soon for a few of the kids. If they were given more time to gradually adjust to the changes, it would be better for them. (October 1998)

Mrs. Willing voiced her opinion that not all students were benefiting from inclusion and collaboration due to high numbers of students and limited special education personnel:

I don't think it's that teachers believe the kids do not belong out there so much, but we have a lot of low level kids. So we've clustered the kids, and the groups are really so unbelievably challenging. It's really tough, and then these kids stay together for most of the day, so I can work with them, and it's really such a frustration not to be able to reach them all. A large number becomes the the challenge. How do I serve them unless I
keep them in a group? Our 8th grade next year is going to present so many challenges! They better be prepared up there! (January 1999)

Teacher believed that most students can benefit from inclusion and collaboration. They reported instances when inclusion was not the best placement for some students. They indicated that for these few students, collaboration is necessary, must be well planned, and delivered dynamically and expertly if the student is to find success in the regular classroom. The belief that some, not all, students can benefit from collaboration heightens the need for quality collaborative practice, since collaboration is no longer an option.

**Teachers need support for successful collaboration.** Focus group interview participants voiced varying levels of confidence that the Hawthorne Building Plan and district policies would support collaboration. Responses early in the study indicated that participants believed that the district would eventually provide needed resources, time, and professional development for collaboration. Most initially regarded the Hawthorne Building Plan as a safeguard for needed resources for collaboration. Mrs. Water expressed optimism early in the study that the building plan and federal laws would eventually support collaboration:

I think the laws will, but I think it will take time, and probably parent reaction and maybe even lawsuits to missed or changed services. We have to remember that the laws are safeguards for change, but they don’t always put the ways and means for compliance in motion. The laws have been the driving force in modern treatment of students with disabilities. We have to trust they will help us out as teachers. It takes time. (October 1998)

Mrs. Leader gave her comments on both the benefits and shortcomings of the Hawthorne Plan as a support for collaboration:

The Hawthorne Plan gives us as teams a little more control over the timeliness of needed changes here at school. If we want to get things
done, we don’t have to go through the lengthy process we had before. (November 1998)

But the building plan only helps us move kids out of restrictive programs. It is a big hassle and lengthy procedure to bring a student who is struggling in the mainstream back into a more restrictive program. The law is forcing us to stretch as professionals to meet the needs in the regular classrooms as much as possible. It’s a complete shift and a struggle of a new sort. (November 1998)

Mrs. Willing spoke about the vision of the writing committee to support collaboration which she shared:

We wrote the Hawthorne Building Plan in March of 1997. We had a district authority figure here to show us how the plan was supposed to look. We sought input from the Site Council that same month and hoped that the plan would prove to be the guarantee we needed to do this job of inclusion the right way with skill and confidence. (November 1998)

Mrs. Number commented on the limited support offered by the plan:

It was developed by a small group of people making wishful decisions for those of us in the trenches. (November 1998)

Mrs. Willing commented further about the Hawthorne Building Plan several months later:

I was on the committee that wrote the Hawthorne Building Plan. We felt that if we stated something in the plan, then it would happen. They’d have to honor it. If it’s on paper, they’ve got no choice other than provide the time and resources. We felt empowered at the time. But now it’s as though it doesn’t exist or make any difference. That was then and this is now. (February 1999)

Mrs. Able reported late in the study that she believed the Hawthorne Plan held little authority to support collaboration:

The building plan became fragmented because of personalities and agendas. It wasn’t as strong as we would have liked. The teams fell apart at the end of last year and we picked up the pieces at a hundred miles an hour. We do what we can do, but the plan isn’t behind us. (April 1999)
Teachers believed the Hawthorne Plan would guarantee supports for collaboration identified by the group. Trust was waning by mid-study, as participants expressed convictions that the plan held minimal authority to secure needed resources for collaboration.

Teachers in the focus group interviews commented that the district's decision to pull the special education teachers from the AEA teacher pool caused a ripple of changes to special education services which did not support collaboration. Mrs. Willing voiced her beliefs about the reduction in direct service from AEA support personnel, who had been the authority in special education practices and decisions since 1975 at Hawthorne:

We had to assume a lot of the burden of AEA pulling out, or the district pulling out, I should say. I realize it was a Pleasantview decision based on budget and compliance to the new law. I guess I should be happy I still have a job and didn't have to transfer. It's disheartening to see all we lost in the change. (February 1999)

Mrs. Willing commented again on the need for collaboration supports in the spring:

I don't think we'll ever have true collaboration around here like we read about in the journals and magazines. The time to plan, time to teach, and time to assess and reflect together as a team just doesn't exist under present work demands. (March 1999)

The building plan was supposed to make these things available to us. Even though we do the best that we can, I don't think we'll ever reach full and ideal levels of collaboration the way things are going around here unless the district gives us some active support and resources. (March 1999)

Mrs. Leader expressed frustration with the lack of direction and communication regarding collaboration support:

It's an insult when I think about it. It's not just the special needs thing, but the whole communication thing in general. No one talks to us unless it's a new project, or we're not up to par on a deadline for a document, but
we rarely have an open forum for any of our concerns. It's downright insulting if you ask me. (February 1999)

Mrs. Able voiced her perspective that supports were needed for successful collaboration at Hawthorne:

It's as though we are supposed to figure out ourselves and make decisions based on our gut feelings, with little regard for our need for inservice and planning. We do what we think is right, always worrying that we're overstepping our bounds, the laws, and the policies we heard so much about at the August special ed inservice. What happened to all the planning the AEA support team said would be ours? They made it sound so important then. So where is it? (February 1999)

Teachers expressed belief that support was needed to collaborate successfully at Hawthorne. Teachers repeatedly identified the need for planning time, professional development, and additional human resources in the effort to comply with collaboration and inclusion mandates in the LRE.

Teachers can collaborate with existing resources. By spring, participants had begun to develop plans for collaboration utilizing existing building resources when district supports failed to materialize. Mrs. Water felt that the district had abandoned the effort, and that no support was coming. She then suggested that the teachers begin to rally and develop their own system for collaboration using the resources they had in the building:

We have waited and asked, and little has happened. Maybe in the end, of what I don't know, we'll come to appreciate the fact that we've been given no direction. We need to see it not as a lack of empowerment, but as an opportunity to take the situation into our own hands and do something about the things that we do have control of. (April 1999)

We need to look at it as the glass half full instead of half empty. We need to view it as a chance to do it our way since no one is telling us any different. Ignorance can be bliss if we shift our view of things and see empowerment to define our roles and our responsibilities. You know we'll hear about it if we cross too many lines the wrong way. But it's our
job now and we should just do it the best way we know and trust ourselves as a team. That’s collaboration to me. (April 1999)

Mrs. Leader also commented on the fact that teachers were building resources for collaboration in the spring. Seeds of determination began to cause the teachers to assess supports they did possess as a staff and make plans to move ahead regarding collaboration efforts:

We haven't been given any time to plan or meet at all. We've spent some time with the AEA people to see what they recommend on a few students, but that whole relationship has changed over the year too. The AEA support people act like they are on the outer rim now, not as front row authoritarian as before. (April 1999)

We have to establish a whole new relationship with them because before, they were in charge. Now they just recommend and we have to get used to it. It has its good points, true. We just have to identify them, and that takes time. (April 1999)

This data indicated that empowerment was developing among the participants to support collaboration at Hawthorne in the absence of district intervention.

Mrs. Melody voiced her opinion that the faculty needed an action plan to support collaboration at Hawthorne Middle School:

I wish we could just sit down and make a plan and follow it, adjust it, and be the good teachers and colleagues we know we are, but don’t have much chance to show for the students with special needs these days. We can’t be left in the dark by the district or spread too thin trying to second guess what they want and what is best. Hopefully these are the same thing. (April 1999)

Mrs. Willing expressed her belief that the Hawthorne Plan needed revision:

I'd like to see the plan be revised and strengthened to get us what we need. But the way things go in this district, I know it won't happen. We need to look at what we’ve got and use it better. (April 1999)
Needed resources to support collaboration were not available. The teachers were beginning to seek alternative resources for collaboration. They spent less time dwelling on what was *not* happening to support collaboration. Mrs. Melody commented that the teachers would attempt to make collaboration successful at Hawthorne despite lack of support:

> It's not fair to the kids and it's not fair to us that we don't have any direction from downtown. Luckily we all work together, and we can do this if we set our minds to it and make our own plans. Otherwise it would just be a bust. (April 1999)

**Question 3a summary.** Teachers believed that most students can benefit from collaboration and inclusion. They indicated that teachers require support for successful collaboration. These supports, specifically planning time, empowerment to address the issues, professional development, and job security, were not available to date. Teachers believed that they possessed valuable resources as a building staff to collaboration successfully at Hawthorne. Teachers changed by redefining their roles in the collaboration effort at Hawthorne.

**Question 3b: Collaboration Practices at Hawthorne**

What are teachers' collaborative practices at Hawthorne Middle School in the first year of compliance?

Analysis of the data collected from focus group interviews over the first year revealed collaboration practices in three areas:

1. Instructional collaboration
2. Supportive collaboration
3. Consultative collaboration

**Instructional collaboration.** Instructional collaboration occurs when the IEP directs the special educator to supply specialized instruction in specific
contexts, subjects and/or times of the school day (Adamson et al., 1990; Van Dyke et al., 1997). The instruction conforms in some way to topic and/or context of the general curriculum. It is delivered by the special educator to teach to the ability level, learning rate, and learning style of the student with special needs within the physical space of the regular classroom.

At Hawthorne instructional collaboration occurred in several classrooms, some at varying intervals and some on regular year long basis. Collaboration experiences occurred when the special educators were able to schedule these into the daily program when they were not meeting students in exclusionary models in the skills lab, a form of resource room where students with identified needs spent part of their day receiving individual and small group instruction and assessment. Instructional collaboration was restricted due to adherence to the dual system of education.

Mrs. Water described her services during the years as a special educator practicing instructional collaboration before switching to regular education:

I believe that collaboration is the regular educator and myself working together. I've team taught, giving half of the curriculum, or I'm in the regular classroom, walking around close to the action, supporting the regular teacher. You know, going around the room helping anyone that needs it. I've done this here now for 5 years. (October 1998)

These comments indicate that Mrs. Water practiced instructional, supportive, and consultative collaboration at Hawthorne. These models are not independent of each other, and according to participants, the models are integrated in collaborative practices when feasible at Hawthorne.

Mrs. Water later reported that as a science teacher, her current position, she still was available for colleague consultation regarding students and their
needs, and colleagues did take advantage of this opportunity to collaborate on an informal level:

We sure don't have to hit anyone over the head to work with us collaboratively. Or even to find a solution. I can walk into anyone's classroom and say I need some help on so and so, and we get something going. A few kids I needed help with are basketball players, so I went to the coach and he told them straight out to get with the program. It's amazing the power a coach has over the kids. (January 1999)

Mrs. Able practiced collaboration by taping tests and assignments for teachers with whom she collaborated, either instructionally or supportively as time permitted, although the former model occurred most often. When Mrs. Melody voiced her frustration at having to perform lunch duty at a time when she might have had time to read tests to students with special needs, Mrs. Able came to her aid:

You know, we have taping sessions all the time. The tapes are all set up and there's someone in the skills lab all the time. We just got 10 new tape recorders for this very reason and the kids each have their own tape. We just dub them, and plug them in. We teach them to use the pause button. It's a godsend to them and to us. (November 1998)

Mrs. Willing added her comments to this collaborative instance:

It's obvious that kids usually know more than they can read or write about on a test. All you need do is let us know he's coming, and we'll take it from there. (November 1998)

A solution to the problem was reached at the focus group interview by the participants in only a brief amount of time. Several other solutions to collaboration dilemmas were reached during subsequent focus group interviews. The teachers reaffirmed their beliefs that the faculty was able and willing, but the system was not supporting the collaboration efforts.
Mrs. Willing and Mrs. Number worked out a solution to a dilemma dealing with students who had not mastered math facts by sixth grade, yet they were being forced to move on to meet building standards and benchmarks. Mrs. Number commented that these students had “no at risk privileges. Can you believe that phrase?” Mrs. Willing offered not only a math strategy, but the two educators worked out a schedule to use peer tutors from the special education classes who had mastered the fact strategy to assist younger students in Mrs. Number’s math class. This took a matter of five minutes in the focus group to achieve a solution. Mrs. Number repeatedly expressed her satisfaction with the instructional collaboration several times throughout the course of later interviews. Mrs. Number became visibly more attentive in the focus groups. Her body language and positive comments regarding her collaboration practice experience were noted often in the data:

I am so pleased with the success of the math facts strategies. I only had about 10 who really needed it, and nine of them have really grabbed on to it. The other one, I could have shook him, just needs to learn six facts. - Just six! I told him over and over that learning the six would allow him to move on. You have to learn them, memorize them, and here is the test, and he’s got his crib sheet. I told him you can’t do this cheating, there isn’t time to use the crib sheet. Today he got 30 right instead of eight or ten, and we’re going to keep working on it. Do you have the other sequences for addition, subtraction, and division? (February 1999)

It was evident that the practice of instructional collaboration was successful for Mrs. Number’s students. She became an advocate for collaboration in several situations occurring later in the year. Others shared her conviction that the practice supported collaboration, but time to practice was restrictive.

Supportive collaboration. Supportive collaboration is defined as the combined efforts of regular and special educators in the regular classroom,
team teaching, adapting, and modifying instruction for those who required this, within the same physical space (Adamson et al., 1990; Van Dyke et al., 1997).

Mrs. Melody, music teacher, commented on her experiences with supportive collaboration in a positive tone:

My situation is one of being a specialist. I get a rare experience at this. The specialists aren't on the regular teams, we're on our own teams. Mrs. R. (Special educator) brings her class of kids with special needs to one of my music classes, and believe it or not, she comes with them and stays. She did this all last year. That was really helpful, because I could run stuff by her if we're doing a lesson, and maybe, for instance, the kids don't have the math skills to cover the note counting. She'll cover this in her classroom beforehand and so the kids don't come to it cold. (October 1998)

Our planning is definitely informally done. We'll meet each other in the hall, or in the bathroom and talk about what's coming up or whatever. There's just no time for formal planning around here. Having her in the room is a life saver! If someone needs this she can help, and I can't stop! She can be there. (October 1998)

Mrs. Water indicated that instructional collaboration occurred in one of her science classes on a daily basis during the 1998-99 school year, her first year as a science teacher:

I came in with her kids once a day to her science class. If I taught, she watched. If she taught, I watched. We got along real well. She was there to help other kids and that was helpful. Any kids. This just started in my own class in reverse roles this year. That's where I started this year in special ed, then I sort of jumped ship and when I went to the special ed meeting this year and saw and heard all the new forms. I was overwhelmed. (October 1998)

The reason I wanted to teach special ed is because my training was out east in special ed and it worked and made sense the way they did things. There were two teachers in the class at all times. We had planning time together and taught and planned together all the time. One person would be the teacher and the other the helper. We'd use each other talents in this way. The other person would cruise. (October 1998)
It's like basketball. The ball going around and you pick it up as it gets to you. There's a ton of respect going on all the time between the teachers and that really comes off! Nobody looks at you to see if you're special ed or regular ed. I mean, we're both teachers all the time and it's an equal setting. In fact when we started, she didn't tell them even that I was special ed. (October 1998)

In my former district, there were four classes per grade, and two of the four had two teachers all the time. It worked well, even when the teams didn't work so well together, I still felt that two people were better than one. (October 1998)

Mrs. Water contributed additional information on collaborative practice at Hawthorne:

Another thing I find, we find, that when there are two teachers in the classroom, and one teacher reaches their limit, it's so nice to depend on another way of trying to make things work. And then on the flip side, when those kids do funny stuff, it's great to have someone to share it with. You don't have to wait till the end of the day to share it. You can enjoy it on the spot. It helps us go on. (November 1998)

Mrs. Melody shared the positive factors of her collaboration experience:

Here's a real joy in having someone else in there. True, we all like to have our own little world, yet we work together, can trade looks, or cues, and it's much nicer. I know she doesn't know all there is to know about the subject of music, but we agree that she is a check on my teaching. If I'm not clear enough for her to understand, then it's evident that the kids aren't understanding, and we need to try again or another angle. (November 1998)

If teachers remain open and are smart about why collaboration is happening, they will come to value the experience as we did. And when you see kids learning more it is truly a blessing. (February 1999)

Mrs. Number had not offered any collaboration comments until mid study due to the fact that she had not been asked or told to collaborate in the classroom prior to November 1998. She had observed collaborative settings in another district:
I observed classes in Motown, and there were two classes together. But it was evident that the special ed teacher had no clue what was going on and it created a bad situation. Her kids never did seem to fit in the classroom. And no one did anything to make it easier for them, the regular ed teacher or the special ed teacher. It just wasn’t good for anyone. Those kids didn’t want to ever come back there. I didn’t ever want to go back there either. I can just imagine trying to absorb those kids into my kids. (November 1998)

These comments indicate that Mrs. Number had little or no experience with mainstreaming or collaboration in any positive sense. She had never had any special education training, and in her conversations in fall focus group interviews, she consistently used pronouns such as “them,” “those kids,” and “their kids,” when referring to the students with special needs.

In November 1998 Mrs. Number and the special educator, Kay, had been told by the building administrator that they would combine a group of students with special needs into one section of Mrs. Number’s regular math class. The special educator accompanied the students. There was no set plan or agenda for collaboration at the time.

By January 1999 she and a special educator had been working together in the classroom for 2 months. Her comments indicate that she was seeing student success as well as collaborative success with this endeavor, to her pleasant surprise:

I have had the best year in a long time. Kay, the special education teacher, and I have developed such a wonderful relationship. We decided early on that each of us would pipe right in when one of us had something to add to the class instruction or discussion to make it richer for all the kids. (January 1999)

The year started out on such a dreary note, and now we have this great system going. I couldn’t be more pleased with the collaboration changes. I don’t know much about the special ed side of things. It sounds like it’s much more complicated than we ever see as regular educators. But my year has been good so far. (January 1999)
Mrs. Number shared her anxiety over almost losing the opportunity to continue the collaboration experience in December, when the administrator was going to pull the special educator from the class, leaving the students with disabilities in the class. Opinions differed when the principal attempted to switch schedules, leave the students with special needs, and reassign the special educator to another class. The collaboration experience would be terminated. Mrs. Number wanted to continue the practice. Her comments are indicative of a change in attitude toward collaboration:

We worked it out, even though it got a little tense, no one got out of line, no animosity. We handled it. We showed Mrs. Boone, our administrator, the increased scores of the kids in math, all the kids and she reconsidered. As it turns out, we do have good communication channels at this building that work, even when the proverbial chips are down. (January 1999)

In data gathered in focus group interview in January of 1999, Mrs. Number started referring to the special education collaborating teacher, the students included in her class and the students without disabilities using the pronouns “we,” “our kids,” and “our class.”

This served as evidence that supportive collaboration was occurring successfully, but with limited frequency due to high student numbers, few special educators, and scheduling restraints.

Consultative collaboration. Consultative collaboration was providing assistance to colleagues in matters concerning IEPs and related professional assistance with collaboration and least restrictive environment (Adamson et al., 1990; Van Dyke et al., 1997). Special education personnel as well as the counselor, Mrs. Leader, provided consultative collaboration. Mrs. Leader commented on her role and practice in consultative collaboration at Hawthorne:
In counseling, I don’t always directly teach per se as you all do, so when I think of collaboration, I think of working with the other counselors here. Ed, another counselor, and I do this all the time and do an awful lot together. We team to work with kids. He’s got strengths that I don’t, and vice versa. We don’t feel insulted when one of us works better with a kid than the other, or for that matter another set of parents requests one of us over the other. (October 1998)

Collaboration for counselors means working with the parents. So that’s what I think of when I think of collaboration. It may well be that the students with whom we work do have IEPs and identified needs. We view the big picture, call in the necessary faculty for problem solving, and we collaborate in this way. The result may well be related to special needs. We’ve taken on a greater role in this collaboration since the AEA is no longer with us in such a great degree. (October 1998)

The counselors served as facilitator of problem solving measures. These measures often led to special education service provision and collaboration via instructional or supportive services for the child.

Mrs. Willing was initially concerned that the teachers in the regular classes would not embrace collaborative practices suggested to them as the students with special needs were returned to the regular classrooms. She practiced consultative collaboration in this effort:

The teachers here at Hawthorne have been amazingly willing to make accommodations or modifications when I’ve suggested them. They are amazing. But don’t get me wrong, I know we all need professional development on this collaboration issue. But our teachers are getting really good at this. They’ve probably always been good at it but never had to stretch to collaborate in the past. (October 1998)

Sometimes they tell me they’re frazzled, and I tell them right back that they are already doing the things I recommend. I tell them it comes natural to them because they are such good teachers. This is just the new name for it. I tell them this constantly because they seem to do a lot of the things naturally. (October 1998)

Mrs. Leader qualified collaborative consultation practice as a positive occurrence:
We just had a meeting at the beginning of the year with a new student. We went down a checklist of accommodations we had devised. We had just about every accommodation on the list checked. This was no easy case. And the teachers present nodded in agreement because they agreed that the student needed those things. It was amazing, but all agreed to try them. It covered so much, and from periodic reports, the student is fairly successful, and the teachers come in and ask for clarification or further direction to accommodate or modify. (February 1999)

This student would probably have qualified for special education services in the past, but under the new policies, we give problem solving a try first. I don't know if she will ever be identified the way things go now, but she will get the help from anyone who can provide it. The teachers are stretched thin, but the student will get the help one way or another. I guess the good thing is that we don't have to identify her with a label to help her. (February 1998)

Consultative collaborative practice supported inclusion and LRE for this student. The practice eliminated labeling the child, minimized effects of the dual system of education, and promoted fair treatment in accordance with IDEA 1997.

Consultative collaboration was occurring at Hawthorne despite barriers. Teachers found time during non-contract time and while performing other activities to collaborate.

The teachers identified the value of the student accommodation plans devised by the special education team as written forms of collaboration. These documents summarized IEP goals and objectives, learning styles and rates, and noted reasonable and relevant accommodations and modifications. The plans were not required documents, but the special educators continued the practice in response to positive reactions of the regular educators and resulting student success. Mrs. Melody voiced her opinion of student accommodation plans:
Without this plan, it would be impossible for me to meet their needs. I know they don’t have to provide it, but it is surely welcomed in my room. I think they deserve a lot of credit for doing this. We all need to give them the credit. (November 1998)

If things work, and kids with disabilities show success, we owe it to these ladies, the special ed team. It’s their experience and talent, as well as their willingness to create and maintain the student accommodation plans. They provide this information at the beginning of the year, and they are available to interpret the stuff during the year. I don’t know what you call this dedication, but it’s collaboration to me, even if I don’t see them for a week. The evidence of their work is there on the sheet, and the kid has a better chance to succeed. (January 1999)

Toward the last months of the study, participants summarized incidents of their collaborative practices. Mrs. Melody identified her instructional and support collaborative practice as being restricted because students with special needs were in her classes only two or three times daily. The opportunity to have a special needs teacher in the room had been reduced to once or twice a week, as planning time for the special educator was scheduled at the same times. The special educator attended the class when she could, but time was scarce (April 1999).

Mrs. Number repeatedly praised her instructional and supportive collaborative experience since January 1999 on. She and the special needs teacher, Kay, collaborated before and after school, and during the class. This collaboration occurred as needed and was not reserved for only those students with special needs (April 1999). This indicates a healthy collaboration practice in which all students receive fair treatment.

Mrs. Willing and Mrs. Able both expressed dismay over scheduling restrictions limiting collaboration within the classrooms. Deadlines for IEP review and revision absorbed much time previously spent in classrooms.
Classroom teachers were willing to consult with them for accommodations and modifications for included students when time permitted.

Mrs. Water reported that she informally collaborated with many teachers on her team regarding student needs. She expressed hope that she would collaborate to a greater degree with instruction and support in the classroom next year. She admitted that she missed the many diverse teaching and learning opportunities she had previously experienced as a special educator, now that her science position involved repetition of instruction throughout the day (April 1999). She had only one science class including students with disabilities this year. The collaborating teacher supported collaboration by team teaching with her. Mrs. Water had performed this role herself as special educator before changing to regular education (April 1999).

Mrs. Leader commented that the problem solving process allowed her to practice consultative collaboration with more teams and individuals regarding students of concern, regardless of the fact that they were or were not identified with special needs (April 1999).

Mrs. Willing gave her comments regarding projected collaboration needs and practices for the upcoming school year:

We surely need to do some planning. We’ve scheduled this year the same way we’ve done it in the past due to limited time and resources. We placed the most needy kids in the classes I will be attending so I can collaborate with the teachers. There are so many students with needs at the 7th grade level, some of them require assistance for 50% of their day. When it comes to 8th grade, we need to look at splitting teams and splitting kids all day so they have diversity and don’t end up in the same classes together all day. There’s 15 to 18 of them for the 8th grade. (March 1999)

Question 3b summary. Instructional, supportive, and consultative collaboration practices were occurring at Hawthorne. These practices were
supported by identified factors: established acceptance of mainstreaming, shared vision, and the expertise and experience of the educators. Factors restricting collaboration opportunities and practices at Hawthorne included limited or nonexistent planning time, resources, and professional development. Consultative collaboration occurred more frequently than the other models.

**Question 4: Change**

Did the teachers change their reported beliefs and collaborative practices over the first year of compliance to IDEA 1997?

Changes in beliefs and collaborative practices indicated in focus group interviews included the following:

1. Teachers' attitudes toward and willingness to participate in collaboration.
2. Teachers' confidence in the Hawthorne Building Plan and Pleasantview School District policies to support collaboration.
3. Increased levels of collaboration practices at Hawthorne.

**Change in teacher beliefs and collaborative practice.** Over the year of study, several of the teachers changed attitudes toward and willingness to participate in collaboration activities at Hawthorne.

**Mrs. Number.** Most notable change was reported by Mrs. Nancy Number, math teacher. In the early months of the study Mrs. Number commented that students with disabilities did not belong in her classroom or any other regular education class because they disrupted the students without disabilities. She had no collaboration experience. She stated that she had purposely chosen to teach regular education, not special education.

Mrs. Number was directed by the building principal to allow a special needs teacher and her group of students to join one of her math classes in
November. She agreed with candid reservations. Her use of pronouns indicated lack of ownership of this population of students: "those children," "her students," "those other students" (October 1998).

After two months of this experience, Mrs. Number spoke readily of the positive relationship she had developed with Kay, the special educator, in the months the two had worked together collaboratively. She made little mention of the included students in mid study focus group interviews.

In the final months of the study, Mrs. Number described her collaboration experience with phrases such as "best year I've had," "I don't know what I'd do without Kay," "our students are so much improved," "our students' remarkable progress," "now I have a positive story to tell too." She was counseling Mrs. Water, veteran special educator turned science teacher, in the final months of the study regarding the role of collaborating regular education teacher as she viewed it:

If you are like I am, the first year is so new and introductory, you work hard on the big pieces. And the next year you'll change even more. And you'll grasp more of the big picture. It gets better as you go into class each time. It keeps changing all the time. Next year you'll branch out even more. (March 1999)

Mrs. Number indicated that in April of 1999 that she and her collaborating teacher planned to tape record each other so they could refine their instruction delivery. She used the pronoun "we" many times in her later comments regarding the teacher and students. Validation of her changed attitude and willingness to collaborate was evident in her final focus group statement:

Having them, the resource kids, in the room has been such a positive experience for all of us. That class had the highest grades of all the classes so far this year. Things just blossomed. We really had good things going on. (April 1999)
Mrs. Number had changed her attitude and was now a willing collaborator. First she recognized the collegial benefits of having another educator in the room. Then she reported on the positive dynamics of the instructional collaboration she and Kay had experienced. Finally, in light of increased student performance, she indicated ownership of the students with special needs in her room.

**Mrs. Water.** Mrs. Water experienced change in an evolutionary sense regarding collaboration. She began the focus group interviews with accounts of why she changed from special education to science teacher, to preserve her seniority and employment. She expressed early that she believed that special education was going to be eventually phased out in the Pleasantview District, and she was very verbal about reporting her opinion of the enormous task facing special educators. These opinions came to the forefront in fall 1998, and were the reason she “jumped ship” to regular education teacher:

> What we have to do, it’s so huge! That’s why I was so turned off at that beginning meeting, training for new IEPs. There’s no way any human being can keep track of that much stuff for such a long time and still teach worth anything. And you know, at the same time you know you can be sued if you don’t do those things with in a certain time frame. You rarely hear of it happening, but it’s always there in the back of your mind. That’s partly why I was glad to jump ship. (October 1998)

Mrs. Water maintained her concerns for the security of other special educators’ jobs throughout the year of study and her opinion that special education was going to be phased out:

> This inclusion movement starts with jeopardizing the special education staff. I believe it will continue to affect every facet of the educational system in the near future as special education services are phased out and regular educators take on students with an amazingly broad range of abilities. It’s inevitable. We’re up the creek without a paddle, and the waves haven’t even begun to get big. (April 1999)
In the last months of the focus group interviews, Mrs. Water commented less about her position change and commented more that the regular classroom did not provide the levels of diversity in teaching opportunities that she had enjoyed as a special educator:

I really look forward to having more diversity of abilities in my classes. Since I changed from special ed to regular ed I've had the worry in the back of my mind that I would miss the diversity and challenges. Now with the collaboration thing, I'm optimistic it's in my future to have some challenges and changes. (March 1999)

This comment indicates that Mrs. Water had resolved job security issues by “jumping ship” to regular education. Now she was anticipating increased opportunity in the regular classroom to serve students with diverse learning styles, rates, and abilities. She spoke these comments with noticeable optimism and anticipation of things to come:

I hope to be involved in more direct collaboration in the classroom with colleagues. I'm doing some consultative type collaboration now with people on my team. I'm enthused with some of the possibilities for team teaching science. (April 1999)

Mrs. Water was an advocate of collaboration for teachers serving students in the LRE. Her concerns with inclusion stemmed from fear of losing her job if she stayed in special education. She voiced her opinion that special education was going to be phased out. Her change included reaching a personal resolution with her professional changes from special education to regular education. She felt she was still employing her special education training every day in her regular classroom. She was looking forward to the challenges and diversity of the students to come in the future as she increased collaboration opportunities at Hawthorne.
Mrs. Melody. Mrs. Melody began the year with one successful collaboration experience with Mrs. R. and her students. She expressed concern over the isolation specialists like herself experienced in the classroom:

My situation is one of being a specialist. I get a rare experience at this. The specialists aren't on the regular teams, we're on our own teams. Mrs. R., special educator, brings her class of kids with special needs to one of my music classes, and believe it or not, she comes with them and stays. She did this all last year. That was really helpful. I wish it could happen again this year, but there's no chance with the schedule. (October 1998)

Mid study comments of Mrs. Melody were more negative regarding the plight of music teachers and specialists in serving students with disabilities in their classes:

It makes me really think about the lack of direction that we specialists get. Well, for instance, we used to have a coordinator. We don't have this music facilitator any more. He was kind of an idea guy, giving ideas for different activities and projects. But, you know, with the physically challenged kids, we're just on our own. (February 1999)

By the end of the school year, Mrs. Melody commented that she had abandoned hope of having a music coordinator but voiced the need for someone to assist the specialists with accommodation for students with physical disabilities not always covered in IEPs:

I scramble to find journals and whip through them to see if there's any literature on the problem I'm facing, and what the journal might add to the solution, and, sometimes I do find something. (April 1999)

Mrs. Melody began to research educational situations and challenges for which she sought strategies. She made a conscious effort to use other professionals, preservice teachers, and research to meet the needs of the students in her classes whose disabilities were not guided by IEP information. Her attitude and willingness to collaborate was self motivated and self directed.
Mrs. Willing. Mrs. Willing changed by becoming more assertive and resourceful in seeking fair student treatment and teacher advocacy. She commented that previously she did not possess assertive levels of confidence. Hawthorne student needs, faculty cooperation, teaming, and serving on the writing committee for the Hawthorne Building Plan fostered new levels of self confidence to seek and practice fair treatment of students and teachers:

I had so many kids in my one skills class with special needs, I felt like I was in a human pin ball machine. That’s what I was told to do, and I did it. I didn’t feel good about it because too many kids with so many needs can’t get much help from one person spread so thin. (November 1998)

Later in the focus group interviews, she discussed her decision to give up a planning period to serve more students:

I lost a lot of time with teachers, but something had to give. I’m playing catch up all the time. (January 1999)

By the end of the year Mrs. Willing indicated that her efforts and new level of confidence were showing positive results:

Things are paying off when it comes to collaborating with the classroom teachers. I was a wreck at first, but now I see they’re doing such a good job, I am reassured. (April 1999)

I see things I never dreamed that teachers would do or allow, and I’m glad I was so adamant that they make these changes. I continue to tell them that the fair thing to do, since no one gives us any direction, is to be the good teacher you have always been who senses the different levels of the kids and does what’s needed to help them. (April 1999)

I used to let people walk all over me. I don’t do that anymore. Not when kids are at stake. That’s my job and I’m going to do whatever it takes. And I know I’m not alone in that around here. (March 1999)

Mrs. Willing had become more assertive in her advocacy for both students with special needs and for teachers who were not receiving tools necessary to collaborate successfully.
Other participants in the focus group experienced change in attitudes and willingness to collaborate.

**Mrs. Able.** Mrs. Able commented that she was committed to use her professional training to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the collaboration effort and not look for direction from the district. Her attitude was evident in her comments and practices:

My ornery nature takes over sometimes. I feel and know I'm doing my best. If it's not good enough, then they can fire me. I'm doing what I think kids need and if it doesn't fit the plan, then fire me. It's hard sometimes not to shut down. It's like they're not telling me what I'm supposed to do or what I'm accountable for. If they can't tell me what I'm accountable for then I'm going to do what I think is right for the kids. And I'll probably ask these people to do this with me. And they probably will. (February, 1999)

Mrs. Able repeatedly requested a meeting with the District Director of Special Needs to provide clarification of questions regarding the IEP and standard and benchmark incompatibilities noted by teachers:

He finally agreed to meet with us. We wanted to present three things: our concerns, what is working, and what was not working. We didn't make it a gripe session either. We addressed the issue that we are spread too thin and we were under the understanding that was not supposed to happen. (March 1999)

But then we had a big scare thrown at us. We were thrown a projection that they are planning to cut the 6.25 special educators to 3.72 next year. I feel like the district has turned their back on us. (March 1999)

My husband is being transferred out of the country at the end of the school year. I am of course going with him. And I don't plan on looking for a teaching job right away. Under present conditions I've experienced in this district lately, I need a break. I'd rather teach than juggle. (April 1999)

Mrs. Able expressed increasing disillusionment with teaching demands and conditions during the focus group interviews. Her attitude and willingness
to do what she felt was right for students intensified her teaching efforts. She assertively requested and conducted a meeting with district personnel regarding the inclusion dilemma. She did not find satisfaction in the outcome, and her attitude toward the district intensified negatively, as she voiced abandonment. The system had failed her and her students in her opinion. She resigned and moved away after 16 years teaching at Hawthorne Middle School. Mrs. Able moved away and is not currently teaching.

**Mrs. Leader.** Mrs. Leader expressed consistent beliefs in the benefits of collaborative practices over the course of the year. She identified the building problem solving process early in the interviews as a viable means of identifying and providing assistance for students with disabilities. She supported the building level decision making authority and indicated positively that inclusion had been successful for most students.

She continuously supported the actions of the building principal regarding problem solving and collaboration efforts. She appeared honest and fair in her comments about colleagues and school related issues. She spoke willingly and calmly when responding to questions. Her body language indicated confidence, optimism, and cooperation. Others appeared interested when she spoke. Her responses to building practices and staff experiences were always expressed in a positive and supportive manner:

*We team here to work with kids, all kids. We each have strengths the other may not have and we’re not insulted when one person is chosen over the other to do a certain task or meet with certain parents. We are a team here.* (October 1998)

*Our school has the Site Council which sometimes is a helpful and positive resource. It’s like a sounding board, and it helps us out with decisions sometimes.* (November 1998)
The changes since AEA pulled out are big ones, but it has its good points. We just need to rally together and identify them. We’re good that way. (April 1999)

When talking about district issues, she took a different, negative tone in the mid and later months of the interviews. She vocalized an increasing disillusionment with the policies and apparent lack of actions, resources, and communication from “downtown” regarding collaboration:

If we want to get things done around here, we do it. We don’t always get directives, so we do the best we can. (October 1998)

We have just had training in the problem solving process. It will be a good deal for us all, but we don’t have time yet to share it all. (November 1998)

It’s been very difficult since AEA pulled out. The AEA doesn’t have the authority to do things with special education like they used to. It’s been really difficult to get things done. We’ve got no direction. (February 1999)

It’s an insult when I think about it. It’s not just the special needs thing, but the whole communication thing in general. No one talks to us unless it’s a new project, or we’re not up to par on a deadline for a document, but we rarely have an open forum for any of our concerns. It’s downright insulting if you ask me. (February 1999)

According to the district, next year we’ll have paper clips, but we won’t have people. It’s the pits. I don’t care if it’s on tape. I get so angry over the whole thing, I can’t even talk about it. But I will say that our machine here is in order, and working to the max. (March 1999)

Boy, are we naive sometimes. We believed it was going to happen and be taken care of so we could do our jobs. We thought we’d get the chance to speak up and get the changes we need. What a rude awakening. (May 1999)

Mrs. Leader maintained a dynamic attitude and willingness to support collaborative practices at Hawthorne. Mrs. Leader supported the efforts of the building administrator and those of her colleagues. She expressed disdain for
the apparent lack of effort on the part of the district to support collaboration. Mrs. Leader participated in early interviews in the informal role of spokesperson for building policies, with evident approval of the others in the group. As the year progressed, she became a more of a listener to the plight of the teachers. She responded later in the conversations, reactive to teacher comments regarding collaboration. Her attitude and willingness to collaborate added strength to the Hawthorne faculty collaboration practices.

**Confidence changes: Documents and policy.** Data indicated that the participants believed that the Hawthorne Building Plan was a safeguard for securing needed resources in the early months of interviews. Comments serve as evidence that the teachers trusted the plan to have the authority to procure necessary resources for collaboration at Hawthorne. Mrs. Water believed that the plan would take time. Her comments often reflected knowledge she possessed of the laws governing special education, the bigger picture:

I think the laws and plans will help, but I think it will take time. The laws have been the driving force in modern treatment of students with disabilities. We have to trust they will help us out as teachers. It takes time. (October 1998)

She later indicated that she believed special education would be eliminated:

I can see it coming. The special education department will be phased out. It will be every man for himself out there. It's inevitable. The law is going to be the reason they use to phase us out. Our ship will sink. (February 1999)

This inclusion movement starts with jeopardizing the special education staff. I believe it will continue to affect every facet of the educational system. (April 1999)
Mrs. Leader shared her perceptions of the strength of the plan during the early months of the focus group interviews. She would later report disdain and disillusionment, citing lack of authority in the plan:

We’ve had some training in problem solving. Soon we’ll have the opportunity to share what we’ve learned. It hasn’t happened yet, but it is supposed to be in the planning stages once the year settles. (October 1998)

The law is forcing us to stretch as professionals to meet the needs in the regular classrooms as much as possible. It’s a complete shift. (November 1998)

It’s an insult the way we don’t have any opportunity to tell our side of the story to assist us in this bold new plan. We’re up the creek, and the paddle isn’t there, isn’t coming. We’re drifting. (February 1999)

Mrs. Willing stated early in the study that she believed the district would eventually provide needed service and resources for collaboration. But she changed her perceptions later in the year:

We have to trust that the the district will give us the tools we need to do this job, but we haven’t seen them yet. (October 1998)

We’ve got to move on with this. We have to rally and move on. I guess it’s in our own hands. (March 1999)

The overall tone of the October focus group interview was generally positive and anticipatory that necessary resources would soon become available, as evidenced in comments by the participants. In November, the optimism was still apparent in comments regarding collaboration efforts at Hawthorne, but participants did offer more candid views of their beliefs and perspectives as to the enormity of the task created by the collaboration mandate. Phrases such as “Inclusion takes more time,” “We need more people,” “We are not trained,” were voiced. Concerns of role ambiguity were growing.
In mid months of the focus group interviews, comments of the participants indicated that they had become critical of evident shortcomings of the building plan and apparent lack of district action. Little optimism remained that the needed resources would be provided this year. Mrs. Willing voiced her disappointment with the lack of assistance:

We are supposed to have time, but it doesn’t work. It just doesn’t show up at any meeting, any report, any notice. (January 1999)

Mrs. Able voiced her perceptions of the strained collaboration effort. She shook her head from side to side and had a look of frustration on her face as she spoke:

The resources we have here will have to do. We’ve rallied before, and we can do it again, I suppose. But it’s getting tougher to reach all the kids. It’s another upsetting of the apple cart. How many times do we have to pick up these apples? (January 1999)

We are barely covering ground this year and we’re threatened with loss of half of our special needs staff for next year. The district has a skewed perception that inclusion means less people. They think that inclusion is just going to take care of the kids’ needs. (February 1999)

Mrs. Leader offered her comments on the waning confidence in district and building plans:

We don’t have the AEA anymore to speak for our needs. We have to do something. We are spread so thin that we turn the kids over to the associates, and they become the authorities on the kids, not the trained teachers with every certification know to man because we don’t have the time ourselves to observe and work with kids long enough to know what’s going on with them. It’s sad. (February 1999)

These mid-study comments indicate that the participants had lost faith in the power of the Hawthorne Building Plan and the district to provide needed resources for collaboration by the winter months. The change in confidence levels became even more apparent as the participants voiced their perceptions.
in the spring months of the interviews. The focus had turned from hope and trust for assistance in the fall, to disdain and frustration in the winter, and then evolved to assessment of available building resources by spring.

Mrs. Willing made her beliefs clear in the later months of the interviews about the need to assess existing building level resources:

I can say for a fact that we have waited and asked for assistance, and nothing has happened. Maybe in the end, if there is one, we'll appreciate the lack of direction and keep on making our own decisions with confidence. It's like waiting for the other shoe to drop. (April 1999)

The sad thing is had we had time to develop things this year we could have been doing such neat things with lots of kids, certainly not just with kids with IEPs. The IEP part doesn't even seem important anymore. Kids who fall through the cracks are the ones who would benefit from things we could do if our hands weren't tied. We certainly have the ability and skills right here to pull it off. (April 1999)

I'm taking a class right now on the Internet called Web Quest. I'd love to work with Mrs. Number with it, if we only had time here to sit down and plan it. Well, I'll tell you we will find the time to do it, probably after school and nights, but it will be worth it. So many kids can benefit. We're willing to give it a try. (May 1999)

Mrs. Melody shared her perception of change over the course of the year regarding collaboration, even though it didn't occur as often as she would have preferred:

You now, this has been so good for me to meet like this each month. It makes me really think, and currently, it makes me think about what I'm doing and hopeful what I'm doing for the special ed kids, all kids. We used to have a coordinator. We don't have this music facilitator any more. We're just on our own. (April 1999)

For instance, when playing instruments, we wonder how can this kid hold the mallets, and we worry, and we experiment. But it doesn't have to be that way. There's all sorts of literature out there on this kind of thing. But we don't get any direction because they might not have an IEP. For example, we have a little girl who's been having chemo and she's trying to sing. And she doesn't match the class tone or pitch, which is ok if it's
not something I can help her change. And I'm wondering if there's something about chemo I should know. (April 1999)

We have a 6th grader with a speech problem, and so I was treating him like he had a hearing problem. Well, by coincidence I found out it's a nerve problem that has nothing to do with his hearing. He said to me, 'I can do that,' and I had to apologize up and down to him that I didn't know. He was really forgiving, and he himself told me about his situation. That was too bad. I held him back by not knowing the real story about this needs. And a coordinator could have helped. (April 1999)

I find situations and I scramble to find journals and whip through them to see if there's any literature on the problem I'm facing, and what the journal might add to the solution. And sometimes I do find something. There should be an easier way I shouldn't have to rely on my own magazines to find solutions. (April 1999)

Mrs. Melody continued her comments regarding one avenue she valued for input on current ways to serve students with disabilities in the music classes:

We occasionally get student teachers and participants from Willdoo College who are majoring in music therapy. It's not something I'm proud to say, but I find myself picking their brains to find out some things they are being taught in their classroom preps that might help me out. That's almost a laugh! I depend on the student teacher to update me! But it sometimes works to a tee. Maybe we should form some kind of liaison with Willdoo College to update us music teachers. (April 1999)

Focus group interviews: Change over time: The comments of the participants indicate phases of change regarding confidence in the district and Hawthorne Building Plan to provide necessary resources for collaboration. In the fall, the group voiced optimism that resources would come. In winter interviews, the participants voiced disillusionment because needed supports were not being provided, even when requested. The spring focus group interviews reflected the teachers' refocus to determine existing resources at the building level. They began to discuss possible sources for increased
assistance other than the district or building plan, such as professional journals, local colleges, and skills and abilities of colleagues on site.

**Summary**

Findings regarding law and policies revealed that most of the regular teachers were not aware of the federal laws mandating inclusion and collaboration, specifically IDEA 1997. Special educators had more knowledge of the laws, local articulation, and interpretation from professional development and support from the local AEA.

Pleasantview District policy directed inclusion of previously self-contained students to the regular classes. Buildings were directed to devise a building plan for special service delivery, which was done at Hawthorne in spring 1997. No further professional development or directives were reported by the teachers as they attempted to include students and collaborate to foster their success in the least restrictive environment.

Inclusion was mandated by IDEA. Collaboration was encouraged by the Pleasantview School District. District policy directed individual schools to develop and follow a building plan to accommodate students with disabilities in the LRE, which for most students was the regular classrooms.

The Hawthorne Building Plan was written in 1997 by building staff. The document was initially considered a guarantee for needed collaboration resources. This support would later emerge as a barrier to collaboration as the teachers expressed loss of confidence in the Hawthorne Building Plan and district policies as the year progressed.

Teachers identified supports for collaboration at Hawthorne: historic acceptance of mainstreaming, building administrative support, shared commitment, and the expertise and experiences of colleagues. Established
acceptance of mainstreaming contributed to acceptance collaboration as Hawthorne had participated in mainstreaming for over 10 years. Administrative support was evident as Mrs. Boone trusted the groups to make decisions in the problem solving meetings as had been done previously. Shared commitment emerged in teacher comments that all students deserved fair educational opportunities. Expertise and experience was identified by the group as a support for collaboration, as both regular and special educators had taught in many service models with reported success to date.

The group identified barriers to collaboration as unpreparedness for change. This unpreparedness was identified as ambiguity of roles, lack of time and resources, lack of professional development, lack of teacher empowerment and job security issues. Teachers expressed concern in role ambiguity in that roles outlined in the Hawthorne Building Plan were no longer the expected practice. Lack of needed resources was evident in the absence of time to plan and collaborate. Limited teacher empowerment was felt by participants, who commented that they had no arena in which to address these concerns at Hawthorne or in the Pleasantview District. Job security was identified by participants to be a legitimate concern related to collaboration. Teachers believed special education was to be phased out, and jobs would be eliminated. Barriers identified by participants were restricting collaboration success at Hawthorne.

Teachers indicated the belief that most students can benefit from inclusion and collaboration. Other beliefs included teachers' perceptions that successful collaboration must be supported. Beliefs that teachers possessed resources to collaborate successfully evolved later in the study.
Collaboration practices included three models: instructional, supportive, and consultative. Collaboration practices at Hawthorne included minimal occurrences of instructional and supportive collaboration. There were increasing instances of consultative collaboration as teachers took advantage of staff expertise as time allowed. Formal collaboration planning time was nonexistent. Teachers took advantage of lunch, passing in halls, before and after school beyond contract time, and used rest room time to collaborate for students with disabilities.

Focus group interview participants changed beliefs and collaborative practice over the course of the school year. Changes included more positive attitudes and willingness to participate in collaboration. Change was evidenced in increased assertiveness to practice consultative collaboration. Teachers changed by redefining their roles using existing resources in the collaboration effort at Hawthorne.

Changes were noted in levels of confidence teachers reported regarding guiding policies and building plans. Guarded confidence changed to disillusionment, which evolved into redefinition of roles and reassessment of available building resources for collaboration.

Changes occurred in participation levels of some focus group interviewees. Discussion leader became listener. Silent nonsupporting member became vocal advocate of collaboration success. Collaboration supporter chose not to teach and resigned.

Changes in positions occurred to insure job security. Change in practice was indicated as teachers investigated literature and outside sources to find strategies and modifications for students with disabilities. Changes occurred in service models provided to best meet the needs of the students with disabilities.
These data represent the impact of the IDEA 1997 on teachers' beliefs and collaborative practices as members of IEP teams at Hawthorne Middle School in the first year of compliance.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the impact of the IDEA 1997 on teachers’ reported beliefs and collaborative practices as participants on IEP Teams at Hawthorne Middle School in the Pleasantview School District during the first year of compliance. Initial research questions were:

1. How are the IDEA 1997 and policies for compliance being articulated and implemented by the Pleasantview Community School District and Hawthorne Building Plan?

2. What are the teachers’ perceived supports for collaboration compliance? What are the perceived barriers to collaboration?

3. What are the reported beliefs and collaborative practices of teachers in regard to laws and policies mandating collaboration for teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings?

4. Will the teachers in the study change their reported beliefs and collaborative practices over the first year of compliance to IDEA 1997?

Question 1: Laws and Policies

How are the IDEA 1997 and policies for compliance being articulated and implemented by the Pleasantview Community School District and Hawthorne Middle School?

Laws and policies for inclusion and collaboration were the following:

1. IDEA 1997

2. Pleasantview Community School District policy on inclusion

3. The Hawthorne Building Plan
The Hawthorne Building Plan was written by Hawthorne staff for serving students with disabilities utilizing a continuum of services at the school. IDEA 1997, reauthorizing PL 94-142 and IDEA 1990, mandates the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classroom to the appropriate extent possible (20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.). The law requires that regular educators now serve on IEP Teams to assist the development, implementation, and revision of IEPs for students with special needs in their classrooms. Focus group interview participants who were trained as special educators indicated that the IDEA 1997 was the main reason that Pleasantview Schools mandated inclusion of students with special needs into regular classrooms.

The teachers representing regular education in the focus group interviews at Hawthorne were unaware of the federal law, IDEA 1997, but attributed the inclusion mandates to district choice reactive to district budget reduction measures and the Hawthorne Building Plan. Review of the data from October 1998 through May 1999 revealed no further comments or references to IDEA 1997 by the group, except when they were asked specifically to report on the impact of the law on collaboration at Hawthorne.

According to the law, the IEP Team must include at least one regular educator involved in the student's education (20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(B)). Focus group interview participants indicated that this policy has been in effect at Hawthorne during the 1997-98 year, but IEP Teams were not formally identified or maintained with the same participants. The special educators in the building reported that they have been the primary caretakers of the IEPs.

Federal laws and regulations (20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.) drive the inclusion and collaboration compliance at Hawthorne Middle School. Participants unanimously indicated that the Hawthorne Building Plan (1997)
suggested but did not guarantee needed professional development, time, or resources for collaboration. The law and the Hawthorne Building Plan were initially viewed as supports for collaboration. The building plan and district policies were later viewed as barriers to collaboration by participants as needed resources and empowerment were not provided, yet students with disabilities were included in regular classes.

Pleasantview School District has mandated inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classrooms in compliance to IDEA 1997 (20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.). Collaboration of teachers is indicated as one means toward successful collaboration. The Hawthorne Building Plan suggests collaboration plans in writing but does not guarantee needed resources for successful collaboration. Needed resources are not being provided in the Pleasantview School District at this time.

Question 2a: Collaboration Supports

What are the teachers' perceived supports for collaboration compliance?

Supports for collaboration were identified by the group as the following:

1. Historical acceptance of mainstreaming
2. Administrative support
3. Shared commitment to serve students with disabilities
4. Collective expertise and experience of staff at Hawthorne
5. The Hawthorne Building Plan
6. IDEA 1997

Teachers identified supports for collaboration at Hawthorne which became coded categories: historic acceptance of mainstreaming, building administrative support, shared commitment, and the expertise and experiences
of colleagues. Established acceptance of mainstreaming contributed to acceptance of collaboration as Hawthorne had participated in mainstreaming for over 10 years. Administrative support was evident in that the building principal allowed teacher teams to make decisions in problem solving meetings regarding students with special needs as had been done previously. Shared commitment was identified in repeated teacher comments that all students deserved fair educational opportunities. Expertise and experience was identified by the group as supports for collaboration, as both regular and special educators at Hawthorne had taught in many service models with reported success to date. Participants had taught at Hawthorne for a minimum of six year. Several decades of service were reported by others.

The Hawthorne Building Plan and IDEA 1997 were initially identified as collaboration supports, but the building plan was later indicated as a barrier to collaboration as it held no apparent authority to provide resources. The federal law was considered to be clear. Participants repeatedly voiced the belief that a federal law would certainly also authorize resources necessary for successful compliance to inclusion. This opinion changed later in the study.

The results of this study indicated agreement with previous studies identifying supports for collaboration as shared commitment and historic acceptance for mainstreaming (Cronin, 1996). Teachers believed that willingness to change was an important factor for collaboration success at Hawthorne as supported in the inclusion literature (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; Van Dyke et al., 1997).

Administrative support at building level for the collaboration efforts was repeatedly expressed by Hawthorne participants throughout the focus group.
interviews. This support was identified in other inclusion studies (McCrory & McLeskey, 1997; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996).

Shared commitment reduced the adherence to dual system of teaching students with disabilities at Hawthorne, as evidenced in inclusion literature (King-Sears & Cummings, 1996; Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). Special educators at Hawthorne attempted to maintain positive collaboration relations with regular education teachers. Positive inclusion and collaboration teacher relations were indicated in inclusion research as a collaboration support (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998).

Collective expertise of staff at Hawthorne was identified by participants as a support for collaboration. This factor was noted in similar studies in inclusion research (Rainforth et al., 1997; Sapon-Shevin, 1996). Special educators at Hawthorne were viewed as having process and strategy expertise, while regular educators were identified as having content expertise.

The Hawthorne Middle School participants in the focus group interviews identified similar supports for collaboration evidenced in other collaboration studies offered in the literature.

**Question 2b: Barriers to Collaboration**

What are the perceived barriers to collaboration?

Barriers to collaboration were identified by the group to include the following:

1. Ambiguity of roles
2. Lack of professional development
3. Adherence to the dual system of teaching students with disabilities
4. Lack of time to plan and implement collaboration
5. Lack of teacher empowerment to secure needed resources

6. Job security issues

The group identified barriers to collaboration which became the coded category of unpreparedness for change. This unpreparedness was subcoded as ambiguity of roles, lack of time and resources, lack of professional development, lack of teacher empowerment and job security issues. Teachers expressed concern regarding role ambiguity in that roles outlined in the Hawthorne Building Plan were no longer the expected practice. Lack of needed resources was evident in the absence of time to plan and collaborate, diminishing numbers of special educators, and growing student needs. Limited teacher empowerment was voiced by participants, who commented that they had no arena in which to address these concerns at Hawthorne or in the Pleasantview District. Job security was identified by participants to be a legitimate concern related to collaboration. Some teachers believed special education was to be phased out, and jobs would be eliminated. Barriers identified by participants were restricting collaboration success at Hawthorne.

The first three barriers listed by Hawthorne participants were reflective of those identified in other studies identifying restrictions to collaboration success (McCrory & McLeskey, 1997; Vaughn, Schumm, & Jallad, et al., 1996). The need for professional development to promote collaboration echoed research which reported the benefits of and need for inservice training for teachers who serve students with disabilities in the regular classroom (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998). Other studies identified limited preparation and support for collaboration which resulted in teachers' disconnected beliefs, skills, and practices concerning teaching students with disabilities in the regular classroom (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996). Such was the case at Hawthorne.
Recent research emerging at the end of this study identifies growing concerns of teachers who are facing collaboration compliance in schools across the nation. A recent article in a publication of the National Education Association, titled “Inclusion Confusion,” identified questions teachers are currently asking as they attempt to comply and collaborate (NEA Today, Vol. 17, #8, April 1999). The questions bear similarity to the questions researched in this study. A compliance reviewer from the Iowa Department of Education in June of 1999 commented regarding collaboration developments in Iowa in light of the IDEA 1997:

One problem is that teachers are not being trained in collaboration. A lot of the time the students are just being thrust into a classroom together. There is also a need for more information and training in support of both general and special education teachers. (J. Rockwell [pseudonym], personal communication, June 2, 1999)

A school superintendent of a neighboring district to Pleasantview commented on inclusion and IDEA 1997:

There can no longer be two separate systems. Schools need to look at what diversity can build in our schools. (S. Elmer [pseudonym], personal communication, June 2, 1999).

These sources verify the need for professional development of teachers to foster collaboration success as was indicated by Hawthorne participants in this qualitative study.

Research indicated that some teachers in the regular classrooms did not believe that they possessed the skills necessary to teach students with disabilities in their regular classes (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Similarly, Hawthorne participants voiced concern with their lack of training to serve those with disabilities. Often adaptations and modifications were noted as desirable
by the regular teachers, but these were not always feasible and rarely occurred. Similar findings were reported on other studies by Ysseldyke et al (1990)

One noted barrier to collaboration which did not surface in the inclusion literature about IDEA 1997 reviewed for this study was lack of teacher empowerment. The teachers at Hawthorne felt abandoned and powerless to procure needed resources for mandated collaboration. Did the law not empower teachers to collaborate? Would the district empower the teachers to collaborate by providing needed time, human resources, and professional development? Is the law so new and compliance in such initial stages that the issue of teacher lack of empowerment to collaborate has yet to surface in the literature? Are Hawthorne teachers alone in this concern? It is probable that the lack of teacher empowerment to collaborate will surface in the inclusion literature identified as a barrier as the practice of inclusion develops over time.

The participants identified job security issues as another barrier to collaboration. This barrier was not identified in the literature reviewed for this study. Participants voiced their concerns and perceptions that special education was being phased out in the Pleasantview Community School District and that, consequently, teacher roles were changing drastically without needed preparation.

Actual special education cuts occurred during the year of study at Hawthorne. District projections threatened to cut special educators at Hawthorne by 50% for the 1999-2000 school year. Both special and regular educators were highly concerned regarding these projections and actual job reductions at Hawthorne during the 1998-99 school year. It was believed by the participants that Mrs. Able’s position as special educator would not be filled for the coming year after her resignation. To date, this position has not been filled.
Job security issues were a major concern of participants, both those in special education and regular education, as the Pleasantview Community School District complies with IDEA 1997. It is probable that the issue will surface in the literature as a major concern and barrier as the practice of collaboration evolves over time.

Identified barriers to collaboration at Hawthorne which were supported in the inclusion literature included role ambiguity, lack of professional development, and lack of time to plan. Barriers to collaboration not found in the literature reviewed for this study included lack of teacher empowerment and job security issues. Repeated concern with these barriers by focus group participants verified their existence. These barriers, unresolved, will continue to restrict collaboration success at Hawthorne, according to the participants.

**Question 3a: Teacher Beliefs**

What are the reported beliefs of teachers in regard to laws and policies mandating collaboration for teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings?

Reported beliefs of teachers regarding teacher collaboration included the following:

1. Most students can benefit from inclusion and teacher collaboration
2. Teachers must have support to collaborate successfully
3. Teachers can promote collaboration with available resources

Hawthorne teachers believed that most students can benefit from teacher collaboration. Similar findings are supported in inclusion literature (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998).

Teachers believed they needed support for collaboration to be successful. This was reported in the literature often, and identified necessary
factors as shared commitment, administrative support, professional development and expertise, as identified in other studies on inclusion (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998).

The belief that the staff at Hawthorne possessed the capabilities for successful collaboration using existing resources emerged later in the study. Initial beliefs in Fall 1998 included guarded confidence and limited trust that the district would supply needed resources for collaboration in the early months of the study. This initial belief was soon replaced by frustration and lack of confidence that these resources would be supplied during the winter months.

In the spring, the teachers began to redefine their professional roles, acknowledging and assessing existing resources at Hawthorne to promote collaboration, however limited by previously reported barriers. Participants maintained belief that barriers reported earlier restricted their abilities to collaborate successfully.

Teachers at Hawthorne were in agreement with related inclusion literature which identified the belief that most children can benefit from collaboration. Participants also identified the belief that identified supports are necessary for successful collaboration, as evidenced in similar studies reported in inclusion research. Hawthorne focus group participants expressed the belief that they were capable of collaboration utilizing existing resources. Teachers redefined their professionalism to collaborate for students with disabilities in the regular classroom, in compliance with IDEA 1997.

**Question 3b: Collaborative Practices at Hawthorne**

What are the collaborative practices of teachers in regard to collaboration for teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings?
Teachers at Hawthorne practiced three models of collaboration:

1. Instructional collaboration
2. Supportive collaboration
3. Consultative collaboration

Collaboration models. Collaboration practices included three models: instructional, supportive, and consultative. Collaboration practices at Hawthorne included minimal occurrences of instructional and supportive incidents of collaboration. At Hawthorne instructional collaboration occurred in several classrooms, some at varying intervals and some on regular year long basis. Collaboration experiences occurred when the special educators were able to schedule these into the daily program when they were not meeting students in exclusionary models in the resource room. This is the place where students with identified needs spend part of their day receiving individual and small group instruction. Instructional collaboration was restricted due to adherence to the dual system of education.

Supportive collaboration at Hawthorne was reported as minimal due to scheduling restrictions, growing numbers of students with needs, both identified and not identified, and limited number of special education staff. Teachers indicated willingness to participate in supportive collaboration experiences, but opportunities were limited by barriers noted to collaboration.

There were increasing instances of consultative collaboration as teachers took advantage of staff expertise as time allowed. Formal collaboration planning time was nonexistent. Teachers took advantage of lunch, passing in halls, before and after school beyond contract time, and used restroom time to collaborate for students with disabilities.
Early studies investigated efforts of both regular and special educators to collaborate to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the regular classrooms (Glatthorn, 1990). Inservice training for teachers dispelled negative opinions of some regular educators toward teacher collaboration models to serve children with special needs in the regular classroom. This perception was indicated in the Hawthorne study by the math instructor who felt she had been abandoned in the regular classroom until collaboration occurred.

**Collaboration and LRE.** Findings indicated that most special educators in the 1990s were positively directed to collaborate with regular educators to serve students with disabilities in the LRE (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998). Such was the case at Hawthorne, where the participants maintained the belief that most students would benefit from collaboration and belonged in the regular classrooms. Some Hawthorne participants attempted to apply research to practice in collaboration efforts, such as the music instructor in this study.

**Factors conducive to collaboration.** Teachers at Hawthorne identified factors which promoted collaboration success, similar to those factors identified in inclusion studies (Sapon-Shevin, 1996; Villa, Thousand, & Chappel, 1996). Freedom to choose a collaborative partner rather than mandatory assignment to a team was reported as important to the success of the collaborative endeavor both at Hawthorne. Communication, both oral and written, was identified as a crucial factor, with common vision and shared planning time identified as necessary resources for collaboration success by focus group participants. Co-planning was identified as necessary to ensure ease of strategy adaptation, natural linkage to existing regular curriculum, use in group instruction, and emphasis on direct instruction of skills. Findings were similar to those noted in earlier inclusion research on the topic (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). These
factors were identified by Hawthorne participants as conducive to successful collaboration, but limited practices were again reported due to limited resources.

Lack of communication, limited or nonexistent planning time opportunities, and lack of administrative support were identified in the literature as primary barriers to collaboration success at Hawthorne by focus group participants. These barriers were similar to those identified in earlier studies on inclusion (McCrory & McLeskey, 1997). These factors were noted repeatedly as barriers to collaboration practices at Hawthorne Middle School by participants.

Benefits of collaboration. Teachers at Hawthorne believed that most students benefit from inclusion and collaboration. Inclusion research studies identified benefits of successful collaboration to include provision of additional levels of service for more students, both identified and non-disabled students (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998). Similar practices at Hawthorne allowed more students to be included in the regular curriculum as the least restrictive environment at Hawthorne in compliance with IDEA 1997. Students felt less stigmatized or singled out when collaborative measures were employed, as was reported by focus group participants. Students without disabilities benefited from peer interactions and social skill development. Regular educators in the focus group reported higher levels of respect for students with identified needs and more willingness to be involved in these students' education

Professional benefits of collaboration were reported by the focus group participants as possibilities for increased opportunity to work with more students and to witness a wider spectrum of student abilities, if collaboration resources were provided. Teacher isolation might be minimized in the collaborative
process in their opinion. Teacher stress likewise might be reduced dependent upon provision of resources. Teachers would have the opportunity to view new and positive levels of understanding toward students identified with special needs as they observed them in more and diverse settings. Regular education teachers might well develop increased levels of patience in working with the students with special needs and with the collaborative teachers. These projections on the benefits of successful collaboration were indicated by Hawthorne participants were similar to those reported in other collaboration studies (Safran & Safran, 1996). Hawthorne participants indicated limited occurrence of these benefits as collaboration experiences increased. Frustration resulting from barriers to collaboration identified in this study restricted increased practices at Hawthorne.

Participants at Hawthorne were devising plans, assessing resources, and practicing various incidents of collaboration by the end of the year of study. They participated in instructional and supportive collaboration with limited occurrence due to restrictive scheduling and high student needs. They practiced consultative collaboration more often than instructional or support models. Consultative collaboration occurred informally, at lunch, passing in halls, and even in the restroom. Time for collaboration was repeatedly identified as a nonexistent resource at Hawthorne. Several solutions to classroom dilemmas were reached during focus group interviews through consultative collaboration. The teachers consistently reaffirmed their beliefs that the faculty was able and willing, but the system was not providing supports for collaboration.
**Question 4: Change**

Will the teachers in the study change their reported beliefs and collaborative practices over the first year of compliance to IDEA 1997?

The initial beliefs reported by the participants of the focus group interviews that changed over the first year of compliance to IDEA 1997 included the following:

1. Teachers' attitudes changed toward collaboration as evidenced in their willingness to participate in collaboration
2. Collaborative practices at Hawthorne increased

Changes were noted in levels of confidence teachers reported regarding guiding policies and building plans. Guarded confidence in the fall that the Hawthorne Building Plan guaranteed resources changed to disillusionment and anger expressed by the group that resources were not provided by January. This anger evolved into redefinition of teacher roles by those in the group and reassessment of available building resources for collaboration by spring.

Changes occurred in participation levels of some focus group interviewees. Discussion leader became listener. Silent nonsupporting member became vocal advocate of collaboration success. Collaboration supporter resigned and chose not to teach.

Changes in positions occurred to insure job security. Change in practice was indicated as teachers investigated professional literature and utilized outside human resources to find strategies and modifications for students with disabilities. Changes occurred in service models provided to best meet the needs of the students with disabilities. Increased occurrence of consultative collaboration were reported by focus group participants. Instructional and
supportive incidents of collaboration increased minimally due to limited resources.

Over the course of the school year of study, all of the participants indicated change regarding belief and/or practice regarding collaboration to varying degrees. Most participant attitudes were positive and formative toward the practice of collaboration. The majority of participants’ attitudes remained pessimistic regarding the probability that resources would be provided.

Focus group interview participants were often asked whether the new policies for collaboration and inclusion were fostering student success under present conditions at Hawthorne. Change is defined as a personal experience in which the individual decides if the journey provides rewards which equal or exceed the input (Fullan, 1991). The participants at Hawthorne were questioning the benefits of limited collaboration opportunities in terms of services to students with and without disabilities, and also in terms of their professional investments.

Fullan (1991) suggested specific criteria by which teachers allow change: the degree to which change fills an identified need, causing students to learn to promised standards; the degree to which teachers’ personal and professional investments are clearly delineated to effect the change, to include time, energy, new learning, generation of enthusiasm, competence, and priorities; social acceptance and interaction success. As evidenced in the data, Hawthorne participants were willing to change to meet student needs. They were, however, confused by role ambiguity. They believed they possessed shared vision for collaboration and inclusion success. Their willingness and enthusiasm was restricted by lack of resources to collaborate successfully.
Change in teachers' beliefs and practices happened when they related directly to the classroom experience. Change is best considered a process and not an event (Fullan, 1991). Some participants of the focus group studies voiced concern that the district policies for inclusion were based on budget issues, and that a clear plan for the process of compliance to IDEA 1997 was not provided to them. They felt abandoned by the district, yet were attempting to provide successful collaboration experiences in the classrooms under limited conditions at Hawthorne.

Participation was reported as the catalyst for change in studies conducted to investigate teacher attitudes and change (Janney et al., 1995). Transforming experiences promoted ownership of and involvement with students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Studies showed that the change experienced by teachers over time in inclusive settings includes a journey through varied degrees of tolerance, acceptance, support, and advocacy (Rainforth et al., 1997). Such was the case of Mrs. Number, veteran Hawthorne math teacher who reported a major positive transformation in attitude and willingness to collaborate after participating in positive collaboration experiences.

Janney et al. (1995) suggested that the factors responsible for changes in teachers toward mainstreaming and inclusive efforts were that teacher beliefs had been the cornerstone for development of strategic plans and actions, thus reducing resistance to change through reduced cost investment by teachers. Such was the case resulting from teachers' development of the Hawthorne Building Plan in 1997. The participants, however, reportedly changed from trust to disillusionment in the authority of the plan to secure needed resources for collaboration at Hawthorne.
Revision of basic guiding principles and goals through the inclusion journey were noted as collaboration and change supports. Teacher empowerment demands clarification of specific investments and costs for implementation of expected change, and are developed sooner when existing beliefs do not have to be abandoned, but rather are built upon (Janney et al., 1995). Teachers at Hawthorne have not yet received the authority to rewrite the building plan to meet current needs, and have voiced abandonment in the value and strength of the plan to procure needed resources to date. Yet they are willing to change to successfully collaborate. Lack of teacher empowerment at Hawthorne was reported repeatedly as a barrier to collaboration success with no resolution as of the end of the year of study.

Skrtic (1991) implied that change in the established school culture to include students with special needs in the regular classroom presents a challenge to the existing status quo of the schools due to the traditional acceptance of the dual system of regular education and special education. Many of the teachers at Hawthorne were trained in the dual system methods, but were now voicing willingness to collaborate, yet indicating frustration at lack of resources to collaborate successfully.

Teachers execute the requirements of their professional role in the classroom as they best understand them. Personal experiences and journeys in the classroom, when undertaken in supportive surroundings, can change beliefs, attitudes and ultimately practices over time (Janney et al., 1995). There must exist opportunities to practice, refine and own new skills in the context of the change both personally and professionally within the school culture as an evolutionary and successful journey in which all stakeholders are learners. Due to lack of resources at Hawthorne, these opportunities were limited.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
However, participants of the focus groups indicated willingness of the teachers to collaborate. They reported that the opportunities to experience personal change were limited as resources to collaborate were not made available to the teachers.

Change is assisted by employment of systematic procedures by leaders to bring about change (Wisniewski & Alper, 1994). Change does not happen solely reactive to laws and mandates. Process for change from the standpoint of the leader may include network development, resource assessment to include options for implementation, implementation of the new process, and dynamic channels for ongoing feedback and renewal of personal and professional investment on the part of all players. The actions and practices of Hawthorne building administrators as reported by focus group participants supported collaboration, and respected the professionalism of the teachers to make building level decisions regarding implementation of inclusion and collaboration. District administrators offered little or no support in the areas of professional development, resources, or or directives, according to Hawthorne participants.

Change takes time (Fullan, 1991). Change takes years, not months, as often reported in research (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Teachers are now viewed as a major players in educational change, as they come as informed agents, problem solvers, and collaborators in the process of change (Englert & Tarrant, 1995). Positive levels of fidelity and longevity, as well as shared vision toward inclusion and collaboration, supported the Hawthorne staff in their collaboration efforts. They realized that collaboration will take time. They were willing to make the necessary changes, but they needed support.
Key elements to change are time and trust (Fullan, 1991). There are no quick fixes to educational issues and dilemmas (Fullan, 1993). Knowing how and why teachers change beliefs and practices was investigated to reveal factors for successful collaboration, both planning and implementation (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998). District administrators apparently did not utilize this line of research when preparing for inclusion and teacher collaboration in the Pleasantview district.

The spring focus group interviews reflected the teachers' change and refocus to determine which resources were already available at the building level. They began to discuss possible sources for increased assistance other than the district or building plan, such as professional journals, local colleges, and various noted skills and abilities of colleagues on site. This change in belief and practice represents the major finding in this study. Participants were redefining their professional roles to collaborate using existing resources at Hawthorne.

Beliefs that remained steadfast according to the data collected in focus group interviews were that teachers believed that most students with disabilities can benefit from inclusion and collaboration, and that they as a staff were willing to collaborate to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

A majority of focus group participants at Hawthorne changed their attitude toward collaboration and willingness to collaborate in positive directions. Some experienced transformational changes, as was the case with Mrs. Number, who went from total disdain for the practice to collaboration advocate and mentor for colleagues. Some teachers changed their beliefs that the district would provide needed resources for collaboration. This was followed by beliefs that the district had abandoned the teachers in their
compliance efforts for inclusion and collaboration. In the final months of the study, participants redefined their professional roles to assess and utilize existing resources at the building level to address collaboration at Hawthorne Middle School.

This evolutionary journey represented a salient outcome of the study. Hawthorne teachers were redefining their professional roles, identifying resources they possessed as a team, and were performing professionally under restrictive circumstances to make collaboration work at Hawthorne Middle School in the first year of compliance to IDEA 1997.

Summary of Conclusions

The results of this study support the following conclusions.

1. IDEA 1997, Pleasantview District policy, and the Hawthorne Building Plan were the guiding documents for collaboration at Hawthorne Middle School in the first year of compliance. The federal law did not provide the process for collaboration. The law was clear. The process was not.

2. Hawthorne Middle School participants indicated supports and barriers to teacher collaboration, many of which were reported in the literature. Job security and lack of teacher empowerment were identified as legitimate barriers to successful collaboration.

3. Teacher beliefs regarding collaboration supported inclusion, teacher collaboration, and teachers' willingness to participate.

4. Successful teacher collaboration will be enhanced at Hawthorne when identified supports are provided.

5. Identified barriers to teacher collaboration are legitimate and warrant resolution if collaboration is to be successful at Hawthorne.
6. Teachers at Hawthorne possess willingness, expertise, and experience to successfully collaborate in spite of restrictions imposed by identified barriers. Hawthorne participants began to assess building resources in May 1999 in absence of other resource support.

Implications

IDEA 1997 mandates inclusion. If collaboration is to be successful, school districts need to supply needed resources. There are no quick fixes in education (Fullan, 1991), but with time and resources to promote inclusion and collaboration, schools can progress toward achievement of the intended purpose of the new law (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998).

Teachers are key players in the inclusion and collaboration effort. Ongoing support for teachers from building and district administration, as well as from the community, is indicated for success. The expertise and willingness of faculty, as well as communication and administrative support, are key elements to collaboration success (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998).

Funding from the state and federal level is needed for inclusion and collaboration success. Financial support is a priority to ensure needed resources to promote inclusion and collaboration success (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, et al., 1996). Job security as a financial concern was an identified barrier to inclusion in this study, and may well emerge in future literature.

Teachers deserve an arena for open and ongoing communication and avenues for empowering their collective voice to eliminate restrictive conditions impeding collaboration. Administrative support should include opportunity for teachers to maintain candid dialogue with administrators and policy makers to communicate the realities of the classrooms following the

Job security concerns and the future of special education are legitimate issues which need to be addressed by the district in open and ongoing communication with teachers. Are teachers trained in special education facing employment jeopardy because students with special needs may no longer be identified on rosters? This topic is timely and casts a shadow of concern on teachers and students with disabilities in light of IDEA 1997.

School districts should utilize human resources within the district in collaboration efforts for professional development. Many faculty members have expertise to successfully collaborate. These resources need to be investigated and utilized in a timely manner (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998).

School districts should study and apply literature regarding teachers and change to assist the collaboration effort. Since IDEA 1997 became law, there are many questions surfacing in the educational communities as to the directions and actions educators should take to promote inclusion and collaboration as best practice. Using emerging research to form practice regarding students with disabilities is in the best interest of students and educators. The law is clear. Administrators, educators, and parents must work together to clarify the process. Collaboration may provide one avenue for the pursuit of successful collaboration.
REFERENCES


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, PL 105-17, 20 U.S.C, §1400-et seq., 105th Congress, 1st session.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
APPENDIX A

Hawthorne Building Plan
Beliefs and Needs

1. What are the specific needs of students with disabilities in the building?

Hawthorne staff is committed to providing services to students with special needs in a flexible and least restrictive environment. The staff believes that categorical labels will not direct the services available to the student, but rather the needs of the student will direct the service. To better serve all students Hawthorne continues to take seriously the need for all instructional and support staff, administrators, and parents to establish a climate that is mutually supportive when working toward the success of all students.

The specific needs include the following:

* learning disabilities
* mental disabilities
* hearing impaired
* visually impaired
* physical disabilities
* autism
* behavior disorder
* speech and language disabilities
* attention deficit disorders
* adolescents who are considered to be at risk
* talented and gifted

It should be noted the Hawthorne has electric lifts and is wheelchair accessible. Personnel will need to be available to help with health needs, such as dispensing medication, helping with asthmatic problems, bathrooming, and delivering first aid. The needs of each student should be determined to ensure that the appropriate support and academic challenges are provided for continuing educational development. A support team, which will include LEA administrator, parent, special and general education teachers, and the AEA support personnel, will monitor the current IEP to ensure that no additional support is necessary.
2. What are the beliefs and priorities of your building?

Hawthorn Middle School
Mission statement
Our mission is to have a community which provides appropriate learning experiences for adolescents in a culturally diverse environment.

Beliefs

WE BELIEVE Hawthorne should continue a strong program of instruction in all subject areas, including the arts of technology, which will prepare students for today's society and provide a basis for lifelong learning.

WE BELIEVE curriculum and instruction should be based on developmentally appropriate learning activities which:

-- provide for individual differences.
-- provide frequent opportunities for success.
-- include special services and resources, which continue to explore and develop general education options that provide opportunities for students with disabilities to re-enter into the full general education setting.

WE BELIEVE Hawthorne should provide a staff educated to work with early adolescents and committed to the age group which:

-- recognizes the vast physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs which exist among these youngsters.
-- recognizes the changing needs for socialization and independence.
-- recognizes that the change from concrete to abstract reasoning is a natural process inherent in early adolescence.
-- provides ways to accommodate needs and values differences.

WE BELIEVE a students' self esteem should be enhanced by cultural diversity, positive relationships, and respect among and between students and staff.

WE BELIEVE Hawthorne should actively promote and provide close cooperation and regular communication between parents and staff regarding student progress.

WE BELIEVE parents, community and all staff should share the responsibility for teaching all students and for providing opportunities for all students to make appropriate decisions within a supportive, challenging, and physically safe learning environment.
WE BELIEVE assessment must be continual, flexible and relevant to learner outcomes and will be used as a vehicle for curriculum change to meet student needs.

WE BELIEVE behavioral management is a fair, consistent and cooperative effort between student, staff and home, leading to an awareness of behavioral expectations and promoting acceptable life skills in a safe orderly environment.

As we address our service delivery model, Hawthorne's intent is to ensure that reasonable and appropriate services are provided to each student based upon individual needs. Problem solving is a critical component of this model. It is also our intent to educate students in the least restrictive environment in which the student can maintain success.

Our assessment for identification and special education services will emphasize student needs and will match strategies and interventions to each individual. The plan will be implemented effectively and with flexibility. We believe that it is the right of all children to receive the services that best meets their needs without limitations or restraints.

Structure and Process

3. How will special education services relate to other programs and services in your building, e.g., student at-risk programs, Title I programs, bilingual/ESL, Head Start, and other educational services?

Special education instruction and support is a service, not a place. Therefore, all education services available within Hawthorne will be viewed as available to all students, including special education students. The problem solving team process will be used to determine the services necessary to meet individual student needs considering resources such as at risk, Section 504, and special education. At this time, Hawthorne does not qualify for Title I, HOTS program, or other federal or district support programs for at risk students. The problem-solving process includes problem identification, problem analysis, development of accommodations and interventions tried, and re-identifying problems, and subsequent interventions and accommodations. The level of intensity of intervention support and accommodation required leads to the decision of whether or not services are provided. This decision is determined by the problem-solving team in conjunction with the AEA support staff, with attention given to special education due process needs.
4. How are general education programs structured and operated?

Hawthorne is divided into eight teams. Six academic teams, a music team, and one team of specialists (Art, Family and Consumer Science, Industrial Technology, and Physical Education). There are two academic teams per grade level. Special needs students are included as part of the teams via homerooms, integration as appropriate, class within a class, and participation in enhancement activities, I.E. field trips and assemblies.

Information is imparted to students in a variety of ways. Examples of instructional methods are: lectures, hands-on activities, cooperative learning, experimental learning, large and small group instruction, and direct instruction according to individual student learning styles.

5. What role do instructional staff have in the process for identifying students who might benefit from special education assistance?

The instructional staff has a significant role in the process of identifying students who may benefit from special education assistance. This role includes but is not limited to:

* identifying student concerns
* making adjustments in curriculum and instruction
* seeking building resources for assistance
* participating in the problem solving process
* designing accommodations or interventions
* implementing and evaluating systemic intervention

The instructional staff, parents, and support staff participate in the problem solving process as a team to determine eligibility, needs, and services. All staff has the responsibility to determine the educational functioning of all students under his/her charge and to report to parents and the principal any student suspected of having any type of disability or learning problem. Each teacher will work actively to see that children if necessary are referred for multidisciplinary evaluations and provide appropriate services.

Special education services are available to students following their identification of entitlement by a team facilitated by AEA support personnel. Formal evaluation for special education is the responsibility of the AEA Support Staff.

6. What are the building's expectations for accommodations and modifications within general education and who assists in
designing and providing these accommodations and modifications.

All Staff need support in designing and providing the accommodations and modifications necessary to meet the needs of all students. This may be in the form of inservice, preparation and time, access to AEA support staff, and technology.

* Overview of the entire plan—assigned staff will present the plan to the instructional staff.
* Legal issues and implications for both general and special education classroom teachers in providing services to students in all school environment.
* Problem solving process and documentation requirements
  * strategies
* Effective teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of students.
* Time to prepare and collaborate.

The general education teacher is responsible for identifying specific student concerns, implementing accommodations and modifications within the classroom, collaborating with special education staff in monitoring the progress of students who are unable to meet the academic and behavioral setting demands of the general education classroom. Teachers will utilize the building's problem solving procedure to assist with identifying needs, planning and implementing interventions, monitoring progress, and documenting involvement. Problem solving team members (which may include but are not limited to the LEA principal, school counselor, regular and special education teachers, AEA support staff, parents) will assist the classroom teacher in designing and providing the accommodations and modifications as appropriate. The problem solving process includes three steps.

**Step I: Classroom Problem solving**

A. Adjustments made by the teacher
B. Teacher-Parent Problem Solving
C. Building Level Problem Solving (Forms A and B)

Step I indicates that the regular classroom teacher is trying to solve the academic or behavior problems of an individual student without the help of any AEA support people or special education personnel. School Guidance Counselors will act as liaisons between instructional and support staff at this step, as well as support to the student.

**Step II: AEA Intervention**

A. Direct assistance from Support Team (Form C)
The support team will meet directly with instructional staff.
B. Extended problem Solving (45 day I-Plan)
This indicates that students may have the services of AEA support staff and/or special education instructional staff. These services may include daily or weekly consultation with the regular education teacher providing skill specific activities without IEP.

Direct services of AEA staff and/or special education instructional staff may include daily or weekly consultation with regular education teacher, providing skill specific instruction to the child, progress monitoring, and collecting data for diagnostic purposes. If interventions at this level include direct assistance from AEA support staff or special education instructional staff, an intervention plan must be written to include the following:

1. baseline data on current level of target behavior.
2. an intervention goal.
3. description of the intervention plan.
4. methods of monitoring progress.
5. scheduled follow up meeting to review the data and discuss student progress.

The intervention plan must indicate who will be directly involved with the child, where the intervention will take place, time line for how long the intervention will be implemented, and detailed description of what specific skill will be taught, and specific intervention strategies/materials. Parent involvement in the plan's design, implementation and follow up at this level is a necessity. AEA support staff and/or special education instructional staff cannot work directly with the student unless parents are active participants in the problem solving process at all levels and give their verbal and written permission.

Step III: Special Education Service
A. Compensatory Skill Lessons. (Level I students) The special education teacher is responsible for planning and teaching compensatory skill lessons in the academic areas needed. The student must have an IEP in effect, and the service provided must address the needs of the IEP. Progress will be monitored and services will provide students with academic support for regular education. The regular education classroom teacher and the special education teacher will share the responsibility for the total academic achievement of the students.

B. Modification of Curriculum. (Level II student) A special education teacher is responsible for planning and delivering most lessons to this student. Direct subject matter instruction will be provided for by the special education teacher and the IEP must be in effect. All services must meet the needs of the IEP. The student will spend a minor portion of the day in the regular classroom. This student will be assigned a homeroom and be included in the least restrictive environment as is appropriate for the student, for example, a class
within a class. Hawthorne can support the needs of these students with the assistance of a full time classroom associate to facilitate integration.

C. Extended and Alternative Curriculum. (Level III student) At this level the student needs to have the entire curriculum redesigned to meet his/her needs. The curriculum substantially departs from the regular classroom curriculum and contains many adaptations and modifications. These include the use of a full-time associate, assistive technology, transportation and total self-containment in the special education setting. Hawthorne can support the needs of this student only with the assistance of a full time classroom associate.

Staff

7. How many special education teachers are on staff? Where will they locate? What are their areas of expertise?

Based on current projections there will be a total of six certified special education teachers at Hawthorne. All of these will be full time positions. The primary focus of the special education teachers will be to staff the learning centers at the school. The learning centers will be located throughout the building to facilitate inclusion. The special education teachers will be available to teach small group lessons to any student identified as having special needs. This may include some at-risk students, with parental consent. There will also be a full time teacher who specializes in the needs of students who perform above grade level and have been identified for enhanced curriculum. The teachers will be flexible and may work in the classroom with the regular education teacher small group in the learning center to work on identified skills.

Areas of special education teachers' expertise include:

* Kansas University Learning Strategies
* SRA Corrective Reading and Math
* Learning Disabilities
* Mental Disabilities
* Behavior Disabilities
* Multi-categorical Certification

8. What roles will the special education teachers assume, e.g., direct instruction or team teaching, etc., so as to support general teachers with accommodations and modifications, monitoring IEPs in other setting, etc.?

The special education teachers at Hawthorne will serve a variety of roles. They will serve as self-contained teachers, when necessary. They will be available to teach small groups of students in a learning center environment as
well as other settings. They may work in the classroom with the regular education teacher or pull aside small groups of students to work in a specific area of the classroom. The special education teacher will provide a variety of services from reading strategies, to writing, spelling and mathematics interventions. These teachers will also teach good study habits, monitor behavior when necessary and work with regular education teachers to ensure that special needs students are successful. They will provide services to support integration and help to plan and monitor accommodations. They will monitor IEPs and gather data to assess student progress.

The primary role of the special education staff is to ensure that the IEP goals of special education students are being addressed, and if not, to initiate the problem-solving process to resolve the concern. In fulfilling this role the special education teacher may:

* Work collaboratively with general educators to develop accommodations and strategies to meet the needs of students.
* Co-teach with general education teachers in general education classrooms serving identified special education students.
* Provide small group teaching in the most appropriate setting with both identified and non-identified students.
* Serve identified students whose needs cannot be met in the general education classroom in instructional setting that specifically meet their needs as determined by the IEP team.

The primary role of the special education clerical personnel include

* clerical work
* teacher directed small group work
* 1-1 assistance for reinforcement of concepts
* behavior management
* accompany student to exploratory classes
* lunch supervision

The goals of collaboration between special education staff and general education staff include addressing the students’ learning styles, emphasizing student strengths and planning for instructional methods according to goals for student achievement. They will participate in joint staff development.

Collaboration and co-teaching will be defined by the individual teachers involved. Generally, the general education teacher will be responsible for content and the special education teacher will be responsible for modifications.
and strategies.

9. What is the nature of the relationship between special education teachers and general education teacher, i.e., will they work together and if so, how: communication mechanism, joint planning session, etc.?

An ongoing, formalized communication process between administrator, AEA personnel, and general and special education is crucial for the success of this plan. This will require time scheduled for collaborative purposes. Hawthorne administrators may use team leader days to facilitate the scheduling of these meetings during the school day. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss modifications, adaptations, student progress, and other areas of concern.

General and special education teachers will also develop additional time to meet. Possible options include meeting during the general educators double planning time, before school, or after school, using part of the district’s two hours of after school meeting time.

Together the general educator and special educator are responsible for the development of the student’s individual education program. In addition, as described in the student’s IEP, the general educator may have additional responsibilities related to implementing and evaluating the IEP or parts of it.

10. How will instruction staff work with support service provider, e.g., what mechanism will be in place for ongoing exchange of information between instructional staff and support service staff who provide services to the same students, etc.?

Communication between staff and parents will be ongoing. The staff and parents will continue to utilize the problem solving process developed by the Pleasantview Community School District in 1994. If problems are not managed, the AEA support team will be contacted by the school counselors. Additional interventions will be selected from this team. If the problems continue to be unresolved, the support team may be asked to meet regularly with the student’s academic team for extended problem solving and/or to develop a forty-five day intervention plan. If all interventions are exhausted, a formal referral to the AEA support team will then be made. This will be monitored by the principal at the scheduled weekly meetings with the administrators, counselors, and AEA support team members.

The AEA support team will monitor all IEPs and will be available to all
special needs teachers for consultation. Regularly scheduled meetings will occur either weekly, biweekly or monthly with all special needs teachers.

**Settings**

11. Where will services be provided to students i.e., in general education classrooms, in special education classrooms, in what buildings, etc.?

Every student with special education needs should attend his or her neighborhood school UNLESS the staffing team, through the IEP process, identifies specific instructional or support needs that cannot be provided in the environment, even with reasonable accommodations.

The instructional staff will make provisions of accommodations and modifications in a general education environment when appropriate for the student's academic, social, emotional, and physical level of learning in accordance with the IEP. All services will be on a continuum from at risk through Level III programming.

12. How will services be configured and provided in order to ensure that students are educated with non disabled peers to the extent specified in their IEPs?

Type of services available for at-risk students: Adjustments will be made by the teacher which would not change basal materials or requirements. A written account of the issues, modifications, and results will be completed before going to the next level.

Options at this level could be: room arrangement/student placement in the room; study guides and help with study skills, extra discussion and explanation, peer and/or volunteer tutoring, use of readers and tapes, tests presented orally, reteach and retest with no penalty, anecdotal records, daily behavior charting sheets (home school plan), parental contact and documentation (home school plan), contracts (home school plan) time out (teacher managed), student self-monitoring, copies of notes, extra time for task completion, and reward/reinforcement.

Types of services available under Level I include:

* General classroom--The student remains in the general educational program and needs are met by modification/interventions recommended by the special education teacher and implemented by the general education teacher
at Hawthorne Middle School

* General classroom with general and special education teachers cooperatively teaching—the student remains in general classroom. Special education teacher and classroom teacher plan, create, modify, adapt, and teach together. For example: Reading Project may expand into other curricular areas.

* General classroom with special education associate in the classroom—Student remains in the general classroom. Special education teacher assists the special education associate in making modifications and adaptations to be used in the general classroom.

* Limited alternative setting for instruction—Student receives special education instruction outside the general classroom for a portion of the school day, along with support and modifications made to the general education program.

**Type of services available under Level II include:**

* Significant modification in the areas of curriculum, instruction, social/emotional, and environmental areas with shared involvement of general education and special education teachers. Students will be integrated into the general education classroom to the maximum extent deemed appropriate by the multi-disciplinary staffing team.

**Type of services available under Level III include:**

* Intensive services are provided to the student with integration into the general education classroom as appropriate.
  * Substantial modifications in the areas of curriculum, instruction, social/emotional, and environmental areas primarily under the direction of the special education staff.
  * Provision of intensive services in cooperation with specialized providers. Options might include:
    a. Special day school
    b. Special residential facility
    c. Home service/hospital service
    d. Other options as deemed appropriate by a multi-disciplinary staffing team.

Levels of service are general guidelines. Combinations of options will be
considered by staffing teams to ensure the best interests of individual students.

13. **How will services be configured and provided in order to ensure that students are able to attend the school they would attend if not disabled?**

Student attendance areas are determined according to the Board of Directors and in accordance with federal, state, and community guidelines/expectations. Students who are identified as in need of services that include special education will attend their home/neighborhood schools except when appropriate services are not available within the school as determined by the Pleasantview Community School District Director of Students with Special Needs or when there would be a violation of the Board of Directors determined neighborhood/home school rules.
APPENDIX B

Letters of Request
Permission Letters
Request for Study to
Pleasantview School District,
Director of Special Needs,
Building Principal

August 11, 1998

Division of Instructional Services
Pleasantview Community Schools
1516 Washington Street
Pleasantview, Iowa 50702

To the Directors of Instructional Services:

As a teacher in both regular and special education for the past 28 years, I have a special interest in the recent developments in serving students with special needs in the regular classroom. The IDEA Amendments of 1997 mandate changes that will result in many of our students with special needs being served in the regular classroom using the general curriculum. The law also defines the regular educator as a member of the IEP team. This new role of the regular educator warrants study.

The Pleasantview Community Schools have articulated IDEA at the local level through conjunction with AEA, district goals, building goals, and building plans for serving the population of students with special needs. The special educators and regular educators will join forces to serve this population of students in the least restrictive environment, which, for most, will be the regular classroom as of Fall 1998.

As an education doctoral student at the University of Northern Iowa, and a former special educator for 17 years in PCS, I request to conduct a study of the beliefs and practices of the regular educator as they assume the new role of IEP Team participant, in accordance with the IDEA 97, PCS district goals, and Hawthorne Middle School Building Plan for serving students with special needs. I have discussed the possibility of working with teachers at Hawthorne Middle School with James Mitchell and Dr. Dale Boone. I intend to study, in a qualitative fashion, the following questions by means of focus group interview and collection of archival data:

1. What are the beliefs and practices of teachers as participants on the IEP teams? Will they change in the first year?

2. What are educator’s perceived supports relating to serving students with special needs in their regular education classroom? What are the perceived barriers?
3. How are the new law, IDEA 97, being interpreted and implemented at local level? How will it meet the needs of teachers as participants on IEP teams?

It is my hope to receive permission to conduct the study of teachers at Hawthorne Middle School in Pleasantview, Iowa during the school year 1998-99, conducting one focus interview group per month from October 1998 through April 1998, excluding December. Individual interviews may be warranted as qualitative measures evolve. I have met with Dr. Dale Boone at Hawthorne and she gave her approval pending district approval.

Participation of regular education and special education teachers will be solicited at the opening faculty meeting on August 19 at Hawthorne Middle School, as Dr. Moon suggested. Participation will be voluntary, all group meetings will occur outside of school contract time, and Phase 3 credit will be a possibility for participation, if this quest meets the building Phase 3 requirements. The constant -comparative method will be employed, requiring participants to remain active for the duration of the study.

I submit this proposal to the PCS, and am hopeful that approval will be given as soon as possible in order to begin the study in October 1998. This date meets the timeliness criteria of the study, as the inclusionary education program begins fall, 1998 in the PCS. Justification for the study is twofold: to assist doctoral study of the issues relating to regular educator’s beliefs and practice, as well as to investigate positive, realistic avenues for regular educators in Pleasantview to assume the new role of IEP Team participants and serve as role models for others in the same pursuit.

Much thanks for considering and assisting this opportunity. Confidentiality and participant approval will be maintained for all information gathered, and findings will be available for faculty and administrators upon request. Please advise me as to the approval of this study for PCS. I feel the study will make a difference in the way we teach all children.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Schroeder
319-984-5025 (H) 984-5501 Ext 6272 (W)
schroederma@uni.edu
Request to Hawthorne Faculty for Participants

Hawthorne Middle School
Pleasantview, Iowa
August, 1998
Dear Hawthorne Faculty:

I am a doctoral student from the University of Northern Iowa, and a 25 year special education teacher for AEA, serving 18 years in the Pleasantview Schools. I request your participation in a study to be conducted at Hawthorne this school year from October 1998 through April 1999. The topic of the study is to research regular educator’s beliefs and practice regarding teaching students with special needs in the regular classroom.

New legislation, the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997, outlines the participation of the regular educator in serving students with special needs as you team with others to plan, review and revise educational pursuits as a member of the IEP Team. The IEP is a written plan addressing specific needs of a child with disability in your classroom.

The plan for this study is to meet once a month, after school, here at Hawthorne, for a focus interview group discussion regarding your beliefs and practices for teaching students with special needs. Opportunity for open discussion will be available to investigate supports and barriers to this new educational paradigm. Possible individual in depth interviews may also occur if you agree that this may benefit the study. The goal is to identify beliefs and practices, supports and barriers to inclusionary education. Findings may well serve to identify both supportive measures as well as needs of the regular educator toward fulfilling this new role as IEP Team member. The study will be qualitative, allowing for open ended findings.

Your participation is voluntary, and all information will be held in confidence. Nothing will be included without your permission and review. All names and places will be fictitious in the study write-up. Monthly meetings will run 60-90 minutes.

There is possibility that the time you spend with the focus group interviews may qualify as a Phase ‘3’ project, as it fulfills a building goal, related to the district goal for serving all students in the least restrictive environment.

You as the regular educator are a most vital and valuable source of information, closest to the students, “where the tire hits the road”. It is my sincere hope that you will consent to participate in this study, knowing that you will be adding to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
the body of knowledge regarding ways to enhance and the ever-more complex role of the regular educator in the 1990s and into the new millennium.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Schroeder
984-5025  schroederma@uni.edu

Interested? Read on.

Focus:
Group Interview on the topic of educators' beliefs and practices, supports and barriers for serving students with disabilities in the regular classroom.

What do you believe? What are your inclusion practices? How can your experiences help others assume this new role as participant on the IEP team?

Purpose:
To identify ways to assist development of the new roles and responsibilities of the regular educator at middle school level.

Timeline: October 1998 through April 1999 (excluding December)
Frequency: One meeting per month, 60-90 minutes long (promise!)
Place: Hawthorne Middle School, room TBA
Perks:
1. Opportunity to add to the knowledge base
2. Have a voice to identify strengths and needs
3. Phase 3 project credit

Yes, I would be interested! Let me know more!
Your name: ________________________________

Position: ____________________________ Years experience __________________

Home Phone: __________________________ Address ________________________________

Best day for meeting: Tuesday, Thursday (circle the one best meeting your needs)
Building Principal Agreement

Impact of IDEA 1997 on Beliefs and Practices of Educators as Participants on IEP Team

The following arrangements have been agreed upon for the duration of the study:

I. As the researcher, Mary Ann Schroeder will:
   1. Check in with the office upon arrival each focus interview group day.
   2. Provide a monthly calendar of scheduled focus group interviews and interviews.
   3. Respect the schedules, needs, and wishes of faculty and staff.
   4. Protect the identity of individuals and location of study.
   5. Provide an executive summary of findings to faculty, administrators and WCS administrators as requested.

II. As the principal of Hawthorne Middle School, Dr. Dale Boone will:
   1. Allow the researcher to have access to building and staff in the form of focus group interviews, documentation, archival documents such as building plan and individual teacher interviews.
   2. Allow the researcher to have access to certain building equipment such as telephones and photocopy machines (at researcher's expense).
   3. Provide information which will allow for the smooth operation of the study such as notice of schedule variations, daily or weekly bulletins, or notice of scheduled meetings pertaining to the topic of the study.

It is further agreed that the participating school, Hawthorne Middle School, may withdraw from the study at any time if deemed appropriate by the principal, Dale Boone.

Mary Ann Schroeder (researcher) Dale Boone (principal)
Hawthorne Middle School Participant Agreement

As a participant in the IEP Team study, I know that the researcher, Mary Ann Schroeder will:

1. Provide a monthly calendar of the scheduled focus group interview.
2. Facilitate open ended interviews in a qualitative manner.
3. Schedule interviews ahead of time at participant convenience
4. Limit interviews in length and number as much as possible.
5. Protect the confidentiality of individuals, data and location of study.

I further agree to:
1. Allow the researcher to interview me (at your convenience).
2. Allow the tape recording/ video recording of interviews, to be destroyed upon completion of the study.
3. Review research findings and add or delete information in a justifiable manner.

Participation is voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any kind. Any concerns regarding this study in any way, to include your rights, may be directed to:
Dr. Sue Etscheidt, Project Advisor, UNI Dept of Special Ed. 273-3279
Dr. David Walker, Human Subjects Coordinator, UNI 273-6148
Mary Ann Schroeder, Researcher, UNI Dept of Special Ed. 273-6061

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. None are foreseen. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge the I have received a copy of this consent statement.

________________________________________
Signature of Participant                      Date

________________________________________
Printed name of Participant

________________________________________
Signature of Researcher                      Date

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
APPENDIX C

Focus Group Interview Questions
Focus Group Interview Questions
Initial Focus Group Interview
October 13, 1998
Hawthorne Middle School Media Center

1. What are your beliefs regarding the education of ALL students in the regular classroom employing the collaboration and inclusion processes?

2. What are your beliefs regarding your participation on IEP teams to help initiate, review, implement, and revise the IEPs of students with special needs in your classroom?

3. How have recent education laws impacted your beliefs about collaborating to serve students with special needs in the regular classroom?

4. Many of you have heard the term collaboration. What does this mean to you as collaborating teachers here at Hawthorne Middle School?

5. Collaboration is a relatively new term in education, and has appeared in newspapers, magazines, TV reports and professional journals. What do you know about?

6. In what ways have recent federal laws impacted the collaboration policies here at Hawthorne?

7. The term collaboration as used in this study is defined by Idol, Paloucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin (1986) as an interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems. How does this relate to at Hawthorne?

8. As experts in the field of classroom teaching, what are some reasons you would offer a new colleague here at Hawthorne why general education classroom is a positive place for students with special needs?

9. Can you offer some reasons why regular ed teachers might believe that the regular classroom and general curriculum might not be the best learning environment for students with special needs?

10. If you could offer advise to another middle school in their efforts toward collaboration, what supports for collaboration would you identify
11. What barriers to successful collaboration can you identify?

12. To what extent do you as the experienced teacher feel prepared to meet the academic and social needs of students with disabilities in your regular classroom?

13. In light of your school district's current practice of serving students with disabilities in the regular classroom, what is your experience with IEPs and IEP Team participation?

14. If you could change one thing about the collaboration process here, what might that be?

Key: Numbered questions-prepared questions

Lettered questions-spontaneous questions emerging during focus group interviews
Focus Group Interview  
November 10, 1998  
Hawthorne Middle School  

1. Do you have site based management here?  
   When do you meet?  
   1b. What is this meeting or group called?  
   1c. Has there been any discussion of the inclusion movement at  
      these site council meetings?  
   1d. Does the Hawthorne Building Plan have any connection to  
      the Site Council?  

2. The Hawthorne Building Plan states that all staff need support in  
   designing and providing the accommodations and modifications  
   necessary to meet needs of all students. This may be in the form  
   of inservice, preparation and time, AEA team access, and technology. How  
   has this played out here?  

3. Have you had any professional development regarding collaboration  
   since last we met?  
   3a. How do you identify that a student has special help or  
       modifications?  
   3b. Are all teachers aware of the student accommodation sheets  
       and comment sheets?  
   3c. Are these only done for students with IEPs?  
   3d. Do other members on your team agree that the students with  
       disabilities and at risk kids may benefit from need to have tests  
       read and other accommodations?  
   3e. Then do you use your special education training with these  
       kids who are in need but not formally identified?  

4. New question: If you were given time to collaborate for at risk or  
   special needs, how would you use it?  
   4a. Can I ask why you’re now teaching two skill classes instead of  
       one?  
   4b. Is there a connection here between Mrs. Number’s  
       accommodation need and Mrs. Willing’s strategy?
5. What avenues are open to you to get the time needed to collaborate. Are there any?

6. Do you have a source to legitimately request inservice time?

7. Do you have input on the topics for inservice time?

8. Let's discuss your administrator's earlier comment, "We need to help them get rid of the guilt."

9. Have the role of the regular education and special education teachers changed here? If so, how?

10. I know Mrs. Water has to leave, and I have a question for the group. Is job security an issue here?

11. Do you think most teachers here believe that students with mild disabilities belong in the regular classroom?

12. Are there some teachers who haven't bought into the idea of collaboration?

13. How do you "weed down students with disabilities" numbers from the regular classes? (This question was directed to Mrs. Number to clarify a comment she made).

14. Who teaches this self contained special math class?

   14a. Are students already identified with an IEP to be in this class?

   14b. What is the reason the student you identified earlier who had low basic skills doesn't join this group?

   14c. Can an unidentified needy student attend a level two math class?

15. Do you have an arena in which to confront these issues and needs?

   15a. Have you been able to include students without IEPs in special math classes in the past before benchmarks?

16. I hear you saying that the tools you're given are not the ones needed to do your job. Please comment on this.
17. Can you name your current supports for collaboration? Your barriers?
18. Do you believe collaboration can work here? If so, what changes need to occur?

**Key:** Numbered questions-prepared questions

Lettered questions-spontaneous questions emerging during focus group interviews
Focus Group Interview
January 12, 1999
Hawthorne Middle School

1. Has the district intervened in collaboration efforts here at Hawthorne since we last met to your knowledge?

   1a. If so, how?

2. What are the methods of compliance for collaboration and inclusion here?

3. Has the new IDEA law become an issue here in any way? If so, how?

4. Has the climate for collaboration here changed since it started in the fall?

5. Do you believe that most students are benefiting from collaboration and inclusion here?

6. Have your beliefs regarding collaboration changed?

   6a. How have they changed?

7. Has your collaborative practice changed?

   7a. How?

8. Are staff and administration changing collaboration beliefs and practices?

   8a. If so, how?

9. What supports have you been given for planning time and inclusion?

10. Is the role of collaborator more beneficial to you as team teacher or consultant?

11. What is the current active role of the AEA here?

12. Is AEA now considered a source of collaboration support?

16. What are your barriers to date
17. As we roll into spring what plans will be made for next school year and the collaboration efforts?

17a. How will this happen?

17b. What will change?

17c. What do you need to make these plans reality?

17d. Do you think collaboration efforts will get the support needed?

Key: Numbered questions-prepared questions

Lettered questions-spontaneous questions emerging during focus group interviews
Focus Group Interviews
February 9, 1999
Hawthorne Middle School

1. Has the district intervened in the collaboration efforts here at Hoover since we last met to your knowledge?

   1a. If so, how?

2. What are the methods of compliance checking for collaboration and inclusion here?

3. Has the new IDEA law become an issue for collaboration here? If so, how?

4. Has the climate for collaboration here changed since it started in the fall?

5. Do you believe that most students are benefiting from collaboration and inclusion here?

6. Have your beliefs regarding collaboration changed?

   6a. How have they changed?

7. Has your collaborative practice changed?

   7a. How?

8. Are staff and administration changing collaboration beliefs and practices?

   8a. If so, how?

9. What supports have you been given for planning time and collaboration?

10. Is the role of collaborator more beneficial to you as team teacher or consultant?

11. What is the current active role of the AEA in collaboration here?

12. Is AEA now considered a source of support?
16. What are your collaboration barriers to date?

17. As we roll into spring what plans will be made for collaboration for next school year?

18. How will this happen?

**Key:** Numbered questions-prepared questions

Lettered questions-spontaneous questions emerging during focus group interviews
Focus Group Interviews
March 9, 1999
Hawthorne Middle School

1. Have there been any new developments from the district level regarding inclusion and collaboration since last we met?

2. You mentioned last meeting that you had a cluster meeting with the Director of Special Needs in late January. Has there been any further development regarding the content and outcomes of the meeting?

3. Have there been events here at Hawthorne as a direct result of that cluster meeting?
   3a. If so, what were the events?
   3b. Who instigated the events?
   3c. What changes have occurred?
   3d. What has not changed regarding efforts here?

4. Has the Hawthorne Building Plan been addressed since last we met in any way related to collaboration?

5. What have you done in collaboration planning since last we met?

6. Have you changed your beliefs regarding collaboration in any way?
   6a. If so, how?
   6b. Who is involved?
   6c. Why did these beliefs change?
   6d. What beliefs did not change?

7. Have you changed your collaborative practices since last meeting?
   7a. If so, how?
   7b. Who is involved in this practice?

8. What are the supports for collaboration you perceive at this time?
8a. What supports would make collaboration more successful in your opinion?

9. What are the barriers to collaboration you perceive at this time here?
   9a. What measures would eliminate these barriers?
   9b. How can these be eliminated?
   9c. Do teachers possess the power to change these?
   9d. What avenues do you have to assist collaboration efforts?

10. Is job security an issue related to current collaboration compliance?

11. How has collaboration affected your teaching role?

12. What is your current teaching role?
   12a. What determines your teaching role?
   12b. What are confusing factors regarding teacher roles here to date?

13. Has the Hawthorne Building Plan empowered collaboration efforts here to date?

14. What do you see as the future of collaboration here at Hawthorne?

**Key:** Numbered questions-prepared questions

Lettered questions-spontaneous questions emerging during focus group interviews

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Focus Group Interview  
April 19, 1999  
Hawthorne Middle School

Researcher introductory statement: It is my intention to bring to the table the categories which have emerged over the months of focus group interviews in response to the initial research questions. We are addressing the impact of the IDEA 1997 on teachers’ reported beliefs and collaborative practices as they participated on IEP Teams here at Hawthorne in the first year of compliance to IDEA 1997.

1. The first category you indicated in the initial question sessions was that Hawthorne was not prepared for the compliance mandate of IDEA 1997. Please comment on this.

2. Are district administrators giving you opportunity to plan for this?
   2a. If so, how?
   2b. If not, why not, in your opinion? When?

3. You noted early in the study that the Hawthorne Building Plan was a safeguard for the time needed to collaborate. Is this currently your perception?
   3a. If not, what is your perception regarding the plan?
   3b. What is the authority of the building plan regarding collaboration here?

4. You had mentioned that you think that true collaboration is not happening here. What will it take for collaboration to happen here?
   4a. Do you think it’s happening anywhere?
   4b. Do you ever utilize assistive technology for students with special needs here?

5. To whom do you address concerns and needs of the students for whom there is no IEP for, but whom you have in your class?

6. Do you have any facilitators or coordinators for content areas or special needs here at Hawthorne to date?
6a. Do you think they are necessary? Why or why not?
6b. What is the role of the AEA support staff here currently?
6c. Do you have other alternatives for assistance currently?

7. You report that the IEP process is not supported in the standards and benchmarks. Please explain this.

7a. What is the source of this concern?
7b. What are the factors of concern?
7c. How are you dealing with the incompatibilities of the two?
7d. Who wrote the standards and benchmarks?
7e. Are they assessed by a district assessment team?

8. You as a group addressed the perception that the building plan was going to reassure and safeguard everything you needed to serve kids with IEPs here. On what did you base this belief?

8a. Who wrote the plan?
8b. Under what conditions was it written?
8c. What is its purpose?
8d. What clout does it possess?
8e. When is it used? How is it used?
8f. Do you think it will be updated?
8g. When? Why? By whom?

9. I sense from your repeated comments that you harbor disillusionment with the Central Administration regarding compliance to IDEA 1997. Is this so?

9a. What are the current issues?
9b. What are the avenues for addressing the issues?
9c. Where is the authority to make necessary and identified changes for compliance to IDEA 1997?

10. Is there a light at the end of this tunnel for you and collaboration here at Hawthorne?

11. The disillusionment has not been with your building administrator?

12. Is job security an issue currently regarding movement?

12a. In what ways?

Key: Numbered questions-prepared questions
Lettered questions-spontaneous questions emerging during focus group interviews
Focus Group Interview
May 8, 1999
Hawthorne Middle School

Researcher introductory comment: I am going to review the categories which have repeatedly emerged during the focus group interviews since October 1998. I will ask you to validate the relevance of each category to the initial research questions as they relate to the effort here at Hawthorne. I will then ask you to report to me how you have changed, and what is the reason you changed. I want to know why you changed.

1. The group identified the federal law IDEA 1997 and the Hawthorne Building Plan as authority for collaboration and inclusion. Is this true?
   1a. Do you still believe in the authority of these two documents?
   1b. If so, what parts? What supports your belief?
   1c. If not, what has happened to change this belief?

2. You identified factors for support of collaboration as:
   2a. historic acceptance of mainstreaming
   2b. administrative support
   2c. expertise and experience of staff
   2d. shared commitment to serve all students
   2e. Are these still your reported supports?

3. You identified unpreparedness for change as a barrier to collaboration in the following factors:
   3a. role ambiguity
   3b. lack of planning time
   3c. lack of professional development
   3d. lack of teacher empowerment
   3e. Are these still reported barriers in your perception?

4. You reported beliefs that:
   4a. most students can benefit from collaboration and inclusion
   4b. job security is an issue associated with collaboration
   4c. lack of confidence has emerged in regard to district policies and Hawthorne Building Plan regarding collaboration and inclusion
   4d. Are these still your beliefs regarding collaboration here?
5. You reported collaboration practices here to include:
   5a. Instructional practice
   5b. Supportive practice
   5c. Consultative collaborative practice
   5d. Do you agree that these are occurring in various capacities here?

6. Your responses over the past year during focus group interviews indicate that you have made some changes as individuals and as a group regarding collaboration and inclusion. As I report indicated changes from the data, will you please qualify the reason for the reported change.

   6a. Mrs. Number became more positive about collaboration.

   6b. Mrs. Water moved on from job security issues to seeking diversity in regular classes after leaving special education to regular education.

   6c. Mrs. Melody began to seek collaboration and inclusion answers in literature and other professional sources, such as student teachers.

   6d. Mrs. Leader lost confidence in district policies and actions but energized her support for building level efforts and resources.

   6e. Mrs. Willing increased her efforts to collaborate and support regular educators in the shift and students who were floundering.

   6f. Mrs. Able demanded district articulation of expectation, while serving students with special needs as she felt was best practice, in absence of district policy and direction.

**Key:** Numbered questions-prepared questions
Lettered questions-spontaneous questions emerging during focus group interviews