

**Preservice Secondary Teachers' Perceptions  
of the Individual Program Plan Process**

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### *Abstract*

The current study investigated the nature of preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) process. Results suggest that secondary preservice teachers' tended to hold generally positive perceptions of the IPP process. A majority of preservice teachers responded positively to statements regarding the feasibility, and relevance of the IPP process. Preservice secondary teachers held moderately positive views regarding accountability to the child on the IPP and to the IPP process. However, it was found that a majority of preservice teachers reported feeling unprepared to participate in the IPP process. There was a significant difference between how preservice teachers responded to statements regarding preparation depending on whether or not they had completed their first or second year of study. There was also a significant difference between how preservice teachers responded to statements regarding preparation depending on whether or not they have experience with the IPP process. Teachers' perceptions have been a vital feature in the successful implementation of the IPP process, and inclusion in general. Therefore, it will be crucial for educational leaders and stakeholders to have a clear understanding of teachers' perceptions of the IPP process and the factors that affect those perceptions.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Austin, and to my daughter, Jessie. Their love, understanding, and support provided me with the courage to move forward with this endeavor. To my parents, John and Isabel, without their support, patience, wisdom, experience and love, the completion of this final product would not have been possible. Had it not been for my parents own love and commitment to life-long learning, I would not have even considered beginning on this journey of learning. To my grandparents, Aubrey and Marguerite, for their wisdom and guidance through the years – I may be a doctor yet Gramp. To my brother, Rick, his unwavering support has enabled me to persevere through it all. To my best friend, Sara, the endless supply of baby sitting and the continual, ‘Are you done yet?’ kept me on the path to complete this process. Additionally, this thesis is dedicated to Mike Lynch and Fran MacIntyre, without your expertise, wisdom, and support; I would never have reached this point in my journey of learning.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature regarding the nature of preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) process is presented in this chapter. The theoretical underpinnings of inclusive education, as well as the legislation that facilitated inclusion in the schools are discussed in the introduction. The purpose of IPPs is reviewed and a clarification of terms presented. Finally, some of the Canadian and Nova Scotian provincial legislation regarding inclusive education is discussed. As well, the rationale for this study is explained; a review of the literature is provided and the research questions are outlined. The second chapter discusses the methodology used. The third chapter examines the results of the questionnaire; and finally the fourth chapter, a discussion of the findings as they relate to research in the area and brief review of implications and recommendations.

### *Inclusive Education*

“Inclusion is an attitude and a value system that promotes the basic right of all students to receive appropriate and quality educational programming and services in the company of their peers” (Nova Scotia, 2005). The theoretical underpinnings of inclusive education are rooted in the purpose of education itself: to prepare children to live productively, independently as citizens and members of their community (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

McGregor and Vogelsberg (1998) state that “inclusive schooling practices are those that lead to the creation of supportive educational communities in which services

necessary to meet the individual needs of all students are available. This includes services previously available only in specialized settings” (p. 11). However, Lindsay (2003) asserts that “inclusion *is* the policy framework. What is at issue is the interpretation and implementation of inclusion in practice. We need to ensure that there is a dual approach focusing on both the rights of children and the effectiveness of their education” (p. 10). While ‘policy framework’ has been necessary to enable the implementation of inclusion in schools, it would be important to guide this ‘framework’ with a sound philosophy or ‘value system’ of inclusive education (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Nova Scotia, 2005).

Inclusion is currently among the top debates in education today (Cook & Semmel, 1999; Lerner, 2000). Discussion of inclusive education has sparked intense and fervent reactions from parents, teachers, administrators, researchers, students, and policy makers (Lerner, 2000). There are essentially two sides to the debate of inclusion: that which argues in support of the concept of full inclusion and that which argues for the concept of a continuum of alternative placements, with the least restrictive environment in mind (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). This debate over inclusive education has been the impetus in considering the focus for this proposed study.

#### *Clarification of the use of the terms IEPs and IPPs*

Program plans for students with diverse needs are often referred to as Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in the literature while within many school boards in the province of Nova Scotia the plans are referred to as Individual Program Plans (IPPs). The term IPP was used in the questionnaire for this study and so throughout the remainder of this thesis



the term IPP will be used for ease of reading unless IEP is in direct quotations.

*Legislation Supporting the Necessity of Individual Program Plans in the United States*

The policy framework for inclusion in the United States has been developed over the years by the US Congress. Congress has enacted laws describing children's right to education. The intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal laws such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act are to provide an environment in which all children, regardless of their disabilities, have a right to be educated in the general classroom alongside their peers without disabilities (Hunt & Marshall, 2005). All students must be treated as full members of the school community for the intent of these laws to be achieved. In addition to the law, a significant body of research clearly demonstrates that when children with and without disabilities are educated together, positive academic and social outcomes result for all children (Hunt & Marshall, 2005; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

For more than 25 years, federal and state laws have confirmed that students with disabilities should have access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), and that school systems must place a student in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) appropriate for him or her. In the United States regulations uphold that students with disabilities shall be educated, to the maximum extent appropriate, alongside students without disabilities (Hunt & Marshall, 2005).

In 2001, Congress enacted the "No Child Left Behind Act" and in 2004 IDEA was reauthorized. Tarver (2006) stated that these particular acts of Congress,

provided children with disabilities and regular education children, their parents and teachers a unique challenge. In addition to the requirement that children must pass standardized tests before advancing to the next grade level, these acts also requires the full inclusion of children with disabilities into the regular classroom. These regulations are based on the assumption that every child can learn and that children with disabilities can positively benefit from more interaction with peers and more contact with the regular education curriculum (Huefner, 2000; Kaye and Aserlind, 1979; McKellar, 1995). These requirements resulted in changes in the way services are delivered to children with disabilities (p. 263).

The onus of development and implementation of the IPP has shifted from the special education teacher to the classroom teacher with the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA. Further, the tasks and members of the IPP team, as well as the content of the IPP document have been amplified. It also aligns the goals of the student with an IPP more closely with those of the student without an IPP. It further mandates inclusion of students with disabilities in state and district wide assessments with appropriate accommodations or the use of alternative assessment methods (Tarver, 2006). Tarver (2006) states that the IPP is now more than ever, a key document in decisions surrounding the provision of services to students with exceptionalities. "Schools are being held accountable for the failure to provide a "free appropriate education" as interpreted through the child's IEP (Huefner, 2000). The inclusion of children with disabilities into the regular classroom requires the active involvement of regular education teachers, administrators, and parents in the IEP process" (Tarver, 2006, p. 264).

### *Canadian Legislation Supporting the Necessity of Individualized Program Plans*

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that, Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, nationality or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (Department of Justice Canada, 1982, 15 (1))

Further, in accordance with the Education Act of Nova Scotia (1996) teachers are required to “acknowledge and, to the extent reasonable, accommodate differences in learning styles” and to “participate in individual program planning and implement individual program plans, as required, for students with special needs” (Nova Scotia, 1996, 26 c & g).

Also, in accordance with the Special Education Policy published by the Department of Education (Nova Scotia, 1996), “Teachers are responsible for all students who are placed under their supervision and care. This includes responsibility for safety and well-being, as well as program planning, implementation, and evaluation” (Nova Scotia, 1996). Further, the public schools program states that “program curricula must be adapted to meet the diverse needs and varying rate and patterns of learning of all students from elementary through senior high school” (Nova Scotia, 1999-2000).

### *The purpose of Individual Program Plans*

When the provincial curriculum outcomes are not applicable and/or attainable for an individual student an IPP is implemented based on the student’s strengths and needs (Nova Scotia, 1996). Students work toward goals outlined in the IPP and this forms the

foundation for the evaluation of student outcomes. The evaluation of outcomes is a component used in measuring school success; however, many other variables are used as well (Nova Scotia, 1996). Legislation clearly states the importance of the development, implementation, and review of Individual Program Plans (Department of Justice Canada, 1982, 15 (1), Nova Scotia, 1996, 26 c & g, Nova Scotia, 1996). However, as observed in the literature, when moving from policy to actual experiences at the school level many teachers often feel they do not have adequate training or resources to develop and implement IPPs. Even if teachers do have adequate training in this area they will often experience the pressure of time constraint and lack of support (Dobrose, 2000; French, 1998; Morgan & Rhode, 1983; Morrisey & Safer, 1977; Rheams, 1989; Rinaldi, 1976; Smith, 1990)

Therefore there is a need to examine how preservice teachers perceive the IPP process. When teachers' perceptions are examined it is important to take this information into consideration when policies and recommendations are implemented. This will ensure that policies and recommendations are coherent, consistent, and supportive and meet everyone's needs and concerns (French, 1998).

The Nova Scotia Department of Education states that "an inclusive school is a school where every child is respected as part of the school community, and where each child is encouraged to learn and achieve as much as possible...a place where all children could learn and where differences are cherished for the richness they bring." (Nova Scotia, 1996). The goal in Nova Scotia schools is to facilitate inclusive schools through "membership, participation and learning of all students in school programs and activities" (Nova Scotia, 1996). Support services should be provided to students within the

neighborhood school, grade level, and subject to the extent possible (Nova Scotia, 1996). The Department of Education in a statement on integration states that the question is no longer whether students with exceptional needs should be integrated but rather what support is needed to facilitate inclusive schools in providing education for all students successfully (Nova Scotia, 1996).

Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Robson, in a 1999 study of 4 schools that sought to develop practices in keeping with inclusion, found that school systems responding to diversity need to expect that there will be “dilemmas arising from contradictory imperatives within mass education systems” (p. 157). It is with this in mind that the current study sought to gain some basic insights from the results of the survey. For example, will there be any evidence of ‘dilemmas’ or of ‘contradictory imperatives’ from the findings of the survey on preservice secondary teachers’ perspectives of the IPP process?

This research study examined the nature of preservice secondary teachers’ perceptions of the IPP process. This document is organized into chapters. The first chapter includes a rationale for this study, a review of the literature on IPPs, and research questions addressed by this study. The second chapter on methodology discusses participants, instrumentation, and procedures that were used. The third chapter on results examines the results of the questionnaire; and finally the fourth chapter, a discussion of the findings as they relate to research in the area and brief review of implications, recommendations, and the next steps to be taken in research.

### *Program Planning: A Team Approach to the IPP process*

Classrooms that successfully include students with exceptional learning needs are designed to welcome diversity and to address the individual needs of all students, whether they have disabilities or not (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). Teachers in the province of Nova Scotia are expected to accept responsibility of helping all students meet the learning outcomes. Teachers will make necessary adaptations to the delivery of the curricula as well to their teaching strategies to better accommodate the student in accordance with various education laws and policies. These adaptations may take the form of an adaptive plan or an individualized program plan as found necessary by the collaborative efforts of the School Program Planning Team (SPPT) (Nova Scotia 2002).

The School Program Planning Team (SPPT) is an integral part of the IPP process. The SPPT is a team of teachers and other professionals formed with the purpose of working collaboratively with staff to discuss and make a variety of decisions regarding students and how best to serve them. The team collaboration may result in:

strategies and resources specific to the strengths and needs of the student are identified to help students meet the PSP curriculum outcomes. These strategies and/or resources are called adaptations. The program planning team may decide to seek additional information or refer the student for further assessment. The program planning team may decide to develop an individual program plan (IPP) (Nova Scotia, 2006).

A School Program Planning Team can meet as often as it is deemed necessary by the individual school with consideration given to the varying needs of the student population. A secondary school team would typically consist of: the principal and/or vice-principal, learning centre teacher, resource teacher, guidance counselor, and one or

two teacher representatives. It would be optimal to also include: the assigned school psychologist and the speech language pathologist; however, considering the large caseloads of these members this is not always possible to include them in the meeting. Referrals to the program planning team may be initiated by the student, the student's parent(s) or guardian(s), the student's teacher(s), or guidance counselor (Nova Scotia, 2006).

### *Perception*

A key aspect of this proposed paper is perception of the IPP process so it is important to discuss the construct of perception. Perception is a fundamental issue in epistemology - the theory of knowledge. All of our empirical knowledge is grounded in how we see, hear, touch, smell and taste the world around us. Perception is the process by which people select, organize, interpret, retrieve and respond to information (Sekuler & Blake, 2002). It is a lens through which information is filtered and then influences actions, reactions, and behaviours (Sekuler & Blake, 2002). Most people would agree that the empirical idea of 'seeing is believing' is valid. However, consider for a moment the opposite, that believing is seeing. When individuals believe that something is useful, they are more likely to perceive information that supports the belief. Beliefs are created from the influences of one's personal experience, one's environment, and one's culture (Sekuler & Blake, 2002). For example in the book *Blink* the author discusses how unstable perceptions can be. In blind taste tests of the beverage 7-Up a consulting firm found that the color of the pop cans made a significant difference in how the person perceived the product (Gladwell, 2005). Several versions of packaging were presented. In

one test the label had 15% more yellow added to the green. Persons tasting in this test reported tasting more lemon or lime flavor and became upset that the company was changing the flavour of the pop (Gladwell, 2005). This is an example of how perception can influence belief. The taste testers biologically perceived the pop can and then believed that the company was changing the flavour of the pop. This is an important study to consider in light of the findings of the current study.

#### *Previous studies of IPP related issues*

Smith (1990) presents a broad review of the literature in the area of Individual Program Plans (IPPs). The literature reviewed ranged from 1975 to 1990. Smith discussed the literature by category: normative, analytical, and technological. It was found that in the early years when IPPs were first implemented, many researchers focused on topics such as legal issues or correct process. Normative research looked at the various aspects of IPPs in regards to legislation (Smith, 1990). Analytic research examined IPP perceptions by focusing on issues of correct implementation, compliance, quality and appropriateness. Technological research was evident during the mid 1980s. There was a surge of interest in computer programs and software for writing IPPs (Smith, 1990; Tymitz, 1981). This surge of interest is due to teachers' wishes to reduce time spent on writing of the IPP. Other research has been conducted in the area of IPP assessment (Lynch & Beare, 1990).

Smith (1990) discussed the findings of Morgan and Rhode's (1983) two year study on teacher attitudes and perceptions toward IPPs. The authors conducted a two year follow up study (Morgan & Rhode, 1983). Special educators in Utah were surveyed to



assess their attitudes toward IPPs in 1978 and again in 1980. The authors found that special education teachers did not perceive a clear relationship between the written IPP and what occurs in the student's classroom. The findings suggested that the teachers in the study held a moderately negative attitude toward IPPs. Of particular concern to the teachers was the excessive time demands and insufficient support from school personnel. In 1978 and again in 1980 (after the two year follow-up study) it was found that teachers perceived the development process of the IPP more as a clerical task and indicated that their teaching was just as effective without the use of the IPP (Morgan & Rhode, 1983). However, it was found that IPPs helped with organization of time and better job satisfaction for special education teachers. There was no significant correlation between teacher attitudes and demography or other teacher characteristics (Morgan & Rhode, 1983).

Dudley-Marling (1985) also studied the perception of the usefulness of IPPs by special education teachers from Colorado. The authors found that most of the 150 teachers surveyed indicated that an IPP does have some general usefulness for themselves and their students. Further, the teachers believed that the IPP helped them understand individual children more fully; was a good reference for planning; and encouraged cooperation among teachers (Dudley-Marling, 1985). While these results are more positive, over half of the teachers surveyed indicated that they did not use the IPP for daily planning, and only reviewed the document annually or semi-annually. Most teachers, 86 percent, kept the IPP in a locked filing cabinet for the purpose of confidentiality. However, this would indicate that the IPP was not a 'working document' and was not to be used to inform daily planning for students on IPPs. Teachers did state

that they would write some form of an IPP even if it was not required by law (Dudley-Marling, 1985).

Rheams (1989) included both special education and classroom teachers in her 1989 study. The author's findings are consistent with previous research regarding special education teacher perceptions of the IPP. She found that teachers' perceived the IPP process as time consuming and generally not useful. However, IPPs were found to be useful in understanding the student more fully. The author concluded that teacher perceptions have not changed in the six years since Morgan and Rhode's (1983) study.

There were considerable limitations in this study (Rheams, 1989). Many (34%) felt the questionnaire was not applicable to their teaching situation. Classroom teachers who did respond to the questionnaire indicated that they were not familiar with the IPP even though they taught exceptional students. Some differences between special education teachers and classroom teachers' perceptions were that fifty-four percent of special education teachers believed that the amount of time need to plan an IPP affected the quality; only twenty-eight percent of classroom teachers have the same opinion. More than fifty percent of special education teachers viewed the IPP as useless, while only twenty-five percent of classroom teachers responded similarly. It was found that if the teacher was a classroom teacher but had special education training then their perceptions were more similar to those of the special education teacher (Rheams, 1989).

The author also looked at the differences in perceptions among types of teachers, by gender, and years of experience. Rheams (1989) found that eighty-six percent of elementary students held a more positive view of IPP effectiveness than secondary teachers (76%). Females perceived IPPs more favorably than did male teachers. More

favorable responses came from new teachers that are in special education (zero to 10 years experience) as compared to teachers with more experience (Rheams, 1989).

French (1998) was commissioned by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union to examine educators' perceptions of the IPP process across school boards within the province of Nova Scotia. French (1998) concluded that educators indicated a positive perspective regarding inclusion of students with exceptionalities. The results of the 1998 study by French also indicated a number of issues that affect the IPP process. French (1998) provided a number of recommendations to address some of these issues that were raised by the results of the study (French, 1998). Dr. French expressed that "if addressed, these refinements could assist in making the IPP process more meaningful for all involved" (1998, p. 15). It is interesting to note that the study found that Elementary teachers and resource teachers held exceptionally positive perceptions regarding the IPP process (French, 1998). Secondary teachers were found to hold some of these perceptions; however the participants indicated "concerns regarding appropriate placement and lack of programming expertise. Principals/vice principals noted the usefulness and worth of IPPs but found the IPP process demanding, especially the paperwork and added responsibilities" (French, 1998, p.2). The instrument French used in the 1998 study was used by the current author to derive the instrument for the current study.

Dobrose conducted a study of Tennessee Middle School teachers' perceptions of the IPP in 2000. The study revealed some results that differed from both Dudley-Marling (1985) and Rheams (1989). In general, teachers still found the IPP paperwork to be excessive, but they did perceive that the IPP was an effective, useful document. The difference between special education and classroom teacher decreased and shows only a

slight difference. The author surmised that this was due to the fact that familiarity with IPPs since the 1980's has grown (Dobrose, 2000). While the results, showing that younger teachers have a more positive perception of IPP effectiveness, correlate with Rheams' (1989) study, differences between genders were not found to be statistically significant. Dobrose (2000) concluded that four main issues influence teacher perceptions of education directiveness and utility: accountability, feasibility, preparedness, and relevance.

In 2006, Tarver investigated teachers' perceptions of IPPs. This study showed that a majority of teachers found IPPs useful in planning goals and objectives. As well, a majority of teachers reported they were involved in IPP development; and found that development of IPPs was a team effort. In contrast to Dudley-Marling (1985), Tarver (2006) found that teachers used IPPs as a way to organize and structure their teaching. And as Tarver (2006) points out this difference coincides with changes in the federal laws.

The study signified that more professional development on IPPs is necessary for classroom teachers. There was some negative response to items on the survey. A number of teachers felt that they were not involved in the development of the IPP. Teachers also "felt that placement was the only team decision and, that time spent developing an IPP was not justified". Tarver (2006) found that the gap "between policy and implementation of IPP requirements is closing" and that "regular education teachers are becoming more involved in the provision of services for children with disabilities as full inclusion becomes a reality" (p. 271).

### *Summary*

A review of the literature indicates that perceptions of IPP usefulness have become slightly more positive over the years, however, these teachers frequently stated that time constraints and excessive paperwork are challenges to effective development and implementation (Dobrose, 2000, French, 1998, Morgan & Rhode, 1983, and Smith, 1990). While special education teachers appear to have accepted the roles and responsibilities associated with the policy mandates, the recent literature does not reflect a dramatic shift in perception (Smith, 1990, and Rheams, 1989). Unexpectedly, classroom teachers were shown to have a more positive view of IPPs than special education teachers; however, many of the classroom teachers responding had limited or no direct experience with special education students, and did not feel they were required to implement and adjust to new roles and responsibilities (Rheams, 1989). French (1998) found that generally teachers' perceptions of the IPP process were positive; however, there were a number of concerns that arose from the study. Time demands and a lack of support were noted as key concerns (French, 1998).

The majority of research concerning IPPs was conducted over 20 years ago (Smith, 1990). There has been much legislation enacted since then and this may have impacted how teachers perceive the IPP process. There are three issues that are of concern resulting from the review of the literature. As mentioned, much of the research is not current with most studies in this area having been conducted in years ranging from 1975-1990 – fifteen to thirty years ago. As well, many of these studies have produced negative results about teachers' perceptions of the IPP process. Of course, this may no longer apply. There are few Canadian studies in the area of teachers' perceptions IPP

process. Aside from the masters' theses and dissertation studies, there are limited studies from Canada or elsewhere that examines secondary teachers' perceptions of IPPs. For these reasons it will be an important area to research and produce more current information regarding how secondary preservice teachers perceive the IPP process.

Tarver (2006) found that the need for training is a necessity to enable teachers to successfully embrace and use inclusion practices. Specifically, it will be helpful for teachers to receive training of different strategies to use with all different types of students with exceptionalities. Tarver also states that it is "essential that new teachers are provided the necessary preservice training and mentoring that would assist them in adapting their classrooms to a child with special needs. A further link in the chain would be curriculum modification of our teacher-training programs at the university level" (p. 271).

#### *Rationale for Current Study*

Inclusion is among the top debates in education today. It is currently being examined by many school systems. In fact, Nova Scotia's Minister of Education announced November 26, 2006 that the Department of Education recommends a review of the "effectiveness and the efficiency of current special education programs and services" as well to examine the "impact inclusion has, if any, on the classroom learning environment" (Department of Education, 2006). Another issue to be a part of the review is whether funding is adequate to "meet the educational needs of students with special needs" (Department of Education, 2006)). The intent of the review is that recommendations will be made to the Minister by a three-member external review team

“to either add, end or modify programs and services to better meet the needs of students receiving those services” (Department of Education, 2006).

Teacher perception of the IPP process is the construct of focus in this proposed study because it is noted throughout the literature as a key component to the successful implementation of inclusive policies. Kavale and Forness (2000) state that “attitudes and beliefs of educators has long been recognized [as] a major factor in the success or failure of a policy such as mainstreaming” (p. 283). Secondary level educators became another component of focus in this proposed study because it has been noted in the literature that “secondary schools have often carried the bulk of criticism” in regards to integration (Foley, 1999, p. 56). Foley states that “secondary schooling has traditionally embraced an environment of subject coverage and mastery presented in a didactic manner by teachers to their students” (p. 56). This type of learning environment will not foster individual students to succeed.

It is hoped that this proposed descriptive study of secondary preservice teachers’ perceptions of the IPP process will make a contribution to the existing knowledge base on this topic. As well, it should provide specific information about the preservice secondary teachers’ perceptions of IPPs and, perhaps with the information gleaned from this study, indicate possible future considerations for the training of secondary Bachelor of Education students regarding IPPs.

Many of the studies found in the literature have been conducted in the United States from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. There are hardly any studies found in the current literature and there have been *no* studies on teacher perceptions of IPPs within a Canadian context. Further, studies that have been conducted in the United States

specifically on teachers' perceptions of IPPs not only have been mostly doctoral studies, but also the majority of these studies are now out of date and have primarily considered elementary teachers' perceptions.

### *Research Question*

Drawing on what Dobrose (2000) concluded were the four main influences (accountability, feasibility, preparedness, and relevance) of teacher perceptions of education directiveness and utility, the research question is five-fold: (1) what perceptions do secondary preservice teachers attending a university in Nova Scotia have of the IPP process?; (2) do the participants' perceive that they are prepared for involvement in the IPP process?; (3) do participants perceive that they will have the necessary support and time to engage in the IPP process?; (4) do participants perceive that engaging in the IPP process will be relevant to them as a teacher?; and (5) do participants perceive that classroom teachers are accountable for students on IPPs?



## CHAPTER II METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used to study preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of the IPP process. The population and participants are described, as well as the sampling procedure, instrumentation, research design, and data analysis. Approval from Mount Saint Vincent's University Research Ethics Board to conduct research with students in the Bachelor of Education secondary program was received prior to proceeding with the research.

### *Participants*

Participants were drawn from the Bachelor of Education secondary program at a University in Eastern Canada. The sample in this study is a convenience sample of Bachelor of Education students in the secondary program (both first and second year students). There are 143 students in this program. There are two clusters included in the sample: first year secondary students (73 students) and second year secondary students (70 students). In terms of a sampling procedure a census survey procedure was used because the entire sample is sufficiently small to include every member of the sample (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). The number of preservice teachers who responded to the invitation to participate was 26 (N=26).

### *Instrumentation*

The questionnaire utilized in this study is derived from a questionnaire used in a 1998 study by Dr. Carmel French. This 1998 study was commissioned by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union to examine "educators' perceptions of the IPP process" (French,

1998). The impetus for the commissioned study was that “some teachers (as is evident in resolution 97.2 from the Council ’97 meeting) question the validity of the IPP process” (French, 1998). The instrument used was a 4 - point Likert type scaled questionnaire with open-ended questions (French, 1998).

### *Administration*

At the time of distribution of the questionnaire the secondary bachelor of education students had completed their courses and were away from the university campus. Arrangements were made with the Director of Teacher Education to send out email surveys via the education office (See Appendix C). The Director of Teacher Education also kindly consented to send out a letter in support of the current research to all potential participants (See Appendix D). Following approval from the Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board a letter of invitation was emailed to the participants (detailing the purpose of the study, reassurance of confidentiality, as well as encouragement to participate) and the questionnaire was attached to this email (See Appendix E).

The questionnaire was written with the intention that it be easy to read, concise, and directions easy to follow (See Appendix A). The directions also addressed the issue of confidentiality in an attempt to ease any hesitations participants may have about filling out the questionnaire. In terms of receiving the questionnaires back, directions would be included with the letter of invitation about returning the questionnaires via e-mail to the researcher. As a token of appreciation for participation in this study, upon receipt of the completed questionnaire and if the participant had indicated on the questionnaire that

they wished to be entered in the draw, the Office of the Department of Education would enter the participant's e-mail address in a draw for a \$40 gift certificate for Empire Cinemas, a \$25 gift certificate for Chapters, and a \$20 gift certificate for Tim Horton's. The participants who won gift certificates in the draw were notified by the Office of the Department of Education via email and arrangements were made to mail the gift certificate the participant via the Education Office.

### *Interpretation*

The questionnaire includes both Likert type scaled questions and open-ended questions. Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991) state that both types of questions can have some difficulty when interpreting the intended meaning of the subject. On the one hand, the open-ended responses will be difficult to interpret as a group. On the other hand, the Likert-type scale is easy to score, however the scale may be just as difficult to interpret as open-ended responses (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). Likert scales also tend to box people in and force them to answer the questions with the responses that are available to them (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). French (1998) states that "research has shown that when forced to make a commitment other than a neutral one; most people can make reliable decisions" (p. 3). However, it is possible that some respondents will be neutral in their response "in which case it could be argued that by not including a neutral point in a scale, the respondent is compelled to make a decision. Kline (cited by Eysenck, 1998) argues for a middle point, 'even though some participants will very often opt out by remaining indecisive'" (Page-Bucci, 2003). Dumas (cited by Page-Bucci, 2003) states 'that by eliminating a neutral level it is providing a better measure of the intensity of participants' attitudes or opinions'. This, in the case of the current study, may help reveal results since

the sample size is small. However, the author suggests that by forcing a participant to 'agree' or 'disagree' and not allowing a neutral response this could be a source of diminished reliability of the survey because the responses may not be true. Contrary to this idea, Kahn (cited by Page-Bucci, 2003) proposed that if participants are actually neutral then they would select 'agree' or 'disagree' in a random fashion and so this random choice should not affect the results of a study.

### *Ethical issues*

Confidentiality was a major consideration given the manner in which the questionnaire was distributed in this study. Every step necessary was taken to ensure the participants did not feel compromised in terms of anonymity (i.e. not requiring a name or other such identifier on the survey). The consent form used in this study clearly ensured that the participant was able to give informed consent. The consent form and the questionnaire were returned via email directly to the researcher.

### *Reliability and Validity*

As mentioned, a questionnaire from another study was used to develop the current instrument. However, some changes to the questionnaire were necessary particularly in the demographic section since the population sampled by French in 1998 and the current population are different. The researcher from which the questionnaire was drawn is Dr. French. She developed the questionnaire for her 1998 commissioned study for the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. In this study by Dr. French, as well as the current study, there was no reference to a pilot study for the questionnaire nor was there any confirmation as

to the validity or reliability of the questionnaire. As such, instrumentation was a possible threat to validity of the study.

There are limits to anonymity in this research by virtue of the nature of e-mail address names. It was explained to participants that questionnaires submitted via e-mail could not be treated anonymously—unless a participant deliberately chose to have his/her e-mail name/identity altered. However, all questionnaires submitted via e-mail were treated confidentially.

### *Data Analysis*

The data were be categorized into four independent variables: preservice teacher group (first year of study or second year of study); teachable subject areas (arts or science based subjects); grade level taught (junior high or senior high); and previous experience with IPPs (experience or no experience). Four dependent variables were considered (preparation, feasibility, relevance, and accountability) (Dobrose, 2000). The quantitative data were analyzed using the statistical analysis software program SPSS 14.0. The quantitative data are bolstered by some qualitative data which was transcribed and reviewed in order to discover recurrent patterns.

The dependent variables were coded from the questionnaire for analysis. In most cases descriptive statistics consisted of frequencies, percentages, and means. A Fisher's Exact test was then used to analyze the association between the independent variables (preservice teacher group, teachable subject area, grade level taught, and years experience) and the dependent variables (each question in the questionnaire). The Fisher's Exact test was used rather than the Chi-square test to calculate P-values because for

tables with small number of expected frequencies, the Chi-square statistic is not appropriate (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). An overall score for each variable: Relevance, Preparation, Feasible, Accountable and General Perception, was computed by adding the response over the appropriate questions for each variable. The overall score was then described as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation. Non-parametric methods (Mann-Whitney test and Kruskal-Wallis test) were used rather than parametric methods (two independent sample t-tests and one way ANOVA) to assess the differences in the mean score of each variable between the different levels of the independent variables because of the small sample size. An alpha level of .05 was used; any p-value smaller than or equal to alpha was declared as significant and further post hoc method of analysis would have been advisable to pinpoint any other areas of significance. Due to the small sample size however, this is not recommended.

### *Limitations*

There were a number of limitations to the current study. First, not all questionnaires were returned (N = 26). Therefore, it must be considered whether there was something unique to both those who completed and returned the questionnaire as well as those who did not. Those that returned the questionnaire might be more altruistic, more achievement oriented, more intelligent, or have negative perceptions of IPPs (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). Did these variables have an effect on that which was being measured by the current study? It is very difficult to know the answer to this question. However, efforts were made to reduce the affect of this limitation. Support of the

Director of Teacher Education at the University was sought. The Director agreed to send out a letter of support to participants in the study. As well, participants could participate in a draw if they so wished for gift certificates if they submitted completed survey. As well, it is important to note that a considerable amount of information was provided in preservice teachers' responses. Third, many participants did not include comments on the survey where they were invited to comment. Rosenthal & Rosnow (1991) state that subjects will often only share information they want to share. If the preservice teachers feel that they are expected to have a certain perspective of IPPs, the results may reflect this expectation rather than the true perspective of the subject. An effort was made to help control for this by including a statement in the instructions of the survey that explained that the results are confidential and are not examined by the students' professors. Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991) state that *yea-saying* is a potential bias in survey method data collection. Some subjects when filling out questionnaires will provide either a positive or negative answer for every question. It appears that the 1998 questionnaire, from which the current survey has been derived, had attempted to control for this bias by varying the direction of the statements. For example, wording questions so that some would generally receive a no (or more negative response) and some questions that require a yes (or a more positive response) (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). The surveys received have a good variety of response within and among. Lastly, only one university was used in the study. This could be a potential limitation because it is possible that perceptions of the Individual Program Plan process are different at various universities. However, since this is a census survey of secondary Bachelor of Education students, this study should be representative of this population at this particular university. The results of this study

would not generalize outside of the actual population from which the participants have been drawn unless the context of this study appears similar to that of the readers’.

The secondary Bachelor of Education program available at this university require that two half unit courses in the area of inclusive education and exceptionalities. The following course is required EDUC 5354 (half unit) *Inclusive Classrooms for Learners with Exceptionalities in the Secondary School* – this course provides the student with a critical and pragmatic examination through case studies of programming, methods, techniques, strategies, materials, issues, and resources pertaining to the education of youth with exceptionalities in the regular secondary classroom. The course is designed to familiarize the beginning teacher with approaches to enabling learners with exceptionalities to be included in the regular secondary school classroom. Also required is, EDUC 5353 (half unit) *Development and Exceptionality* – this course provides a critical review of development across the lifespan with a focus on adolescence and youth with exceptionalities. Students will examine and analyze various theories and research on aspects of normal and atypical growth dealing with cognitive, social and affective development, and implications for the teaching/learning process. The focus will be on adolescent development of youth and youth with various exceptionalities such as learning disabilities, specific developmental delays, emotional difficulties and those who are gifted and talented. Another course is in the area of exceptionality is EDUC 5501 *Special Topics in Education: Psychological Perspectives*. This course is offered to students as an elective course in their second year of study. The course is designed to provide an opportunity for students to expand and update their knowledge in specific areas of interest and concern in the area of students with exceptionalities. The overall framework



of the course relates to supporting diverse learners in an inclusive environment. Some topics of study may include: differentiated instruction, program planning, the role of the paraprofessional, and programming for students with specific exceptionalities such as learning disabilities, and so forth.

## CHAPTER III RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present and summarize the findings from the questionnaire utilized in the current study regarding preservice teachers' perceptions of Individual Program Plan (IPP) process. The following quantitative data will be reviewed: participants, demographic information, and Likert-type scaled responses. The Likert-type scaled responses and qualitative data will also be reviewed by theme as it relates to the four main influences (accountability, feasibility, preparedness, and relevance) of preservice teachers' perceptions of IPPs. The preservice teachers' general perceptions of the IPP process will also be reviewed.

### *Participants*

Of the 143 preservice teachers surveyed, 26 (18.2%) responded to the invitation to participate. It is difficult to conclude if all 143 preservice teachers were actually invited to participate because the survey was distributed via email. There is a good chance that many students did not maintain current email accounts with the university. Therefore when the survey was sent out to all preservice teachers registered in the Bachelor of Education program it may be that not all of the 143 preservice teachers received the email.

### *Demographic Information*

The first part of the questionnaire included demographic information about the participants. Twenty-two (84.6%) of the 26 questionnaires were completed by females and 4 (15.4%) by males. Participants ranged in age from a minimum of 22 to a maximum

of 45 with a Mean age of 27.12. Two participants (7.7%) chose not to share their age as it was an optional question (see figure 1. Appendix H).

Fifteen (57.7%) of the 26 questionnaires were completed by first year students and eleven (42.3%) by second year students. Twenty-four (92.3%) preservice teachers indicated that they hoped to gain a teaching position as a classroom teacher. One (3.8%) participant indicated that they hoped to gain a teaching position as a Specialist teacher (specifically indicating French teacher). One (3.8%) participant indicated that they hoped to gain a teaching position as a Classroom teacher and/or Learning Centre teacher. Participants indicated the following subjects areas as courses which they would be considered qualified to teach:

Table 1.

*Percentage of participants indicating particular subject areas as teachable*

<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Math	15.4%
Social Studies	38.5%
French	11.5%
English	57.7%
Business	7.7%
Science	15.4%
Visual Art	11.5%
Commerce	3.8%
Geography	7.7%
Biology	3.8%
Sociology	3.8%
History	15.4%

Participants reported on courses that they taught during their practicum experience. Preservice teachers' reported teaching many courses at various grade levels and some of the courses did not always match the participant's teachables. Three (11.5% Total) of 11 second year participants took the course EDUC 5501 Special Topics in Education: Psychological Perspectives (as detailed above).

During the practicum experience preservice teachers on average taught 28.2 students per class (minimum=20, maximum=35). Eight (30.8%) participants taught Junior High (grades 7, 8, 9), 10 participants (38.5%) taught Senior High (grades 10, 11, 12), and 8 (30.8%) participants taught both Junior and Senior High. Fifteen (57.7%) participants did not have an opportunity to develop or review an IPP during their practicum experience while eleven (42.3%) did have the opportunity to develop or review an IPP during the practicum.

Table 2.

*Demographic Information on Participants*

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Response Format</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender:</b>	Male	15.4%
	Female	84.6%
<b>Year of study:</b>	First year	57.7%
	Second year	42.3%
<b>Type of teaching position hope to gain:</b>	Classroom	92.3%
	Specialist	3.8%
	Classroom & Resource / Learning Centre	3.8%
<b>Took EDUC 5501.01 Psychological Perspectives (applicable for second year students only)</b>	Yes	72.7%
	No	27.3%
<b>Grade level(s) taught in practicum:</b>	Junior High (7, 8, 9)	30.8%
	Senior High (10, 11, 12)	38.5%
	Both	30.8%
<b>Developed or reviewed an IPP during practicum:</b>	Yes	42.3%
	No	57.7%

The percentage of participants indicating the aspects of the IPP process they feel they will be responsible for when they do become employed as a teacher is indicated below in Table3. The majority of participants responded in a positive manner with 19 (73.1%) participants or more indicating that they felt it was within their responsibility to be a part of various aspects of the IPP process. Only three (11.5%) participants felt that they would be involved in the IPP process as an IPP coordinator. This would stand to reason considering the participants have not yet entered the workforce.

Table 3.

*Percentage of participants indicating the aspects of the IPP process they feel they will be responsible for when they do become employed as a teacher*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Identifying students with special needs	88.8%
Participating in a school planning team	92.3%
Providing classroom teacher information for the IPP	73.1%
Development of the IPP on an ongoing basis	88.5%
Implementing the IPP	100 %
Reviewing and evaluating the IPP	88.5%
IPP coordinator in your school	11.5%

#### *Likert-type Scaled Questions*

The second part of the questionnaire contained Likert-type scaled questions where teachers were asked to check boxes for the following categories: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree regarding statements provided. Responses were collapsed to Agree (Agree, Strongly Agree) and Disagree (Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Statements and percentages of agreement are shown in following tables 4 to 8. The results have been grouped according to the research questions.

#### *Qualitative Responses*

The final part of the questionnaire contained open ended questions where teachers were asked about their general perceptions of the IPP process as well as, if they felt prepared to engage in the IPP process, and if they felt that the IPP feasible and relevant to them as a teacher, and if they felt accountable to the child on an IPP and to the IPP

process. The answers were recorded separately from the questionnaire and categorized to determine if any relevant themes emerged. The remainder of the results will be presented by the four main influences as well as general perceptions of the IPP process. Both quantitative and qualitative results will be reviewed for each influence (preparedness, feasibility, relevance, and accountability).

### *Preparedness*

In regards to participant response to statements that reflect preparation, 9 (34.6%) participants agreed that they feel prepared to participate in the IPP process. These results are shown in Table 5. Only 3 (11.5%) participants agreed that the coursework they have completed has prepared them to engage in the IPP process as a participant. Conversely, 19 (86.4%) participants agreed that IPP meetings can be stressful. A majority, 19 (86.4%) participants agreed that professional development sessions are needed on planning and implementing IPPs. Similar numbers of participants agreed that they were familiar with the Special Education Policy Manual (12 participants, 46.2%) and the policies and regulations in the **Nova Scotia Education Act 1995 – 1996 (Bill 39)** (11 participants, 42.3%).

Table 4.

*Percentage of participants Agreeing with the Following Statements regarding Preparation*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Percentage Agree / Strongly Agree</b>
2. I feel prepared to participate in the IPP process.	34.6%
8. I feel that the coursework I have completed has prepared me to engage in the IPP process as a participant.	11.5%
14. IPP meetings can be stressful.	86.4%
15. Professional development sessions are needed on planning and implementing IPPs.	96%
18. I am familiar with the Special Education Policy Manual.	46.2%
26. I am familiar with the policies and regulations in the <b>Nova Scotia Education Act 1995 – 1996 (Bill 39)</b> .	42.3%

**11. During your practicum did you feel prepared to participate in the IPP process?**

Preservice teachers provided comments that showed that the majority of participants felt they were not prepared to participate in the IPP process. Comments such as, “Not at all. My cooperating teacher mentioned that students were IPP, but never went into specifics about what each student needed. I never saw an IPP plan written down, and got the impression this would be an inconvenience for my co-operating teacher.”; and “I did not feel prepared but it went ok,” reflected the perspective of many preservice teachers. On the one hand, one participant mentioned that he/she did not feel prepared but during his/her practicum he/she “discovered that much of the implementation is common sense, adapting material is something I found to be creative and imaginative - I enjoy it.” On the other hand, another participant mentioned that he/she was looking forward to learning about the IPP process but was disappointed he/she missed out on the opportunity to develop course adaptations for students who were on IPPs”. Comments from participants reflect the vast range of experiences students can expect to encounter during



the practicum including a comment that the participants' perspectives on IPP process differed from those of the cooperative teacher. Two participants commented throughout the survey that they were the "student teacher, WAS NOT INVOLVED" and one participant even commented "Student teachers, especially in the first year aren't allowed". Some participants acknowledged that while they may not have felt prepared entering the practicum, they did feel that they came away from the practicum with enough experience to engage in the IPP process.

### *Feasibility*

Generally, participants responded positively to statements regarding the feasibility of the IPP process. The results are shown below in table 5. Twenty-three participants (92%) agreed that IPP meetings are time consuming but relevant. While only eight participants (30.8%) agreed that the support personnel, resources, and funding needed to implement the IPP are available. All participants (100%) agreed that workload demands are already great without IPPs but all participants (100%) also agreed that student gains are worth the time and effort involved in developing an IPP. Nineteen participants (86.4%) agreed that IPP meetings can be stressful. While 20 (76.9%) participants agreed that the time and effort involved in the IPP process affect the emotional and intellectual energy teachers have available for other students in their class.

Table 5.

*Percentage of participants Agreeing with the Following Statements regarding Feasibility*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Percentage Agree / Strongly Agree</b>
4. IPP meetings are time consuming but relevant.	92%
6. The support personnel, resources, and funding needed to implement the IPP are available.	30.8%
7. Workload demands are already great without IPPs.	100%
13. Student gains are worth the time and effort involved in developing an IPP.	100%
14. IPP meetings can be stressful.	86.4%
16. The time and effort involved in the IPP process affect the emotional and intellectual energy teachers have available for other students in their class.	76.9%

**12. Did you feel that you and your fellow teachers had the necessary support to engage in the IPP process?**

The comments participants provided regarding the feasibility of the IPP process were quite varied. While some participants reported perceptions on the negative end of the spectrum with comments such as, “Not by a long shot”; and “Not completely”, another participant commented “My experience is limited to two very well staffed high schools that have many resources and handle the IPP process very successfully”. Other participants commented that feasibility was dependent on the particular situation. For example one participant reported that, “Most of the time for the co-operative students yes, but for the more difficult students sometimes yes, sometimes no”. One preservice teacher stated that he/she did not have any students who were on an IPP in the classes that he/she taught. Another preservice teacher recounted his/her positive experience with receiving support but stated that input from others than just the classroom teacher and

resource teachers would have been better. Specifically, the participant stated that, “It was nice that my cooperating teacher was relieved of her normal teaching responsibilities for a few days to develop the IPPs, but I think that there could have been more people giving input into the process than simply the classroom and resource teachers”.

### *Relevance*

Overall, participant response to the statements regarding the relevance of the IPP process was positive. The results are shown below in table 6. Twenty-six (100%) participants agreed that Individual Program Plans (IPPs) are needed for some students. Most participants, 23 (92%), acknowledged that while IPPs are time consuming they are relevant. Ten (41.7%) participants agreed to the statement that too many IPPs are developed. A majority of participants, 25 (96.2%), agreed with the statement ‘I feel it is important to engage in the IPP process as the teacher of a student who is on an IPP’. Similar results are shown for the conversely worded statement, ‘since I may only teach a single subject to a child who is on an IPP it will be impossible for me to be involved in the IPP process of every student that I teach who has an IPP’, only 6 (24%) participants agreed with this statement. And as was reported for the other main influences, 19 (86.4%) participants agree with the statement, ‘IPP meetings can be stressful’.

Table 6.

*Percentage of participants Agreeing with the Following Statements regarding Relevance*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Percentage Agree / Strongly Agree</b>
1. Individual Program Plans (IPP) are needed for some students.	100%
3. Too many IPPs are developed.	41.7%
4. IPP meetings are time consuming but relevant.	92%
9. Since I may only teach a single subject to a child who is on an IPP it will be impossible for me to be involved in the IPP process of every student that I teach who has an IPP.	24%
14. IPP meetings can be stressful.	86.4%
19. I feel it is important to engage in the IPP process as the teacher of a student who is on an IPP.	96.2%

**13. Did you feel that engaging in the IPP process was relevant to you as a teacher?**

Many preservice teachers commented that they felt the IPP process was not relevant to them now as a preservice teacher but would be in the future. Comments that reflect this perception include, “I don't feel as though I was able to engage in the process. I do think that this could be meaningful in the future”; “Would have been had I been more informed”; and “It definitely would have if I had been involved”. One participant responded in a very positive manner to this question regarding relevance. Here is his/her response, “Absolutely, we have to dispense with the notion that every student walking into a classroom is going to have the same capabilities, or the same requirements. A one-lesson plan-fits-all idea is ridiculous.” Another participant noted that the IPP process was relevant to them as a teacher because it supported ‘flexible goal setting’ which in turn aided the teacher by quelling frustration levels with academic process. Two other participants reported negative experience with in regards to the IPP process being

relevant to them as teachers. In both cases this experience seems to be due to the participants' particular experience in his/her practicum placement. Specifically they state, "Yes. It becomes political when your co-operating teacher hinders you participation in the IPP's of your students. You want to find out how to help, and you also don't want to ruffle their feathers. If a Co-operating teacher isn't engaged, how can a student teacher be?" and "No, I felt that IPPs were inadequately integrated with the themes of the course; other students did not share IPP students insights". While one participant presumes that they have not engaged in the IPP process because they have only implemented an IPP during his/her practicum. The participant commented "I did not engage in the IPP process, simply implemented the IPP during my practicum".

#### *Accountability*

Participant response to the statements regarding accountability to the IPP process was mostly positive; however, there was some variability in participant response. Twenty-six (100%) participants agreed that teachers should be actively involved in the IPP process. A majority of participants, 23 (88.5%), agree that accountability for implementing an IPP can cause extra stress. Similarly, 19 (86.4%) participants agree that IPP meetings can be stressful. The following statements drew a moderate level of agreement from participants: 'IPPs should be developed by specialist and resource teachers'; and 'I feel legally mandated to provide or have available everything stated on the IPP' with 64% and 69.6% of participants agreeing respectively.

Table 7.

*Percentage of participants Agreeing with the Following Statements regarding Accountability*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Percentage Agree / Strongly Agree</b>
5. Teachers should be actively involved in the IPP process.	100%
10. IPPs should be developed by specialist and resource teachers.	64%
11. Accountability for implementing an IPP can cause extra stress.	88.5%
14. IPP meetings can be stressful.	86.4%
17. I feel legally mandated to provide or have available everything stated on the IPP.	69.6%

**14. Did you feel accountable to the child on the IPP and to the IPP process?**

The majority of comments provided by preservice teachers indicated that they felt ‘somewhat’ accountable but really felt it was the cooperating teacher that was accountable. Some of the comments that reflect this opinion include the following: “Somewhat (as a student teacher)”; “Yes, although not formally, as the resource system overall seemed overloaded to the point where implementation tracking would have been prohibitively time consuming”; “Not really as the student teacher, but as a teacher, I would feel accountable for implementing and following the IPP”; and “Somewhat, I knew the cooperating teacher and the resource teacher would be looking at my work, which they did and completely changed”. There was one participant who provided what could be considered to be negative comments in regards to accountability. It may also be that this response is spoiled because the question may have been misunderstood or the response

was mixed up in the process of responding. Another participant who included a comment in response to this question appears to not consider the actual question, but also seems to provide valuable feedback in regards to the IPP process in general. The participant commented, “I was not satisfied with the level of inclusion of all IPP students—even while I recognized that significant learning took place”.

### *General Perceptions*

Overall, participants’ general perceptions about the IPP process were positive with the exception of statements regarding the clarity of roles and responsibilities in the IPP process and administrator’s role in the IPP process. The percentage of preservice teachers’, who agreed that assessment reports are helpful in developing an IPP, was 100% (all 26 participants). These results are shown below in table 8. A high number of participants, 24 (92.3%) also agreed that the IPP addresses the identified needs of the student. While only 8 (34.8%) participants agreed that the principal / vice-principal at their practicum site assumes a leadership role in the IPP process. Further, in regard to roles and responsibilities of participants in the IPP process only 7 (28%) participants agreed that the roles and responsibilities are clear. The majority of preservice teachers’ 18 (81.8%) agreed that participants in the IPP process interact and share information at IPP meetings. With regard to parent participation 12 (57.1%) agreed that parents participate in the process rather than just sign the form. Finally, a majority of participants 21 (95.5%) agreed that annual goals and the specific outcomes are usually realistic and relevant to the child’s learning needs.

Table 8.

*Percentage of participants Agreeing with the Following Statements regarding General Perceptions toward the IPP Process*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Percentage Agree / Strongly Agree</b>
12. Assessment reports are helpful in developing the IPP.	100%
20. The IPP addresses the identified needs of the student.	92.3%
21. The principal / vice-principal at my practicum site assumes a leadership role in the IPP process.	34.8%
22. The roles and responsibilities of participants in the IPP process are clear.	28%
23. Participants interact and share information at IPP meetings.	81.8%
24. Parents participate rather than just sign the IPP form.	57.1%
25. The annual goals and the specific outcomes are usually realistic and relevant to the child’s learning needs.	95.5%

**Question 10: Comment on implementing the IPP (difficulties, expectations, ease, etc.)**

Generally, preservice teachers provided comments that expressed the perspective that the IPP process can be a difficult but necessary. For example, comments expressing this perspective include: “It can be challenging to implement an IPP and to find the time to address the individual needs of particular students. Though it can be challenging, it is a component of the job and teachers should therefore do what is in their power and reach to help the student”; and “It was time consuming, but worthwhile to enable the IPP students to remain focused,” reflected the perspective of many preservice teachers.

Only two participants expressed a negative view of the IPP process. Commenting that “In my experience, the IPPs were not generally implemented well at all; it seemed more of a token process, and these students often were left under-challenged and



unstimulated”; and “In my case I found it frustrating to have the students in my class because they were not getting much benefit from being in the classroom but would have benefited infinitely more by covering the adapted topics one-on-one.” Several participants commented that inexperience compounded the difficulties they experienced with the IPP process. For example participants commented, “Competing demands; can be stressful especially if you’re inexperienced”; and “I found it difficult because I had no idea how to adapt my lessons to the vastly different learning ability of the students I had in my class - mostly because I had no experience doing this”. Two participants commented that they felt very uncertain as to the IPP process. Commenting that “Haven't even SEEN an IPP.” And “I am very unsure as I have had very limited experience with them”.

Secondary preservice teachers noted concerns regarding the number of students on an IPP in one class. It was stated that they felt very comfortable implementing an IPP for a student however, when there were ‘more than five students on IPPs in the same class’ the implementation became much more difficult. At the same time they did feel that it was a necessary process that was ‘valuable’ for the student and therefore allowed the teacher to achieve more success with the student. One participant noted that, “Teachers need more examples of what works”. While another participant noted that it was “easiest to adapt the assignment for the entire class. Specific adaptations, particularly those involving new software, were more time consuming and tricky to implement”.

### *Quantitative and Qualitative Responses to Questions 1 to 9 Regarding IPP Process*

Questions 1 to 9 contain a mixture of quantitative and qualitative type responses. The following is a review of the data gleaned from these questions. Sixteen (61.5%) of 25 participants reported that they participated in course work or professional development session on IPPs. Only 5 (19.2%) of 26 participants reported being involved in the *development* of an IPP. Of the participants who reported developing an IPP 66.7% felt that the IPP was warranted. In question 2.c. participants were asked who makes the final decision regarding the need for an IPP. One (5.9%) participant answered that ‘resource staff, parents, and administration’ would make the final decision regarding the need for an IPP. Seven (41.2%) participants reported that they felt the ‘resource teacher’ would make the final decision regarding the need for an IPP. Two (11.8%) participants reported that they felt ‘administration’ would make the final decision regarding the need for an IPP. While five (29.4%) participants reported that they ‘didn’t know’ who made the final decision regarding the need for an IPP. Nine (34.6%) participants did not respond to this question. Generally, secondary preservice teachers were unsure of who would make the final decision regarding the need for an IPP. One participant commented, “Not sure. It should be parents, students and teachers”. And another participant commented “It seems as though (at the school I was at anyway) that everyone is trying to pass on the workload, and no one is completely sure who is truly responsible for the development of the IPP.”

Twelve (92.3%) of the 13 participants who responded to question 3.a. “If you have been involved in developing or reviewing and updating an IPP, was the IPP process generally meaningful?”, felt the process was meaningful. While the majority of preservice secondary teachers responded in a positive way feeling that the IPP process

was meaningful, in many cases comments in addition to the yes/no response did not echo this response. One participant did respond with a positive comment “It is important to develop a meaningful IPP specifically designed for individual students. This work is extremely meaningful.” While another participant responded, “It was a good experience for ME, but I think not meaningful for the student”. Yet still other participants continued to echo the response of not feeling prepared, “I was asked to make the IPP for two students. I had attended the meetings, however, based only on that I could not be completely sure what my role would be exactly. I know the basic idea of an IPP, but we have not received any instruction on how to make one or what to consider when making an IPP”.

Preservice secondary teachers were asked to comment on the time involved in developing an IPP. Some participants answered that time spent was not enough, “When I participated, it was mostly in an observational sense, and I don’t think it was done well at all; it was rushed, taking only about 15-20 minutes for each student. That was not even close to sufficient in my opinion. While another participant commented that it was time-consuming, “Though the process can be time-consuming, it is imperative to remember that the education of the child comes first in the classroom. If a child’s educational experience can be improved through time commitment of teachers and educational professionals, all the time is worthwhile and beneficial”. Participants were further asked if they ‘were comfortable with their level of participation in the IPP process’ eight (88.9%) of nine participants who responded answered yes they were comfortable.

Questions 4 to 6 were open ended questions that asked preservice secondary teachers to comment on the role of various participants (administration, cooperating

teacher, and the parent and/or student) in the IPP process. A majority of preservice secondary teachers responded to the question “What was the principal’s / vice-principal’s role in the IPP process?” by indicating that they were either unsure of the administrator’s role in the IPP process or that the administrator was not involved. For example participants made comments such as, “I am not sure”; “This was not obvious”; “They did not participate”; and “None”. There were some participants who responded in a positive way, stating, “He attended the meetings and was knowledgeable about all the students and their specific alterations”; “Supervisory / reassure the parent”; “...The vice principal was in attendance at meetings and added/subtracted information from the IPP draft as it was discussed between guidance, parents, and teachers”; and “As a contributor to a lesser extent than the teacher(s) and special ed personnel”.

Preservice secondary teachers were asked “What was the role of your cooperating teacher in the IPP process”? In general, participants responded in a positive way to this question and most were aware of his/her cooperating teacher’s role in the IPP process. In general, most participants’ shared positive comments regarding the role of his/her cooperating teacher in the IPP process. For example some participants shared the following comments, “My cooperating teacher was responsible for meeting with the resource teachers to discuss how well the students were functioning in her particular class. She discussed with the resource teachers any adaptations that she was already implementing on a formal basis. Once they established as a group which students should be on IPPs, my cooperating teacher was responsible for developing the actual IPP and implementing it. Because there quite a few students she had to plan for, she was given by her administration a few professional development days in order to develop the IPPs.”;

“Leader / facilitator”; and “They worked with the resource teacher to make recommendations on how to implement strategies to help the student on the IPP”. While one participant commented that he/she felt that the cooperating teacher did “As little as possible. She would quickly write something, usually very similar to the last one, then he/she would implement in his/her own way”.

Preservice secondary teachers were also asked to ‘comment on the role of the parent and, if they participated, the student’. A majority of participants responded to this question in a positive way. However, in all comments shared no participants stated that students were involved or had an active role in the IPP process. Some comments participants shared were “The student was not present, the parents were very involved and proactive”; “Enlightened staff regarding some of the medical conditions of the student or techniques that have proven to work for them.”; and “The parent would come to the meeting, and offer any input to ensure we had developed the best program for their child. The student knew what was expected of them, and worked to meet their individual goals.” There were two participants who provided comments that indicated that they were unsure of the role of the parent, stating “I am not sure” and “None apparent”. Two participants commented on the role of the parent indicating that parents were not attending the IPP meetings. It was not clear from one of the comments if the parents did not show up or if they were not invited. The comments included were “As far as I know, the parents were not attending the IPP meetings”; and “The two IPPs that I was involved in, the parents did not show up to the meetings”.

Participants were asked in question #7, “were there other professionals involved in the IPP process?” 13 (86.7%) of the 15 participants who responded reported that ‘yes, other professionals were involved’.

Table 9.

*Percentage of Participants Indicating Yes or No on Questions 1 to 8*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Response Format</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Have you participated in course work or professional development session on IPPs?	Yes / No	61.5% Yes 34.5% No
2.a. Have you been involved in the development of an IPP?	Yes / No	19.2% Yes 80.8% No
2.b. If yes, did you feel that the IPP was warranted?	Yes / No	66.7% Yes 16.7% No
3. a Was the IPP process meaningful?	Yes / No	92.3% Yes 7.7% No
3. c. Were you comfortable with your level of participation?	Yes / No	88.9% Yes 11.1% No
7. Were there other professionals involved in the IPP process?	Yes / No	86.7% Yes 13.3% No

Participants were asked to specify, if other professionals were involved, who were involved. Eight (30.8%) participants indicated resource teachers; one (3.8%) participant indicated itinerant teachers; two (7.7%) participants indicated classroom teachers; one (3.8%) participant indicated a social worker; two participants (7.7%) indicated Learning Centre teachers or Special Education teachers; two participants (7.7%) indicated APSEA (Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority) itinerant teachers; three (11.5%) participants indicated Guidance Counsellors; one (3.8%) participant indicated a School Psychologist; one (3.8%) participant indicated that they ‘did not know’; three (11.5%)

participants did not respond; and nine (34.6%) participants indicated that they felt that the question was ‘not applicable’. In some cases, participants indicated more than one professional who was involved in the IPP process.

Table 10.

*Percentage of participants indicating other professionals as being involved in the IPP process*

<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Resource teacher	8	30.8%
Itinerant teacher	1	3.8%
Classroom teacher	2	7.7%
Social Worker	1	3.8%
Learning Centre / Special Education teacher	2	7.7%
APSEA	1	3.8%
Guidance Counsellor	3	11.5%
School Psychologist	1	3.8%
Do not know	1	3.8%
No Response	3	11.5%
Not Applicable	9	34.6%

Participants were asked if supports, both in regards to material and personnel, were available to implement the IPP. This aspect of IPP process has been indicated in much of the research as barrier to inclusion (Dobrose, 2000; French, 1998; Morgan & Rhode, 1983; Morrisey & Safer, 1977; Rheams, 1989; Rinaldi, 1976; Smith, 1990). Eight (50%) participants out of 16 who responded to question 8 agreed that material supports

were available to implement the IPP. While 11 (68.8%) participants out of 16 participants who responded to question 8 agreed that personnel supports were available to implement the IPP.

Table 11.

*Percentage of Participants Indicating Yes or No on Question 8*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Response Format</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
8. (part I) Were the needed supports in terms of material available to implement the IPP?	Yes / No	50% Yes 50% No
8. (part II) Were the needed supports in terms of personnel available to implement the IPP?	Yes / No	68.8% Yes 31.3% No

Participants were asked to “Check which of the following support personnel you think should be available”. Nineteen (73.1%) participants indicated social workers; 19 (73.1%) participants indicated psychologists; 14 (53.8%) participants indicated school nurses; 13 (50%) participants indicated physiotherapists; 15 (57.7%) participants indicated audiologists; 19 (73.1%) participants indicated counselors; 20 (76.9%) participants indicated Speech Language Pathologists; 25 (96.2%) participants indicated Resource teachers; 16 (61.5%) participants indicated Visual Specialists; 22 (84.6%) indicated Reading Specialists; 13 (50%) participants indicated Occupational Therapists; and 3 (11.5%) participants indicated additional personnel should be available to support the IPP process.



Table 12.

*Percentage of participants indicating which support personnel they think should be available*

<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Social Workers	73.1%
Psychologists	73.1%
School Nurses	53.8%
Physiotherapists	50%
Audiologists	57.7%
Counsellors	73.1%
Computer technologists (to adapt, demonstrate and develop appropriate software/computer programs)	88.5%
Speech Language Pathologists	76.9%
Resource teachers	96.2%
Visual Specialists	61.5%
Reading Specialists	84.6%
Occupational therapists	50%
Other(s)	88.5%

#### *Group Comparisons*

A number of group comparisons were analyzed for statistical significance using the Fisher's Exact test, as the data was non-parametric (data was either nominal or ordinal) and the sample size was small (N=26). The first comparison was based on, preservice teachers' year of study compared to: preparedness, feasibility, relevance, accountability, and general perceptions. This comparison was done to examine if there was a difference between how preservice teachers responded depending on whether or not they have completed their first or second year of study. The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted and the results were significant  $\chi^2 (2, N=26) = .045, p < .05$  for the

preparedness variable only. For preservice teachers who were in their second year of study they were more likely to agree with statements regarding preparation.

The next comparison was made between participants with experience developing and / or reviewing IPPs during their practicum and with participants with no experience developing and / or reviewing IPPs during their practicum. This group was compared to: preparedness, feasibility, relevance, accountability, and general perceptions. This comparison was done to examine if there was a difference between how preservice teachers responded depending on whether or not they have IPP experience. Mann-Whitney U test was conducted and the results were significant  $\chi^2 (2, N=26) = .045, p < .05$  for the preparedness variable only. For preservice teachers who had experience developing and / or reviewing IPPs during their practicum they were more likely to agree with statements regarding preparation.

The next comparison was made between participants who taught different grade levels (Junior High (7, 8, 9); Senior High (10, 11, 12); and both levels) during their practicum. This group was compared to: preparedness, feasibility, relevance, accountability, and general perceptions. This comparison was done to examine if there was a difference between how preservice teachers responded depending on whether or not they taught in Junior High, Senior High, or both. A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted and the results were not significant for any of the factors (preparedness, feasibility, relevance, accountability, and general perceptions).

The next comparison was made between participants who taught different subjects (Arts / Science) during their practicum. This group was compared to: preparedness, feasibility, relevance, accountability, and general perceptions. This

comparison was done to examine if there was a difference between how preservice teachers responded depending on whether or not they taught Arts oriented subjects or Science oriented subjects. A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted and the results were not statistically significant for any of the factors (preparedness, feasibility, relevance, accountability, and general perceptions).

#### *Comments regarding Coursework or Practicum*

Finally, students were asked if they had anything to add regarding their coursework or practicum as it relates to their perceptions of the IPP process. While this was not directly a part of my research question, this was an important question to ask participants since the sample surveyed are ‘preservice’ teachers. Since preparedness for the IPP process has been found to be significant in regards to preservice teachers’ perceptions, it is important to explore the participants’ thoughts and comments they have provided in regards to their coursework and practicum experience.

In general, when asked, “do you have anything to add regarding your coursework or practicum as it relates your perceptions of the IPP process?”, the vast majority of preservice teachers commented that they felt there was not enough time during coursework spent on the IPP process. Some participants mentioned the practicum as a valuable learning opportunity regarding the IPP process. Other participants commented that while they did receive some information on IPPs and the IPP process they did not feel any information regarding how to modify curriculum was imparted. Some participants suggested that further course work in the area of inclusive education be required of the program or perhaps ‘mandatory sessions’ on the topic. Generally,

preservice teachers felt that they were unprepared to engage in the IPP process when they enter the field of education. Included below are the full comments from the participants as this research felt that it was important the participants' voices be heard.

**15. Do you have anything to add regarding your coursework or practicum as it relates your perceptions of the IPP process?**

*I have not encountered any material in my courses that have increased my knowledge of what an IPP is nor how to make and implement one. I had no experience in my practicum either and therefore was unable to answer many of these questions. I feel that I have had to look up information regarding IPP's myself and would love to be able to gain further information from my courses next year and during my practicum.*

*Preservice teachers should not be expected to work with IPP children without having proper exposure to the process involved with these types of programs.*

*The theory portion of the Education program was absolutely useless as it relates to practical concerns like IPP. I learned more in my placement than I ever did in a university classroom and I wish the Mount would get with the program and shorten its program.*

*I feel that I didn't gain much information of the specifics of an IPP (or on what to expect from ipp meetings) from our course work, though we did receive a lot of vague or general information. I feel that some mock IPP meetings within a university setting might be*

*helpful in better understanding the process and our role in in as teachers (and as STUDENT teachers).*

*I do not believe that I have enough information on the IPP process to really comment on it. Although IPP's were introduced and discussed in a couple of our classes I do not feel that enough time was spent on discussing them and the process that is used to implement one. We were given a basic overview of IPP's but I do not recall ever being told about how to actually implement one.*

*With regards to coursework, I think that there needs to be a lot more time spent on familiarizing preservice teachers with IPP's and the IPP process. Personally, at this point I do not feel prepared to deal with IPP's when I begin my teaching career.*

*We need to see real life examples.*

*I wish we could have prepared an IPP to better prepare us for the teaching world!*

*I am still very nervous about the IPP process due to the very limited experience I have when them. I still have not seen the full process nor have I had the opportunity to see one completed. I hope my second practicum experience is a different one.*

*I feel it may be valuable to run mandatory sessions on the IPP process. I was fortunate to take the advanced special needs course this past year and therefore had some additional*

*exposure to IPPs and the writing process. However, any BEd student who was not enrolled in this course missed out on great information. Given that the IPP plays such a fundamental role in many of today's classrooms, more should be done throughout the BEd program to prepare teachers to successfully move through the IPP process.*

*Although we did cover briefly how an IPP is developed and what one looks like, I felt completely unprepared to modify a lesson to meet the different learning needs of my IPP students. Discussion at length of methods of lesson modification during my coursework would have helped me feel more prepared. I had to turn to a friend who teaches elementary school to assist me in figuring out what to do.*

*I feel that the amount of emphasis placed on an IPP in both the university and the classroom, there would be a much more extensive program to teach us how to create/ implement one. I feel unprepared to go into the classroom and teach next year, while being expected to know how to complete one.*

## CHAPTER IV DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) process. There were several research questions asked in this study: what perceptions do secondary preservice teachers attending a university in Nova Scotia have of the IPP process; do the participants' perceive that they are prepared for involvement in the IPP process; do participants perceive that they have the necessary support and time to engage in the IPP process; do participants perceive that engaging in the IPP process is relevant to them as a teacher; and do participants perceive that they are accountable for students on IPPs. There has been considerable research in the area of inclusion and to a lesser extent in the area of teachers' perceptions of the IPP process. The results from the current study will be discussed in light of previous findings. There have been a number of studies that recommend or propose the use of particular strategies or general practices that promote successful inclusion of all students within the school setting. Some of these practices and strategies will be discussed with reference to the literature. Finally, the Minister of Education called for a review of services for students with special needs in November of 2006. The results of the committee review were published in July 2007 and a number of recommendations were made. The recommendations will be reviewed as it pertains to the current study.

### *Main Findings*

In general, most of the preservice teachers responded in a positive manner, indicating that they felt it was within their responsibility to be a part of various aspects of the IPP process. A majority of preservice teachers responded positively to statements

regarding the feasibility of the IPP process. Preservice teachers agreed that while implementing an IPP can be time consuming, it is a worthwhile task for the benefit of the student. Overall, preservice teachers' response to the statements regarding the relevance of the IPP process was positive. However, it was found that a majority of preservice teachers reported feeling unprepared to participate in the IPP process. In regards to accountability to the IPP process preservice teachers' response to the statements regarding was mostly positive; however, there was some variability in participant response. A moderate number of preservice teachers felt that 'IPPs should be developed by specialist and resource teachers'. There was a significant difference between how preservice teachers responded to statements regarding preparation depending on whether or not they have completed their first or second year of study. There was also a significant difference between how preservice teachers responded to statements regarding preparation depending on whether or not they have IPP experience.

Teachers' perceptions have been a vital feature in the successful implementation of the IPP process, and inclusion in general. Therefore, it will be crucial for educational leaders and stakeholders to have a clear understanding of teachers' perceptions of IPPs and the factors that affect those perceptions. On the whole, the preservice teachers surveyed in the current study held positive perceptions of the IPP process. There were, however, a number of concerns indicated within the results of the study. Some of the concerns raised may be considered to be a reflection on preservice teachers' natural apprehension toward feeling prepared. However, the concerns may also be an accurate reflection of legitimate concerns. In any case, these concerns need to be addressed.



In general, most of the secondary preservice teachers responded in a positive manor, indicating that they felt it was within their responsibility to be a part of various aspects of the IPP process. Similar to the current findings French (1998) concluded that educators indicated a positive perspective regarding inclusion of students with exceptionalities. French also found that Elementary teachers and resource teachers held exceptionally positive perceptions regarding the IPP process (French, 1998). Secondary teachers were found to hold some of these perceptions; however the participants indicated,

more concerns than the other two groups elementary teaches and resource teachers. Some secondary teachers felt that the regular class may not be the best place for students with IPPs to have their needs met and that expertise was lacking to program for these students. Others stated that the IPP process was too demanding in terms of time, energy and commitment. They noted that standards were being eroded and many bright students were not receiving adequate attention” (French, 1998, p. 14).

It is difficult to surmise if these more negative results that French obtained in 1998, as compared to the current study, are due to the fact that a different population was surveyed, or if it has to do with the amount of time that has elapsed since the 1998 study by French.

In a study conducted by Dobrose (2000) it was found that teachers perceived the IPP process as effective and useful. The results showed that there was only a slight difference between special education and classroom teacher perceptions. Age was found to be significant in this study; it was found that younger teachers had more positive perceptions (Dobrose, 2000).

A majority of secondary preservice teachers responded positively to statements regarding the feasibility of the IPP process. In a study by Morgan and Rhode (1983) it was found that teachers perceived that excessive time demands and insufficient support from school personnel made engaging in the IPP process difficult. The current study found that secondary preservice teachers agreed that while implementing an IPP can be time consuming, it is a worthwhile task for the benefit of the student. In a 1989 study by Rheams, it was found that teachers had not changed their perceptions of the IPP process in the six years since Morgan and Rhode's (1983) study. The author found that teachers perceived IPP as time consuming and generally not useful. Dudley-Marling (1985) found that teachers did not use the IPP for daily planning and only reviewed the document annually or semi-annually. In contrast to Dudley-Marling (1985), Tarver (2006) found that teachers regarded the IPP process to be a useful way to organize and structure their teaching.

Overall, preservice teachers' response to the statements regarding the relevance of the IPP process was positive. However, Morgan and Rhode (1983) found that teachers did not feel the IPP process was relevant to them as a teacher. Teachers reported that they felt the IPP process as more of a clerical type task and that their teaching was just as effective without the use of an IPP.

It was found that a majority of preservice teachers reported feeling unprepared to participate in the IPP process. Tarver (2006) reported that teacher felt that more professional development on the IPP and the IPP process is necessary. In a study by Smith (2000) investigating secondary teachers' perceptions toward inclusion of students with severe disabilities a major finding was that teachers did not feel prepared to teach

students who are on IPPs. Tarver (2006) found that the need for training is a necessity to enable teachers to successfully embrace and use inclusion practices. Specifically, it will be helpful for teachers to receive training of different strategies to use with all different types of students with exceptionalities. Tarver also states that it is “essential that new teachers are provided the necessary preservice training and mentoring that would assist them in adapting their classrooms to a child with exceptionalities. A further link in the chain would be curriculum modification of our teacher-training programs at the university level” (p. 271).

In regards to accountability to the IPP process preservice teachers’ response to the statements regarding was mostly positive; however, there was some variability in participant response. A moderate number of preservice teachers felt that ‘IPP’s should be developed by specialist and resource teachers’; and ‘I feel legally mandated to provide or have available everything stated on the IPP’. In contrast to secondary preservice teachers’, lower than expected agreement with the statement ‘I feel legally mandated to provide or have available everything stated on the IPP’, Dudley-Marling (1985) found that teachers would write some form of an IPP even if it was not required by law. There was a significant difference between how preservice teachers responded to statements regarding preparation depending on whether or not they have completed their first or second year of study. There was also a significant difference between how preservice teachers responded to statements regarding preparation depending on whether or not they have IPP experience.

### *Implications and Recommendations*

The findings of the current study highlight the importance of preparing teachers to ensure they are aware of policies, sound practices, and have started to formulate a philosophy regarding inclusive education. Successful inclusive education can present as complex problem with no easy solutions and so it is only through research and thoughtful reflection on research and on practice, that strides can be made toward the pathway of successful inclusive education.

Based on the findings of the current study, five implications for preservice teacher education are: (1) preservice secondary teachers do not feel that the coursework they have completed has prepared them to engage in the IPP process; (2) preservice secondary teachers agreed that professional development sessions are needed on planning and implementing IPPs; (3) many preservice secondary teachers felt that too many IPPs are developed; (4) the roles and responsibilities of participants in the IPP process are not clear to preservice secondary teachers; and (5) less than half of preservice secondary teachers are familiar with the policies regulations of the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

The following recommendations for preservice secondary teacher training programs should be considered:

- (1) An examination of the existing coursework regarding inclusive education and teacher participation in the IPP process should be conducted. Consideration toward the following is recommended in light of the current findings: IPP process: what is it; who is involved; and in what capacity; what does current provincial legislation and policies state is required of the classroom teacher in

regard to the IPP process, as well as, to the student with exceptionalities. The Minister's Review Committee also recommends raising current teacher certification standard related to teaching students with exceptionalities (to a minimum of 12 credit hours / 4 half credits) so that a major emphasis is placed on issues, knowledge, skills, and attitudes around inclusive education and the instructional strategies required to meet the needs of the diverse learner. The participants in this study are currently required to take 6 credit hours and may take an optional nine credit hours in the area of inclusive education and teaching students with exceptionalities. During the public consultation phase of this review preservice preparedness was often noted as a concern. The participants in this study are currently required to take two half credits and may take an optional third half credit in the area of inclusive education and teaching students with exceptionalities.

- (2) As suggested by participants in the current study, perhaps 'mandatory sessions' may be an option to incorporate further information to preservice teachers outside of teacher training coursework. This may be an interesting way to get specific information regarding: the IPP process; IPP development; roles and responsibilities of the school program planning team; as well as, policy and legislation. These mandatory sessions may serve as a model to preservice teachers of what it is like to engage in and commit to professional development. Similarly, the Minister's Review Committee recommends professional development. The review committee found that school boards must provide opportunities for professional development so that teachers participate in at least ten hours of

professional development in the area of inclusive education out of the 100 hours teachers complete through their own professional development plan.

Preservice teachers need to be provided with specific information both in coursework and during the practicum component of the program regarding the following aspects:

- (3) Preservice secondary teachers need to be provided with specific information regarding the School Program Planning Team process and the criteria with which a team may arrive at the decision to develop an IPP for a student.
- (4) The roles and responsibilities of participants in the IPP process need to be clarified for preservice secondary teachers. It may be helpful for preservice secondary teachers to have members of community groups such as HACL (Halifax Association for Community Living) visit with their class.
- (5) Preservice secondary teachers need to become more familiar with the policies regulations of the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Preservice teachers could be given a personal copy of the policies while they are reviewing policy information during coursework.

There has been some discourse within the literature regarding preservice teacher preparation in particular with regard to teaching students with exceptionalities. Maheady and others (1993) propose the Reflective and Responsive Educator (RARE) model. The purpose of this model was to develop preservice teachers' knowledge and skills to work effectively with diverse learning groups. This program is based on a series of practicum experiences. In contrast to what is proposed in the RARE model, Hadadian & Chiang (2007) found that when preservice teachers had the opportunity to teach students with

disabilities it did not improve their perceptions of inclusion. However, results indicated that pre-service teachers will benefit from formal training and curriculum in educating exceptional students.

Finally, it would be interesting to examine preservice secondary teacher's perceptions of preparedness in general because, as mentioned previously, it is difficult to determine from the current study if the preservice teachers' reported negative feelings of preparedness is due to a natural propensity of preservice teachers to feel unprepared or if this is something unique to inclusive education and the IPP process. It will be important to know how preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of feeling prepared in the area of inclusive education are compared to the rest of their studies. A further extension to this study would be to compare secondary preservice teachers' perceptions to those of elementary preservice teachers' perceptions.

### *Conclusion*

In summary, "New teachers must be trained in research-validated practices as well as effective collaborative skills. Measuring the perceptions that preservice bring to the classroom about students with disabilities is a starting point for designing curricula that prepares them to provide effective instruction to students with disabilities in inclusive settings" (Shippen, et. al., 2005, p. 93).

The results of this study will be important to consider when developing curricula and learning experiences at the university where the study was based. Rademacher and others (1998) (cited by Jobling & Moni, 2004) found that new teachers are likely to develop negative perceptions if ill prepared for teaching students with exceptionalities. Perceptions, once formed, may be difficult to change even after positive experiences

(Rademacher et. al., 1998 cited by Jobling & Moni, 2004). If these statements are true then preservice teacher preparation in the area of teaching students with exceptionalities is critical. Preservice teachers must be prepared to teach children with exceptionalities when they leave the university to begin their teaching career.

Finally, teachers are presented with the challenge of providing quality education that meets the diverse needs of every student. Teachers may be so busy providing education to children in response to the needs and demands of individual schools, school boards, and / or the department of education. Consequently, the needs of the individual student must not be forgotten in the rush to meet the various other demands.



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## APPENDIX A: (Questionnaire)

## PRESERVICE SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IPP PROCESS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) process. Please complete this survey based on your experiences both at the university and in your practicum placement. Your input and opinions are very important. This survey should take approximately five to ten minutes complete. This survey will be returned to the researcher at [REDACTED] and the answers you record on this survey will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Please provide the following demographic information. Data will be used for statistical purposes only, and will not be used to identify participants. *Please do not place your name anywhere on this questionnaire.*

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION Please complete the following:

<b>Sex:</b> M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Age (optional):</b> _____ years old
<b>Year of study:</b> first year <input type="checkbox"/> second year <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Type of teaching position you hope to gain:</b> Classroom <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify subject if applicable _____ ) Resource / Learning Centre <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> please specify _____ Other <input type="checkbox"/> please specify _____
<b>Previous degree and teachables:</b>
<b>If you are a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student, did you take EDUC 5501.01 Psychological Perspectives?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Approximate number of students per class you taught in your practicum:</b> <b>Grade level(s) taught in your practicum:</b> <b>Subjects taught in your practicum:</b>
<b>Have you helped develop and / or review an IPP during your practicum?</b> <b>If so, how many?</b>

Indicate from the following any of the responsibilities that describe what you feel your involvement might be in the IPP process when you become employed as a teacher.

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Identify students with special needs  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Participating in a school program planning team                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Providing classroom teacher information for IPP                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Development of the IPP on an ongoing basis                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Implementing the IPP  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Reviewing and evaluating the IPP  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. IPP coordinator in your school<br>(contact person, gathering all resources) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**NOTE: ALL INFORMATION WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL. ONLY GROUP DATA WILL BE REPORTED.**

**DO YOU WISH TO BE ENTERED IN THE DRAW?**  Yes  No

Please note whether you *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree* with the following statements.

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
1. Individual Program Plans (IPP) are needed for some students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I feel prepared to participate in the IPP process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Too many IPPs are developed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. IPP meetings are time consuming but relevant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Teachers should be actively involved in the IPP process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The support personnel, resources, and funding needed to implement the IPP are available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Workload demands are already great without IPPs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I feel that the coursework I have completed has prepared me to engage in the IPP process as a participant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Since I may only teach a single subject to a child who is on an IPP it will be impossible for me to be involved in the IPP process of every student that I teach who has an IPP.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. IPPs should be developed by specialist and resource teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Accountability for implementing an IPP can cause extra stress.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Assessment reports are helpful in developing the IPP.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Student gains are worth the time and effort involved in developing an IPP.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. IPP meetings can be stressful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Professional development sessions are needed on planning and implementing IPPs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. The time and effort involved in the IPP process affect the emotional and intellectual energy teachers have available for other students in their class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I feel legally mandated to provide or have available everything stated on the IPP.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I am familiar with the Special Education Policy Manual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I feel it is important to engage in the IPP process as the teacher of a student who is on an IPP.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. The IPP addresses the identified needs of the student.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. The principal / vice-principal at my practicum site assumes a leadership role in the IPP process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. The roles and responsibilities of participants in the IPP process are clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Participants interact and share information at IPP meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Parents participate rather than just sign the IPP form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. The annual goals and the specific outcomes are usually realistic and relevant to the child's learning needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. I am familiar with the policies and regulations in the <b>Nova Scotia Education Act 1995 – 1996 (Bill 39)</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Remember to complete this survey based on your experiences both at the university and in your practicum placement.**

1. Have you participated in course work or professional development sessions on Individual Program Plans (IPPs)?  **Yes**  **No**
2. a. Have you been involved in the development of an IPP?  **Yes**  **No**  
b. If yes, did you feel that the IPP was warranted?  **Yes**  **No**  
c. Who makes the final decision regarding the need for an IPP? (specify position or title, not name)  **Yes**  **No** Comments:
3. a. If you have been involved in developing or reviewing and updating an IPP, was the IPP process generally meaningful?  **Yes**  **No** Comment:  
b. Comment on the time involved in developing the IPP.  
c. Were you comfortable with your level of participation?
4. What was the principal's / vice-principal's role in the IPP process?
5. What was the role of your cooperating teacher in the IPP process?
6. Comment on the role of the parent and, if they participated, the student.
7. Were there other professionals involved in the IPP process?  **Yes**  **No**  
If yes, who?
8. Were the needed supports available to implement the IPP? Material -  **Yes**  **No**  
Personnel -  **Yes**  **No**
9. Check which of the following support personnel you think should be available.  

<input type="checkbox"/> Social workers	<input type="checkbox"/> Computer technologist (to adapt, demonstrate and develop appropriate software/computer programs)
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychologists	<input type="checkbox"/> Speech language pathologists
<input type="checkbox"/> School nurses	<input type="checkbox"/> Resource teachers
<input type="checkbox"/> Physiotherapists	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual specialists
<input type="checkbox"/> Audiologists	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading specialists
<input type="checkbox"/> Counsellors	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupational therapists

  
 Other(s) (please specify)
10. Comment on implementing the IPP (difficulties, expectations, ease, etc.)
11. During your practicum did you feel prepared to participate in the IPP process?
12. Did you feel that you and your fellow teachers had the necessary support to engage in the IPP process?
13. Did you feel that engaging in the IPP process was relevant to you as a teacher?



14. Did you feel accountable to the child on the IPP and to the IPP process?
15. Do you have anything to add regarding your coursework or practicum as it relates your perceptions of the IPP process?

\* Return to researcher at [REDACTED] Thank you!

APPENDIX B: (Letter of Permission to Author of 1998 Questionnaire)

March 12, 2007

Dr. Carmel French  
Associate Professor, Child & Youth Study  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
Bedford Highway  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3M 2J6  
Canada  
(902) 457-6187

Dear Dr. French,

I am requesting written permission to revise and expand the 1998 instrument you developed for use in the study commissioned by Nova Scotia Teachers Union. The survey will be used to gather data about preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of the IPP process.

I am enclosing a copy of the survey. Some of the demographic information had to be revised due to the different populations that were used in each of the studies. At the conclusion of my research, if you wish, I will share with you the results and an interpretation of the research findings.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Collett, B.Sc., B.Ed.  
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student  
Mount Saint Vincent University

APPENDIX C: (Letter to the Director of Teacher Education)

Director of Teacher Education  
Mount Saint Vincent University

April 12, 2007

Dear Director of Teacher Education:

I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University completing a thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. This study is being conducted under the supervision of university faculty member, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins. My research has been approved by my thesis committee and the University Review Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. I plan to use a questionnaire delivered via email to explore preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) process. It is hoped that results can be used to aid educators by expanding on the existing knowledge base on teachers' perceptions of the IPP process; provide specific information about the particular population being studied; and with the information gleaned from this study indicate possible future directions for the training of secondary Bachelor of Education students regarding IPPs.

I am requesting permission to census survey all students (first and second year) in the secondary program. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. A letter of invitation to participate will be emailed out to all students in the secondary program. This letter will briefly describe the purpose of the study; instructions on how to return the questionnaire; and all of the information necessary for informed consent. Completion of the attached questionnaire indicates the students' consent to participate in the study. The anonymity of all participants will be assured and the fact that this survey is in no way associated with the B.Ed. program will be conveyed.

Results from the study will be mailed to you in October of 2007. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research or the questionnaire, please contact me at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (email). You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902)457-6595 (telephone) or [maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca](mailto:maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca) (email). I thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Collett  
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student  
Mount Saint Vincent University

APPENDIX D: (Letter from the Director of Teacher Education)



June 4, 2007

Dear Bachelor of Education Students, Secondary program:

Research is an important endeavour at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am writing to inform you that Elizabeth Collett, a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University, is completing her thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. This thesis study is being conducted under the supervision of university faculty member, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins. The research has been approved by the thesis committee and the University Review Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. She is seeking to explore preservice secondary teachers' perceptions of the Individual Program Plan process using an e-mail questionnaire. The researcher hopes that results can be used to aid educators by expanding on the existing knowledge base of preservice teachers' perceptions of the IPP process; and to help indicate possible future directions for preservice/classroom teacher involvement in the IPP process at the secondary level, as well as, university preparation regarding the IPP process.

I understand that the Office of the Department of Education will be e-mailing out an invitation to participate with the attached questionnaire shortly on behalf of the researcher. I am urging you to consider this researcher's invitation to participate. The study and specifically, issues of confidentiality and anonymity of participants is explained in the invitation to participate. Please be assured that this survey is in no way associated with the B.Ed. program. However, it has the potential to provide valuable information for our program.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research or the questionnaire, please contact the researcher, Elizabeth Collett at (██████████) (telephone) or ██████████ (email) or her thesis supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902)457-6595 (telephone) or maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca (email). You may also contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter at (902)457-6274 or robert.berard@msvu.ca.

Sincerely,

Robert N. Bérard, Ph.D.  
Director of Teacher Education  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3M 2J6  
Canada  
Tel.: (902) 457-6274  
Fax: (902) 457-6455

APPENDIX E: (Free and Informed Consent Form)



## Invitation to Participate

### *Preservice Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) Process / Researcher – Elizabeth Collett*

I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. As part of my Master of Arts in School Psychology program, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Mary Jane Harkins (Department of Education, MSVU) and Dr. Joseph Murphy (Dalhousie University). I am inviting you to participate in my study, *Preservice Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) Process*. Results of this study may aid educators by expanding on the existing knowledge base of teachers' perceptions of IPPs; provide specific information about the particular population being studied; and with the information gleaned from this study indicate possible future directions for teacher involvement in the IPP process at the secondary level, as well as, university preparation regarding the IPP process.

This study involves completing the attached questionnaire that assesses your views. The questionnaire should take approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete. This survey has been sent to you using 'blind copy' so that other participants cannot see who else is being asked to complete this questionnaire. Participants are asked to simply complete the attached questionnaire and return the completed questionnaire to [REDACTED] a Two email reminders will be sent out to survey participants before the survey end-date of June 29, 2007. A copy of the thesis will be available in the Curriculum Resource Centre at Mount Saint Vincent University soon after the defence and approval of the thesis.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may answer any, all, or none of the questionnaire items. There are no anticipated benefits of participating in this study and there are potential minimal risks of participating in this study.

As a token of my appreciation for your participation in this study, upon receipt of your completed questionnaire and if you have indicated on the questionnaire that you wish to be entered in the draw, the Office of the Department of Education will enter your e-mail address in a draw for a \$40 gift certificate for Empire Cinemas, a \$25 gift certificate for Chapters, and a \$20 gift certificate for Tim Horton's. You will be notified by the Office of the Department of Education via email if you win a gift certificate and arrangements will be made to mail the gift certificate to you via the Education Office.

Your answers will be completely confidential. However, there are limits to anonymity in this research by virtue of the nature of e-mail address names. Questionnaires submitted via e-mail cannot be treated anonymously and confidentially—unless a participant deliberately chooses to have his/her e-mail name/identity altered. I can assure you that only the researcher will receive the questionnaires back via e-mail. Upon receipt of the e-mail questionnaires the researcher will remove the e-mail address from each questionnaire. The e-mail addresses will be stored separately from the questionnaires for a period of approximately a week after the end-date of the survey so that the researcher can place all e-mail addresses of those participants who wish to be entered in the draw for the gift certificates. Upon completion of the draw all e-mail addresses of participants will be discarded and only raw data will remain. The supervisors involved in this study will have access to questionnaires once e-mail addresses have been removed. This is in no way related to your Bachelor of Education program at the university and responding, not responding, or how you respond will not affect how your academic performance and work is assessed / evaluated by the university.

At the completion of the study, all data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's office and retained for a minimum of five years in accordance with the Mount Saint Vincent University ethical procedures and guidelines.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact myself, Elizabeth Collett at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (email) or Dr. Harkins at 902-457-6595 (telephone) or [maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca](mailto:maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca) (email). This research activity has met the ethical standards of the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. If you have any questions or concerns about this study and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved with this study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board by phone at 902-457-6350 or by e-mail at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca).

**Completion of the attached questionnaire indicates your consent to participate in this study.**

---



APPENDIX F: (Sample Reminder)



Two weeks ago you received an e-mail message inviting you to participate in my study, *Preservice Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) Process*. [If you have filled out the questionnaire, thank you!](#)

If you have not had a chance to take the questionnaire yet, I would appreciate your reading the message below and completing the survey.

This message has gone to everyone in the selected population. Since no personal data is retained with the surveys for reasons of confidentiality, we are unable to identify whether or not you have already completed the survey.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Collett  
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student

---

*Preservice Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) Process / Researcher – Elizabeth Collett*

I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. As part of my master of arts in school psychology program, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Mary Jane Harkins (Department of Education, MSVU) and Dr. Joseph Murphy (Dalhousie University). I am inviting you to participate in my study, *Preservice Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of the Individual Program Plan (IPP) Process*. Results of this study may aid educators by expanding on the existing knowledge base of teachers' perceptions of IPPs; provide specific information about the particular population being studied; and with the information gleaned from this study indicate possible future directions for teacher involvement in the IPP process at the secondary level, as well as, university preparation regarding the IPP process.

This study involves completing the attached questionnaire that assesses your views on the IPP process. The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This survey has been sent to you using blind copy so that other participants cannot see who else is being asked to complete this questionnaire. Participants are asked to simply complete the attached questionnaire and save the completed questionnaire to the desktop of your computer. Click reply on the email you received then attach the completed questionnaire from desktop and click send. Discard questionnaire upon completion of the survey. Two email reminders will be sent out to survey participants before the survey

end-date of May 31, 2007. A copy of the thesis will be available in the Curriculum Resource Centre at Mount Saint Vincent University soon after the defence and approval of the thesis.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may answer any, all, or none of the questionnaire items. There are no known risks of participating in this study.

As a token of my appreciation for your participation in this study, upon receipt of your completed questionnaire, the Office of the Department of Education will enter your email address in a draw for a \$40 gift certificate Empire Cinemas, a \$25 gift certificate at Chapters, and a \$20 gift certificate at Tim Horton's. You will be notified by email if you win a gift certificate and arrangements will be made to deliver the gift certificate to you.

Your answers will be completely confidential. This is in no way related to your Bachelor of Education program. Combined data only will be reported. Neither the researcher nor the supervisors will be able to view the participants email addresses. A graduate student assistant will remove the email addresses and print off the surveys with no identifying features for analysis by the researcher. The email addresses of participants who choose to enter the prize draw will be stored separately from the survey and discarded after the contest winners have been identified. Only the researchers involved in this study will have access to questionnaires once identifying features have been removed. The questionnaires will be stored in a locked cabinet and shredded six months after completion of the study.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact myself, Elizabeth Collett at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (email) or Dr. Harkins at 902-457-6595 (telephone) or [maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca](mailto:maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca) (email). This research activity has met the ethical standards of the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. If you have any questions or concerns about this study and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved with this study, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board, by phone at 902-457-6350 or by e-mail at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca).

**Completion of the attached questionnaire indicates your consent to participate in the study.**

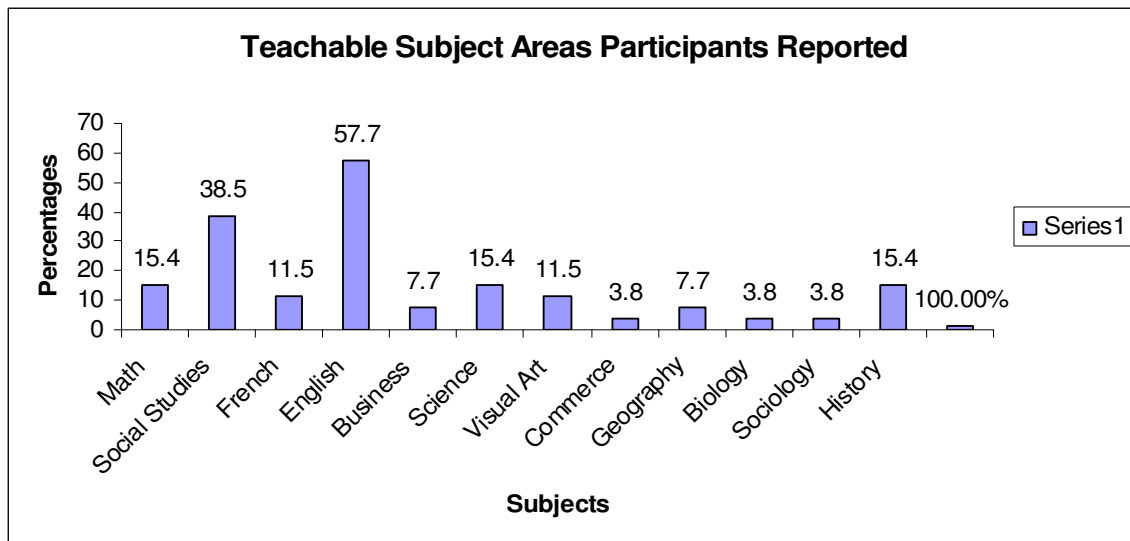
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APPENDIX G: (Figures and Tables)

Figure 1.



Figure 2.



APPENDIX G: (Figures and Tables) (continued)

Figure 3.

