British Columbia Institutions Teacher Curricula and the Ministry of Education Teachers Act Standards

by

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We accept the thesis as conforming to the required standard

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Abstract

British Columbia’s Ministry of Education has established fundamental policy standards for teacher practice. These standards ensure the safety and well-being of school children and youth. My study explores the lived realities of novice and experienced teachers focusing on the quantity and quality of their university training and their preparedness to implement standards.

Participants’ stories reveal vast differences in teacher training institutions curricula, practicums, and overall quality of education. However, there is one similarity; there is a general lack of training in relation to bullying, classroom management, and teaching strategies. Interestingly, teachers have been requesting training in these areas for decades. I contend that there is a gap between ministry policy and teacher training institutions’ curriculum development. Thus, teachers graduate without the necessary skills to implement the government’s teaching standards, especially in relation to student safety in school. I present practical recommendations for teacher training curriculum development, and I emphasize the importance of a mentorship program for novice teachers to ensure best practice and job satisfaction.
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Glossary

AC – Action Curriculum
BC – British Columbia
BEd – Bachelor of Education
ESL – English Second Language
LCT – Learning Centre Teacher
METAS – Ministry of Education Teacher’s Act Standards
MOE – Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Education
PDP – Professional Development Program
SFU – Simon Fraser University
SMART – Secondary Methods Art Education
TMP – Teacher Mentorship Program
TOC – Teacher on Call
TTIs – Teacher Training Institutions
UBC – University of British Columbia
UVic – University of Victoria
Chapter One: Focus and Framing

The role of a teacher in British Columbia in the 21st century seems to be increasingly demanding. British Columbia’s 2012 Ministry of Education Teacher’s Act Standards (METAS) outline eight standards by which teachers are meant to be regulated (Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Education [MOE], 2012b; see also Appendix A). These standards describe a rigorous compilation of teaching skills such as the necessity for a broad academic knowledge base in subject area and the ability to apply knowledge of student growth and development. Interestingly, the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program varies greatly among British Columbia (BC) teacher training institutions (TTIs), and the fundamental question is does diversity in curricula affect consistency in outcomes in the school classroom? Whether an educating institution has a theoretical or an experiential approach, the METAS suggest that all teachers must be knowledgeable in their abilities to respectfully manage a classroom of 30 or more diverse learners from elementary to high school (MOE, 2012b).

Although noble, the METAS (MOE, 2012b) are an ambitious request of young novice and pre-service teachers who are graduating from varied BEd programs. On paper and in theory the METAS address the vast concerns of school administrators, teachers, parents, and students (MOE, 2012b); the question remains, how well do standards transfer from page to practice? Do BC’s TTIs effectively train BC’s teachers to implement these standards in their practice? Further to this, how well do TTIs regulate the consistency with which their student teachers understand and demonstrate the standards?

The purpose of my research is to identify the quality and amount of training that BC’s student teachers receive that enables them to provide and foster the emotional well-being of
students in their classrooms as set out in BC’s 2012 METAS (MOE, 2012b). My research focuses on the following standards:

[Standard] 1. . . . Educators are responsible for fostering the emotional, esthetic, intellectual, physical, social and vocational development of students. They are responsible for the emotional and physical safety of students. Educators treat students with respect and dignity. Educators respect the diversity in their classrooms, schools and communities. (MOE, 2012b, p. 4)

[Standard] 3. . . . Educators are knowledgeable about how children develop as learners and as social beings, and demonstrate an understanding of individual learning differences and special needs. This knowledge is used to assist educators in making decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management. (MOE, 2012b, p. 4)

[Standard] 5. . . . Educators have the knowledge and skills to facilitate learning for all students and know when to seek additional support for their practice. (MOE, 2012b, p. 4)

[Standard] 6. . . . Educators understand the curricular, conceptual and methodological foundations of education and of the subject areas they teach. (MOE, 2012b, p. 4)

My primary hypothesis is that BC’s TTIs do not teach the METAS (MOE, 2012b) to student teachers with consistency and sufficient practical application. My secondary hypothesis is that, if the four aspects of the METAS that are listed above were taught with consistency and understood both in theory and practice,

- would the incidence of bullying and bully-like behaviours be reduced?
- would student dropout decrease?
- would academic scores for all students and schools increase?
- would job satisfaction for teachers improve significantly?
The list of the teachers’ responsibilities in the METAS continues to include academic planning, evaluating and reporting, developing and implementing involvement and support of parents, guardians, families and school communities (MOE, 2012b). In their book, Caine and Caine (1991) highlight the enormous demands on teachers:

They frequently become surrogate parents, police and truant officers, and welfare workers. . . . They are asked to exhibit compassion and consideration while implementing a system that discounts many of the essential needs and characteristics of students. And most educators are tested and evaluated according to standards that force them to choose between good teaching and personal survival. (p. 173)

If we examine the trajectory that BC’s public school system has taken over the last decade it becomes clear that despite parents and teachers’ requests, classrooms are increasing in size. Furthermore, classrooms are more diverse in ethnicity and special needs, yet the demands on teachers are greater and increasingly complex.

Although much literature clearly states that academic success is dependent on healthy emotional learning environments, the focus of my research is on the provision of classroom environments to support the emotional well-being of elementary and high school students, rather than the academic achievement of those students. In his article, Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom, Dr. Brian Perry (n.d.) writes, “When a child feels safe, curiosity lives. . . . The most important learning ‘tool’ is the teacher . . . it is the teacher who creates the safe ‘home base’ from which the child will explore” (para. 9–10).

The BC’s Ministry of Education (2008) report titled Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools: A Guide supports the correlation between students’ feelings and their ability to learn. The BC
Ministry of Education (2004) Ministry Policy Site presents the policy statement from the Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools (MOE, 2008) as follows:

British Columbia schools strive to develop positive and welcoming school cultures, and are committed to fostering optimal environments for learning. Members of these school communities share a commitment to maintaining safe, caring and orderly schools.

(MOE, 2004, Policy Statement section, para. 1)

The BC Ministry of Education (2004) presents the rationale as follows:

To respond to increased interest in the issue of school safety both within the school system and among the general population – interest that stems partly from increasing concern about violence within our communities and, as well, from a recognition of the relationship between feelings of safety and belonging and a student’s ability to learn.

(Rationale section, para. 1)

Qualitative Approach

I used qualitative methods of research to explore two foundational questions:

1. How are teachers experiencing the increasing demands in their day-to-day teaching practice?

2. What are the lived realities of teachers in relation to being taught to understand and implement the METAS (MOE, 2012b)?

Specifically, I employ phenomenology-based field research methods. Phenomenological research instructs that researcher biases be contained or bracketed, thus allowing for pure phenomena to emerge from participants’ descriptions of their lived experiences in relation to their teaching practice. “The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts”
I use open-ended questions that encouraged participants to freely express the lived experiences of their day-to-day teaching practice.

I conducted one field study in which I observed a practicing teacher teach two high school science classes. Debriefing with the teacher after my field study clarified my descriptive and interpretive observations from the vantage point of the teacher’s experiences and realities and helped build my methodological approach.

**Personal Perspective**

“I have learned that when students are asked what kind of classroom they wanted, they talk about the importance of feeling safe” (Cohen, 2006, p. 217). The word safe leads me to think about physical safety, but it also means mental and emotional safety. However, “although school officials, teachers, parents, and students are exerting great efforts to make schools friendlier and safer places, a reduction in bullying is not always evident” (Beran, 2005, p. 43).

Bully-like behaviour can be as subtle as threatening eye contact from one student to another, something that can easily be missed by a teacher. Standard 1 in the list of the METAS states, “[Teachers] are responsible for fostering the emotional . . . development of students . . . [and] responsible for the emotional and physical safety of students” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4). In my exploration of teacher training, I focus on what methods student teachers are taught to foster the emotional development of students as well as establish emotional safety in the classroom? I place my study of teachers’ preparedness in the context of emotional and physical safety for students.

Personally, as a student, I did not always feel emotionally safe in my high school classrooms, and as a result I suffered anxiety as a child that negatively affected my schoolwork and my ability to focus. There were no outward signs that I was being threatened in any way.
How were my teachers to know if I was feeling emotionally threatened in class? Unlike the children of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, today’s children and youth are encouraged to speak with someone they trust if they are feeling threatened, yet as television media and newspapers report, bullying and bully-like behaviour remain a problem in schools across Canada. For example, Steffenhagen (2012) wrote an article in the *Vancouver Sun* titled “Parents Accuse Richmond School of Failing to Stop Student Bullying: They Question the Value of New Anti-Bulling Strategies if Officials Turn a Blind Eye.” Steffenhagen states, “Giles and Sandra Slade pulled their son out of Dixon elementary school in Richmond because of the school’s inability or unwillingness to stop the bullying of their son” (para. 1). Steffenhagen’s article shines a light on the gap between BC Ministry policy such as the METAS and the lack of funding and regulation to ensure the consistent implementation of such policy.

When adults recall their favourite elementary or high school teachers, they might describe situations in which their teachers made them laugh, or they may refer to the teachers as “good” teachers. I remember that I had a connection with my favourite teachers and that those connections made me feel safe, that I was a member of the class, and that my success was important to them. There is no question that my ability to focus on my schoolwork improved for the teachers with whom I felt a connection. My children also described their favourite teachers in ways that showed they felt connected to those teachers. The teachers that developed a relationship with my children inspired them to explore and learn.

Wheatley (2006) says that “everything in the Universe is composed of these ‘bundles of potentiality’ that only manifest their potential in relationship” (para. 1). A fundamental cornerstone of my research is based on my concurrence with Wheatley’s (2006) statement. BC’s education system also demonstrates concurrence with Wheatley’s (2006) statement in its quest
for safe, nurturing schools through the implementation of the METAS (MOE, 2012b): “As a tool for the public good, the Standards are intended to support the goals of our society by helping to support the education of citizens to live productive and fulfilled lives” (MOE, 2012b, p. 2). Wheatley and the METAS speaks to educators, in all teaching institutions, to view their students as “bundles of potentiality” (Wheatley, 2006, para. 1) in order to lead them to live productive, fulfilled lives.

Importantly with respect to student safety, teachers are leaders in their classrooms and communities. Yukl (2010) offers a plethora of definitions for leadership, but reports that “most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization” (p. 3). Yukl points out the ambiguous nature of leadership in which followers or subordinates are affected by the behaviour and actions of the leader. Standard 2 in the METAS require that “educators are accountable for their conduct while on duty, as well as off duty, where that conduct has an effect on the education system” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4) in which students are a part.

In retrospect, I now recognize the influences that my teachers had in my life, negative or positive. I know that it did not take much for a teacher to inspire me or invalidate me. Teachers are in power positions, and the METAS (MOE, 2012b) illustrate the necessity for teachers’ accountability. I hypothesize that student teachers want to learn techniques and behaviours that will enable them to inspire and lead their students, and I question the degree to which TTIs teach these desired techniques.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter I discuss effective and ineffective classroom management skills, the necessity for healthy student–teacher relationships, and the benefits of teacher self-study and self-reflection in the context of student safety, specifically, bullying and bully-like behaviour. I synthesize the literature that argues that teachers may not receive adequate training from their TTIs to feel confident in their teaching practice related to classroom security, and I describe the negative effect that this may have on them as teachers and on the students they teach.

Terminology

Scholarly information that addresses pre-service teachers’ training in the skill of implementing a safe, nurturing classroom environment is limited and vague. For the purpose of this research, I use the term classroom management to describe the ability of pre-service and novice teachers to provide safe nurturing classroom environments that offer respect for diversity, development of emotional well being, social responsibility, and healthy student–teacher relationships.

Educators, Discipline, and School Safety

The Premier of BC has recently announced the ERASE Bullying strategy, which she describes as a “nation-leading strategy that will ensure every child in our province feels safe, accepted and respected” (Clark, as cited in Government of British Columbia, Newsroom, 2012, para. 2; see also Meissiner, 2012). ERASE Bullying consists of a list of 10 elements including “a five year multi-level training for educators and community partners to help them proactively identify and address threats . . . [and] anti-bullying . . . training for pre-service teachers” (Government of British Columbia, Newsroom, 2012, para. 4–13; see also Meissiner, 2012). The
results of a Canadian study by Dr. Tanya Beran (2005) that refers to pre-service teachers’ preparedness to deal with bullying reveal that

The majority of pre-service teachers held negative attitudes about bullying. Few, however, indicated feeling confident or prepared to deal with the problem. . . . This lack of confidence may be due to the lack of training [that pre-service teachers] have received that specifically addresses bullying . . . since this topic is not presented in university curriculum materials or program descriptions. (p 47)

The University of Granada conducted a study in which an experimental group of pre-service teachers were taught a course on bullying, as opposed to a control group of pre-service teachers who were not (Benítez, García-Berbén, & Fernández-Cabezas, 2009). The results affirmed that the experimental group “modified and improved their knowledge and perceptions about bullying, [and perceived] themselves as more capable of confronting the problem” (Benítez et al., 2009, p. 204). Further observation revealed that the experimental group developed a more positive attitude about the bullying problem compared to the control group (Benítez et al., 2009, p. 204).

Although bullying is a complex issue, my research explores pre-service teachers’ training with respect to bullying, classroom safety, and healthy student-teacher relationships. Many studies connect the importance of students’ feelings of belonging and their ability to learn:

“Belongingness” (sometimes referred to as “relatedness”) is a measure of the depth and quality of the interpersonal relationships in an individual’s life. The need to belong, or the need to form strong, mutually supportive relationships and to maintain these relationships through regular contact, is a fundamental human motivation that can affect emotional patterns and cognitive processes. Supportive relationships can serve to buffer
the impact of stressful life events, leading to superior adjustments and well-being. (The Hope Survey, 2010, What Is It section, para. 1)

Being accepted by peers can come with its own unique set of stressors. An often negative social dynamic behaviour is the formation of cliques, sometimes referred to as in-groups (vs. out-groups), or friendship groups. The leader of a clique holds the power over his or her followers. If one is invited into a clique, it is understood that acceptance or rejection is determined by the leader and inner circle. Alder and Alder (1995), who wrote a report on the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, continue to be a primary authoritative source on the subject of the formation of student cliques that transpire between Grades 4 to 6, and the dangerous implications of such cliques:

Clique dynamics teach children to reproduce society’s strong feelings of differentiation between in-groups and out-groups. . . . They [clique members] develop feelings of intolerance toward individuals who are not privileged to be accepted as members, adopting an ethnocentric perspective that accords higher status to their own attitudes, values, and behaviors while devaluing those of others. . . . They [cliques] may form the basis for the societal reproduction of racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, and other forms of bigotry and discrimination. (p. 160)

In my research, I question whether BC’s TTIs educate student teachers to recognize the developmental phenomenon of clique formations? Once recognized how well are student teachers trained to intervene in established cliques? The potential for a clique forming against the teacher could certainly yield disastrous outcomes for both teachers and students because “group process in a classroom can be very dominant, and sometimes such processes jeopardize teachers’ goals as managers of classroom activities. Consequently, the students’ behavior can
sometimes be seen as a threat to a teacher’s professional identity and ethics” (Granström, 2006, p. 1142). {Again, it is up to you as a writer to connect the quotation to the point you are making. A quotation should never just sit out there unconnected by transitional words.}

The results of Bromfield’s (2006) United Kingdom study in which student teachers and qualified pre-service teachers were interviewed revealed similar concerns. Although they did not specifically describe clique behaviour, the student teachers described their students “refusal to work and reluctance to work [as being] the most difficult behaviours to deal with . . . [along with] low level disruptive behaviours such as talking when the teacher was talking and inappropriate noise levels” (Bromfield, 2006, p. 190). The result of a teacher feeling professionally threatened by a classroom clique is a thwarting of a teacher’s ability to form important and supportive student–teacher relationships. Pauley and Pauley (2007) report, “Many [teachers] do not know how to establish [positive] relationships with all of their students. . . . Frequently [some] students get labeled ‘reluctant learners’, act out in class, make life difficult for their teachers, and bully other students” (p. 191).

These problems of classroom safety are not new, which leads me to question what is missing in the communication between BC’s Ministry policy makers and TTIs. Certainly there have been numerous studies addressing this very issue, yet teachers’ comments referring to their inability to manage a classroom still exist. As a policy response, a study in 1998 endorsed the Cool Tool, described as “a social skills strategy designed to teach and encourage prosocial behaviour in the classroom and larger school environment” (Langland, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 1998, p. 245). The Cool Tool is designed to address the increased concern from educators and parents about school safety and effective discipline methods. The strength of the Cool Tool method is its generalization:
Educators short on time are tempted to purchase a packaged social skills curriculum and teach it right out of the box... So what is a teacher to do? One lesson is clear: A social skills lesson without a specific plan to promote generalization is not likely to achieve it. (McIntosh, & MacKay, 2008, pp. 18–19)

Langland et al. (1998) report, “Strategies to promote generalization need to be included explicitly in every social skills training curriculum... the ‘Cool Tool’... is amenable to the school-wide and classroom-wide implementation and includes features designed to promote skill maintenance and generalization” (p. 248). My reason for citing these articles is to emphasize the copious amounts of research and literature on the subject of school discipline and safety. There are programs and curricula developed throughout the world to assist schools in addressing these issues of safety, yet school bullying still exists. Neufeld and Mate (2005) assert “that the phenomenon of bullying has only very recently reached such proportions as to become a subject for widespread social alarm” (p. 139).

I pose the argument that a classroom list of “dos and don’ts” is ineffective and that “demanding that a child comply with rules leads to more conflict” (Martin & Nuzzi, 2001, p. 251), and “teachers who encourage self-management techniques and responsibility in their students are the most successful” (p. 254). A veteran teacher may learn the techniques to implement effective strategies throughout her/his teaching career, but what of the novice teacher? A study of teachers at the end of their first year of teaching focusing on classroom management revealed that the majority of teachers felt that further training was required (Anhorn, 2008, pp. 17–18). Comments from some of the participants in Anhorn’s (2008) study revealed the lack of attention placed on classroom management training:

• I think as a first-year teacher, you just do what you think is right.
• Discipline was my biggest issue this year.

• Classroom management has been a “learn as I go” thing.

• I “cracked down” at the beginning. (pp. 17–18)

Reward and punishment, along with suspension and expulsion, remain the predominant forms of disciplinary action taken by schools, regardless of the fact that these methods have been shown to have no effect on school safety and contribute to student dropout rates (Fenning & Bohanon, 2006, p. 1026). The greatest danger of punitive methods of discipline is that the majority of students suspended or expelled are the very students who need more academic instructional time, not less. Fenning and Bohanon (2006) document that “we have substantial evidence that suspension and expulsion are not effective, with some very serious potential biases for youth from underrepresented backgrounds” (p. 1028).

If punitive methods have proven ineffective for long-term classroom management, what does the literature tell us about effective methods? In response, it seems that “recent research shows that if teachers show students that they care about them and establish positive relationships with all of their students, the bullying stops or is greatly reduced and the students are more motivated to learn” (Pauley & Pauley, 2007, p. 191).

Student–Teacher Relationships

“One by-product of efforts to conceptualize management in relational terms and to focus on improving relationships between teacher and children are increases in teachers’ own mental health, job satisfaction, and sense of efficacy” (Pianta, 2006, p. 687). In turn “researchers have documented significant relations between positive aspects of teacher-student relationships and students’ social and academic functioning at school” (Wentzel, 2010, p. 81). These two findings
indicate that both teachers and students benefit from healthy student–teacher relationships. In *The Handbook of Classroom Management*, Jones (2006) states,

> Perhaps not surprisingly, over one third of new teachers leave the profession by the end of their third year of teaching, and many of these teachers list problems with student behavior as a significant factor influencing their decision to leave the profession. (p. 902)

I argue as a fundamental cornerstone of my research that this myopic statement targets the child or youth as the problem, for it excludes the possibility that the larger problem may be the teacher’s lack of preparedness due to the absence of effective training to manage or understand the diversity and developmental stages of her/his students.

Andrews and Quinn (as cited in Anhorn, 2008) indicate that “a beginning teacher is expected, from the first day of her career, to complete all tasks asked of the veteran teachers” (p. 15). Anhorn presents a running commentary of teachers’ duties that sound daunting for the most experienced teacher, let alone a novice teacher. Along with hours of lesson preparation, “classroom management and discipline . . . determining appropriate expectation for students . . . handling student conflicts . . . dealing with students of varying abilities and feeling inadequate as a teacher are other areas of concern of first-year teachers” (Anhorn, 2008, p. 16). Having knowledge and an understanding of students’ varying abilities is paramount for teachers to make sense of students’ behaviours in the classroom.

Richards and Brzozowski (2006) suggest that children begin demonstrating behaviours of being at risk of dropping out before Grade 3. In *The Handbook of Classroom Management*, Watson and Battistich (2006) write, “If teachers have a negative view of children or of particular groups of children, they will be unable to trust their students enough to have high expectations for them or to view student behavior in a positive light” (p. 270).
Student teachers recognize the importance of quality supervision while participating in their practicum field training, as Caires, Almeida, and Vieira (2012) describe:

More recently, the affective-relational components of the supervisor-student relationship have come into focus. . . . Some of the most relevant evidence in this field points out the important role of supervision in the socialization process of student teachers and on their learning and professional development, as well as on their emotional and physical balance. (p. 165)

The significance of this statement lies in the parallels between student teachers’ learning experiences and the learning experiences of elementary and high school students. In *The Handbook of Research on Schools, Schooling, and Human Development*, Wentzel (2010) writes, “As evidenced by the work of affective qualities of teacher-student relationships, emotionally supportive interactions have the potential to provide strong incentives for students to engage in valued classroom activities” (p. 79). Meaningful student–teacher relationships, in which the teacher takes a personal interest in the student, contribute to “feelings of relatedness [that] are believed to facilitate the adoption of goals and interests valued by teachers” (Wentzel, 2010, p. 76).

When a child or youth is not displaying the necessary developmental attributes for learning, the motivator can instead be the child’s desire to please the teacher. Neufeld and Mate (2004) write,

Students hamstrung by their lack of emergence, integration, or adaptability can learn only when attachment is somehow involved. . . . Attachment is by far the most powerful process in learning and is certainly sufficient for the task. . . . Attachment-based learners are highly motivated in ways other students may not be. (pp. 170–171)
Bromfield (2006) refers to a survey for newly qualified teachers and states, “What they [newly qualified teachers] wanted from training was ‘better teaching of step-by-step strategies to deal with bad behaviour and a discussion of options for different situations’” (TTA NQT Survey, 2005, p. 189). Bromfield’s article suggests that this type of strategy training could lead to a “behaviorist approach [that] fails to take account of complex classroom dynamics and the personalities and circumstances of individual pupils” (p. 189). Could these novice teachers be asking instead for examples of how a teacher might display or demonstrate empathy, caring, respect, and dignity toward a student that is disruptive in class? Calderhead and Robson (as cited in Bromfield, 2006) reveal that teachers’ idealized notions upon entering the teaching profession changed once they were faced with the realities of the day-to-day teaching practice (p. 189). Bromfield (2006) describes this as a change from a humanistic viewpoint to a behavioural approach in which the teacher is manager of the classroom focussed on “instructional outcomes and academic performance” (p. 189).

Sending a student out of the classroom may be necessary in some situations, but according to Neufeld (2006) this method of controlling can damage the student–teacher relationship. Thus, the teacher must spend time with the student in conversation in order to repair the relationship. In addition, teachers may not have the time to fulfill all the emotional needs of their students. Anhorn (2008) quotes first-year elementary teachers as saying they feel “overwhelmed, hectic, isolated, beaten down, unsupported, scared, humiliated, afraid, stressed, and drowning” (p. 15). Teachers at all levels report time as being a limited resource.

Besides the need for student teachers to be taught skills to develop student–teacher relationships, Cohen (2006) writes, “Although a series of national educational organizations have affirmed the central importance of being reflective [emphasis added] educators, we are not
translating this goal into teacher training in substantive and ongoing ways” (pp. 225–226). Ghaye (2011) says, “Through reflection, we can develop new insights and understandings that help us to improve our actions” (p. 1). In a study correlating teachers’ beliefs and behaviour, Fang (1996) points out that “the classroom is a highly dynamic and interactive environment where unexpected cues can spontaneously trigger teachers’ decisions and judgements” (p. 56).

Watson and Battistich (2006) write,

[Some] teachers appear to have personalities that make it difficult for them to provide at least some of their students with the care and warmth they need. . . . Can such teachers be helped to build supportive relationships with their students, or should they be counseled out of teaching or encouraged to use a coercive approach to maintaining classroom control? (p. 270)

How well does teacher-training curricula offer supportive alternatives for student teachers to gain insight into their behaviours and thus encourage a more relational rather than coercive approach to classroom management? Russell (2005) writes, “Professional educators often advocate reflective practice; it is less clear that they model it and provide explicit instruction” (p. 199).

**Necessity for Self-Reflective Practice**

Effective techniques of self-reflection must be taught, supported, and consistently practiced, particularly for those in professions that deal with humans. For a teacher to empathically foster the social development of children and youth, she or he must first deeply know her or his beliefs and values. Through self-reflection and self-study, humans glean an understanding of their behaviours. This understanding allows for personal growth and may foster change.
Gunn (2010) states her shared belief about the importance of reflecting: 

Regularly reflecting on our teaching practice can lead away from possibly falling into an attitude of routine, repetitive ‘one size fits all’ teaching to more skillful, productive teaching. I also believe that skillful teaching can be seen as central to a high-quality learning environment; thus, the learners who are being taught by a reflective teacher will benefit as well as the teacher. (Why Reflect section, para. 1)

To what degree are pre-service teachers taught to understand the importance of self-reflective practices as a method to understand their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours? If one is not aware of why he or she behaves in certain ways it is difficult to change personal behaviours.

In *The Handbook of Classroom Management*, Fallona and Richardson (2006) indicate, 

The teacher’s style of working can be seen as more than a mere function of role, of convention, or of external expectations from school or society. Style is expressive of a teacher’s personal qualities that can potentially influence students for good or for ill. Style is at the heart of a teacher’s moral influence on students. (p. 1047)

The handbook contends that it is important that teachers are able to justify their actions when dealing with student behaviours (Bromfield, 2006, p. 192). The authors argue that students and teachers experience feelings of frustration and anxiety, and thus it is incumbent upon the teacher to model reflective practice (Bromfield, 2006, p. 192). The question remains how well teacher educators demonstrate reflective practice to their student teachers.

The results of a study by Stewart-Wells (as cited in Jones, 2006) found “teacher educators teach classroom management based on their own comfort levels, and in the broadest sense of the term classroom management, leaving student teachers dependent on whom they have as an educator” (p. 890). Thus, student teachers are subjected to the limitations and even
biases of their educators. Ideally, teacher educators support student teachers to reflect on their beliefs and values and when necessary offer alternative reframing methods. Russell (2005) suggests that “there seems to be more rhetoric about the value of reflective practice than there is detail about how professional educators can help beginning professionals develop the skills of reflective practice and acquire initial experiences” (p. 199).

Berry (2007) describes her transition from teacher to teacher educator as “unmapped in terms of the development or professional knowledge of teaching about teaching” (p. 1). Speaking of her personal experience she writes, “I had few ideas about how to help new teachers learn about teaching other than sharing with them what I had done as a teacher” (p. 1). This realization sent Berry on a quest of self-study in which she researched her own practice as a teacher educator. Berry writes,

As the process of investigating my practice has unfolded so my learning about teacher education practices has been informed. As a consequence, I now understand the importance of teaching about teaching as a positive influence on prospective teachers’ learning about teaching. (p. 6)

How often do teacher educators engage in the task of self-study? Some research has suggested that self-study be structured, inclusive, and ongoing. Russell (as cited in Loughran, 2007) states that “elf-study [is not] the private and personal affair that the label might suggest. Self-study relies on interaction with close colleagues. . . . Self study also relies on ideas and perspectives presented by others and then taken into one’s personal teaching” (p. 16). Loughran (2007) stresses the importance of “quality self-study [that is] a disciplined and systematic inquiry, [that] values professional learning as a research outcome – for students of teaching and for teacher educators – and aims to develop and better articulate a knowledge of practice”
(p. 19). Both Berry (2007) and Russell (2005) dedicated their resources to conduct ethological research into their individual and personal teaching practices in order to contribute to knowledge of practice. Berry (2007) discovered that “self-study can therefore be conceptualized as an ongoing spiral of research informing practice, informing research” (p. 153). What of the novice teacher, overwhelmed with the demands of first-year teaching and unskilled in reflective practice? Self-reflection is difficult, particularly if one’s behaviour has not been in alignment with one’s beliefs and values. Yet reflecting on one’s behaviours helps one to examine beliefs, values, and assumptions.

Classrooms offer a surplus of emotional interactions, some visible and audible, some not. The METAS (MOE, 2012b) require that teachers foster the emotional development for not just some of their students, but for all students. Berry (2007) writes, “Learning about my ‘self’ through developing my self-understanding and self-awareness is prerequisite to helping others see themselves in ways that enable them to help themselves” (p. 163). This is a powerful and valuable life lesson that speaks to the skill of empathy. The United Kingdom’s Department of Education (2012) website, which supports teachers in the management of their classrooms suggests that

Trainees should understand what effect their responses, both verbal and non-verbal can have on children’s behaviour. They should be able to manage their own emotions when they are teaching. . . . [They] should be able to reflect on the way they manage behaviour and their classrooms and be prepared to change what isn’t working well. (“Improving Teacher Training,” para. 11–13)

Even for the most devout reflective practitioner, changing beliefs, attitudes, emotional reactions, and behaviour can be a slow process, particularly if one is consistently confronted by disruptive
or challenging students. Potential healthy student–teacher relationships can be damaged in the process of a teacher navigating his or her way to awareness. Given the importance of reflection, the question remains, do TTI programs weave reflective practice throughout curricula?

There are many methods of reflective practice. My research has focussed on the self-reflective method described in Larrivee’s (2006) chapter of *The Handbook of Classroom Management*:

Based on the presumption that understanding oneself is a prerequisite condition to understanding others, self-reflection warrants distinction by itself. . . . Self-reflection entails deep examination of values and beliefs, embodied in the assumptions teachers make and the expectations they have for students. . . . Beliefs can be affirming or defeating, expansive or limiting. . . . If a teacher tries to shed the belief that the teacher must be in total control to be effective, it means revealing uncertainty and vulnerability . . . Typical questions the teacher asks at the level of self-reflection are: *In what ways might I be modeling disrespect? Why am I so intolerant of Leroy’s inappropriate behavior?* (pp. 987–988)

These are two excellent examples of self-reflective questions in which the teacher is questioning his or her own behaviour and intolerance rather than reflecting on ways to change students’ behaviour.

Importantly, self-reflection may lead to questioning an institution’s practices that possibly go against an individual’s beliefs and values. In the event a student teacher challenges an institution on differing values, the institution then has an opportunity to examine assumptions and possible outdated practices. Cohen (2006) has strong words for universities and schools that ignore the emotional well being for their students, referring to this practice as a social injustice:
Few courses provide educators with theoretical or practical knowledge about evidence-based work in character education, mental health, or social-emotional learning. The rare exceptions to this indictment exist at universities where individual faculty members have sufficient prestige or resources to influence curriculum. As a general rule, however, education schools do not yet embrace social, emotional, and ethical learning as a vital dimension of school life. (p. 227)

Overall, Berry (2007) describes the value and importance for teacher educators to self-study their teaching practices:

As a consequence [of self-study], I have come to see the importance of a knowledge or teaching about teaching as a positive influence on prospective teachers’ learning about teaching. And, that very standing of a knowledge framework that in turn sets the foundations and expectations for personal and professional growth. (p. 6)

Loughran (2007) supports educators adopting self-study for the purpose of personal and professional development arguing that “there is little doubt that those teacher educators who adopt a self-study methodology for inquiring into their teacher education practices are indeed serious about seeking to better understand the complex nature of teaching and learning about teaching” (p. 18).

The foundational argument underpinning the work of Berry and others is that we humans by nature self-reflect as we incessantly analyze our actions in an attempt to determine how we are faring in life compared to others. The pendulum of validating to invalidating ourselves swings back and forth as we navigate through our day. Most often this behaviour contributes to feelings of inadequacy or superiority, but it does not assist us in actually becoming aware of our beliefs and values.
Referring to teacher education institutions, Russell (2005) states that “Reflective practice can and should be taught . . . The results of explicit instruction seem far more productive than merely avocation reflective practice and assuming that individuals will understand how reflective practice differs profoundly from our everyday sense of reflection” (Abstract section, para. 1). For novice teachers, that everyday sense of reflection usually means focusing on what they did wrong. Statistics show that the incidence of teachers leaving the profession is highest within the first 2 years (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 514). There are, of course, many factors at play that determine this outcome, but I would argue that student teachers would have a head start if they were taught how to effectively self-reflect throughout their teacher training education. Effective self-reflection “help[s] us understand the links between feeling, thinking and doing. How we feel affects how we think. This affects what we actually do” (Ghaye, 2011, p. 1). Although I believe Ghaye is on the right track in connecting thoughts, feelings, and action, unlike Ghaye I think that our thoughts affect how we feel, not the other way around. Thus, if a teacher thinks she has done a poor job, she will feel anxious or upset. If a teacher thinks she has done well, then she will feel content, proud, or happy.

**Importance of Mentorship and Modelling**

It would seem reasonable that people who are learning look to others for guidance and support. This starts in childhood and carries on throughout life. The role of a teacher is demanding from day one in the classroom; thus, student teachers require their TTIs to model effective teaching practices such as the development of healthy student–teacher relationships and effective mentorship strategies that support students through difficulties.
The BC education plan website offers an open forum communication page inviting everyone to participate in dialogue (MOE, 2011). Not surprisingly many comments come from pre-service and service teachers. In reference to mentorship, I cite two of these responses:

1) If you survive the first few years and don’t burn out, then maybe you can start climbing an easier mountain. Sadly, it seems that many teachers get to this point crushed by their workload and the hours they put in and they become jaded. They become complacent in their practice and stop innovating because they don’t see the point. In this vein, mentorship and “easing in” to teaching may be a solution to this that can lead to new teachers that start strong and get better at teaching. To implement this however, will require time put in by a mentor teacher, which they have little or nothing of. (Miss Teacher Candidate, 2012, para. 1)

2) Imagine if a “new teacher” meant one with 0–5 years of experience. Imagine being paired with a teacher or teachers who could take you under wing throughout those 5 years. Imagine saying, “I’d like to get better at this aspect in my teaching” and being coached by a numeracy/literacy/tech ed/Special Ed master. Imagine having “built in” time to collaborate during the school week. (McEachern, 2012, para. 3)

The BC Education Plan (MOE, 2012a) is impressive in its thoroughness and attention to detail. Three points are made in the BC’s Education Plan Engagement (MOE, 2013) document referring to mentorship for teachers:

- Provide teachers with paid time away from the classroom to observe teachers in other classrooms (perhaps even in other schools) in order to learn new teaching techniques and styles.
• Introduce an apprenticeship model where teachers in training are paired with a master teacher for a year or more. This will allow the new teacher time to gradually adopt a full teaching load.

• Provide mentorship opportunities for new teachers to learn from master teachers.

  Grant master teachers more release time in order to help out. (p. 8)

The BC Education Plan documents indicate that both teachers and the BC Ministry of Education are in agreement as to a possible solution to mentoring novice teachers (MOE, 2011, 2012a). However, a challenge exists because most teachers work at least 1 year as a teacher on call (TOC) before they receive a teaching contract with one school. TOCs do not have the full teaching responsibilities that contracted teachers do, but they do face the challenge of teaching students with which they have not formed relationships. On top of this, TOCs are often expected to teach subjects they know little about on short notice.

  Mentorship and induction programs are not new. Established induction programs in Europe vary in their operational methods, some proving to be more successful than others. Krull (2005) says that “in order to promote the introduction of mentor or supervisor preparation programmes for teacher education, it is an ultimate necessity to provide the field with a better research basis, including studies proving the effectiveness of these programmes” (p. 155). Krull (2005) describes a successful mentorship program implemented in Estonia’s universities in which all newly graduated pre-service teachers “have to work one year as a junior teacher under the supervision of a mentor teacher and to participate in the beginning teacher support programme in order to be certified as teachers” (p. 152).

  Education is often competitive and businesslike and mentorship should be fundamental to educational efficiency. Academic outcomes for schools produce statistics that are compared to
previous years, other schools, other cities, countries, and continents. However, outcome
statistics come from what transpires in the classroom, and what transpires in the classroom is
greatly affected by the individual school’s culture: “Teachers’ instructional decision-making is
influenced by the principal’s and cooperation/mentoring teacher’s discretionary decision-
making” (Fang, 1996, p. 54). Principals are responsible for setting the tone or energy in which a
school will operate. How new teachers are welcomed into a school varies. Often schools
establish a pecking order in which new teachers are assigned the most difficult student
population with little to no emotional or planned curriculum support (Patterson, 2005, p. 22;
Hazing can be subtle and defeating, but “new teachers want to work in an environment in which
they feel they belong” (Anhorn, 2008, p. 16).

Anhorn’s (2008) research revealed that school orientation for novice teachers was varied
for each participant, but that most teachers reported their needs were not met adequately.
Anhorn’s participants spoke about feeling isolated and left on their own to figure things out, yet
we know that “relationships with fellow teachers and other school staff are at the heart of the
first-year teachers’ sense of belonging to the staff at their school” (Anhorn, 2008, p. 19).
Anhorn’s study paints a rather grim picture of first-year teachers’ experiences, from one
participant leaving the profession due to lack of support from administration to others
experiencing outright hazing. Interestingly, “loving the students and watching their progress”
(Anhorn, 2008, p. 19) is a sentiment that runs through the literature that describes why teachers
stay in the profession.

With the focus on TTIs, novice teachers report feeling bewildered and betrayed by their
education programs in the area of preparedness for managing the real-life classroom (Jones,
2006, p. 888). Anhorn (2008) makes recommendations for pre-service teachers in which support networks are formed that link the TTIs to school administrators and practicing teachers “who understand what new teachers need to survive. . . . Mentoring, orientation, ongoing induction programs and real-life teacher education preparation” (p. 19).

Practicum or field experience is the student teacher’s opportunity to put into practice the theories that he or she has learned in the TTI; however, without adequate training, student teachers enter their practicums ill prepared to bring those theories to life. From the results of numerous studies Jones (2006) summarizes that

The limited amount and poor quality of field experiences is another area often presented as contributing to the lack of knowledge, skill, and confidence preservice teachers possess in the area of classroom management. . . . Student teachers frequently comment on the poor match between the theories and methods presented in their teacher education program and those espoused during their student teaching or internship experience. (p. 891)

Anhorn (2008) reports that student teachers value practicum experience and that TTIs need to offer more realistic training in areas of special needs, including required paperwork and working effectively with parents (p. 21).

The dilemma for tutors at the beginning of the programme is that they understand the necessity of trainees grasping the theoretical basis for particular strategies or interventions whereas trainee teachers want practical knowledge that will enable them to survive their first teaching placement. There is clearly a need to bridge this gap between lay and professional concerns and make the process more transparent. (Bromfield, 2006, p. 192)
Student and novice teachers want concrete strategies to help them manage their classrooms, yet “there are no neat answers that can be packaged or prescribed. Behaviour is complex and any situation involving human interactions creates a separate occurrence that is coloured by individual circumstances and differences” (Bromfield, 2006, p. 191). The questions surrounding mentorship in BC include: How well are BC’s student teachers prepared to handle complex behavioural difficulties amongst the children and youth they teach, and how consistently are novice teachers supported as they navigate through these human interactions?
Chapter Three: Methodology

Approach

As a neophyte researcher it was important for me to identify and be knowledgeable in the research methodology I would use to conduct my qualitative research project. I undertook a deduction process whereby I selected the appropriate sampling demographic that would best suit my study and included all stakeholders in the education system: students, parents, involved community members, administration, support staff, student teachers, service teachers, and service school counsellors. I chose to interview service teachers and school counsellors due to my personal interests and on the basis of my hypotheses. I used semi-structured questionnaires to guide me throughout the interviews:

*Interviews* share many of the features of questionnaires, in that there may be a set of items the researcher uses to gather information. With interviews, however, it is possible to ask for explanations (to probe) and to provide information on the reactions of the respondents that cannot be obtained from a questionnaire. (Goddard & Villanova, 2006, p. 115)

It was important for me to conduct my research during the summer months when schools were not in session. I appreciate the demands on teachers during the school year and felt I would have more success in recruiting willing participants during the summer months. I was also sensitive to the possible emotional toll that the recent 2012 teacher job action in BC may have taken on teachers and school counsellors. A teacher friend of mine posted my letter of invitation (see Appendix B) to participate in my research on the school district website. This approach proved fruitful, creating a snowball effect in which I established interview times with two
experienced school counsellors and seven in-service teachers whose careers span from 1 to over 8 years of practice.

My research approach was qualitative, using triangulation methods including individual formal face-to-face interviews and one field research exploration in which I observed two high school science classes in session. Mehra (2002) writes,

Qualitative research paradigm believes that the researcher is an important part of the process. The researcher can’t separate himself or herself from the topic/people he or she is studying, it is in the interaction between the researcher and the researched that the knowledge is created. So the researcher bias enters into the picture even if the researcher tries to stay out of it. (Specific Questions About Bias section, para. 4)

In an effort to “stay out of it” and subdue bias, I approached each interview with a desire to be surprised by all that was said. I also practiced self-reflection as a method to delineate and bracket or suspend possible personal biases, thus leaving room for new assumptions and insights for data analysis. The difficulty is that “researchers decide to study a topic because they see a ‘personal connection’ to it at some level – either as a practitioner in the field, or as an individual” (Mehra, 2002, “Deciding What To Do,” para. 3). My personal connection to my research topic comes from several angles: my own school experiences as a student and as a parent, the school experiences of my children, and my present concern for all stakeholders in our current education system.

The METAS take an interdisciplinary approach to education in that they address the need for “emotional, esthetic, intellectual, physical, social and vocational development of students” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4). My interview questions were specific to addressing the emotional and
social elements of teaching practice, such as classroom management, respect for diversity, student–teacher relationships, teacher job satisfaction, and the quality of teacher support.

Keeping in mind that “researcher bias and subjectivity are commonly understood as inevitable and important by most qualitative researchers” (Mehra, 2002, Abstract section, para. 1), I used the METAS (MOE, 2012b) to formulate a guideline that assisted me in maintaining neutrality whilst exploring the phenomena under study. Groenewald (2004) suggests, “Some guidelines are necessary, especially for novice researchers” (p. 6). My interview schedules also served as a guideline for further data collection. I am relaxed by nature, and this assisted my interviewees to freely elaborate in narrative in response to my questions.

Field research varies in the amount of researcher participation. My field research goal was to observe an experienced high school teacher teach, and I used the METAS (MOE, 2012b) as a tool to label my observations particularly related to classroom management. I was not in a position to determine emotional classroom safety for individual students, but I was interested in witnessing the teacher as leader, whom I believe establishes emotional classroom safety on a large scale, thus contributing to individuals’ emotional safety.

Teacher leadership is not about “teacher power.” Rather, it is about mobilizing the still largely untapped attributes of teachers to strengthen student performance at ground level. . . . Teacher leadership can be a big part of the answer to questions like . . . [h]ow can we create school environments where each student is known and treated as an individual? (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001, p. 4)

Possible student sensitivity to my presence in the classroom prevented me from taking copious amounts of notes. Thus, I relied heavily on my observational skills, a few memos recorded in class, and my ability to remember what had transpired: “With direct observational
methods the researcher seeks to blend in as much as possible in the background, even doing research incognito” (Sheppard, 2004, p. 226). Initially the teacher introduced me to the students and explained my purpose for being there; I then, to the best of my ability, blended into the background of the classroom. I journalized my observations immediately following my field research. This timeline helped me to relate my observations to the METAS (MOE, 2012b), allowing me to establish how the teacher’s actions impacted upon individual students and the classroom as a whole.

**Rationale**

My rationale to conduct this study was to augment the existing literature devoted to students’ personal safety and academic success, teachers’ job satisfaction, and teacher training institutions curricula development. The current tenor of BC’s education system is strained, even though there is no shortage of books, articles, and websites offering strategies to help teachers manage their classrooms, organize their planning, and address bullying. My study offers additional information that addresses pre-service teachers’ knowledge of and preparedness to implement the METAS (MOE, 2012b) as designed by the BC Ministry of Education in “recognition of the relationship between feelings of safety and belonging and a student’s ability to learn” (MOE, 2004, Rationale section, para. 1).

My study identifies the obligation of both the BC Ministry of Education and the TTIls to make the METAS (MOE, 2012b) operationally visible to all stakeholders in the education system, including parents and the community at large. As cited in this report, for many years novice teachers have declared dissatisfaction in their preparedness to manage a classroom. This phenomenon is explored through the voices of teachers that describe their lived experiences in relation to their teaching practice and the METAS. The results of my research could be used as a
pointer for university educator administrators to build curricula that emulate the METAS rendering them operational for novice teachers.

Design

“One of the key elements associated with qualitative methods is its capacity to see things through the eyes of the participants in the study” (Sheppard, 2004, p. 226). The context of my research is established in the voice of the teacher. I believe that the lived experiences of the teachers responsible for understanding and implementing the METAS (MOE, 2012b) must be heard in order to identify the degree to which these standards are operational. Although phenomenological research normally begins with few or no established hypotheses, I chose to use this methodology because it forced me to acknowledge and bracket my presuppositions about pre-services teachers’ preparedness to implement the METAS in their practice: “In other words, one ought to suspend judgment about the existence of the world and ‘bracket’ or set aside existential assumptions made in everyday life and in the sciences” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 24). Thus I established an empathetic interest to identify the shared lived experiences of novice and experienced teachers associated to their teaching practice in relation to the METAS.

Groenewald (2004) claims, “A good research-undertaking starts with the selection of the topic, problem or area of interest, as well as the paradigm (Creswell, 1994; Mason, 1996)” (p. 6). “The aim of phenomenology is the return to the concrete” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 4). As a phenomenological researcher, in my quest to return to the concrete I did not want to limit my approach to data collection to one method. I primarily conducted face-to-face interviews lasting approximately 1 hour each, using interview schedules designed specifically for the individual participant being interviewed (see Appendix C). For example, while maintaining the integrity of my topic, the interview schedule designed for an experienced school counsellor posed different
questions than that for an end of first year teacher: “Subsequently, the aim is to more precisely identify what set of [participant] attributes are relevant to the research question” (Goddard & Villanova, 2006, p. 116).

After I read the eight standards illustrated in the METAS (MOE, 2012b), I derived typical questions for novice teachers with 1 year of experience:

• In what way did your TTI instruct you to implement these standards in your teaching practice?
• Describe how your TTI taught you the importance of seeking support.
• Explain, as best you can, how your TTI taught you to manage a classroom of 30 diverse learners.
• How did your TTI model reflective practice?

After I read the METAS (MOE, 2012b), I created typical questions for experienced teachers with over 6 years experience:

• In reflection, how did your TTI prepare you to respect diverse learners in your classroom?
• In reflection and in comparison to now, how has your style of teaching changed, if at all?
• Tell me how you were supported as a student teacher, novice teacher, and currently
• What methods have you found work best for managing your classroom?

My participants chose the location, date, and time for the interviews to take place. Each participant signed a consent form before interviewing commenced (see Appendix D). All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed word for word into Microsoft Word documents that are stored in my locked office.
Although I did not conduct theoretical sampling, I did allow my participants to guide my research questions as topics emerged. Thus “the number of questions varied from one participant to the other” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 13). This flexibility encouraged authentic narrative from my participants in which they expressed intelligent, articulate descriptions of their lived experiences in relation to their teaching practice. These lived experiences constitute the realities of the participants: “Realities are thus treated as pure ‘phenomena’ and the only absolute data from where to begin” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 4).

As a secondary method of exploratory research I conducted a field study through an opportunity that presented itself to me in which I was invited to observe Grades 8 and 11 science classes. I did not interact with the students, but I did debrief with the teacher in order to understand her beliefs, motivations, and the experiences that led to her actions in the classroom.

**Sampling and Data Collection Methods**

I used selective sampling to collect data from informants who teach or counsel in elementary and high schools. This purposeful sampling method centred on my own judgement of what demographic would offer the most in-depth perspectives regarding the phenomena in question. My primary subjects were teachers followed by school counsellors. Age, gender, and ethnicity were not factors in selection but were considered during data analysis.

**Participant terminology.** The following terms were captured in participants’ responses and appear in this report in participant quotations:

- An *experienced* counsellor or teacher describes a counsellor or teacher who has practiced 6 years or more.
- A *teacher updater* is a teacher who has completed updating training to re-enter the teaching profession.
• A learning centre teacher (LCT) teaches and works with children and youth with special needs.

• A novice teacher has taught as a TOC and is entering his or her first year as a contracted teacher: teachers are considered novice teachers until they have completed 5 years of full-time teaching.

**Rationale for timeline.** I selected a timeline of 6 years and over for an experienced teacher, and 5 years and under for a novice teacher based on teacher communication and my literature review data as described by McEachern (2012), “imagine if a ‘new teacher’ meant one with 0–5 years experience” (para. 3). This timeline correlates to attrition rates for teachers and teacher job satisfaction.

Disillusioned by daily, even hourly, indignities such as ceaseless interruptions by public address announcements, being ordered to “teach to the test,” and a legion of others, 30 percent of all new teachers now last less than five years, while half of those in urban schools are gone within three. (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001, p. 7)

My initial contact happened in an opportunistic manner in which a conversation about my research took place between a teacher friend of mine and me. My friend assumed the position of gatekeeper and offered to place my letter of invitation to participate in my research on her school district website. Creswell (2008) describes “gatekeepers [as] individuals who have an official or unofficial role at the site, provide entrance to a site, help researchers locate people. And assist in the identification of places to study” (p. 604).

The invitation was posted on the district website before school closed for the summer months (see Appendix B), which proved to be excellent timing for purposeful criterion and snowball sampling. Coyne (1997) describes “the underlying principle that is common to all
these strategies is selecting information-rich cases, that is, cases that are selected purposefully to fit the study” (p. 627). I was able to schedule interviews with nine volunteer participants to transpire during the summer months when the rigour of their day-to-day teaching workload was not in effect, thus lessening the possibly of data being negatively or positively influenced by a participant’s work day.

My interviews were reciprocal, as described by Groenewald (2004): “both researcher and research subject are engaged in the dialogue . . . [and] the duration of interviews and the number of questions varied from one participant to the other” (p. 13). As subjects shared their experiences, perspectives, and lived realities, I was able to spontaneously formulate questions that probed deeper into their motives, beliefs, and values in relation to the METAS (MOE, 2012b).

I received permission from each informant to audio record the interviews into a recording device designed for research purposes. I recorded each interview into a separate personal file using the informant’s first name as a reference method. The recordings were then transferred to my computer into individual files, again using the informants name as the reference method. I transcribed the audio recordings word for word no later than 24 hours after each interview so that I could document the subject’s innuendos and expressions during our interview session. Relating to transcription, Groenwald (2004) states, “the researcher must be disciplined to record, subsequent to each interview, as comprehensively as possible, but without judgmental evaluations” (p. 15).

I applied triangulation methods to collect data: “Triangulation is a method . . . where you seek to take information from two or more vantage points. . . . [Triangulation] can also be used, for instance, in relation to different sources of information” (Sheppard, 2004, p. 234). I used
classroom observation as a method to observe and experience the interplay that transpires between students and their teacher in the classroom. While observing in the field, Groenwald (2004) suggests asking the following: “What happened and what was involved? Who was involved? Where did the activities occur? Why did an incident take place and how did it actually happen?” (p. 15).

Following my classroom observation I used the METAS (MOE, 2012b) as a guideline to determine how my observations aligned with the METAS. This method of aligning my observations to the METAS mimics analysis. Thus it was important for me to seek clarification from the participant teacher, because operationally my research was centred on the teacher’s perspectives and lived experiences. Groenewald (2004) writes, “It is very important that the researcher must, to the greatest degree possible, prevent the data from being prematurely categorised or ‘pushed’ into the researcher’s bias” (p. 16). . . the researcher [must] maintain a balance between descriptive notes and reflective notes, such as hunches, impressions, feelings, and so on” (pp. 13–14).

I practiced immediacy as a method to maintain my research focus. Immediacy is a word used most often in the realm of counselling and “the definition of immediacy varies from author to author, [yet] the definition always centers on the here and now and on the importance of the current . . . relationship” (Wheeler & D’Andrea, 2004, p. 117). During interviews it was important for me to practice empathy with my subjects as a means of grasping the lived realities of their teaching practice. Applying the skill of empathy means that I had to suspend my own assumptions and be present to my subjects’ experiences in the here and now. My task was to align my data to the METAS (MOE, 2012b) with integrity and from the perspective of the participant teacher.
Details of confidentiality were discussed, and consent forms were signed before the interviews commenced (see Appendix D). Participants were reassured that proper names and the names of the schools in which they work would be changed to ensure anonymity.

I stipulated that relative quiet and privacy was necessary for quality interviews and then allowed my subjects to select the time and place for interviewing, thus ensuring as much comfort for them as possible. I ran one pretest with a school counsellor friend. The pretest included reading my consent form, and I determined that an interview would last approximately 1 hour. My pretest also confirmed that my questions and interviewing style generated enthusiasm in my informant to share his/her personal beliefs, views, experiences, attitudes, and feelings related to the topic.

I reported my findings using a thematic approach in which I highlighted emerging themes that described teachers’ lived experiences in relation to their teacher training, teaching practice, and preparedness to implement the METAS (MOE, 2012b) in their practice. My approach to emerging themes spanned the exploration of the BC Ministry of Education’s responsibility to their TTIs, the TTIs’ responsibility to their students, public school administration’s responsibility to their teachers, and service teachers’ responsibility to their students, colleagues, and community.

**Reliability and Validity**

To identify or test the reliability and validity of my study I initially turned the focus on myself: “The credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). Mehra (2002) addresses the necessity to identify the two voices that qualitative researchers contend with:
The idea is to keep the two voices separate – emic (insiders’/participants’ voice) and etic (outsider/researchers’ voice) – as much as possible in your data, and decide which voice will be the predominant voice in your text. The etic voice is of course, always there, hidden may be, but is always present in the text by way of how the text is organized, how the data is presented, what quotes are used and what data is ignored etc., etc. If you are interested in the emic voice being the predominant voice to tell the story, then it is important that you keep your personal judgments/interpretations out as much as possible. (Specific Questions About Bias section, para. 28)

The goal of my research was to “understand things in-depth and directly from the perspectives of those being studied” (Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008, p. 156), and thus the integrity of my research demanded I bracket assumptions to allow an emic voice to predominate.

There is a great deal of discussion in scholarly literature about appropriate methods for testing reliability and validity in qualitative research; for example, Golafshani (2003) points out that “some qualitative researchers have argued that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research, but at the same time, they have realised the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for the their research” (p. 602). Golafshani says, “The traditional meaning of reliability and validity from the qualitative researchers’ perspectives . . . [can be] conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm” (p. 604). I applied two methods of validity testing that were relevant to my phenomenological study, construct validity and external validity.

**Construct validity.** Construct validity deals with the trustworthiness of research results that are established through the operational measures for the specifics of the inquiry: “To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial” (Golafshani, 2003,
The first tactic I used to ensure trustworthiness was to collect data from multiple sources such as face-to-face interviews and classroom observation, for “these multiple observations can be combined into an overall measure that is more reliable than any single question would be by itself” (Kalof et al., 2008, p. 156). In addition, the triangulation I used “is typically a strategy (test) for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 603).

The second tactic I used to establish validity linked the data collected and the METAS (MOE, 2012b) to the lived experiences of my participants. This was accomplished by rigorously cross-referencing my interview questions and collected data with the METAS.

As a neophyte researcher I thought it important to use an external audit to ensure proper formatting, referencing, use of grammar and punctuation, and clarity of speech: “This auditor reviews the project and writes or communicates an evaluation of the study” (Creswell, 2008, p. 604).

**External validity.** “External validity is the ability to generalize from a study to a larger population” (Kalof et al., 2008, p. 157). Using the METAS (MOE, 2012b) as a framework for investigating the lived experiences of novice and experienced teachers and school counsellors in relation to their knowledge of the METAS allows for generalization of this study to a larger population of all teachers and school counsellors in BC. My research further contributes to generalization through the operation of interviewing teachers from the three predominant TTIs in BC; thus its design is applicable to teachers who have graduated from a variety of TTIs in BC.

**Reliability.** “Reliability is concerned with consistency. Research findings are considered reliable if similar findings are revealed time after time in repeated applications of the research” (Kalof et al., 2008, p. 156). Considering that qualitative research is interpretive, Creswell (2008)
states, “The interpretation that you make of a transcript, for example, differs from the interpretation that someone else makes” (p. 245). My study investigated the lived teaching experiences of novice and service teachers in relation to the METAS (MOE, 2012b), and in particular how well their TTIs prepared them to implement the METAS in their practice. Phenomenological research occurs in the here and now, and although my study had structure and procedural criteria, the likelihood of exactly replicating this study is low. Project integrity was maintained by practicing self-reflection and self-awareness, immediacy, bracketing assumptions, and acknowledging my perspectives, yet the collected data was interpreted by me. Thus the issue of reliability is less important for a qualitative study than for a more empirical study.
Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents my research findings from my classroom observation and interviews with my participants. The findings are illustrated under four topics that relate to the METAS (MOE, 2012b); they are modelling, classroom environment and resources, mentorship, and fostering relationships.

Confidentially Application

Participants’ names are fictitious in this document, and the schools in which they work have not been identified. However, I do identify the TTIs from which they graduated, those being UBC, SFU, and UVic. I disclose participants’ gender and years of teaching or counselling experience. All participants were consulted about and were in agreement with these confidentiality measures.

Classroom Observation

At the time of this field trip, Natalie was completing her 6th year as a full-time high school science teacher. Natalie acted as a gatekeeper for me by posting my invitation to participate in my research on her school district website, inviting me into her classroom to observe, and participating herself as an interviewee. In her early 20s, Natalie had accomplished her Bachelor of Science degree and a Bachelor of Education degree from SFU. More recently, she completed a 2-year teaching diploma program from SFU of which she spoke highly. She was contracted in a full-time position after only a 5-month period as a TOC; she pointed out that this was unusually fast and fortunate for her.

We set the date for me to observe her classroom in early June; school would soon be closing for the summer months. The day was cool and wet, quite typical for June in Vancouver’s lower mainland. I met Natalie at her home in an affluent neighbourhood within walking distance
to the school. She was eating a granola bar, and I wondered if that was her breakfast or just a breakfast “dessert.” Regardless, she did not get to finish it. I followed her along a path that entered into the school’s rather empty parking lot. As we walked, Natalie gave me the outline of how the day would proceed: Grade 8 science class from 8:40 to 10:00 a.m., followed by a Grade 11 chemistry class from 10:05 to 11:25 a.m. After a 15-minute morning break, a Math 8 class was scheduled from 11:40 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., followed by a 40-minute lunch break, and then another Chemistry 11 class from 1:45 to 3:05 p.m. I lost track after “morning break,” so I asked her to email me the schedule. Natalie sent me the following schedule:

- Each class is 80 minutes, far too long for ideal learning conditions. We have 8 blocks total in a 2 day rotating schedule (4 classes one day, and the other 4 the next). Full time teachers teach 7 out of 8. So one day I would teach all the classes and the second day I would have one block as prep time. The above schedule is for the day you were there. The other day I had another science 8 and 2 science 10 [classes]. My science 8 classes were full, 30 [students], my chemistry 11 was only 28 [students] and I had a smaller math class at 26 [students].

Natalie’s school opened its doors in 1961 to less than 400 students. It now accommodates over 1,500 students. Although the school is old, I sensed a welcoming feel to its culture. We went to the school’s office to sign in, and I was given a pass with instructions to pin it to my clothes so it was visible. Natalie wanted to introduce me to the principal. We could see the principal in her office through the open door; she was standing, dressed in an attractive suit, and very much engaged in conversation with some people. Natalie suggested we wait for a few minutes. I did not want to cause her to be late for class, but she appeared relaxed and in control. In the end we did not meet the principal, but Natalie suggested we try again during the break.
I followed her through heavy swing doors, along busy corridors, up stairs, around corners until finally we arrived at her classroom. She unlocked the door, and we entered into a large dank room lit only by the gray light coming through six windows on the back wall that were sealed shut and viewed the library, there was no trace of the outside world from this room. She smiled at me, I guess at the expression on my face that said, “What a horrible looking room.” She explained that the school was old and in need of much repair and maintenance, so painting and replacing tables in a science lab was not priority. Of course a building that size and age needed constant attention, but “depressing” was the word that came to mind while I looked around. I thought, “Can’t someone just slap some white paint on the walls?” I kept these thoughts to myself; this was Natalie’s work environment, and I did not want to criticize it.

The room held three rows of dark gray lab benches that sat two students each. The remainder of students sat in regular desks that Natalie claimed took up much needed classroom space. The front of the room was built up about a foot off the floor, like a platform. It was framed at one end with a bookcase and to the right a small desk and computer. Natalie stashed her purse and half eaten granola bar on a lower shelf of the bookcase. Feeling some sort of survival instinct, I kept my purse with me. I walked through a door at the back of the class that led into a narrow side room with shelves from floor to ceiling filled with labelled bottles and jars of various sizes and colours. It looked like something out of a Harry Potter movie. Natalie explained they were chemicals for doing lab experiments, which would not be happening this particular day.

We selected a spot in the room for me to sit where I could see just about everything. I am not sure where my chair came from, but it was a small, somewhat worn, but comfortable armchair. I settled into my spot situated outside the storage room door and slightly in front and
to the side of the last lab bench at the back of the class. Natalie told me that the student that sat on the stool closest to me (in the back left corner) would be off his stool more than on it. This student was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and this location was perfect, allowing the student to move about as needed without being disruptive to the class. It remained to be seen how a student could move about yet not be disruptive.

After the sound of the school bell, students started filing through the door to their usual seating space. Natalie stood watching at the front of the room, slight smile on her face, the picture of patience as they found their spots. There were 30 Grade-8 boys and girls chattering, sniffing, coughing, and rifling through their bags for pens, paper and books and dragging stools this way and that.

She gave the students exactly the right amount of time to establish their space in the room, which included allowing them to have a bit of social conversation with the persons sitting beside them. With developed intuition she began to gently blow air through her teeth to express a long “shh” sound, just before the chatter escalated. The students responded to it and the chatter ceased. She used the “shh” sound as needed during the class, yielding the same positive results every time. How would a novice teacher, especially a novice teacher with no support, manage to calm this classroom? The students were not displaying “bad behaviour”; they were socializing. Yet without a skill to quiet them, I could easily see how a teacher could let the class get out of hand quickly. I wondered if “shh” could be considered a skill. It was certainly effective in calming these students.

Once the din ceased, Natalie broke out into a big smile and spoke to the class about the band concerts that had gone on at the school for the previous two nights. She said that she had attended both concerts and that she felt tired from doing so, so she understood that they would
also be feeling tired. She then acknowledged seeing some of the students there on both nights and said, “So we’re in this together.” This was an excellent example of the teacher fostering healthy student–teacher relationships.

Natalie then buckled down to her teaching tasks, starting with going over what the TOC had done with them in their last class. This involved some instruction followed by the students working in small groups or pairs to complete a question sheet. As the students worked, Natalie walked up and down the rows displaying her ability to read upside down to view the students’ work. I noticed how this positioned her in front of the student, rather than looking at the work over the student’s shoulder from behind. If she wanted to speak with the student, she could then look at the student face to face and speak in a quiet voice. I could only partially hear what she said to the two students who sat close to me. Surprisingly, one student spoke to Natalie about a parent’s illness or injury (I could not make out the exact words). Natalie’s split second response was one of compassion and understanding in which she acknowledged concern and requested the student let her know how things progressed. It was obvious to me that the student had a solid student–teacher relationship with Natalie. That simple connection between student and teacher took less than half a minute. I watched her move slowly up and down the aisles sharing a laugh with some students and addressing the question sheet with others. I also heard her ask another student about a collarbone injury. These were prime examples of a teacher who had developed healthy relationships with students.

As this exercise came to a close the chatter began to escalate and the familiar “shh” sound was heard to calm the room. She then played a film of Bill Nye the Science Guy (Nye, 2013). It was accompanied by a worksheet for students to fill in the blanks pertaining to the film’s content. I decided to do the work sheet as well, even though I noticed a slight tension in my
temples. I thought about recovering some headache analgesic from my purse, but I did not want to draw attention to myself, particularly to be seen taking pills.

The film started, and I was happy to be entertained by the comical face of Bill Nye (2013). The sounds in the classroom changed. I noticed that a number of students appeared to have colds, as constant sounds of sniffing and coughing carried on. The irritating noise of stools grinding against the floor became more prominent, but I had a worksheet to fill out, and Nye had already given a lot of information. The room was dark, so it was not easy to see the writing on the paper. I thought of my son who needed glasses at least 2 years before he actually got them (in Grade 9) and how difficult seeing this paper would have been for him. There had to be at least one student in this room that needed but did not have glasses.

I found it difficult to watch and listen to the film and read and answer questions at the same time. I admired the students for sticking to it, owning the challenge, enthusiastically filling in the blanks—I gave up. The film ended, and Natalie started talking about the film right away before turning on the lights; I thought this to be an effective management tactic because it did not allow time for the students to side talk with one another.

At this point I was thinking, “break time.” I was wrong; we had a long way to go before the end of class. We reviewed the film’s worksheet, and then moved onto new curricula. It was obvious Natalie loved her subject matter; she was extremely knowledgeable and delivered the material with enthusiasm. This portion of class instruction was participatory, in which students were encouraged to show their knowledge by posing and answering questions. My visual view of Natalie was somewhat obstructed from the back left corner of the room and in that moment I had an understanding of the challenge teachers have to “reach” all 30 diverse learners in a
classroom. There seemed to be copious amounts of material to be taught in the class time frame; how could a teacher possibly make sure each and every student understood the material?

One student sitting at the back far right side of the class was outspoken in a derogatory manner toward another student’s comment. The first time this happened Natalie addressed it with a “look” that told the outspoken student to stop. When the student spoke out for a second time she increased the volume of her voice and said, “I am the teacher in this class and that means I am in charge of what goes on my classroom.” There was respectful quiet for approximately 8 seconds and then she resumed with the lesson. In that situation I felt Natalie demonstrated leadership in her classroom that enabled everyone to feel safe and cared for. Even the outspoken student knew that Natalie could be relied upon to lead and manage the classroom with consistency. In particular, I felt the words she used to manage the situation with the outspoken student were exceptionally wise. She did not point out fault or shame the student; she simply stated her position in that room clarifying she was in charge.

The student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder was indeed active, but not disruptive. It truly was the perfect seating spot for this student. Natalie told me that this student had very good parental support, which made a huge difference in this child’s determination to succeed.

While Natalie instructed the students to complete the task they were working on for homework, they seemingly ignored the instruction, but later she assured me that they had heard her, and then laughingly said, “That did not necessarily mean that they would do the homework anyway.” Of course experience plays into understanding this classroom dynamic, but I thought that she modelled patience and trust. It is what Neufeld (2003) describes as “soliciting good intentions” (p. 46).
The bell rang for class dismissal, the students were gone in a flash, and the room assumed its dark sombre mood. It was now 10:00 a.m., a perfect break time. We started to debrief about what had just occurred while Natalie cleaned up and prepared for the next class. She made a point of telling me to notice the difference in energy between her Grade 8 students who had just left and her Grade 11 chemistry students who were about to arrive. The room felt chilly with the absence of students. The combination of dampness, lack of colour, and chilliness made this room a challenging work environment.

Our debriefing swallowed up the miniscule opportunity to go to the washroom between the two classes. It was not break time yet. The bell rang, and I sat back down in my selected spot to watch the Grade 11 students file in. Indeed these students looked much taller and more mature than the Grade 8 students. They were more grounded, less scattered. I felt my protective mother instinct kick in, and I wondered how Natalie managed these merging adults. She looked younger than many of them and not a minute older than any of them. She used the same approach to welcome this class as she did with her Grade 8 students. She stood quietly at the front of the class with a slight smile on her face watching them enter the room and find their spot. Again, she graced them with a period of time to greet their neighbour, retrieve their pens and work, and adjust their stools. At the precise second before the din would have escalated she said “shh” and the group quieted down. She spoke about the band concerts in the same manner that she did with her Grade 8 students, acknowledging that they might be feeling tired, and that she too was tired and that “they were in it together.” This statement of inclusiveness left no one out—I too felt a part of the group and “in it together.”

I was quickly introduced, which caused a few heads to turn my way with moderate interest. The lesson began. It was not long before my personal needs competed with my
research work. My headache intensified, I was hungry, chilled, and in need of a washroom break. Again the first part of the class was used to address homework and complete the work assignment from their last class. Directly in front of me I noticed two students carrying on a conversation just “under the radar” so that Natalie was not aware of it, and if she were aware, they were not disruptive enough to be disciplined. I asked her about these students in our debriefing session. She told me that they were struggling a bit with the course work, but that they, on their own, were nice kids. Apparently, these particular students tended to form an alliance when they were with a particular “influential friend” who happened to not like Natalie.

Again she walked up and down the aisles to engage in quiet face-to-face conversations with students while they completed their worksheets. In the class’s next module Natalie used an overhead projector to demonstrate, with enthusiasm, how carbons and hydrogen bonded. This was new material, and one student expressed concern about not knowing it well enough for the approaching year-end exam. A student requested that they be given a test or quiz on the material as a means to prepare. Natalie obliged them, and then took it a step further and gave them the option to apply or not apply their quiz mark to their overall course mark. With this marking option a student exuberantly shouted, “We love you Mrs. Stevens”; Natalie smiled.

Many of the METAS (MOE, 2012b) were demonstrated in this student–teacher interchange regarding the quiz and marking options, such as:

- students’ emotional and intellectual needs being fostered;
- the educator treating students with respect and dignity;
- the educator being knowledgeable about how children develop as learners and social beings;
- the educator demonstrate an understanding of individual learning differences;
• the educator ability to make decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment, and classroom management; and

• the educator understanding of her or his subject area.

After hearing the student cry, “We love you Mrs. Stevens,” I decided to give in to my personal comfort that had now outweighed my desire for more research data. I took the opportunity to say a quick thank you and good-bye to Natalie. She looked surprised to see that I was leaving and we agreed to debrief soon. I immediately jotted a few notes on a piece of paper that I later expanded on to encapsulate my observations, my assumptions, and questions to ask Natalie when we spoke. Our debriefing conversations took place over the next couple of days and a few times when we happened to meet on a causal basis.

**Classroom observation debrief.** My first question to Natalie was about her personal needs. When did she go to the washroom, eat, drink, and see her colleagues? She apologised to me for not showing me where the washroom was. I assured her I was quite capable of taking care of all that myself, but that I wanted to experience her day as it was for her. She told me she was “conditioned,” but that if she needed a washroom break she could leave her Grade 11 (not her Grade 8) students on task for a few minutes.

We talked about isolation and teacher support. She told me that taking her break in the staff room was of utmost importance to her for reasons of support, personal and professional development, a sense of belonging, keeping abreast of school and community news, and fun. Apparently not all teachers eat their lunch in the staff room, and Natalie said she thought this was a mistake on their part. She said that teaching can be an isolating profession, thus one must make an effort to be with colleagues. The literature supports Natalie’s comment: “Although
elementary and secondary teaching involves intensive interaction with youngsters, the work of teachers is done largely in isolation from colleagues” (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 202).

I asked Natalie how well the Grade 11 chemistry students were doing. I noticed that some students grasped the curricula concepts quicker than others. She replied, “I will be failing some of those students.” I was unnerved by this news, but the reality is that some of those students either needed extra help, summer school, or a different educational focus. Failing Chemistry 11 would not hold them back from moving onto Grade 12; I had to keep things in perspective. The METAS state, “Educators thoughtfully consider all aspects of teaching, from planning through reporting, and understand the relationships among them” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4). Clearly Natalie understood the relationship among these various teaching aspects to effectively establish what was appropriate for her students.

I talked to Natalie about her connections with her students and her talent of reading upside down, which enabled her to have face-to-face conversations with them. She laughed at this and said all these techniques developed over time. She said she really liked the kids and enjoyed having connections with them and their parents. She said that there was so much material to teach in every class that casual interactions had to be kept to a minimum. We talked about her use of “shh” and how effective it was in quieting the class. Again she laughed and said she just started using it and it worked, so it has remained her reliable method. I described what I observed in her classroom, and she concurred that what I had witnessed had transpired such as speaking clearly to the outspoken student, pacing how long students talk to each other, and dividing up her curricula modules for optimal learning.

Natalie was somewhat familiar with the METAS (MOE, 2012b), but not as they were written in point form off the BC Ministry of Education’s website. She was familiar with the
profession’s expectations and concurred with the value and importance of the standards. She was also pleased that she was meeting the standards, but said that in her experience novice teachers, and she purposefully added, some experienced teachers, were not prepared to implement the METAS.

**Summary.** Natalie demonstrated a wonderful ability to teach, demonstrate knowledge of her subject, develop student–teacher relationships, demonstrate respect for diversity, be flexible with curricula delivery, provide a safe nurturing classroom, and manage a classroom of 30 diverse high school students. She credits her 6 years of experience, support, and professional development for these abilities. Even though I have no doubt about Natalie’s ability to implement the METAS (MOE, 2012b) in her practice, I have come away from this experience with the following concerns:

- the isolating aspect of the teaching profession,
- concerns about the length of time a teacher might instruct without a break,
- the amount of subject matter to be taught in the class time frame,
- the expectation for a teacher to effectively deliver curricula to diverse learners in that time frame and classroom design,
- the length of instruction time being too long for optimal learning,
- the esthetics and overall comfort of the work environment for both teachers and students, and
- the lack of updated teaching resources and curricula materials.

Natalie’s 6 years of teaching experience, her grounded knowledge of her subject, and her enjoyment of her students overshadowed the challenging elements that I observed and felt in her classroom. Teachers are expected to model behaviour that reflects a willingness to implement
the METAS (MOE, 2012b) in their teaching practice with their students and as citizens in their community, yet I discovered in my observational classroom experience that the BC Ministry of Education does not appear to model the same willingness toward its teachers given the founded concerns listed above.

From my list of concerns generated from my experience in Natalie’s classroom, I extrapolated four major areas that address the missing links between the METAS (MOE, 2012b) and the BC Ministry of Education’s lack of ability to implement the METAS for the student and novice teachers they serve. The table below illustrates these missing links and subsequent questions that developed during my research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES</th>
<th>EMERGING THEMES</th>
<th>THEMES RELATED TO METAS</th>
<th>FINDINGS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modelling</td>
<td>Meeting personal needs of teachers = meeting personal needs of students</td>
<td>Respect for teachers/students</td>
<td>Ministry’s ability to model respect for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher job satisfaction</td>
<td>Dignity for teachers/students</td>
<td>Ministry’s ability to meet the needs of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Career-long learning</td>
<td>Ministry’s meeting needs of child/youth development through teacher training curricula</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Necessity for consistent teacher regulation</td>
<td>Teacher’s ability to respectfully manage students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment</td>
<td>Esthetics of classroom</td>
<td>Safety of environment</td>
<td>Novice teachers knowledge of classroom cliques/bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Work space conducive for learning, teaching &amp; classroom management</td>
<td>Current or Outdated resources</td>
<td>TTI’s role to prepare novice teachers for realities of classroom environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of students (diverse learners) in a classroom</td>
<td>Respect/Dignity for teachers &amp; students reflected in work space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher job satisfaction</td>
<td>Nurturing work environment supports optimal learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship</td>
<td>Teacher isolation</td>
<td>Necessity for teacher mentorship</td>
<td>Mentorship programs inconsistent amongst school districts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher job satisfaction</td>
<td>Classroom safety</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fostering-relationships</td>
<td>Diversity in learning as well as social development</td>
<td>Respecting diversity in student social development</td>
<td>TTI responsibility to implement the METAS in curricula development and delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of student-teacher relationships</td>
<td>Teacher knowledge of confidentiality/trust</td>
<td>TTI responsibility for the educational and social development of the children and youth in teachers care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outdated curricula</td>
<td>Teacher responsible for intellectual development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** Codes and emerging themes.

*Note.* METAS = Ministry of Education Teacher’s Act Standards; TTI = Teacher Training Institution.

The information provided in Figure 1 illustrates how challenges, listed under the term codes, bridge to the METAS (MOE, 2012b) through emerging themes of the experiences for teachers and students. The table then correlates the BC Ministry of Education’s role in the existence of these challenges to my research questions and the phenomena being explored. With a new perspective of and appreciation for a day in the life of a high school science teacher, I brought these emerging themes forward into my interviews.
Interviews

My interviewees consisted of nine volunteer participants: one elementary school counsellor, Mary; one high school counsellor, Lucy; one experienced LCT, Ruth; one teacher updater, Pat; four novice teachers, Jenna, Melissa, Megan, and Jeff; and one experienced teacher, Natalie. Two interviews took place in my home and the other seven interviews were conducted in the participants’ homes. I created ideal interviewing conditions in my home to ensure quiet and privacy because “the setting of the interview can also affect the results” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 164). Although all participants were welcoming in their homes, some interviews were affected by noise. As mentioned, all interviews took place during the summer months when the public schools were closed.

Modelling

Throughout the METAS the BC Ministry of Education (2012b) conveys an expectation for the competence and conduct of teachers. How does the ministry model this expectation to the teachers it serves, both in TTIs as well as in the public school system?

As mentioned in my classroom observation, Natalie described herself as conditioned to what was expected of her as a teacher. Things that I found difficult to deal with such as outdated resources, overcrowded classroom, gloomy esthetics, and long isolated work hours were not necessarily what concerned her. Her concerns lay deeply in her responsibility for the success of her students. The colour of paint on her classroom walls was not on her radar as being important in light of her heavy workload.

Jenna, a novice teacher, completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from UBC in which she spent an exchange year attending Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux Arts in Paris, France. She subsequently acquired a Masters of Fine Arts in Sweden, and then attended UBC to
complete her BEd in a cohort for secondary art teachers called Secondary Methods Art Education (SMART). Jenna has taught 1 year as a TOC, 1 year part time, and 2012–2013 will be her first year of full-time teaching a Grade 5/6 split class in French Immersion. Jenna said the METAS (MOE, 2012b) were a focus in the SMART program: “We had to prove where we met all of these [standards]. . . . We had to show lifelong learner, some kind of archival example from my year; we had to do that as our graduation requirement.” Jenna said she had some “really good professors that had a lot of experience teaching that could give a lot of scenarios that you could kind of imagine and put yourself there.” Jenna said that specific prerequisite experience was necessary to get into the SMART program, so the combination of her really good professors and an experienced cohort made her Professional Development Program (PDP) a good experience.

Even though Jenna’s PDP experience was good, she said:

There were not enough strategies [taught]. There could be a whole course on strategies. What you’re dealing with in high school is that they [students] don’t want to be there. And the system is not working half the time, because these kids are in 2012, their brains are stimulated on all their stuff and to be forced to sit down and go through the curriculum . . . [she shook her head as if to say, it’s not going to happen].

When Jenna and I talked about styles of teaching and disciplining, she said that she did not intend to be teaching the class she was currently teaching. Teachers being placed in classrooms that they are not equipped to teach seems to be common practice in the teaching profession; any warm body will do. Jenna commented, “This year I’ve just been on survival.” She described how difficult it was for her to navigate her way through important aspects of teaching that added stress to her already stressed mind and body.
They philosophize and talk about marking and assessment; it’s such a huge topic right now, but how to even use the programs could be really useful. . . . Luckily a teacher gave me a half hour tutorial on her own time, on setting up my marking system. (Jenna)

I felt frustrated that Jenna had to experience unnecessary added stress. If the BC Ministry of Education modelled support for novice teachers, a program would be in place to ensure a smooth transition that established their feelings of belonging and job satisfaction.

Jeff was my only male volunteer. He completed a Bachelor of Human Kinetics degree and then a 1-year teacher education degree specializing in Fine Arts and Media from UBC. He has practiced as a TOC for 4 years in which he taught everything from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Last year he taught a Grade 4/5 split. In 2012–2013 he is teaching Grade 5. The interview was conducted in his home. It was comfortable, quiet, well lit, and welcoming. Jeff was articulate, and thoughtfully and enthusiastically answered all of my questions. I found his comments about self-care as a teacher especially relatable to the procession of modelling from the BC Ministry of Education to the grassroots of today’s classroom teacher. Referring to self-care, Jeff said:

Well that’s something else which is a huge issue with teachers is being able to have an after-school activity to do, like whether it be meditation, my girlfriend (also a teacher) does yoga, and I play a lot of sports. The whole job of a teacher it seems like it can never really end. If you’re focussed on your job then you just get bogged down, and I think you get burned out. [In the] staff rooms you can see people are burnt out and people aren’t getting enough exercise or eating properly. We teach this in the classroom, but I doubt teachers are getting what we teach.

Jeff talked about incentives for teachers such as a gym and shower room. I believe Jeff touched upon a vital piece of the puzzle and that is self-care. The BC Ministry of Education plies
teachers with expectation upon expectation, but how does the ministry model that they understand the physical and emotional toll this puts on teachers? Jeff said that burn out is evident in the staff room. How does the ministry model respect for the well being of teachers, and how do TTIs model the importance of self-care in curricula? How can teachers effectively model self-care to their students when it is not modelled to them?

There are fewer male teachers in elementary school, and Jeff said that “as a male teacher in the classroom it’s really important to be a role model to them because a lot of them have never had a male teacher before, up until this point.” My impression of Jeff was that he took his role of teacher (and male teacher) extremely seriously, yet he had an element of fun and vibrancy that was evident and somewhat infectious.

All my participants spoke about the difference between elementary and high school teaching. Both Natalie and Jeff spoke about the importance of connecting with other teachers in the staff room, and Jeff added, “I know in some high schools you’re lucky if you can make it to the washroom in your 10 minutes.” (I could relate.)

Lucy, an energetic, experienced high school counsellor, concurred with Jeff’s comments. Lucy was my first interviewee after conducting my pretest and classroom observation. We met in her school office, which appeared too small for all that she had going on. Piles of paper and books occupied every available space. At the time of the interview she was working with a group of students to raise funds for a particular charity. The atmosphere in her office bubbled with her excitement about this project. She spoke highly of the students who were involved. She had a bag of money (funds), and I wondered about her bookkeeping methods in this seemingly chaotic space. Someone came to the door and asked for something, Lucy reached into a pile, pulled out the sought-after documents, and handed them over—this was organized chaos.
After Lucy signed the interview consent form and reviewed the METAS (MOE, 2012b), I asked this question: “What have you witnessed in relation to novice teachers and their abilities to manage and provide safe nurturing classroom environments?” That was the one and only question I asked Lucy because she started talking and did not stop for one hour. She answered all my questions and more without actually being asked more than the first one. Keeping up with her was challenging, I admired her steadfast focus on my topic. Lucy commented that high school teachers must often decide whether to go to the washroom or prepare for their next class. She said that in some schools, “the washroom is too far away from the classroom so the teacher doesn’t have time anyway.” A major concern for Lucy was the limited amount of knowledge that novice, and some experienced teachers had about the mental state of (some) youth. She felt that teachers were not sufficiently prepared to recognize or deal with a teen who might be suicidal. Lucy said, “Some teachers with 20 years experience don’t know social protocol. Don’t know when to report a student that may have threatened suicide. Sometimes they [teachers] stay quiet thinking it will go away.”

Cohen (2006) states, “Suicide (typically associated with depression) is the third leading cause of death among adolescents and is responsible for more deaths in this age group than all other illnesses combined (Office of the Surgeon General, 1999)” (p. 208). Cohen says that, “despite the importance of these findings, teacher-education programs do not train educators to recognize signs of possible mental health problems. These problems can have very real, even fatal outcomes” (p. 208). Although I did not further pursue this topic with Lucy it occurred to me that teachers are faced with daunting responsibilities. In relation to the METAS how well do TTIs equip novice teachers to “foster the emotional . . . [and] social development of students”
(MOE, 2012b, p. 4), and further to that, how well is the emotional health of novice teachers’ monitored and supported?

My interview with Megan opened a window into the lack of attention that is given to a novice teacher in relation to his or her own emotional well being. Megan graduated from SFU with a Bachelor of Arts in English and minor in French. After upgrading her math she completed a 1-year PDP program at SFU to earn her BEd. Megan has taught Kindergarten and Grade 3 in French immersion. She is teaching French immersion Kindergarten in the 2012–2013 year. Of all my participants, Megan’s journey through her teacher training, practicums and novice teaching experiences was the most compelling. Although all my participants pointed out weaknesses in their teacher training and transitions from training to practice, Megan described a harrowing compilation of circumstances starting with her training.

I didn’t actually have a very good experience. . . . My experience was very specific to the French module, so coming out of it I didn’t feel prepared. . . . There were 48 people [student teachers]; we were elementary and secondary, we were FSL [French Second Language], and French immersion and Francophone, and we were all together. (Megan) Megan’s faculty advisor was changed half way through her program. She had connected well with her first advisor:

I got positive feedback with a little constructive criticism. . . . I work much better than if I get a lot of [pause], I shut myself down and I have a really hard time building myself back up to where I need to be. . . . She [the new faculty advisor] gave me really weird feedback and was not supportive, so I hung back, it was really tough . . . and they switched schools for my [second] practicum. Normally they set you up with a teacher
that is willing to take on both practicums. It was a job share, and one teacher didn’t want to do it twice. (Megan)

Megan requested to teach French immersion Kindergarten but was assigned to a French immersion Grade 5/6 split classroom that she said she was barely qualified to teach: “So there were a lot of hick-ups for me” (Megan). I asked her if she commiserated with her fellow classmates, and she said she did not often connect with them but she said that she did not think “anyone had a very positive experience.”

Throughout the entire interview Megan smiled and talked about her love of children and her desire to teach. I actually felt sadness for the manner in which Megan’s emotional well being had been ignored during her training. Surely she is not alone. How did the BC Ministry of Education model treat Megan with dignity? I asked Megan what she thought about the attrition rate for teachers within the first 3 to 5 years of teaching, she said:

Yup, I mean to feel you have to reinvent the wheel and everything. It’s time consuming. And how to put the curriculum together . . . it was depressing, like I was depressed for a period of a year, which is a hard concept to deal with. Around October or November, I was saying, “I don’t want to do this. I can’t do this. I’m not going to work tomorrow.” Patterson (2005) writes,

The new teachers who left the school I focused on almost never did so because of the challenges of teaching, the long hours, or the low pay. They left because they believed that they were in impossible situations in which they would never experience success or career satisfaction. (p. 21)
Patterson also reports that beginning teachers (0 to 3 years experience) were more often given the difficult teaching arrangements, such as sharing or moving classrooms, along with the more challenging teaching assignments (p. 22).

It is a shame for the profession to lose loving, kind teachers such as Megan simply because their needs are not respected. Megan did speak highly of an advisor and a couple of practicing teachers who supported and helped her in positives ways. The willingness to share curriculum materials is up to the individual practicing teachers. Megan worked with several teachers who were not willing to share materials; this is what she is referring to in her comment about reinventing the wheel. Patterson (2005) states, “As professionals, we owe it to one another to improve the way we treat our newest and most vulnerable colleagues” (p. 23).

Summary. Modelling arose in the discussion as an action or behaviour that faculty advisors or sponsor teachers engaged in with my participants. Modelling behaviours included demonstrating classroom management strategies, explaining the marking system, or sharing materials. Whether understood as modelling or not, negative modelling also occurs when faculty advisors and sponsor teachers do not assist student and novice teachers in supportive ways. Standard 2 of the METAS states, “Educators act with integrity, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the profession” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4). My participants described inconsistent and unpredictable experiences with regard to how they were received and supported as student teachers during their practicum, as TOCs, and as novice teachers.

My participants spoke of the modelling of self-care as something they wish they had had. Self-care, in the form of taking breaks in the staff room as a means to connect with colleagues and engaging in after-school activities to maintain fitness and well being, was something that
was promoted by many educators to their students, but the time for self care was not facilitated or prioritized by school administrators for their teaching staff.

**Classroom Environment and Resources**

**Esthetics and safety.** The esthetics of a classroom may seem trivial, yet I would argue that one way for school boards to demonstrate respect for teachers and students is in their caring for the environment in which the latter work. I was hard pressed to find any redeeming features in Natalie’s classroom, including the room temperature. The METAS say that “educators are responsible for fostering the esthetic, physical, social and vocational development of students . . . are responsible for the . . . physical safety of students . . . are knowledgeable about how children develop as learners and as social beings” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4). Even though Natalie’s classroom met minimum requirements for conducting science experiments, it was not an inviting work environment. It also occurred to me that it was not a safe environment. When I asked her about classroom safety, bullying, and cliques, Natalie told me that her TTI only touched on the subject:

> I remember a little bit, and I do remember some role playing, but I don’t remember learning any particular philosophies or methodologies in terms of bullying and cliques. I do remember being taught how to deal with a fight, if there’s ever a fight in your classroom. Our recommendation was to move the desks and chairs out of the way. Give them a safe place and take obstacles away from reach, and send students out for help, one to the office and one next door.

Upon reflection, I realized that Natalie could in no way move lab benches made from heavy slabs of granite; her classroom was not a safe environment. In keeping with the METAS (MOE, 2012b) requirement for classroom safety, I specifically asked my participants: “Tell me how your TTI prepared you to recognize and deal with bullying and cliques.”
Melissa graduated from UVic last April with a BEd. UVic has a 5-year program that consists of 2 years prerequisite work focussed toward a bachelor’s degree, and 3 years of teacher training. In total, UVic student teachers complete three practicums. Melissa’s practicums were in Grade-3, Grade-5/6-split, and Grade-1 classrooms. UVic’s teacher training program is well respected in the lower mainland of BC. To answer my question about bullying, Melissa said,

It was always discussed but I never felt like we received any training. A lot of the teacher education program I find is theory based—but there’s nothing that says, “here’s a strategy, and here’s a strategy.” So obviously we read about cliques, you know about bullying, but we were never really given anything concrete.

Melissa described a system that one of her sponsor teachers used to address issues of bullying, although she did not think it effective. She did recall an incident of cyber bullying that started near the end of her practicum. She said it was taken very seriously. Jeff also confirmed his school took every incident seriously. He said students are taught about nonviolent communication (NVC) and how to solve problems between themselves using NVC (Center for Nonviolent Communication, 2012). Jeff was aware that cliques start to form in Grade 4, but said that he had not experienced any clique formations in his classes. Jeff stated that he learned skills in his training, but “more on the job in special development, Pro-D [professional development] and in-service, not so much in training. There are quite a few workshops [available].”

Megan also reported that “we [in TTI] did touch on it; we had a guest speaker come in to our module. As I said it was a large module. I remember hearing a lot about cyber bullying.” She described a situation that arose in her practicum amongst some Grade-6 girls in which a clique was starting to form.
It was happening on the playground; it wasn’t happening in the classroom. I was told by one of the supervisors; so I thought, “Okay, I’m going to start checking in with these girls to get a picture of what was going on.” And I had a ringleader, and she decided she was best friends with “this girl” and nobody else was allowed to play with them.

Megan said it was unfortunate because it was near the end of the school year that up until then had gone well. With guidance from the school counsellor Megan, taught a “Friendship Unit” to the class.

I had books and we read them. We did it in English because the French element wasn’t strong enough to really discuss. And we went through the rules of friendship. It was as successful as it could have been. . . . I was lucky in a sense that it was the last month of school, because you know I am able to make that decision before too much damage is done, that they can be in separate classes next year. But I do worry about the ringleader. Megan said she had a “phenomenal parent group” and everyone was on board to support the best outcome for this situation.

Pat, a teacher updater, taught high school 20 years ago for 5 years. At the time of this interview she had just completed a 1-year refresher course from UBC that qualified her to re-enter the teaching profession. Our interview took place on her deck. She appeared somewhat stressed, and I could not help feeling that she regretted volunteering to participate in my research. Before our interview started she told me that she would be taking a call during the interview. I practiced my relaxation skills to aid us both through the interview process.

When I asked Pat about her knowledge of the METAS (MOE, 2012b), specifically as they related to classroom safety, bullying, and cliques, she rolled her eyes and said:
I just read those things sometimes and I just wasn’t to roll my eyes. They want you to be everything to everybody. It’s not really addressed; it’s just assumed that you know how to do this, and I think providing skill in classroom management helps you to provide a safe environment. . . . In the courses I took it wasn’t part of the instruction, but one of my classmates did a presentation on it, but it was something that she chose to do. They didn’t talk about how to deal with that kind of stuff.

Pat explained that as a teacher updater, she chose the courses she wanted to take so possibly there was a course offered that addressed bullying and cliques but she did not choose such a course. Benítez et al. (2009) say that “although bullying is a phenomenon which directly affects teachers, they receive little preparation in how to handle it. One way to correct this situation is to include specific content about bullying within their initial university curriculum” (p. 192). This is a repeated sentiment throughout literature referring to TTIs’ responsibility to their student teachers as a means to understand and prevent bullying and bully-like behaviour in our public and private schools.

Teacher updaters have the advantage of teaching experience as well as life experience. They are upgrading to re-enter a profession that has new and different challenges. How can the BC Ministry of Education and TTIs ignore the issue of bullying and classroom safety in their teacher updater program? I argue that this is an opportunity missed in BC’s TTIs, and could result in injustice to the children and youth they are meant to protect. Given this oversight in the teacher updater program, I raise the following question: How is the BC Ministry of Education demonstrating the importance of fostering safe nurturing classrooms and the emotional and social development of students as stated in the METAS? (MOE, 2012b).
Jenna commended her sponsor teachers for modelling an effective system that handled conflict between students. She witnessed this system at work and described it thus:

In difficult situations with students the teachers worked as a team. One teacher took charge and unravelled what the kids were up to and created a shift [in students’ thinking] and the issue stopped. Teachers had a communication system set up to stop bullying and cliques. This is a community school, and everyone knows everyone else.

Jenna explained that all the parents of the students involved were informed and contributed to the solution.

As with my other participants, Jenna also said that her TTI did not offer specific skills to deal with bullying or cliques. Admittedly, as each participant reported his or her lack of training to deal with bullying, I had difficulty with practicing value neutrality, which Holloway (1997) describes as a “concept [that] means freedom from personal values” (p. 162). Holloway goes on to say that “value freedom is now seen as impossible” (p. 162). A qualitative researcher must illustrate value commitment, or in my case my commitment is to safe and learning environments for students. Beran (2005) points out that “it is unlikely that they [student teachers] would have developed knowledge and skills on bullying during their training since this topic is not presented in university curriculum materials or program descriptions” (p. 47).

**Classroom diversity.** The topic of classroom environment includes the issue of learning diversities amongst students. The METAS say “educators demonstrate an understanding of individual learning differences and special needs. This knowledge is used to assist educators in making decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4). I asked my LCT participant Ruth to tell me her experiences of student and novice teachers’ preparedness to understand diverse learners. Ruth began by saying, “You get the
shining star student teachers who get it, and then you get the other ones that come in and look like deer in the headlights.” She suggested that sponsor teachers put their student teachers in the LCT room,

So they could really see how difficult it is for some kids. . . . I say every new teacher should have to go and teach in that type of an alternate program for at least their first year so they really get an understanding of how hard these kids’ lives [pause] some kids lives are.

My question also encompassed teachers’ understanding of cultural diversity amongst students in their classrooms. Melissa said that she took two elective courses in her initial teacher training in English second language learners along with an English Second Language (ESL) diploma program from UBC outside her TTI program; therefore, she felt comfortable with diverse learners. In reference to cultural diversity, Melissa said that in her ESL program she learned about “cultural ambivalence . . . a concept of the student not wanting to talk about their culture, whether they’re new to the country or not, because they don’t want to be singled out. . . . Teachers really have to tread lightly.”

As my interviews progressed it became evident that much of the discourse that my participants found valuable came from programs they had taken outside their initial TTI program. Melissa spoke highly of the elementary level Orton-Gillingham training for students with dyslexia (Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators, 2012). Melissa said, It’s a different way of teaching, and I find it works for all students. I’ve been using it with students and all grade levels. Their big thing is creating pathways through different ways of learning. It’s very systematic; it’s quite a strict program to follow.

My now retired Kindergarten teacher friend also spoke highly of the Orton-Gillingham training.
Megan for the most part struggled to find redeeming things to say about her training, although in reference to learning about diversity she said,

There were a few things that we picked out of the PDP program, one was technology and the other was diversity. . . . We talked about it a lot, the different types of learners, and how to integrate that into all the lessons, so that everyone takes a bit out of it.

Megan said her social studies professor wanted her student teachers to demonstrate how their assignments could be applied to First Nations students.

She would look at our work and say, “Well, how are you going to relate this to First Nations, so what’s important about First Nations here, what can we honour, what can we add to it, and what does this mean to the kids?” She was actually one of the really good teachers.

Jeff’s experience with the Fine Arts and Media program from UBC was positive. He felt he received adequate training in learning diversities. However, Jeff did point out that teaching split classes offered challenges of diverse learning, and he said, “That’s one thing that they don’t really prepare you for.” He spoke about the differences between Grades 4 and 5 curricula and the difficulty in teaching to these two groups in the same classroom. I mentioned the Kindergarten and Grade-1 students being put together, Jeff said, “They are completely different worlds, the difference between some of them are some [Kindergarteners] are 4 years old and some Grade Ones are 7 years old.” Jeff said that split classes are becoming the norm as a method to fill up classrooms. He said his students’ learning styles became evident as the year progressed. In his particular PDP, he said, “We learn about all the different styles of learning, but in terms of diversity of cultures, ESL, and LAC, we don’t learn a whole lot about that in the program.” He told me he had an ESL student in his split class, so this meant that he had to
prepare three lesson plans to accommodate the needs of everyone. Again I felt overwhelmed thinking about the workload for teachers, which changes from year to year.

Referring to being taught how to demonstrate respect for diversity in the classroom Pat said,

I don’t remember that really being addressed, at least not in the courses I took. I guess it’s modelled in the university classroom because we were quite a diverse group and so we respect one another. A lot of it’s just common sense. . . . I don’t know.

Pat talked about students now have individual education plans that were not in existence 25 years ago. Pat went on to ask,

And how do you meet the needs of all these kids, and it sounds like from the reading I did, they’ve pulled funding away from special education, and so a lot of these kids are not supported as they used to be.

Natalie also said she did not receive adequate information about diverse learners during her initial teacher training, but she came to life when describing her 2-year diploma program she had recently completed at SFU. She enthusiastically described the program:

When I did my diploma program at SFU that was fabulous, I can’t say enough. It was in supporting diverse learners, so essentially special ed [education], but a bit broader than that. And I would say that what I learned in first semester in that program should have been in every single teacher education program. You know, I was sitting there thinking, “How on earth is this not something that I did when I was doing my PDP, like this stuff is essential.”

Natalie described the basics of the program and methods used to teach, such as knowing oneself and understanding the cognitive abilities of each student. She interjected with, “and I
would say that a lot of his [Mel Leevene’s] work should be taught in PDP, because it’s all about learning styles.” Natalie described it as basic information that is easy to understand and follow, “There’s eight cognitive functions, so it’s not like it’s this huge overwhelming thing . . . and there’s solutions for all eight.”

Ruth agreed that student teachers “need to have at least one course in learning disabilities, so they have an understanding.” She promoted a DVD program called Beyond F.A.T. City by Richard Lavoie (1989). This method places the educators, parents, and other professionals in the position of the struggling student so that these adults glean a better understanding of the child’s and youth perspective as a student. Ruth said that if teachers do not understand the abilities or disabilities of a student their first inclination is to get frustrated and get mad at them and then the kid feels worse about themselves, and that doesn’t work . . . if students don’t have confidence and feel good about themselves, no matter what their background, they won’t do well.

Ruth also brought up a point that dimly resonated throughout my interviews: the regulation of experienced teachers to meet the METAS (MOE, 2012b) was dubious. Ruth boldly stated,

There are lots of teachers out there that aren’t doing a good job, who don’t care how they should care. It needs to be a clearer process to identify those teachers that need to be made to go do some kind of course work or remediation where they’re not getting it, because colleagues can’t identify colleagues. Every year there should be one Pro-D [professional development] day spent on talking about the different types of kids, how to connect to those kids, what your professional responsibilities are towards those kids.
This sentiment is not new. Fang (1996) asserts that “rather than simply providing teachers with more theories, educators must help teachers understand how to cope with the complexities of classroom life and how to apply theory within the constraints imposed by those realities” (p. 59). Ruth pointed out that sponsor teachers need to be “chosen more carefully.” Certainly my participants described vast differences in their experiences with sponsor teachers.

**Summary.** Classroom environment in relation to classroom safety did not appear as an issue for my participants even though teacher isolation was discussed. Classroom environment and resources in relation to learning did present as an issue in the growing number of split classes and diverse learners, along with the reduction of support staff.

None of my participants credited their TTI for teaching them useful, lasting strategies to prevent or address bullying. Standard 1 of the METAS states, “[Educators] are responsible for the emotional and physical safety of students” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4). This is a fundamental expectation by parents and students. In today’s school climate, education for bullying and bully-like behaviour is a necessity; however, as described by my participants, BC’s TTIs and even some school administrators are not adequately addressing this need.

Discussion in reference to resources suggested that further or extra teacher education outside the initial TTIs contributed greatly to my participants’ ability to teach diverse learners. Natalie reported that her diploma program in learning diversities should be taught in all TTIs as basic teacher training curriculum. One participant suggested that all student teachers spend a portion of their practicum working in a learning centre with facing the arduous demands of teaching diverse learners.

Differences in child and youth development in split classes were discussed as learning diversities. Jeff reported that TTIs do not prepare student teachers for the diverse realities of
ESL students and split classes. There are no mandatory systems in place that provide novice teachers with established curriculum. The interviews revealed that it is up to the individual school or an individual practicing teacher to share resources with a novice teacher.

**Mentorship**

“In order to make the practice-based learning effective and coherent with theoretical studies, the school practice tasks and activities should be carried out purposefully following an established programme in cooperation with a supervising teacher” (Krull, 2005, p. 144). In relation to mentorship and support, I was interested in the following aspects:

- As student teachers, how were my participants encouraged to seek support?
- Did they seek support either from their TTI’s advisory facilitators, their TTI’s counselling department, in-service employment assistance program, or their sponsor teachers?
- What was their experience with being supported during their initial teacher training, during their practicums, or as novice teachers?

Even though Pat’s initial training was 25 years ago, she still remembered her sponsor teacher. Pat said she “ran her class like a military camp.” Pat shared her experiences of the refresher course that she had just completed:

[My] faculty advisor was very much about building rapport. She told me I was too serious, [and that I needed] to joke around a little bit with the students. I can’t imagine 25 years ago, my sponsor teacher ever saying that.

I got the sense that Pat had a good connection with her faculty advisor. She described a conversation they had: “I said [to my faculty advisor] there’s never a perfect day, and she said you’re right, and you shouldn’t try to have a perfect day, she said you look for the perfect
moments, where you connect.” Pat’s advisor coached her on how to reflect effectively. It occurred to me that Pat’s advisor was most likely a person she could turn to for support at any time in her career.

In training, Jeff relied on his cohort for support, but said,

Once you’re out of that and you’re actually teaching, support is a really big issue because it can actually be quite a lonely profession. Especially if you don’t have an SEA [special education aid] you can be the only adult in the classroom all day. It’s so important to go to the staff room on breaks.

Megan’s experiences were the most diverse of all my participants. Besides her large diverse cohort, she incurred many changes throughout her practicum. Megan said,

There was nothing wrong with my longer practicum, but she [sponsor teacher] was much younger, she had only been teaching for 5 or 6 years, so she was great but she didn’t have quite as much experience and knowledge behind her.

As with other participants Megan also addressed feelings of isolation and said that she always ate lunch in the staff room with her colleagues. As our interview progressed, Megan opened up and shared that even though she had some supportive teachers who were willing to share their teaching and curricula materials, it was really one of the most emotionally difficult times in her life. She sought council outside the school environment. She said this was a personal choice, indicating,

I did not want to come off as not being [her words trailed off]. . . . Again this was just me feeling overwhelmed that year. I didn’t really feel comfortable asking questions about it. This year I’m more confident, I might call HR [human resources] and ask if they have a counselling service, and [yes] they do, but I was embarrassed to do that [then].
Megan said her cohort was warned about the stress of first year teaching. Krull (2005) suggests, “In certain cases timely psychological support to the student or beginning teachers during their field experiences could play an even bigger role in their professional growth than instructional support” (p. 147). It would seem reasonable, given that the METAS state teachers are responsible for the emotional development of their students (MOE, 2012b), that the BC Ministry of Education would in part be responsible for the emotional well being of its teachers.

Although there was nothing specifically in place in Pat’s refresher course that addressed mentorship or classroom management, she described learning management skills and techniques from both her sponsor teacher and faculty advisor. Pat was advised to “let some things go.” She was taught methods to build rapport with students such as shaking hands with students as they entered the classroom, keeping students’ birthdays marked on a calendar, having the students wear name tags initially, and learning students’ interests as quickly as possible as a means to match teaching material to their interests. Pat said she was told to “lighten up, be friendlier with the students.” She admitted discomfort with letting go of control, but was told it would work in her favour. Essentially, what Pat described was a sense of being known, understood, and supported by her sponsor teacher; this is exactly what children and youth want from their teachers.

If they exist at all, mentorship programs vary amongst school districts and individual schools. Jeff, Natalie, Jenna, and Melissa had family members who were teachers or they conducted their practicums in the schools that they attended as youth. They spoke about relying on these family members for support. Natalie and Jenna both practiced in the school that they had attended as youth, and as students they had developed a warm connection with their
teachers. Natalie’s first year was spent as a TOC for a former teacher “who liked me; she left all her resources for me.”

When asked directly how the importance of seeking support was taught throughout teacher training and teaching practice, Melissa said that she did not recall it being mentioned except to say:

Go to your supervisor if it’s during a practicum, but no one really wanted to do that because they’re writing your final report, which is so important for when you’re getting a job. I felt that I never wanted to let them know that we [cohort] were stressing out. But it was never kind of said, “If you’re struggling in this area this is where you should go.”

At the time of this interview, Mary had just retired from her career as an elementary school counsellor. She pointed out how ethics play a role in offering support. She said that novice teachers must ask for help or assistance.

One of the teachers’ ethics is you are not allowed to go in and advise someone; you have to wait to be asked. So if you were to go into a class because you notice the kids are jumping off the walls, you can’t go in there as say, “Gee, would you like a little help with class management? I think you should have a little more structure in here?” You’re not allowed to do that.

Mary said she has witnessed many teachers cry over parent–teacher interviews, lessons falling flat, and students being disrespectful. She said that novice teachers soon learn “who on staff is really good at this and that.” I could not help but think of Megan. Not all novice teachers have the confidence to seek assistance from colleagues who may or may not be willing to help.

Is it not up to school administrators to align novice teachers with a mentoring experienced teacher? Ingersoll and Strong (2011) write that “he data show that beginning teachers, in
particular, report that one of the main factors behind their decisions to depart is a lack of adequate support from the school administration” (p. 202). Patterson (2005) concurs: “Schools and districts that create respectful, supportive environments in which new teachers receive equitable treatment will automatically provide their students with a better education and a chance for a more fulfilling future” (p. 23).

**Summary.** In Vancouver’s lower mainland schools, administrators choose how much time and effort they wish to dedicate to mentorship programs, and more often it would seem that mentoring is left up to those individuals who are willing to assume the role. Some of my participants described being mentored in random acts of kindness. They expressed gratitude for the simplest show of support from an advisor, sponsor, or practicing teacher. Megan described how grateful she was when a practicing teacher shared her teaching materials, and Jenna expressed relief when a teacher took the time to explain the marking system. Standard 8 of the METAS states, “Educators support, mentor or encourage other educators and those preparing to enter the profession” (MOE, 2012b, p. 4), yet it appears that the BC Ministry of Education has not established resources to ensure that this standard be met. Mary confirmed this finding, indicating that student and novice teachers soon learn who they can turn to for support and guidance in their schools. Jeff commented that teaching is a lonely profession and that support was a problem. I contend that the ministry has failed to implement its own standard, and thus is failing the children and youth attending our public and private schools in BC through lack of regularized mentorship support for teachers.

**Fostering Relationships – Managing the Classroom**

Meeting the needs of students’ learning diversities alone is daunting, particularly for novice teachers with little to no support, but what of the responsibility for students’ social
Both Natalie and Jenna commented that the majority of students in their classrooms do not want to be there. Natalie, Megan, and Melissa described having experiences of clique formations and some bully-like behaviour amongst their students, yet the majority of my participants reported receiving little or no training in their TTIs in this area.

Jenna and Natalie made reference to the BC Ministry of Education’s new 21st-century-learner approach to teaching and learning (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001). Jenna said, “You know, I like the idea of 21st century learning, [but] students being independent learners is really utopic and hard to do. What you’re dealing with in high school is that they [students] don’t want to be there.” Natalie said,

This is a little off topic, but this whole 21st century learning thing, one of the huge assumptions that that model relies on is that students are motivated, and a lot of them are not, so it’ll be interesting to see how that plays out.

I again felt overwhelmed for my participants and the expectations that the teaching profession demands. The intentions of all stakeholders—the BC Ministry of Education, TTIs, and teachers—are to reach elementary and high school students so they may learn. There is a plethora of literature on this topic, yet it would seem that a unanimous resolve eludes us. Fan (2012) writes:

The way the teacher talks to students either formally or informally matters to them. A friendly professional relationship with students is capable of stimulating and motivating them to learn. Knowing the needs of individual students, establishing motivational relationships with them and being sensitive to their needs and problems is socially and psychologically healthy. (p. 487)
When I asked my participants to tell me about their experiences with classroom management and teaching styles, Natalie and Jenna expressed both concern and surprise about how they sometimes talked to their students to gain control of the classroom. Jenna talked about a teacher that yelled and barked as a method of control:

I don’t want to be like that . . . [but] my style’s changed, because I had to do the yelling thing sometimes, I had to do the lecturing thing I never thought I would do. I never intended to teach the class I’m teaching, so I haven’t seen that being modelled to me. My sponsor teacher told me I needed to own my classroom, to be in charge when dealing with rude students. I did not know how to deal with it, because I’m too nice to start.

Jenna said she is still working on styles and lesson plans.

Natalie described her first practicum:

I wasn’t able to form those relationships with the kids so I wasn’t getting the personal satisfaction out of it. I felt like all I was doing was the classroom management and having to be a—bitch—[laughter] basically. I’m not typically, [pause] I like to balance the warm with control. And it’s a fine balance, and a tricky balance, trying to get yourself to that authority place but still have students feel open to you.

Megan also spoke about finding a balance with her Grade 6/7 split class:

Grade 6/7 is a lot more regimented, but a lot more curriculum, a lot more concepts and a lot different dynamics socially, and the kids don’t like you as much. But I think one of the things I struggle with and will be for several years is finding that balance, because I do like to be fun. I think the kids learn more if they’re engaging with you in that way.

But you also need to be in charge, control, and also having the confidence to be the boss.

. . . I think discipline is something that doesn’t necessarily get, [pause] we touched on it,
obviously we discussed it . . ., discipline methods, you know, “Read this book and do this, and it will be wonderful,” [laughter] but you know it’s a different feeling when you’re in the classroom.

Pat said in her refresher course work “classroom management was not really addressed . . . I learned more doing my practicum . . . I’m organized, I’m serious, I’m not real laid back, you know, to go with flow kind of teacher.” Although Pat found classroom management was not addressed in the course, her sponsor teacher gave her classroom management tips. After Pat had sent a student out of the classroom for being disruptive she was instructed to deal with it quietly, don’t embarrass the student sort of thing, that was the message I was getting, whereas I think if you’ve warned them and the kid is [pause], I don’t have a problem sending children out, I would close the door next time.

Apparently the child in the hall continued to disturb students in the classroom.

Jeff talked about a management technique that teachers joke about “that you start off in the beginning of the year being stricter, which can make the rest of the year easier, and then you can cool off after Christmas, maybe [laughter].” Jeff said he does not send students out of the classroom:

I try to keep the students in the classroom as long as possible. I try to manage my class just from my own role modelling in how I interact with the students, and I hope that I create a safe and secure environment. I think that’s the first step, because if you can create the secure environment where students are comfortable when coming in and just being there and they feel they can talk to you safely, most of the classroom management issues won’t be as severe.
Ruth’s passion for teaching special needs children was palpable. She described the importance of connecting with her students:

Our school has the gifted learning disabled, which is one of the most difficult children to teach because their level of discouragement is far higher than any other child. Other than transforming a life, I don’t know why you’d want to go into teaching—it’s not for the money, the stress is high. The only thing that keeps me going is the kids. The kids love the crazy teacher.

It occurred to me that Ruth had mastered balancing fun while maintaining control of her classroom. She was well versed in teaching approaches for diverse learners, and said:

Kids deserve to be treated fairly and respectfully from where they’re coming from not from the ideal standard. Teenagers all look rebellious. Teenagers aren’t able to say, “I’m hurting inside, I feel stupid, I don’t understand.” They’d rather look angry and mean, so then they’re in control.

Mary had witnessed many novice teachers start their elementary school teaching career. She said that with the younger students a teacher needs to know how to communicate to capture the students’ interest. Mary said,

Most of the university education until they hit the classroom is written—that’s a completely different way of communication, so you need a dynamic way of speaking. You know there should be a lot more: What do I look like in front of the class? Am I interesting? Can I captivate the kids?

I think Mary was suggesting that teachers practice self-reflection by asking those types of questions.
I asked my teacher participants to tell me how their TTIs taught them the practice of self-reflection, in what way did they practice self-reflection, and did they find the practice of self-reflecting useful? Unanimously, all seven teacher participants indicated that self-reflection was a large component of their teacher training, specifically using a journaling method. Referring to her training, Pat responded, “Yes, that was big, yes that was a huge component—reflecting.”

When I asked Pat her view or opinion of the practice of self-reflection, she said,

I reflect on how I can reach a particular student, or what I need to do, something differently to connect separate from curriculum, so I think about that. There isn’t enough time in the day; you’ve got a lot of work to do, to think how can I connect with all of these different students who just don’t seem to have anything to want to do with the program or me.

I appreciated Pat’s candidness and blunt honesty about her teaching experiences; she quickly made herself vulnerable. She credited her sponsor teacher for encouraging her through her practicum and said that student teachers need to be taught to focus on what went well in their classrooms, not just what went wrong.

Part of Jenna’s requirement for graduation was writing a visual journal that she had to contribute to daily. Even though she found this practice helpful she did not continue it due to time constraints. I was interested to know if any of my participants were taught to self-reflect about students that they did not necessarily like. Jenna said,

We did talk about kids that would bug you; but I don’t think we talked about how to deal with it or reflect on it. We read articles, and we had to write responses to the [her words trailed off]. I had some kids that really bugged me, but what happened is I started to just love them and it made it better. And they’re not bad kids, they’re just being teenagers.
Melissa said that in her PDP students were told to assess their units after teaching them. She developed a grid with three columns titled successful, challenges, and changes. She then quickly jots down necessary information in the appropriate column to refer to when teaching the same unit again.

Reflection was also an important piece of Jeff’s PDP. Jeff said, “We literally had to reflect on our reflections.” Then he proceeded to describe a typical day for a teacher that explained why putting time aside for self-reflection was an impossible luxury.

The reflection that you do is more on going, like, “This isn’t working,” [and] I have to change it on the fly. You can make a quick note of it as to how you changed it, “This didn’t work.” But by the end of the day you’re so exhausted, burnt out, that I would be at the school until 5 p.m. and then I’d just have to get out of there. So I would be prepping for the next day, I’d have this massive bin of marking, I’d take it home and mark until about 6 or 7 or so, have dinner, continue marking and prepping for the next day until 10 p.m., and at the end of the day you just don’t have time to reflect. Maybe later on, in 10 or 15 years, if I have more time I can sit down and reflect [laughter].

Interestingly, Megan mentioned that she remembered having to journal in her PDP but currently she said she “informally reflects quite often.” Then she described to me what she does if she is feeling “bugged” by a kid:

If I’m having trouble with a kid I try to sit down with them once or twice that day and say, “Hey, what are you doing after school? Like what?” or “How’s your hockey game going?” or “Look at that Lego piece. What are you building?”

**Summary.** Fostering relationships arose in the discussion in relation to my participants’ ability to develop student–teacher bonds while learning how to manage their classrooms.
Balancing the two was a recurring sentiment throughout my interviews. Natalie aligned her feelings of disillusionment with not having a connection with her students during her first practicum. Jenna said she was told to “own” her classroom. Jeff mentioned the long-running teacher “joke” about not smiling in the classroom until after Christmas break as a management technique. A few of my participants felt that they could not be both strict and nice at the same time. Natalie and Jenna recognized the importance of fostering connections with their disinterested high school students as a method of engaging them to learn.

My participants described the use of self-reflection as a method to evaluate the lessons that they taught rather than a technique to understand their beliefs and values. Self-reflection was seen as luxury that none of my participants could fit into their full and sometimes hectic teaching schedules. Participants’ TTIs required that student teachers used journaling as a self-reflective method but there were no provisions made to support this or other self-reflective methods after graduation.

My participants received very little to no instruction from their TTIs about how to deal with students they did not like, although they indicated that when this occurred they strived to find ways to connect with those students, usually with positive results. Jenna reported that she ended up “just loving them” in the end.
Chapter Five: Discussion

Retaining Integrity

Whilst developing creativity,
also cultivate receptivity.
Retain the mind like that of a child,
which flows like running water. (Lau Tzu, 1984, Retaining Integrity section, para. 1)

In my note taking during my university course work I listed “personal reasons for doing research.” The list included the following: find answers to some unsolved problems, gain insights into a particular issue, and contribute to our knowledge in the field. At the time I wrote this list I had no idea of what I would awaken to while conducting my research. I was deeply moved by each of my participants’ longing, desire, and dedication to the children he or she taught and continues to teach. They all described many obstacles and challenges in their training and work, yet their love of the kids was the resounding reason for them to master those challenges. Learning about my participants’ lived experiences as students and practicing teachers was like peeling an onion. Each layer of the onion revealed another aspect of the teaching profession that I had not known or thought about, such as Jeff’s comments referring to the challenges of the learning diversities due to split classes, and Natalie’s and Jenna’s comments referring to the newly implemented 21st century learner curriculum (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001).

There was consensus from all my participants that the TTIs fell short in addressing classroom management and strategies to prevent, identify, and resolve bullying and clique formation. Although all my participants did have some knowledge of techniques and strategies to address bullying and cliques, they indicated that they did not learn them from their initial TTI.
All my participants reported that the expectation for reflective practice was continuous throughout their teacher training. The common reflective method taught to them was journaling. Due to time constraints, none of my participants continued to journal as a reflective method. They did, however, invent on-the-spot methods to evaluate lessons. I believe that this approach to reflection limits exploration into thoughts, feelings, and actions and reduces the reflection to simply evaluating lessons. Of course evaluating lessons is extremely important and useful, but it is not helpful when struggling with feelings of inadequacy.

The lack of structure for support and mentorship became evident as my participants described their individual experiences ranging from no support at all, to having a couple of helpful people provide support, such as a sponsor teacher, faculty advisor, practicing teacher, or family member. None of my participants described being mentored from their TTI into their first year of teaching. As practicing TOCs, my participants described being placed in grades that they were not trained or prepared to teach. Melissa was caught off guard once and relied on her smartphone for a quick lesson in fractions before entering a classroom.

The literature on the topic of teachers’ preparedness to manage a classroom dates back for decades. Teachers continually ask for strategies in classroom management and discipline. Natalie said that as a TOC she had no idea how to respond to a student who volunteered an incorrect answer. This is such a simple thing, and yet students are looking at teachers for guidance and social protocol. A teacher responding negatively to an incorrect answer could potentially stop a student from contributing at all, or even worse turn the student against the teacher.

Much of the literature that focuses on teachers’ strategies in classroom management states that each situation is different, one technique does not fit every situation, and there is
danger in using only behavioural methods to manage a classroom (Bromfield, 2006, p. 189). Based on my research, I suggest that strategies can and should be taught to student teachers. By not teaching effective strategies to manage children and youth, we are setting both teacher and student up for frustration and failure. Pat said her sponsor teacher told her to shake hands with her students as they entered the classroom or put their important dates on a visible calendar such as their birthdays and sports events. Pat was also instructed how to handle a disruptive student—these are strategies. I witnessed Natalie smiling at her students as they entered the room, using “shh” as a means to quiet them, and reminding a disruptive student that she was in charge in the classroom—these are strategies. I believe in the “fake it till you make it” theory. It may indeed feel strange for a novice teacher to be saying “shh” to a room full of children or youth, but as the teacher practices saying “shh” and the students respond positively, it soon becomes natural to the teacher, as do all practiced strategies.

Lucy pointed out that carpenters and mechanics apprentice before receiving their certification or licence. Lawyers article, doctors intern, yet teachers graduate and are immediately thrown into positions for which they are often not prepared. Of course all my participants had worked and volunteered with children and youth in some capacity, often summer camps, but this type of interaction does not compare to being faced with 30 Grade-10 teenagers of whom only six are interested in the subject being taught. Further to this, the TOC or novice teacher is isolated in the classroom, and quite possibly has no support system in place. These findings reveal the BC Ministry of Education appears to be doing a less than adequate job of demonstrating the METAS (MOE, 2012b) to their student, novice, and practicing teachers.

All my participants want to be “nice” teachers. They want their students to like them. They know the importance of student–teacher relationships. I suggest that TTIs must teach their
student teachers management strategies, techniques, and skills so that once in the classroom they may feel in control and capable, confident, and supported. They need to know that being nice and being liked will naturally occur as a result of them demonstrating effective strategies for managing their classrooms.

I have referred to several programs designed to address issues of bullying, mentorship, developing student–teacher relationships, and discipline, such as the Cool Tool (Langland et al., 1998) and induction programs. There are many more such as the Roots of Empathy (2013) and the MindUP™ (The Hawn Foundation, 2011) programs, in which safety and respect are taught. Programs such as these are excellent, but they have not been adopted by the TTIs. It is up to schools and school districts to provide many of these alternate programs; however, it appears that only a select few teachers receive this information along with the necessary support to implement it in the classroom. I am truly astounded by the fact that all my participants stated their TTIs touched on bullying but did not provide adequate training to deal with bullying effectively; thus, I argue that the BC Ministry of Education is failing to provide adequately safe and caring schools.

My goal with this project is to contribute to solutions for these problems. From my vantage point, some solutions appear obvious and simple to resolve, while others seem more difficult, such as the development of a common curriculum for all BC’s TTIs. As I examined what works, my data suggest that UVic offers a high quality teacher training program. It is 5 years in total, including three practicums, and has developed a positive reputation on Vancouver Island and in Vancouver’s lower mainland. Although it would be an enormous undertaking for all of BC’s TTIs to adopt UVic’s teaching curricula, it is not impossible if all stakeholders are willing.
Several of my participants mentioned Alberta as having established some principles to support teachers and students, such as capping Kindergarten classrooms at 16 students with full-time special education assistants. In my literature review, I described how Estonia used induction programs for novice teachers, referred to as junior teachers for their first year (Krull, 2005, p. 152). The induction program mimics an apprenticeship program, in which the apprentice or junior teacher is being paid while being mentored and supported by experienced teacher employees (Krull, 2005, p. 152).

If we want to know what children need, we must listen to the children—they will tell us. If we want to know what teachers need, we must listen to the teachers. For many years teachers have been asking for more strategies in classroom management, more support through the first 0 to 5 years of their career, smaller class sizes so they may reach all the diverse learners in their classrooms, and more support staff such as special education assistants. All my participants cited these resources as necessary and extremely lacking. Jeff pointed out that there is a push to eliminate divisions as a method to fill classrooms; this will result in more combined or split classes, which will further increase the complexity of teachers’ preparation. Based on my findings, I argue that the BC Ministry of Education is not adequately demonstrating respect for the diversity of the children and youth they serve by combining grades while reducing support staff.

Even though the BC Ministry of Education’s (2008) report on Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools, the Premier’s anti-bullying program (Clark, as cited in Government of British Columbia, Newsroom, 2012; Meissiner, 2012), the newly implemented 21st century learner curriculum (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001), and the METAS (MOE, 2012b) all address the major concerns for educators, parents, and students, there appears to be little support
for the teachers who are expected to implement the standards that are demanded of them. I believe the TTIs curriculum must be injected with a humanistic approach. Teacher education institutions can learn from the wisdom of Margaret Wheatley (2006): “The deeper that physicists peer into the nature of reality, the only thing they find is relationships. . . . Many of our frequent and recurring failures in organizations are the consequence of not comprehending the importance of relationships” (para. 1–5).
Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

Using a qualitative, phenomenological research method I investigated how well TTIs teach their student teachers to understand and implement the BC Ministry of Education (2012b) METAS into their teaching practice. The current tenor of BC’s education system is strained. Teachers have demonstrated dissatisfaction with the ministry in recent job action, yet the ministry continues to request teachers meet teaching standards. In response, teachers have had to take their own actions: “Although teachers will resume administrative and supervisory tasks, Lambert says her members will vote . . . on whether to withdraw extracurricular activities or stage a full-scale strike to protest the back-to-work legislation” (Canadian Press, 2012, para. 4).

To develop a better understanding of teachers’ lived experiences in relation to the METAS (MOE, 2012b), I used a purposeful sampling method in which I interviewed novice and experienced teachers and experienced school counsellors. I also observed two high school science classes being taught.

My research revealed both strengths and weaknesses in BC’s education system. Figure 2 (below) illustrates an effectively functioning education system in which the feedback loop demonstrates the importance of connecting our school-age children and youth (Circle #1), to the TTIs’ curriculum developers (Circle #3), through the BC Ministry of Education’s policy makers (Circle #2). Although I place the ministry policy makers at the top of the feedback loop, school children and youth are classified as number 1 in importance to the overall system.
The METAS (MOE, 2012b) dictate ways in which teachers must conduct themselves to meet the needs of their students and contribute to their profession. Themes emerged as I explored my participants’ lived realities in relation to the ministry’s expectation of teachers to implement the METAS (see Figure 1 in Chapter 4). The themes coincide with and hence represent aspects of the METAS that I determine to be weak or lacking in TTIs curriculum. Figure 3 (below) demonstrates the areas of weakness shown as a disconnection between policy makers and TTIs, thus causing an inordinate focus on teachers and school administrators to
effectively implement ministry policies. In relation to my themes, Figure 1 (found in Chapter 4) also identifies the ministry’s disconnection from the school children it serves. Figure 3 illustrates that school administrators and teachers channel their focus to the ministry in an attempt to communicate the necessity for resources and support so they may meet the needs of their students.

Figure 3. British Columbia’s current education system.

Note. METAS = Ministry of Education Teacher’s Act Standards.

Figure 2 illustrates a healthy functioning education system in which the Ministry of Education assumes a hierarchal position directing policy to TTI’s that incorporate policy into curriculum development and educational instruction. In comparison to Figure 3 that illustrates a dysfunctional education system in which the Ministry of Education directs policy directly to
public and private school administrators and teachers, bypassing the TTI’s curriculum developers and educators.

My participants described various degrees of knowledge of the METAS (MOE, 2012b) that they learned from their teacher training. Some participants commented that as student teachers, when they had role played a real-life classroom scenario, no one took the role play seriously; thus, the impact of being a novice teacher faced with 30 high school students was lost.

Consistencies throughout my participants’ stories spoke to the necessity for more classroom management skills and techniques, better support systems for students and teachers, established times for self-care, and a more effective regulatory system. Each participant described different experiences in relation to her or his practicum, both positive and negative depending on the sponsor teacher, classroom dynamics, and amount of support from administration and faculty advisors. With each story a new element to the job of teaching became evident, at times causing me to feel overwhelmed.

BC’s Ministry of Education excels in policy development. The METAS (MOE, 2012b) read like a roadmap to success for every school-age student in the province, meant to ensure the enhancement of teachers’ job satisfaction. However, my research revealed that resources and TTIs curriculum limit BC schools from implementing the METAS with consistency. I contend that the METAS must be modelled at the grassroots level in BC’s TTIs. The TTI curriculum must include teachable strategies in which teacher educators demonstrate or model to their student teachers dignity, respect, and caring “in action”; I refer to this curriculum as an Action Curriculum (AC).

An AC for teachers would include role playing human dynamics such as re-enactments of real-life bullying scenarios in schools, school children displaying disrespect or disinterest,
overcrowded classrooms with diverse learners, and so on—the possibilities are endless. AC espouses language use as a tool to develop student–teacher relationships and model respect, safety, and caring, such as kindness, mindfulness, empathy, support, gratitude, and happiness. It would seem reasonable that student teachers should practice using these words during their course work in order to develop authentic speech and understanding of the positive impact these words have on an individual’s emotional well being and in group dynamics. It is not uncommon to hear Kindergarten teachers use these words to encourage children to share and get along, but this language dissipates as the grade levels increase. An AC re-implements this language into TTIs course work for all levels of education, spanning from Kindergarten to Grade-12 lesson planning and delivery. The METAS (MOE, 2012b) are fundamental to AC development; in particular, the standards that I focussed on in my research are key, for TTIs have a responsibility to prepare their students for the realities of teaching.

Further to providing an AC, the BC Ministry of Education needs to demonstrate the art of mentorship to novice teachers. I contend that the ministry should design a teacher mentorship program (TMP), in which teachers who have recently graduated from TTIs are mentored through their first year of teaching by experienced practicing teachers. Practicing teachers must be offered incentives to participate in the TMP. In addition, a possible screening process for those participants may be necessary to regulate program quality. The role of a mentor includes supporting the individual needs that arise for the novice teachers and TOCs as well as providing tutorials in such things as the marking system. The TMP needs to be designed to foster the emotional well being of novice teachers and TOCs, thus decreasing stress and increasing job satisfaction.
The constant strength in BC’s education system resides in its dedicated teachers. Fan (2012) says, “Indeed, teachers influence students by the kind of social atmosphere they establish in their classrooms and by the patterning of their interaction with individual students” (p. 490). Cohen (2006), however, writes that “in theory, research shapes policy, which in turn results in teacher-education requirements. In practice, the relationship among policy, research, and teacher training is much more complicated and rarely so logically related” (p. 219). The BC Ministry of Education has an obligation to resource the curriculum development of TTIs so that all graduating students are prepared to manage a classroom at any grade level. The BC Ministry of Education has an obligation to provide resources for a mentorship program for all graduating students through their first year of teaching, thus modelling respect, dignity, and care for our educators and the children they teach. Cohen states, “If federal and state policymakers and education schools continue to ignore the importance of social-emotional competencies, I believe that this amounts to a violation of human rights. Our children deserve better. The country deserves better” (p. 228).
References


Appendix A: Standards for the Education, Competence, and Professional Conduct of Educators in British Columbia


1. Educators value and care for all students and act in their best interests.

Educators are responsible for fostering the emotional, esthetic, intellectual, physical, social and vocational development of students. They are responsible for the emotional and physical safety of students. Educators treat students with respect and dignity. Educators respect the diversity in their classrooms, schools and communities. Educators have a privileged position of power and trust. They respect confidentiality unless disclosure is required by law. Educators do not abuse or exploit students or minors for personal, sexual, ideological, material or other advantage.

2. Educators are role models who act ethically and honestly.

Educators act with integrity, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the profession. They understand that their individual conduct contributes to the perception of the profession as a whole. Educators are accountable for their conduct while on duty, as well as off duty, where that conduct has an effect on the education system. Educators have an understanding of the education system in BC and the law as it relates to their duties.

3. Educators understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development.

Educators are knowledgeable about how children develop as learners and as social beings, and demonstrate an understanding of individual learning differences and special needs. This knowledge is used to assist educators in making decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management.

4. Educators value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families and communities in schools.

Educators understand, respect and support the role of parents and the community in the education of students. Educators communicate effectively and in a timely manner with parents and consider their advice on matters pertaining to their children.

5. Educators implement effective practices in areas of classroom management, planning, instruction, assessment, evaluation and reporting.

Educators have the knowledge and skills to facilitate learning for all students and know when to seek additional support for their practice. Educators thoughtfully consider all aspects of teaching, from planning through reporting, and understand the relationships among them. Educators employ a variety of instructional and assessment strategies.
6. Educators have a broad knowledge base and understand the subject areas they teach.

Educators understand the curricular, conceptual and methodological foundations of education and of the subject areas they teach. Educators must be able to communicate effectively in English or French. Educators teach students to understand relevant curricula in a Canadian, Aboriginal, and global context. Educators convey the values, beliefs and knowledge of our democratic society.

7. Educators engage in career-long learning.

Educators engage in professional development and reflective practice, understanding that a hallmark of professionalism is the concept of professional growth over time. Educators develop and refine personal philosophies of education, teaching and learning that are informed by theory and practice. Educators identify their professional needs and work to meet those needs individually and collaboratively.

8. Educators contribute to the profession.

Educators support, mentor or encourage other educators and those preparing to enter the profession. Educators contribute their expertise to activities offered by their schools, districts, professional organizations, post-secondary institutions or contribute in other ways.
Appendix B: Participant Letter of Invitation

Title: Teacher Training Curriculums and the Ministry of Education Teachers’ Act Standards

Researcher: Sarah Stirling – [telephone number] [email address]

Royal Roads University Supervisor: Dr. Bernard Schissel – [email address]

Royal Roads University Ethics Review Board:

Program Head, MAIS Department RRU: Dr. Wendy Schissel – [email address]

I would like to invite you to contribute to a research study that I am conducting as part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) degree from Royal Roads University. My name is Sarah Stirling, and my credentials with RRU can be verified by contacting Dr. Wendy Schissel, Program Head, email [email address]

If you are a;

• a preservice teacher or a 1st, 2nd, 3rd year substitute teacher
• completed your first year, second or third year of teaching
• are an experienced teacher, over 8 years
• are an experienced school counsellor, over 8 years

you are invited to be a participant in a study that will identify the degree to which British Columbia teacher training institutions meet the Ministry of Education Teachers’ Act standards in relation to beginning teachers’ preparedness to provide a safe environment that offers respect for diversity and development of the emotional well being for students in their classrooms.

In this research study the term, “classroom management” refers to classroom management and the ability to provide safe nurturing classroom environments that offer respect for diversity, development of emotional well being, social responsibility, and healthy student-teacher relationships.

Each interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis, and should take 1 to 2 hours. The interviews will take place during the summer months, July and August 2012. Once the analysis is complete and the report is written all recorded and transcribed information will be destroyed. All information given will be anonymous in the final report. No specific comments will be attributed to any individual or institution.

It is your right to not answer a question if you so choose. You may withdraw from participating in this study at any time by informing me, without prejudice. If you withdraw from the study any information given will remain confident.

If you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact Sarah Stirling [telephone number] [email address] between 8 AM and 4 PM. I would like to thank you for contributing to this study.

Sarah Stirling
Appendix C: Interview Questions

Teachers: Given the METAS to read

1. Are you familiar with these standards? Tell me your thoughts and feelings about them?
2. In what way did your teacher training prepare you to manage a classroom?
3. Tell me about your practicums.
4. How were you supported and mentored during your practicums and as a first year teacher?
5. Tell me what your TTIs taught you about teaching and showing respect for diverse learners and students with special needs.
6. What methods were you taught in your teacher training to prevent and deal with bullying and classroom cliques?
7. In what way was developing student-teacher relationships taught and modeled to you in your TTI.
8. What were you taught about the practice of self-reflection? Do you practice self-reflection?
9. Tell me about your teaching style; has it changed?
10. Is there anything else you would like to say or add to this interview?

Experienced Counsellors and LC Teacher: Given the METAS to read

1. Are you familiar with these standards? Tell me your thoughts and feelings about them.
2. Tell me what you have witnessed in relation to student and novice teachers’ preparedness and ability to manage a classroom of diverse learners.
3. Have you witnessed novice teachers seeking help? How does your school support novice teachers?
4. Is there anything else you would like say or add to this interview?
Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

Title: Teacher Training Curriculums and the Ministry of Education Teachers’ Act Standards

Researcher: Sarah Stirling: [telephone number] [email address]

Royal Roads University Supervisor: Dr. Bernard Schissel: [email address]

Royal Roads University Ethics Review Board:

Program Head, MAIS Department RRU: Dr. Wendy Schissel [email address] [telephone number]

This research study is part of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) degree at Royal Roads University. My name is Sarah Stirling, and my credentials with RRU can be verified by contacting Dr. Wendy Schissel, Program Head.

This document constitutes an agreement to participate in my research study. The objective of this study is to identify the degree to which British Columbia teacher training institutions meet the Ministry of Education Teachers’ Act standards in relation to beginning teachers’ preparedness to provide a safe environment that offers respect for diversity and development of the emotional well being for students in their classrooms.

In this research study the term, “classroom management” refers to classroom management and the ability to provide safe nurturing classroom environments that offer respect for diversity, development of emotional well being, social responsibility, and healthy student-teacher relationships.

Each interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis, and should take 1 to 2 hours. Interviews will take place during July and August 2012. The collected data will be securely stored in my locked office. Once the analysis is complete and the report is written all recorded and transcribed information will be destroyed. All information given will be anonymous in the final report. No specific comments will be attributed to any individual or institution. By signing this consent form you agree to keep the comments of others confidential to insure anonymity.

It is your right to not answer a question if you so choose. You may withdraw from participating in this study at any time by informing me, without prejudice. If you withdraw from the study any information given will remain confidential.

By signing this form, you give free and informed consent to participate in this research study. If you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact Sarah Stirling between 8 AM and 4 PM. I would like to thank you for contributing to this study.

NAME: ______________________

SIGNATURE: ______________________ DATE: ______________________