

2021

Teachers' Perceptions of Challenges Implementing Best Practices for Inclusion

Julie Deshann Miller
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Julie Deshann Miller

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Judith Tanner, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Andrew Alexson, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Mary Lou Morton, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2021

Abstract

Teachers' Perceptions of Challenges Implementing Best Practices for Inclusion

by

Julie Deshann Miller

EdS, Walden University, 2017

MA, Tennessee Technological University, 2000

BS, Middle Tennessee State University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2021

Abstract

In a small, rural district in southeastern United States, general and special education teachers have not consistently provided inclusionary practices for students with disabilities to help them be successful in the general education setting. The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive are effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the strategies, and what teachers think they need to help them improve implementing inclusion practices. The conceptual framework that grounded this study was Knowles' adult learning theory. The research questions addressed the inclusionary practices teachers use, challenges of inclusion, and teachers' perceptions of what they need to help improve implementing inclusion. A basic qualitative research design was employed in which interview data were collected from 10 general education teachers and 8 special education teachers with a valid state teaching license and at least 1 year of teaching experience in an inclusion classroom. Using NVivo 12, the study findings revealed that coteaching was the inclusion practice that the district implemented for students with disabilities and the challenges that teachers encountered when implementing inclusion were a teacher's perception of inclusion, lack of common planning or collaboration time, and the district's sparse support. Teachers thought more common planning time, additional instructional materials to support students with disabilities, and visiting other schools where inclusion was successful would be most beneficial for them to improve the implementation of inclusion. This study may contribute to positive social change by improving academic gains for students with disabilities through providing teachers with a better understanding of inclusionary practices that could potentially improve graduation rates in the district.

Teachers' Perceptions of Challenges Implementing Best Practices for Inclusion

by

Julie Deshann Miller

EdS, Walden University, 2017

MA, Tennessee Technological University, 2000

BS, Middle Tennessee State University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2021

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my mom and dad. My mom has always been my biggest supporter and encourager throughout my life. My dad has always believed me in even when I did not. Both of my parents have sacrificed so much for my education and I am eternally grateful to both of them.

To my daughter, Abby, you have been my inspiration. You have never once discouraged me to follow my dreams. You have shown me that by following your dreams anything is possible. Thank you for your unconditional love and support.

To my son, Cody, you have been my ray of sunshine. I could be down or discouraged and all I had to do is talk to you and you always put a smile on my face and determination in my heart. I hope that one day I can inspire you the way that you have touched me.

To my grandson, Henry Coleman, you have shown me faith and strength. Your arrival in this world has shown everyone that you are going to accomplish great things in your life. Your continued strength guides me to accomplish this degree.

Last, to my loving savior, God, you have given me strength and guided me to use this education to touch other's lives with your words of wisdom. I am thankful to be able to freely worship and pray to you anytime and always.

I love all of you bunches and could not have done this without any of you!

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my Walden chair, Dr. Tanner, for all the continuous support, advice, and words of wisdom that she has offered me throughout this journey.

Dr. Tanner, I could not have done this without you!

I would also like to acknowledge my Walden co-chair, Dr. Alexson, for all the support that he has provided me throughout this accomplishment. Dr. Alexson's words of wisdom have come in very helpful in this long partnership!

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	2
Problem Statement.....	3
Research Questions.....	8
Conceptual Framework.....	8
Nature of the Study.....	9
Definitions.....	10
Assumptions.....	11
Scope and Delimitations.....	12
Limitations.....	12
Significance.....	13
Summary.....	15
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	16
Literature Search Strategy.....	17
Conceptual Framework.....	17

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable	19
General Education Teachers' Knowledge of Inclusion	19
General and Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion	22
Professional Development and Collaboration Devoted to Inclusion	24
Challenges of Coteaching	26
School Change for Inclusion.....	27
Summary and Conclusions	29
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	32
Research Design and Rationale	32
Role of the Researcher	35
Methodology.....	36
Participant Selection	36
Instrumentation	38
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	39
Data Analysis Plan.....	41
Trustworthiness.....	42
Ethical Procedures	43

Summary.....	44
Chapter 4: Results.....	46
Setting.....	47
Data Collection.....	49
Data Analysis.....	55
Results.....	64
Theme 1: Perception/Positive and Negative Perceptions of Teachers.....	64
Theme 2: Coteaching Training/Adequate Training to Coteach.....	66
Theme 3: Collaboration times/Collaboration Time Among Teachers.....	68
Theme 4: Preparedness/Teachers Prepared and not Prepared to Coteach.....	69
Theme 5: District support/Teachers Needed District Support for Inclusion.....	71
Theme 6: Planning times/Common Planning Times Needed for Teachers.....	73
Theme 7: Amount of support/Varied Support Time for Teachers.....	74
Theme 8: More needs for support/Needs for Additional Support for Inclusion.....	76
Theme 9: Professional development needs/Teacher Recommendations.....	78
Summarizing Answers to the Research Questions.....	80

Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	82
Summary.....	84
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	86
Interpretation of the Findings.....	88
Interpretation of Findings of RQ1.....	89
Interpretation of Findings of RQ2.....	93
Findings of RQ3.....	98
Limitations of the Study.....	102
Recommendations.....	103
Implications.....	104
Conclusion	105
References.....	107
Appendix A: Interview Questions	120
Appendix B: Interview Guide.....	122
Appendix C: Interview Protocol.....	126

List of Tables

Table 1. Percentage of Nondisabled Students and Students With Disabilities Scoring Proficient or Advanced	5
Table 2. Demographic Information.....	48
Table 3. Correlation Between Research Questions and Interview Question	51
Table 4. Meeting Platform and Duration of Participant Interview	53
Table 5. NVivo12 Codes and Transcript Evidence	56
Table 6. Codes and Percentage Responses	59
Table 7. Themes and Theme Statements	61
Table 8. Theme and Conceptual Framework	62

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the education setting, the term *inclusion* is defined as providing differentiated instruction to students with disabilities in the general education setting (Gaines & Barnes, 2017). Many research studies reflected the challenges for general education teachers providing inclusion as lacking instructional support and having minimal knowledge about inclusion, time management issues, and minimal collaboration for planning with the special education teacher. The current study needed to be conducted in a small, rural district in the southeastern United States because general and special education teachers there were faced with the challenges of providing inclusion and Common Core standards increased the academic rigor for both general and special education students in the district. The adult learning theory grounded this research by acknowledging learning assumptions that contributed to positive and negative learning experiences for adults (see Knowles, 1980). Gunnulfsen and Moller (2016) found that both general and special education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion became negative and the expectations for the students with disabilities were minimal in the general education setting if the teachers were not provided with common planning time, professional development, and coaching support for inclusion. This study may contribute to positive social change by increasing the learning opportunities for students with disabilities in preschool through eighth grade by improving their reading/language arts and mathematics scores on formative and summative assessments. In Chapter 1, I discuss the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study,

definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance before concluding with a summary.

Background

Common Core standards were adopted as education standards for students in kindergarten through 12th grade that require the teaching of in-depth thinking and problem-solving skills across all academic subjects (Gunnulfsen & Moller, 2016). The Common Core standards are the foundation of learning for most students in classrooms throughout the United States and the local district (see Weber & Young, 2017). Due to the district requiring inclusion, general and special education teachers needed to change their instructional practices to incorporate inclusionary practices for all students, including students with disabilities, to accomplish the academic growth necessary under the Common Core standards (Wedin & Wessman, 2017).

This study addressed the gap in practice by identifying the key reasons why general and special education teachers are not consistently providing inclusion practices to support students with disabilities. Orakcı, Aktan, Toraman, and Çevik (2016) found there was a significant demand for professional development opportunities to prepare general and special education teachers to better implement effective inclusion strategies. Gunnulfsen and Moller (2016) referred to the need to examine the views of administrators and teachers regarding professional development on providing inclusion in the classroom to meet the needs of all learners' instructional needs. This study was needed to address the challenges that general and special education teachers encounter while implementing inclusion.

This study may benefit general and special education teachers, administrators, and school systems where inclusion was practiced without fidelity. General and special education teachers have been found to benefit from learning to provide consistent inclusion practices to students with disabilities that enabled them to deliver Common Core instruction (Gunnulfsen & Moller, 2016). The adult learning theory guided this study by helping general and special education teachers relate the need to address the challenges of inclusion through self-motivation, connecting the learning, and building self-concept. When general and special education teachers can provide consistent inclusionary practices that result in academic growth for students with disabilities, administrators and school systems saw general and special education teachers' perception toward inclusion change from negative to positive (Koch & Thompson, 2017). This research study may contribute to positive social change by increasing learning opportunities for students with disabilities by providing general and special education teachers with an improved understanding and more successful implementation of inclusion, thereby potentially improving graduation rates, teacher self-efficacy, and job opportunities in the community.

Problem Statement

The problem under study was that general and special education teachers are not consistently implementing inclusion practices to support students with disabilities. In a small, rural district in the southeastern United States, teachers received professional development for inclusionary and coteaching practices. According to the special education coordinator, following professional development, teachers are observed and

coached (by instructional coaches) to ensure they implemented the professional development and yet, they were still not implementing the professional development. There was follow-up coaching after teachers attended training regarding inclusionary practices in which the instructional coach demonstrated, observed, and coached the teacher in the implementation of the inclusionary training. The administrators completed on-going formal evaluations and informal walk-through observations of the teachers. The principal reported that the results showed that teachers are not implementing best practices in the inclusion setting. Consequently, there was a need to determine why general and special education teachers are not implementing inclusion strategies for students with disabilities with fidelity in this district.

For the purposes of this research study, I refer to the district with a pseudonym, the Harris School District (HSD). I reviewed the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores for the HSD regarding nondisabled students and students with disabilities. The NAEP tests were taken in school districts every 2 years. In 2017, the NAEP reported that in the HSD, 42.49% of nondisabled students scored at or above proficient in math and 40.57% of nondisabled students scored at or above proficient in reading; however, 14.74% of students with disabilities scored at or above proficient in math and 7.77% in reading. When comparing nondisabled peers to students with disabilities, the scores declined drastically in math and reading for all 3 years that are reflected in Table 1. The NAEP scores from 2005–2009 also reflected that students with disabilities scored 5.5% lower in reading/language arts and 4.3% lower in math than their nondisabled peers (NAEP 2018). The percentages of students with disabilities who score

proficient or advanced in reading/language arts and math on state achievement tests in the HSD have continually decreased since 2013 with 2014–2015 being the only exception, when math scores increased. In Table 1, the percentage of nondisabled peers scoring proficient or advanced on the NAEP are compared to the percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or advance on the NAEP from 2013–2017.

Table 1

Percentage of Nondisabled Students and Students with Disabilities Scoring Proficient or Advanced

Subject	Year	Year	Year
	2013	2015	2017
Reading			
Nondis.	41.23	40.76	40.57
SD	25.86	25.76	7.77
Math			
Nondis.	47.12	46.77	42.49
SD	20.69	25.56	14.74

**Note.* Nondis. = Nondisabled students, SD = students with disabilities (NAEP, 2018)

Table 1 displays how general education student achievement on the NAEP test remained relatively steady as Nondis. declined five points in math, while SD declined more than 10 points.

Current researchers have stated that the general education setting in Grades Kindergarten through 12 has changed to meet the needs of students with disabilities through inclusionary services (Gaines & Barnes, 2017). Several studies have been conducted that explored the success of coteaching and inclusion among general and

special education teachers, differentiation strategies, teachers' perceptions about inclusion, and purposeful professional development for inclusion (Brennan, 2019; Gaitas & Martins, 2017; Oraki et al., 2016; Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Casserly and Padden (2018) concluded that coteaching with special education teachers required professional development, a variety of teaching practices to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and a desire for learning to provide the instruction needed to ensure the success of inclusion. Evidence from a similar study showed that common planning times for general and special education teachers and coteaching were vital attributes for a positive, inclusive culture (Strogilos, Stefanidis, & Tragoulia, 2016). In their study on inclusive education, Pancsofar and Petroff (2016) reported that the teachers' experience, attitudes, and professional development opportunities were the variables for successful coteaching. Gaines and Barnes (2017) found that teachers often rely on administrators for support and professional development opportunities when implementing inclusionary practices. Despite this evidence, there was a gap in the literature related to the reasons why general and special education teachers were not consistently implementing inclusion practices to support students with disabilities. The gap in practice at the focus setting (i.e., inclusion practices not being implemented) and the gap in literature (i.e., the reasons inclusion practices are not being implemented) provided the motivation for me to research what teachers perceived to be the challenges of implementing inclusion practices in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive as effective inclusionary practices, why they were not implementing the practices, and what teachers thought they needed to help them improve implementing inclusion practices. Kirby (2017) found that when providing inclusion practices, a challenge for teachers was their attitude and expectations of students with disabilities. Teachers were more supportive of the isolation of students with disabilities rather than inclusion due to their feelings of inadequacy of not being prepared to teach all students (Kirby, 2017). An improved understanding of inclusion may result in general and special education teachers being more attentive to the educational needs of students with disabilities. Another challenge for teachers using inclusionary practices was how to provide effective instruction for students with disabilities using grade-level academic standards (Gavish, 2017). Mestry (2017) stated that high academic success is possible for all students if teachers' goals were focused on growth for all students. When teachers involved in inclusionary teaching were provided with coaching support, student success and teacher expectations grew for students with disabilities (Mestry, 2017). This basic qualitative study may contribute to improved inclusionary teaching practices, positive teacher perceptions toward inclusion, and grade-level growth for students with disabilities by improving the teachers' understanding of inclusion by planning professional development based upon teachers' suggestions along with tracking the educational progress of students with disabilities.

Research Questions

RQ1: What inclusion practices do general and special education teachers implement for students with disabilities?

RQ2: What are the challenges that general and special education teachers encounter when implementing inclusion practices for students with disabilities?

RQ3: What do general and special education teachers think they need to help them improve implementing inclusionary practices?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that grounded this basic qualitative study was the adult learning theory (see Knowles, 1989). Adult learning theory was developed to focus on five assumptions: “self-concept, adult learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation of learning, and motivation to learn” (Knowles, 1989, p. 77-78). Through the lens of the five assumptions of the adult learning theory, I explored how general and special education teachers perceived the challenges of implementing inclusionary best practices (see McCray, 2016). In McCray’s study, general and special education teachers evaluated their learning independence by determining how they learn either self-directed or by an instructor. Teachers reflected on individual experiences using inclusionary practices to determine the success and failure of the practice. The teacher’s willingness to learn new practices for inclusion decreased the challenges of implementing inclusionary practices (see McCray).

In this study, I applied the adult learning theory to the research problem and research questions. Use of the theory allowed me to gather data through interviews with

the general and special education teachers. I investigated what inclusion practices were being provided to students with disabilities, determined the teachers' challenges when providing inclusion, and heard what teachers thought would help them improve the implementation of inclusion. The assumptions of self-concept, adult learning experiences, and motivation to learn were used as a guide when creating the interview questions. The assumptions of readiness to learn and orientation of the learning informed my analysis of the data from the interviews. Yarbrough (2018) conducted a study that focused on how adult learners, general and special education teachers, with previous online learning experience progressed during online learning that they had planned. When general and special education teachers collaborated to determine the importance of consistently providing best practices for inclusion, then all members involved in the learning related positive past inclusion experiences to new learning, problem-solved to apply the new learning to inclusion classrooms, and realized the need to use the inclusionary practices for students (see Yarbrough). In Chapter 2, I provide a more detailed explanation of the adult learning theory that is derived from the literature.

Nature of the Study

I used the basic qualitative research design for this study because I collected interview data from general and special education teachers about what inclusion practices they used to provide students with disabilities instruction on a daily basis, why inclusionary practices are not being implemented, and what they thought was needed to improve the implementation of inclusion (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). A researcher conducts a basic qualitative study when they are focused on understanding a particular

phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The participants provide descriptive views regarding their experiences with the phenomenon (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Knowles's (1980) adult learning theory grounded this study focusing on how adults learn, why they learn, and motivators for learning.

The population of this study consisted of general and special education teachers from a district in a small, rural county in the southeastern United States. Merriam and Grenier (2019) suggested that 10 participants are a good number to use when collecting qualitative data. I selected 10 general and 8 special education teachers who taught third through fifth grades. The sampling technique was purposeful because the administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers either planned inclusion professional development, provided support, or taught in an inclusive learning environment. The data were collected through one-on-one interviews. I conducted systematic data analysis through using a NVivo 12 thematic coding process followed by open coding.

Definitions

Common planning: A specified time for teachers to meet, discuss, and plan best practices that meet each students' individual needs (Wilson, Woolfsen, & Durkin, 2018).

Coteaching: Two teachers in one educational setting providing teaching, reteaching, enrichment, assessment, and planning to meet the needs of students (Casserly & Padden, 2018).

Inclusion: General and special education teachers providing students with disabilities and nondisabled students in the general education classroom with learning opportunities to learn academic standards and socialization skills (Brennan, 2019).

Professional development: Providing teachers, either through formal or informal settings, the opportunity to learn new teaching strategies, collaboration skills, self-motivation skills, self-reflection techniques, and coaching to promote student success (Koch & Thompson, 2017).

Proficient: Achieving mastery of the academic skills required per academic subject to show competency in an educational setting (Gunnelsfun & Moller, 2016).

Students with disabilities: Students who have a physical or mental impairment that limits major life activities and has documentation (i.e., testing or legal documentation) indicating the specific disability (Gaines & Barnes, 2017).

Assumptions

The first assumption in this study was that the general and special education teachers participating in the interviews would provide honest and truthful answers about the inclusion practices used and the possible challenges of implementing the inclusionary best practices. I also assumed that I, the researcher, would not influence or sway the teachers in their answers during the interview. Another assumption was that the data analysis and interpretation of the results clearly and concisely portrayed each participants' responses as accurately as possible. All three assumptions were necessary for the context of this basic qualitative study that focused on collecting individual interview data pertaining to the challenges of implementing best practices for inclusion.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to elementary general and special education teachers in a small, rural southeastern district in the United States. The participants were selected from Grades 3 through 5 in two elementary schools. The district was very small, consisting of two elementary schools and a middle school. The middle school was not included in the study because at the time of the study, I held an administrative role there. The population of this study was elementary general and special education teachers who either taught in inclusion classrooms, provided support for inclusion in-services, or planned inclusion professional development. Participants' number of years of teaching experience, age, and ethnicity were not delimited in this study. Due to only elementary teachers participating in the study, the results are not generalizable to middle and high school.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. I used purposeful sampling to gather data from 10 general education teachers and 10 special education teachers from a small, rural southeastern district in the United States. Therefore, the study was limited to represent only the inclusion practices and challenges to implementing inclusion for one district in one state and cannot be generalized beyond the scope of this study. The categories and themes were not intended to represent general and special education teachers providing inclusion throughout the United States. Purposeful sampling was used in order to include the participants, their inclusion practices, and their challenges and does not entirely represent the teachers within the school district. The data were limited to one interview

per interviewee and may not have captured more than what was occurring at that particular time.

Significance

This study addressed the gap in practice by identifying the challenges for why general and special education teachers were not consistently providing inclusion practices to support students with disabilities in the district under study. Orakcı et al. (2016) found that there was a significant demand to review professional development opportunities to prepare general and special education teachers better to implement effective inclusion strategies. Gunnulfsen and Moller (2016) referred to the need to examine the views of administrators and teachers regarding professional development for providing inclusion in the classroom to meet the needs of all learners' instruction. Professional development and teachers' views of inclusion were challenges for why general and special education teachers were not consistently providing inclusion services to support students with disabilities in HSD.

Common Core standards were adopted as education standards for students in kindergarten through 12th grade that require in-depth thinking and problem-solving skills across all academic subjects (Gunnulfsen & Moller, 2016). Common Core standards became the foundation of learning for all students in general education classrooms (Weber & Young, 2017). Deas (2018) discovered that 37 states in the United States and the District of Columbia had adopted Common Core standards as part of their state standards for academics. HSD is in 1 of the 37 states that has adopted Common Core standards. General and special education teachers needed to implement inclusionary

practices with fidelity for each student to make adequate academic yearly growth (Wedin & Wessman, 2017).

This study may benefit general and special education teachers, administrators, and school systems. General and special education teachers may benefit by learning to address the challenges of providing inclusion practices to students with disabilities, which will enable them to deliver Common Core instruction by providing solutions for general and special education to implement inclusion consistently (see Gunnulfsen & Moller, 2016). Administrators and school systems have seen general and special education teachers' motivation and desire to include students with disabilities increase in the general education setting because students with disabilities have had access to grade-level academic standards that show mastery by data tracking (Koch & Thompson, 2017). When the five assumptions of the adult learning theory guide inclusionary learning for general and special education teachers, then they could connect the benefit of addressing the challenges of providing inclusion to seeing academic gains for students with disabilities and the teachers' perceptions will change from negative to positive. This research study may contribute to positive social change by influencing academic success for students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms as well as improving general and special education teachers understanding of inclusion; thereby, potentially improving inclusionary teaching practices to produce grade level growth for students with disabilities.

Summary

In this basic qualitative study, I focused on the problem of why general and special education teachers are not consistently implementing best practices for inclusion in two elementary schools in a small, rural district in the southeastern United States. The purpose of this study was to investigate what current practices general and special education teachers are using, the challenges they encountered while implementing inclusion, and what teachers felt they needed to improve the implementation of inclusion. The three research questions aligned with the purpose of the study. The adult learning theory was the conceptual framework that grounded the study. I collected data for this study from one-on-one interviews with 10 general and 8 special education teachers. The study may contribute to positive social change by assisting teachers with possible suggestions to improve inclusion strategies and learning opportunities for students with disabilities. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the literature search strategy and conceptual framework as well as provide a review of the literature related to key variables and concepts from current, peer-reviewed resources that reveal the challenges of providing inclusion from different perspectives. The chapter will end with a summary and discussion of conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem for this study was that general and special education teachers were not consistently implementing inclusion practices to support students with disabilities in the HSD. The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive as effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the strategies, and what teachers thought they needed to help them improve implementing inclusion practices. The results of this literature review reflected the challenges of implementing effective inclusionary practices from different perspectives. The literature reviewed focused on changes in education for special education, the challenges of coteaching, purposeful professional development for regular and special education teachers, differentiation strategies, and teacher perceptions of inclusion. I also read previous dissertations pertaining to inclusion and possible challenges for the successful implementation of inclusion. The review of this literature increased my understanding of possible challenges that HSD faced while justifying the significance of the study and its application to the district.

In Chapter 2, I discuss general education teachers' knowledge of inclusion and the general and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion. This section also includes an exploration of the need for professional development devoted to best practices for inclusionary practices and challenges of coteaching. Finally, the review also supports school changes for promoting inclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted a thorough search of the literature to identify possible challenges of implementing best practices for inclusion. The sources I reviewed for this study were peer reviewed and published in the past 5 years, ensuring quality research literature. The Walden University Library and Google Scholar were used to locate online source. The databases of ERIC, SAGE, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, Public Administrators Abstracts, Research Starters Education, Teacher Reference Center, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley were searched. I used the following keyword search terms: *administration, inclusion, professional development, differentiation, teacher training, special education training, coteaching, leaders perceptions inclusion, teachers perceptions inclusion, academic accommodations, learning disabilities, individualized educational plan, disabilities education, school leaders inclusion, challenges to inclusion, social justice, education support, students with disabilities, inclusion awareness, special education results, common planning times, positive inclusion culture, and school change.*

Conceptual Framework

I used the adult learning theory as the conceptual framework to guide this study. The adult learning theory evolved from the research of Knowles, where self-directed learning was the focus of adult learning through motivation, experience, and application to personal life (Thiers, 2016). Human emotions have a great impact on an adult's learning capacity by allowing them to make positive or negative perceptions of the learning from an emotion the adult felt during the process of learning (Knowles, 1980). Knowles (1989) stated that adults needed a humanistic approach to learning where human

emotion and motivation both are factors in learning opportunities. Readiness to learn was a vital indicator of the role the adult would take when learning was necessary (Hartee, 1984). Adults do not learn at the same rate as younger students; therefore, adults should consider this when presented with new learning expectations.

The adult learning theory was developed to focus on assumptions of how adults learn. First, for adults to learn effectively, they must make connections between the new learning and their own life experience (Knowles, 1989). The adult learner's concept of himself/herself impacts how he/she learns (Hartee, 1984). If the adult does not have a positive attitude and cannot connect the learning to his/her own life, then the learning is not likely to be successful (Knowles, 1989). For learning to be a prosperous experience for the adult, the adult has to take responsibility and be motivated to learn (Thiers, 2016). If the adult felt that the learning was imposed upon himself/herself, then the lack of motivation diminished (Hartee). Lastly, adults need a safe learning environment in which they felt that risks could be taken without penalty (Knowles, 1980). According to the adult learning theory, the core of adult learning is found within the assumptions of making connections, self-concept, perceptions, motivation, and the availability of risk-free learning (Knowles, 1980).

Knowles (1980) stated that the fundamental purpose of the adult learning theory was to discover how adults learn best by seeing the value of the new learning to each individual. Adult learning differs from younger student learning; younger students learn because they are provided with an environment conducive to learning and offered

external motivators to learn (Knowles, 1989). However, adults choose to learn for the value that the learning brings to themselves (Yarbrough, 2018).

Knowles' adult learning theory provided this study with five key assumptions that showed how teachers related effective inclusionary strategies. The five key assumptions were the connection of new learning to the adult's life, the adult's self-perception, the willingness of the adult to learn independently, motivation to learn, and risk-free learning environment (Walker, 2017). In this study, I used the qualitative method, focusing on the challenges of implementing best practices for inclusion. The results of Walker's study revealed current practices for inclusion and the challenges of inclusion in elementary classrooms were the areas that needed to be addressed in this study. The adult learning theory guided this study regarding how and why adults learn to determine the challenges of providing effective inclusionary practices (see Theirs, 2016).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

General Education Teachers' Knowledge of Inclusion

In the education setting, the term inclusion is defined as providing differentiated instruction to students with disabilities in the general education setting (Gaines & Barnes, 2017). Several researchers have stated that challenges to inclusion are related to the general education teachers' knowledge of inclusion (Pugach & Peck, 2016; McFarland, 2018; Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017). Hannas and Hanssen (2016) discovered that preschool general education teachers' competency level at providing inclusion was minimal compared to special education teachers' competency level. Preschool and general education teachers only had one introductory class to special education during

their college experience, and they were then expected to provide inclusion practices with minimal support (Hannas & Hanssen, 2016). Bryant (2018) also concluded that beginning general education teachers had limited knowledge about inclusion. In Florida, Reyes, Hutchinson, and Little (2017) found that for teachers to gain recertification, they were required to earn only one college credit or professional development point equal to the credit for teaching students with disabilities. Their findings showed that one college credit pertaining to special education did not meet general education teachers' needs for providing inclusion services without frustration and negative attitudes from the teachers. College education classes provided general education teachers with a broad understanding of children with disabilities but minimal strategies for providing services in the inclusion classroom (Majoko, 2016). Majoko (2016) also found that the college special education class that a general education teacher took in the course of study was a basic class only defining student disabilities that general education teachers could see in a classroom setting. Majoko suggested that general education teachers should take multiple courses regarding special education with inclusion becoming the standard in many classrooms. A set number of courses may not be necessary for general education teachers, but Kocbeker-Eid (2016) claimed that the rigorous content regarding special education should be revised for universities. College curricula and professional development opportunities are needed to prepare teachers with a thorough knowledge of special education and differentiated instructional strategies to address special education students in the general classroom (Everett, 2018).

According to Alexander et al. (2016), an essential part of any teacher's college curricula and practicum experience involved exposing the teacher to a plethora of knowledge and scenarios about the broad spectrum of special education disabilities. General education teachers needed opportunities to express concerns with perplexing classroom instructional strategies that provide educational growth to special education students (Martzoukou & Elliot, 2016). McKay (2016) conducted a study on the frustrations and dilemmas of first-year teachers teaching inclusion and found that more research was needed to prepare general education teachers for inclusive classrooms because educational requirements are consistently changing to meet individual needs in the classroom settings. Ozmantor (2019) completed a study on 22 preservice teachers in a practicum setting in which data from 211 teacher reports required by the practicum supervisor were analyzed to determine teachers need training to provide inclusion services to reduce their stress, anxiety, and preconceptions about inclusion. The curriculum for education majors needs to be evaluated for the effectiveness of providing general education teachers the academic knowledge and strategies to teach inclusion students in the general classroom setting (Ozmantor, 2019).

General education teachers college curricula have provided them with minimal special education knowledge prior to college graduation (Sharp, Simmons, Goode, & Scott, 2019). In a Hong Kong study, Zhu, Li, and Hsieh (2017) concluded that teachers in all grades have students in their classrooms with learning disorders. Less than 50% of the teachers in their study were familiar with learning disorders before entering the classroom. College education classes provided general education teachers with a broad

understanding of children with disabilities but minimal strategies for providing services in the inclusion classroom (Zhu et al., 2017). Sharp et al. conducted a study in which most teachers expressed that students with learning disorders have low self-esteem. All the participants stated that the students need specialized strategies to help them succeed. Sharp et al. reported biased results due to the lack of college courses addressing special education students required for general education teachers. The researchers concluded that further research should be conducted to determine effective, updated technology training for professionals regarding instructional strategies and knowledge about learning disorders. Lancaster and Bain (2019) found a direct correlation between the lack of college preparation classes for inclusion education and teachers' negative attitude toward inclusion classrooms. Due to the lack of college curriculum support for general education teachers, those teachers often became frustrated and cynical when providing inclusionary support for students with disabilities (Lancaster & Bain, 2019).

General and Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion

The success of inclusion affected the perception of the teachers implementing inclusionary practices for students with disabilities (Rozenfelde, 2018). Bryant (2018) stated that general education teachers tend to have negative attitudes with limited experience implementing inclusion without success. In the introduction to a study of Jordanian teachers' opinions and knowledge regarding inclusion, Amr, Al-Natour, Al-Abdallat, and Alkhurma (2016) provided the challenges that teachers providing inclusion services face in educational settings. They found the three main challenges to enabling inclusion in Jordan were the building structures, appropriate curriculum, and qualified

general education teachers. Amr et al. concluded that elementary general education teachers are concerned about their ability to provide inclusion services to their children in their classrooms due to the teachers' minimal knowledge about inclusion practices. Their study revealed that teachers had negative attitudes toward the students due to the inadequate curriculum and lack of staff to support the inclusion. In an Indian study, Sandu (2017) found that general and special education teachers had discrepant and narrowed views about inclusive educational settings. The general education teachers reported that children with disabilities were primarily the special education teacher's concern and there was limited interaction among regular and special education students (Sandu, 2017). General education teachers have expressed having minimal expectations for children with disabilities during inclusion opportunities (Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019). Stites, Rakes, Noggle, and Shah (2018) reported that general and special education teachers were provided with minimal time to collaborate and plan inclusive activities in the general education setting. Lower expectations for students with disabilities and negative perceptions regarding inclusion are challenges that teachers face when providing inclusion.

General and special education teachers benefited from professional development that supports their specific needs for providing inclusionary practices (Reese, Richards-Tutor, Hansuvadha, Pavri & Xu, 2018). The results of an Indian inclusion study ranging from various schools found that general and special education teachers were not provided with guidance or professional development opportunities to execute inclusion, coteach, and utilize educational assistants in the inclusive classroom (Priyadarshini &

Thangarajathi, 2016). The teachers communicated that a risk-free environment among special education, regular education, and educational assistants should exist. The results of an inclusion study in Ecuador reflected that the majority of participants held negative attitudes about providing inclusion services (Moreno-Rodriguez, Lopez, Carnicero, Garrote, & Sanchez, 2017). The Ecuadoran teachers felt inadequately prepared to provide the needed services. The majority of the sample also felt that many times students with disabilities were not appropriately identified. The teachers voiced that more in-service support and staff support would help them improve inclusive education. The teachers unanimously agreed that the best way to serve inclusion students would be in a separate teaching environment without more knowledge and support. Due to these research findings, there was a significant demand to review college curriculum and professional development opportunities to prepare better general and special education teachers to execute effective inclusion strategies.

Professional Development and Collaboration Devoted to Inclusion

Teachers and administrators viewed purposeful professional development as a positive asset for providing inclusionary services to students with disabilities. Quality professional development began with determining participants' needs, then sharing the results of those needs with the participants (Macias, 2017). Additionally, administrators asked both general and special education teachers what their learning needs were before planning effective professional development (Romanuck Murphy, 2018). Turnbull and Turnbull (2020) suggested that strengthening professional development that focused on building relationships among general and special education teachers would better serve

students with disabilities in inclusion classes. Tyler (2016) found that when teachers do not have the opportunity to express their learning needs or feel supported by the administrators, teachers develop a negative attitude toward inclusion and buy-in. Tyler concluded that one of the characteristics of quality professional development was to provide individualized support. General and special education teachers needed opportunities to participate in self-paced learning that expands their knowledge about inclusion and provides multiple strategies to address differentiation in their classrooms (Macias, 2017). Orakcı et al. (2016) determined that teachers need the opportunity to express their instructional needs and have input when administrators planned professional development opportunities. Effective professional development addressed specific groups of teachers and one-on-one learning for teachers at individual paces.

Evidence from research supported the importance of exploring administrators' role in planning effective professional development in inclusionary practices (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Bettini et al. (2017) held that administrators should plan professional development to empower teachers to provide students with disabilities effective instruction. Likewise, Ifat and Eyal (2017) noted that administrators need to know the educators' needs and provide appropriate professional development.

Collaborative opportunities among teachers and administrators were the key for providing inclusionary practices to students with disabilities (Weber & Young, 2017). According to Bridich (2016), little student success was seen unless teachers and administrators collaborate. Teachers often felt unprepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities without having the opportunity to plan with grade-level peers and

administrators (McKay, 2016). Woodcock and Hardy (2017) found that administrator support of effective professional development in inclusion improved inclusion conditions. There was a need for administrators to provide quality and equitable professional development opportunities and provide administrative support for general and special education teachers in inclusionary practices (Kaufman, Felder, Ahrbeck, Badar, & Schneiders, 2018; McKay, 2016; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). Bonati (2018) expressed the need for general and special educators to have common planning times; furthermore, administrators should be active participants during common plan times. General and special education teachers along with administrators needed time to collaborate to meet the needs of students with disabilities when providing inclusionary practices.

Challenges of Coteaching

One of the critical components of inclusion is successful coteaching among the general and special education teachers in the least restrictive environment. Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) found that important aspects to consider for coteaching were teachers with like personalities and similar teaching styles. Oh, Murawski, and Nussli (2017) identified the following barriers to successful coteaching: the need for continuous collaboration throughout the year, openness to positive and negative feedback, honesty, self-reflection, trust among the team, and different teaching personalities. When teachers are an influential part of the school environment, a supervisor must evaluate each teacher's unique qualities and expand their teaching possibilities by pairing like personalities when addressing coteaching (Oh et al., 2017). Wilson et al. (2018) suggested that a key to coteaching with success was when teachers and administrators

work together to meet the same goals for student achievement and administrators look for reciprocal teaching after modeling expectations for the teachers. When coteaching was successful, the general and special education teachers benefited by learning coteaching strategies through professional development and administrators supported mastery of students' skills (Wedin & Wessman, 2017). Bettini et al. (2017) conducted a study of special education administrators and their role as supervisors for ensuring special education laws were implemented. The authors concluded by finding that special education administrators using special education teachers provided professional development and mentoring consistently throughout the year increased success of coteaching experiences. School districts and administrators planned to continue to offer teachers continued professional development, mentor support, and modeling to improve coteaching opportunities and inclusion success (Conderman & Hedin, 2017). Coteaching was beneficial when teacher buy-in was valued by administrators and supervisors to promote school change for inclusion.

School Change for Inclusion

For schools to use best practices when providing inclusion, change was inevitable (Allen, Harper, & Koschoreck, 2017). The change was difficult for stakeholders to embrace. Fullan (2016) stated that successful change was not just being correct, but also collaborating with diverse groups who have varying opinions about the change. Teachers did not always agree with each other regarding best instructional practices, but both general and special education teachers learned to listen, respect, and value others' opinions when embracing change (Versland & Erickson, 2017).

Educational supervisor's role in schools took a shift from a traditional approach to a cooperative approach (Kalinovich & Marrone, 2017). For example, in the past, administrators have planned professional development based upon what the administrator thought was a need, not what the teachers saw as a need (Meadows & Canglia, 2018). Previously, administrators have not ensured that common planning times were critical among grade levels and the general and special education teachers; today, teachers are provided with common planning times with administrative support to general and special education (Brendle, Lock, & Piazza, 2017). Timothy and Agbenyega (2018) conducted a research study in Australia using a qualitative method in which two schools focused on the best models for inclusion services. The study revealed that school administrators should provide common planning times that allowed for collaboration, provide coaching of instructional strategies for individual student needs throughout the year, encourage general and special education to share best instructional strategies upon reviewing data. The school leader's ability to change culture and grow trust among professionals was the key effectiveness for implementing inclusion in this study (Timothy & Agbenyega, 2018). When an administrator provided effective feedback after coaching or observing, the administrator was building self-efficacy in the teacher while encouraging him/her to become the best he/she can be as a teacher (Balyer, Ozcan, & Yildiz, 2017). A paradigm shift for the administrator was that he/she no longer controlled the teacher but strived to grow the teacher to foster a classroom of learning for all individuals (Alila, Uusiautti, & Maatta, 2016). School leaders aimed to collaborate, model, and reflect with teachers to promote academic growth in the inclusion setting (Ustun, 2017). Based on research

findings, administrators planned based upon teachers' needs, provided common planning times, and supported general and special education teachers with useful feedback to grow adult learning needs for inclusion.

When providing inclusion services, both general and education teachers should know their role in the inclusion classroom, plan together, and be supported with many opportunities to grow their teaching abilities (Lyons, 2016). Planning was an essential part of successful inclusion for general and special education teachers (Chang & Pascua, 2017). General and special education teachers who are provided with common planning time, coaching support, and professional development on inclusion strive to expand all students' learning potential of all in their classrooms (Timothy & Agbenyega, 2018). General and special education teachers need the opportunity to share their strengths and struggles among professionals (Lyons, 2016). When general and special education teachers are provided with time to collaborate, then they have the opportunity to grow their inclusionary best practices to meet their students' needs (Mestry, 2017). Collaboration and common planning times were necessary for general and special education teachers that provided work toward effective inclusionary practices.

Summary and Conclusions

Inclusionary best practices for students with disabilities were both the general and special education teachers' responsibility in the public education setting. Many research studies reflected the challenges for the general and special education teachers providing inclusion had minimal knowledge about inclusion and lacked instructional support, negative perceptions toward inclusion, the need for more professional development,

coteaching challenges, and the need for school change (Versland & Erickson, 2017).

With general and special education teachers facing these challenges, their attitude toward inclusion became negative, and the expectations for the students with disabilities were minimal in the general education setting. For inclusion to be successful for students with disabilities, school districts needed to provide quality and equitable professional development opportunities for general and special education teachers in which the teachers may voice their educational needs (Macias, 2017).

This study addresses a gap in practice on possible reasons why general and special education teachers have not been providing inclusionary practices to students with disabilities. Lyons (2016) found that general and special education understood their role during inclusion instruction, collaborated frequently, and were provided with quality learning opportunities to grow inclusionary practices. Lyons concluded that if one part was minimized, then inclusion was not successful. A study was also concluded in findings that there was a correlation between a teacher's negative perception toward inclusion and the lack of college prerequisites to address inclusion (Lancaster & Bain, 2019). While these research findings provided some of the possible reasons why general and special education teachers were not providing inclusionary practices, there is more research that is needed to determine why general and special education teachers were not consistently providing inclusionary best practices in a small, rural district in the southeastern United States.

Chapter 2 included a thorough review of the literature pertaining to this study along with the research strategies and search engines that I used to gather information.

The theoretical framework of adult learning theory was described in relation to this study. The key concepts and the challenges of inclusion from different perspectives were explained. There continues to be a gap in the literature about why general and special education teachers were not consistently providing inclusionary best practices for students with disabilities. In Chapter 3, I will describe the research methodology for this study. Chapter 3 also includes the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and summary. The sampling procedures for recruitment and data collection are also described.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive as effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the strategies, and what teachers thought they needed to help them improve implementing inclusion practices. Chapter 3 includes the following major sections: Research Design and Rationale, Role of the Researcher, Methodology, Participation Selection, Instrumentation, Procedures for Recruitment, Participation and Data Collection, Data Analysis, Trustworthiness, and Ethical Procedures. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research method used.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What inclusion practices do general and special education teachers implement for students with disabilities?

RQ2: What are the challenges that general and special education teachers encounter when implementing inclusion practices for students with disabilities?

RQ3: What do general and special education teachers think they need to help them improve implementing inclusionary practices?

In this study, I used the basic qualitative research design to discover what inclusionary practices general and special education are presently using. Additionally, I determined the challenges they encountered in implementing inclusion and the support they needed to improve the implementation. In this study, I collected interview data about what inclusion practices general and special education teachers used to provide

students with disabilities in the HSD. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the current problem and collect in-depth data from the participants to answer the research questions (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that a basic qualitative researcher needs to understand the participants' views concerning the phenomenon being researched. In this basic qualitative study, I interpreted each participant's perceptions and experiences regarding the challenges associated with inclusionary practices.

Edwards and Holland (2020) found that qualitative research dates back to the 5th century B.C. in Greece since when humans have been shown to be inquisitive and have initiated the study of human interaction. Creswell and Poth (2017) stated that qualitative research could be divided into eight historical periods: traditional, modernist, blurred genres, crisis of representation, postmodern, postexperimental, methodologically contested present, and fractured future. Researchers in the 19th century created ethnography, or the study of customs, beliefs, and culture that belong to a group of people, which added more depth to the qualitative approach (Edwards & Holland, 2020). From 1920–1950, the qualitative researcher learned that realism would be the driving force during the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The birth of the postpositivist research era (from 1960s–1980s) was seen after the realist era and was composed of the intertwining of qualitative beliefs into the social sciences. Qualitative research debuted in the 1990s in the humanities, science, and math (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The field of education was viewed as valuing the work of the realist (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

I reviewed qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches to determine the most appropriate method for this study. Qualitative research focuses on narrative answers to a problem that describes how people encounter particular interactions in the world (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative research is used to understand how people expressed and understood experiences about topics (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Quantitative research uses data with variables to answer research questions and develop a hypothesis between the variables; quantitative research does not seek to focus on human relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Mixed methods research includes more than one method to gather data for a problem, usually the qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I did not use the quantitative method in this study because the statistical analysis of numbers was not necessary to answer the research questions.

I also reviewed ethnography, narrative design, grounded theory, and basic qualitative research designs to establish the most suitable research design for this study. Ethnography relies on gathering data from observations and interactions with participants in real-life environments over long periods of time (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ethnography would not have been appropriate for this study because observations and interactions were not planned; instead, interviews were the source of data. Narrative research focuses on in-depth discussions to establish how people assign meaning to experiences in their lives, including written document analysis (Schlein, 2020). Narrative research would not have been suitable for this study because I was not interested in following a person's life in depth. The grounded theory design is used to discover a theory from the data that had been collected (Buckley, 2019). Grounded theory was not appropriate for this study

because my goal was not to develop a theory. The basic qualitative researcher interprets the participants' perceptions and experiences about the problem (Merriam & Gernier, 2019). To address the research questions in this study, I needed to gather the participants' perceptions about the challenges of providing inclusion and understand their experiences with inclusion. The basic qualitative research design was appropriate to use because it allowed me to gather the data needed to answer the research questions.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a basic qualitative researcher was to interview participants and interpret their perceptions about the challenges of providing inclusion and their experiences with inclusion in the most naturalistic setting possible (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have been employed by the HSD for 5 years as a special education teacher, assistant principal, and principal. I have worked with general and special education teachers who have opinions and thoughts regarding inclusion that I needed to stay aware of while conducting this study. I did not interview any teachers at the school where I am currently the principal; however, data were collected from the school where I was a special education teacher and assistant principal previously. In my present position, I am not responsible for evaluating any of the participants. Previously, I was employed at the focus school for 2.5 years; however, 40% of the teacher participants have either retired or moved.

As a basic qualitative researcher, I was not able to completely avoid bias (see Johnson, 2017). One of my researcher bias was having 16 years of special education experience and knowing the topics of professional development that have been provided

in the district for the past 5 years regarding inclusion. I maintained awareness of any preconceptions regarding inclusion that I had during the interview process and the data analysis. I also remained open minded throughout the interview and data analysis process related to the participants' knowledge of inclusion. Only data from the participant interviews were included in the analysis. I was cognizant of my biases and monitored the biases that affected the data (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Methodology

As qualitative research has evolved, each of the eight historical periods transposed different meanings for the qualitative researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative researcher conducts a research study in the most naturalistic setting possible for the problem (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A realist researcher has a few tools available to collect information, such as: observations, cultural texts, artifacts, interactions, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and interviews (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). A qualitative researcher is always striving to find the connection between the human, the human interaction, and the problem of the study (Ravitch & Carl).

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling allows the researcher the adjustability to choose participants who can provide the researcher with answers to the research problem and questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used purposeful sampling to gather the participants for this study. Participants were chosen based on their knowledge and experience implementing inclusion in the past 2 years. The participants were selected from a small, rural district in the southeastern United States. The HSD has two elementary schools and a middle

school that approximately 1,400 students are enrolled in. The HSD had approximately 115 professional employees (i.e., 94 general education teachers and 21 special education teachers) at the time of this study. The district supervisors provided me with information about the general and special education teachers in the elementary schools participating in inclusion. Purposeful sampling was employed in this study because I wanted to understand and explore the challenges that general and special education teachers faced when providing inclusionary practices to gain the most information and answer the research questions (see Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I invited teachers who are involved in inclusion practices to be participants for this study. The participants had either a general or special education professional license in the state. Due to the small size of the HSD, 10 general and eight special education teachers were used for the sample. The participants who were selected had at least 1 year of experience teaching in an inclusion classroom. The middle school was excluded from this study because that was where I worked at the time of this study. In the potential participants' personal school mailbox, I placed a sealed envelope with their name on it that contained an invitation for participation along with the informed consent form. If the teachers were interested in participating in the study, they e-mailed me at my personal e-mail address using his/her personal e-mail and included the phrase "I consent." I asked the first 10 general and eight special education teachers who met the criteria and responded to the e-mail to attend a brief meeting. I held a meeting with each participant to explain the purpose of the study, gather demographic information, and obtain a written

consent. The participants were assigned a code name to ensure confidentiality (e.g., GET 1 = General Education Teacher 1 and SET 1 = Special Education Teacher 1).

Instrumentation

I field tested the interview protocol with two professional educators who were not included in the future participant group. The educators were given the interview questions to analyze for any biases and offer recommendations. The educators' responses to the interview protocol were included in the revised protocol. Each participant was asked the same interview questions (see Appendix A) and had their answers were digitally recorded. I developed the open-ended interviewing questions, allowing participants to fully express their thoughts (see Babbie, 2017). No historical or legal documents were used as sources of data. The interview questions were correlated to each research question, which sufficiently afforded the answering of each research question (see Table 3).

I developed the interview questions to gain an understanding and interpretation of each participant's perceptions regarding inclusion challenges and experiences (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The interview questions were a logical extension of the purpose of the study, aligned to the research design, related to each central research question, and open ended to allow the participants the opportunity to express personal feelings and experiences about inclusion (see Creswell & Poth, 2017). The content validity was established by field testing prior to the actual research. I distributed the interview questions 2 weeks before the start of the study for field testing through an e-mail to one general and one special education teacher who had teaching experience in an

inclusion setting in kindergarten through Grade 2 from HSD. The field participants had 1 week to submit suggestions for improvement regarding researcher biases. I revised the interview questions based on the feedback provided from the field testing. The use of multiple interviews and recordings in this qualitative study resulted in a diverse collection of knowledge (see Johnson, 2017).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

First, I applied for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) acceptance from Walden University. I also got permission to do the research from HSD following board policy. IRB and school district permission were a necessity prior to recruiting participants, planning the interviews, and collecting data. When IRB and HSD permissions were received, I proceeded with the recruitment of the participants by gathering teachers' names from school websites and placing addressed sealed envelopes containing an invitation letter in teachers' school mailboxes. Before setting up the interviews, I e-mailed the informed consent to each participant, and each participant responded with "I consent." via e-mail. Once participants were confirmed, I set an appointment time for the interviews. Each participant was asked to give me three dates of availability; I then scheduled interview from those dates.

Before each interview, I made sure that all equipment was in working order and that I knew how to operate the equipment. Digital recording and note-taking were essential for capturing all the details during the interview. I used a voice memo application on the laptop and iPad for digital recording while taking hand-written notes to ensure factual information was reported. Time limits were set, and I abided by the time

limit of 45- to 60-minute interviews to show respect to the participants. I conducted one-on-one personal interviews with each participant via Google Meet or phone conference to observe social distancing guideline for COVID-19.

As a qualitative researcher, I set clear expectations initially, asked open-ended questions, acquired a good rapport, remained neutral, and maintained appropriate body language and facial expressions throughout the data collecting process (Yob & Brewer, n.d.). I conducted quality interviews with fidelity and fairness to all participants to ensure an interview setting that is of good quality. When participants answered the interview questions that were incomplete or needed further explanation, I asked related prompts to get complete answers to questions.

Before starting the interview, I informed each participant that he/she was being recorded. At the beginning of the interview, I set clear, concise expectations that detailed the interview process (Yob & Brewer, n.d.). Yob and Brewer (n.d.) suggested that the researcher should practice the interview before the actual interview to foresee potentially biased data collection. I practiced the interview numerous times before the actual interviews to predict potential problems or biases. Participants knew in advance that the interview would last 45 to 60 minutes. At the close of the interview, I thanked each participant and expressed the participant's value to the research. After the interview, I e-mailed each participant a transcription of the interview. The participant was asked to check for accuracy and e-mailed me any possible suggestions for revisions. Participant recruitment, participation, and data collection were vital parts of the research, and procedures were established to ensure the accuracy and truth of reporting.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative research could be subjective if the research's quality was not evaluated with the proper criteria (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The primary data analysis source for this research study was an inductive process of open coding of emerging ideas. These coded segments were organized into categories that identified patterns and relationships among the categories. NVivo 12, a data analysis application, was used to transcribe, code, and develop themes from the interview data for this research. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined inductive analysis as synthesizing data to define the meaning, starting with specific data and completing the analysis with categories and patterns.

The initial step in the data analysis was to complete the transcription process. I read the transcriptions to begin organizing the data after all the interviews were completed. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. First, open coding was used to analyze the data from the interviews. Open coding allows the researcher to develop categories of information from the transcripts (Johnson, 2017). Common themes were developed from the categories. After open coding, axial coding was the next step in the NVivo 12 analysis, where subthemes were developed from the themes. Independent coding occurred until no other themes emerged (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Codes were independently applied to all transcripts. Coding discrepancies were resolved through member checking by allowing the participants to check their responses for accuracy before the analysis began.

This data analysis provided me with a thorough interpretation of individual interviews. Discrepant data were analyzed until saturation to determine the relationship

to the problem, research questions, and conceptual framework (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Johnson (2017) described data saturation as when no new themes, categories, or patterns appeared upon data analysis. I analyzed the data for new themes, categories, or patterns until the same answers began to repeat to ensure saturation (Johnson, 2017).

Trustworthiness

One crucial factor that a qualitative researcher must consider when collecting data was trustworthiness. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that building rapport must extend to *authentic engagement* for the qualitative researcher to collect equitable data (p. 351).

Negotiating entrée was a term meaning that the researcher refrained from practicing to ensure that his/her research was trustworthy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 350). When the researcher refrained from steering the participants to provide answers that the researcher wanted during data collection, the qualitative researcher removed the negotiating entrée from the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I refrained from steering participants to giving me answers that I wanted during the research by portraying neutral facial expressions as the participants provided answers to the questions. I also considered *reciprocity* or what the study and researcher provided and took to ensure the research ethics are included throughout the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 357). Fairness, transparency, and justice were target areas for the qualitative researcher when creating, collecting, analyzing, and reporting data for the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For my qualitative research study, I used Ravitch and Carl techniques to ensure ethical measures met my study.

Trustworthiness was described as having four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As a credible

and transferable researcher, I was open to the participants' answers and reported the participant's exact content (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participant interview data were transcribed, analyzed through coding and thematic analysis, and triangulated by comparing participants' responses and between the two types of participants. I also considered how the findings of the study transferred from my study to another scenario for transferability. Anyone reading the study could conclude from the study what applied to specific situations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability was established with an audit trail. The audit trail provided specific details to the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data ensuring that the findings are participants' ideas, excluding researcher bias (Saldana, 2016). Confirmability was practiced through reflexivity by keeping a journal. The journal reflected my values and interest in the research and data to remain neutral throughout the study (Saldana, 2016). The qualitative researcher ensured that the research and the reporting reflected truth, was applied in different contexts, reflected consistency, and displayed neutrality (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

Ethical issues were considered by the researcher. The qualitative researcher did not conduct a research study in his/her work environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews were not conducted in the school where I work. I conducted the interviews at the public library, a neutral place for all participants, or by a phone conference due to social distancing. I have received permission from the public library to conduct the interviews in one of the meeting rooms. I was also mindful of a personal bias because I have 16 years of special education teaching experience. I was aware of any biased

opinions that I may have had while interpreting the data from general and special education teachers' interviews.

The qualitative researcher was able to conduct quality interviews with fidelity and neutrality to obtain the equitable data needed for the research study. Each participant was emailed a consent form that notified the participant of his/her rights and data confidentiality before beginning the interview. The participant signed the consent form and scanned back to the researcher through e-mail before the interview took place. Participants were assigned a code name. Participants were reminded that they might choose to withdraw from the study at any time, and their data will be deleted. All data, including digital data, will be kept locked in a filing cabinet in my house for 5 years, then destroyed. One important consideration for me to consider was to record observational data instead of interpretational data (Babbie, 2017). Interpretational data was biased and considered the researcher's reasoning for particular behavior. I strived to build a good rapport and relationship of trust with each participant by being an active listener and talking directly with each participant. (Babbie, 2017). Ethics was an essential part of any research and should be practiced with fidelity.

Summary

Chapter 3 consisted of an overview of the research design and rationale. In this chapter, I addressed the basic qualitative methodology, explained the participant selection process, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical issues, and subjectivity to this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive are effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the

strategies, and what teachers thought they needed to help them improve implementing inclusion practices in a small, rural district in the southeastern United States. Both 10 general and 8 special education teachers were purposely selected to provide information about inclusion. This study was limited to general and special education teachers in Grades 3-5 in one district. Chapter 4 includes a thorough analysis of the results from the collected data during the individual interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive as effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the strategies, and what teachers thought they needed to help them improve implementing inclusion practices. I conducted this study to determine the inclusion practices that are being used, discover challenges for implementing inclusion, and decide what general and special education needed to improve inclusion. The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1: What inclusion practices do general and special education teachers implement for students with disabilities?

RQ2: What are the challenges that general and special education teachers encounter when implementing inclusion practices for students with disabilities?

RQ3: What do general and special education teachers think they need to help them improve implementing inclusionary practices?

The research questions were informed by the conceptual framework and aligned with the problem and purpose of this study.

The data for this basic qualitative study included results from 18 individual interviews based on 17 questions. The questions addressed the inclusionary practices that were being used, challenges of implementing inclusion, and what teachers felt they needed to be successful when providing inclusion in the district that they are employed. I analyzed and coded the interview transcripts to discover themes and theme statements that have been correlated to the conceptual framework.

This study of inclusion and the challenges of inclusion was needed to grow teacher support for students with disabilities in the general education setting. In Chapter 4, I discuss the setting for collecting the data, the data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and conclude with a summary. The Walden University IRB and HSD approved this study before data collection began (IRB Approval No. 08-19-20-0638310_).

Setting

In this basic qualitative study, I documented and analyzed data gathered from individual interviews with both general and special education teachers that offered information on effective inclusionary practices, why inclusionary best practices are not being implemented, and their perceptions of what they feel are needed to improve the implementation of inclusionary best practices. The interviews allowed the participants to respond openly in a risk-free setting in which data could be collected with fidelity. The interview setting allowed me to listen attentively to the participants' answers and note any patterns in this setting (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

I planned for the first 10 general and 10 special education teachers meeting the criteria to be participants of this study; however, I only received interest from 10 general and eight special education teachers to participate in the study. The participants were from two elementary schools in a small, rural district in the southeastern United States with a valid teaching license and at least 1 year of experience in an inclusion classroom. The consent to participate was obtained during the COVID-19 pandemic, and schools throughout the United States had been closed. During this closure of schools, teachers

provided students with instruction in-person and on a virtual learning platform. There was a social distancing rule in place of respecting a 6-foot distance among individuals, and both adults and students are being encouraged to wear masks to prevent the spread of the virus. All of the one-on-one interviews for this study were either conducted via a phone interview or on the Google Meet video conferencing platform.

Out of the 18 participants, nine held a bachelor's degree, four had a master's degree, and five had a specialist degree. Their years of experience ranged from 5 to 28 years in the classroom. The years of inclusion experience ranged from 2 to 15 years. Nine of the participants had only taught in this district; however, 10 of the participants had taught in one or more other districts during their years of service. One participant had 20 years of experience in another state where he/she participated in inclusion. Sixteen of the participants were females and two were male. All 18 participants were White. Table 2 summarizes the information about the participants of this study.

Table 2

Demographic Information

Career Characteristic	Range	Average
Years in education	5–28	16.4
Years of experience in inclusion	2–15	6.6
Years in district	4–26	14.2

Data Collection

I used purposeful sampling to gather the 10 general education teachers and 8 special education teachers as participants for this basic qualitative study. In order to participate in the study, the participants had to have a valid state general or special education license and at least 1 year of teaching experience in an inclusion classroom. Participant selection began after receiving IRB approval from Walden University and approval from the school district.

Previously, I had planned to recruit participants by sending them an e-mail using their personal e-mail address and asking them to participate in the study. I intended to ask the first 10 general education teachers and the first 10 special education teachers to attend a brief meeting to explain the purpose of the study, gather demographic information, and obtain consent. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and after obtaining IRB approval, my plan to recruit participants had to change. First, I gathered teachers' names from school websites and addressed sealed envelopes containing an invitation letter seeking interest to participate in the study to individual teachers. The district permitted me to recruit the participants by distributing sealed letters. The sealed envelopes were placed in each teacher's school mailbox. The first 10 general education teachers and the first 10 special education teachers who would reply to the invitation would be asked to participate. If interested in participating in this study, I asked each teacher to reply to me at my personal e-mail address using his/her personal e-mail address. The teachers chosen to participate in the study were e-mailed the informed consent form to review. If they chose to participate, then each participant replied to me

from his/her personal email address with the phrase “I consent.” Each participant kept this e-mail as his/her copy of the consent. If the participant was not one of the first 10 general education or first 10 special education teachers to respond, then I sent them an e-mail thanking the individual for his/her interest and stating that he/she was not chosen to participate in the study.

I received e-mails from 10 general education teachers and eight special education teachers agreeing to participate in the study and providing their consent. Next, I scheduled a time to complete each interview via Google Meet or phone conference. Two participants participated through a phone conference because they did not have a Google Mail account. I started each interview with an overview of the interview procedure, which ensured confidentiality as well as that participation was voluntary and the interview was being recorded (see Appendix C). Each participant was assigned a code name before the interview (e.g., GET1 = General Education Teacher 1, GET2 = General Education Teacher 2, SET1 = Special Education Teacher 1, etc.).

Eighteen participants (10 general education and 8 special education teachers) were interviewed using an interview guide that I created, which contained 17 questions (see Appendix B). I designed the questions to gain an understanding and interpretation of each participant’s perceptions regarding inclusion challenges and experiences (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The interview questions are a logical extension of the purpose of the study, align to the research design, relate to each central research question, and are open-ended, which allowed the participants the opportunity to express personal

feelings and experiences about inclusion (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). Table 3 shows the alignment of the interview questions and research questions

Table 3

Correlation Between Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Question
1. What inclusion practices do general and special education teachers implement for students with disabilities?	4. What knowledge do you have regarding coteaching? 5. How prepared do you feel to coteach? 6. What are some accommodations and/or modifications that you use on a regular basis to meet the needs of students with disabilities? 8. What data do you use to track the progress of students in your classroom? 9. How often do you use data to maximize learning opportunities for students with disabilities? 15. Explain how prepared you feel to implement inclusion practices, coteach, and track data for students with disabilities?

(table continues)

Research Question	Interview Question
2. What are the challenges that general and special education teachers encounter when implementing inclusion practices for students with disabilities?	<p>1. What is your perception of inclusion of special education students in the general classroom?</p> <p>2. What is your perception of teaching in inclusion settings?</p> <p>7. How often do general and special education teachers collaborate to discuss the progress of students with disabilities?</p> <p>10. How prepared to you feel to provide inclusion in your classroom? Why?</p> <p>11. Who has provided you with support to grow inclusion services in the general education setting? Describe the support.</p> <p>12. How often do you have common planning times for general and special education teachers?</p>
3. What do general and special education teachers think they need to help them improve implementing inclusionary practices?	<p>3. What professional development regarding inclusionary practices have you attend in the last year?</p> <p>13. How often are you provided special education support for inclusion practices?</p> <p>14. How do you think the support that you are provided for inclusion helps to ensure academic growth for all students in the general education setting?</p> <p>16. What support(s) do you feel would benefit teachers providing inclusion?</p> <p>17. What professional development opportunities do you think would help you and other teachers improve the implementation of inclusion?</p>

I collected the data for this study through one-on-one interviews either by phone or Google Meet to observe the social distancing guidelines. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Two participants were interviewed by phone, and 16 were

interviewed on Google Meet. The participants were allowed to choose the interview time (after school hours) and date. I recorded the interview data on a voice memo application on my laptop and on an iPad to ensure the quality of collection. I also took handwritten notes throughout the interviews as well. The interviews were completed over a 10-day period consisting of afternoons, nights, and a weekend. Table 4 displays the meeting platform and duration of the meeting.

Table 4

Meeting Platform and Duration of Participant Interviews

Participant	Meeting Platform	Duration
GET1	Google Meet	35 minutes
GET2	Google Meet	42 minutes
GET3	Google Meet	37 minutes
GET4	Google Meet	31 minutes
GET5	Phone conference	39 minutes
GET6	Google Meet	29 minutes
GET7	Phone conference	44 minutes
GET8	Google Meet	30 minutes
GET9	Google Meet	36 minutes
GET10	Google Meet	32 minutes
SET1	Google Meet	45 minutes
SET2	Google Meet	40 minutes
SET3	Google Meet	38 minutes
SET4	Google Meet	35 minutes

(table continues)

Participant	Meeting Platform	Duration
SET5	Google Meet	33 minutes
SET6	Google Meet	42 minutes
SET7	Google Meet	39 minutes
SET8	Google Meet	26 minutes

I recorded the participants' interview responses on my laptop using an application called RecordIt. A voice recorder on my iPad was also used to record the interviews. I also took handwritten notes on each participant and interview question. NVivo 12 was used to transcribe the recorded audio interview into a Microsoft Word document. Upon the conclusion of each interview, I thanked each participant for his/her participation and reminded them that on the day following the interview, he/she would be e-mailed a transcript (in the form of a Microsoft Word document from NVivo 12) to review for accuracy. The transcripts were e-mailed to the participants after school hours on his/her personal e-mail account. Reviewing the transcripts should have taken the participants approximately 45 minutes to complete, and each participant was given 48 hours to provide me with any corrections to the transcript after the review. No participants returned any revisions to me after they reviewed the transcript.

The first step that I took after each interview was to read my notes and listen to the recording to validate consistency between my notes and the recording. Next, I read the Word document that was a transcription of the interview where I had just compared my notes and recording. The three items from the interview (transcript, audio, and my notes) were consistent in reporting the same data per interview and question. These steps

were completed for all 18 interviews. There were no unusual circumstances to report during any of the interviews. The interviews, recordings, and transcripts were consistent. The recording applications and the NVivo 12 reflected the participants' responses with accuracy.

Data Analysis

The initial step in the data analysis was to complete the transcription process. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and assigned a code correlated with interview number, for example, first interview = GET1, second interview = SET2, etc. The codes ensured confidentiality among participants for this study. Each participant was e-mailed a copy of his/her transcript via Word document to validate the member checking process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The participants responded to the review of their transcripts within 48 hours. All participants agreed that the transcripts were a true reflection of what had been stated during each interview.

The next step of the analysis was to review each transcript using NVivo 12 to create codes to begin thematic analysis. Organization during the data analysis is crucial for the researcher to analyze the data effectively (Johnson, 2017). First, I read and highlighted data to develop common codes from the transcripts. Next, I placed the highlighted data from each interview under the codes in NVivo 12. Coding allows the researcher to organize the data to discover patterns and themes throughout the data (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Table 5 reflects the coding from NVivo 12 after the first data analysis from transcripts.

Table 5

NVivo12 Codes and Transcript Evidence

Interview Question	Transcript Evidence
1. What is your perception of inclusion of special education students in the general classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like having inclusion in class • Positive perception • Positive and negative for both populations • Not many teachers want to participate • Some special education students benefit from pull-out
2. What is your perception of teaching in inclusion settings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets the needs of students better • Like having the support of an assistant • Challenging • Not all special education students benefit from inclusion
3. What professional development regarding inclusionary practices have you attend in the last year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training from the district • Professional development • None • Webinars that I chose to do on my own
4. What knowledge do you have regarding coteaching?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some knowledge • Only experience is doing • 10 years of experience • Only experience is having 2 assistants
5. How prepared do you feel to coteach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% prepared • Very prepared • That it was a struggle • Hesitant due to lack of planning
6. What are some accommodations and/or modifications that you use on a regular basis to meet the needs of students with disabilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifying work and tests • Google Read/Write • Guided notes • Preferential seating • Checks for understanding

(table continues)

Interview Question	Transcript Evidence
7. How often do general and special education teachers collaborate to discuss the progress of students with disabilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to grant-never • Prior to grant-rarely • Assistants communicate daily • As the need arises • With grant-weekly
8. What data do you use to track the progress of students in your classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observations • Benchmark assessments • Common formative assessments • RTI data • IEP goals
9. How often do you use data to maximize learning opportunities for students with disabilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily • Monthly • Bi-weekly • All the time • Weekly
10. How prepared to you feel to provide inclusion in your classroom? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75-80% prepared • Strong in that area • 50% prepared • Less prepared • Depends on the class
11. Who has provided you with support to grow inclusion services in the general education setting? Describe the support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion teacher • Educational assistant • Principal • Special education director
12. How often do you have common planning times for general and special education teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to grant-never • None • With grant-one time per week • Prior to this year-zero

(table continues)

Interview Question	Transcript Evidence
13. How often are you provided special education support for inclusion practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily • Weekly • Depends on the IEP • More minutes equal more assistant time • Hardly ever
14. How do you think the support that you are provided for inclusion helps to ensure academic growth for all students in the general education setting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher supports every child • This was an abstract issue • All have to be on board and believe for success • Very little positives for general education student • Both general and special education students' benefits
15. Explain how prepared you feel to implement inclusion practices, coteach, and track data for students with disabilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year they were growing • Prepared • Somewhat prepared • Pretty prepared • Almost there
16. What support(s) do you feel would benefit teachers providing inclusion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More planning time • Extra assistants • Materials to use • Smaller classes • More professional development
17. What professional development opportunities do you think would help you and other teachers improve the implementation of inclusion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing inclusion in action • Usable materials • Talk to successful inclusion teachers • Better collaboration between general and special education teachers • Visit schools that model inclusion

In 2019, HSD applied for the 6-21 federal grant, which would provide general and special education teachers common planning time after school 1 hour per week after school. HSD recognized the need for general and special education teachers to have common planning time; however, scheduling common planning time for the teachers was a problem for HSD during the school day. HSD was awarded the 6-21 federal grant for the 2020-21 school year.

After reviewing the first step in coding, I recorded the data among the codes that emerged and each participant's response to each code. Next, I calculated the percentage of responses related to the emerging code. Table 6 shows the percentage response related to each emerging code.

Table 6

Codes and Percentage Responses

Codes	Percentages of GET Responses	Percentage of SET Responses
		Perception
Positive	90	75
Negative	10	25
		Coteaching
No Training	80	50
Some Training	20	50
		Inclusion
Prepared	100	87.5
Not prepared	0	12.5

(table continues)

Codes	Percentages of GET Responses	Percentage of SET Responses
Collaboration time		
None (before grant)	100	100
Weekly (with grant)	100	100
Prepared to coteach		
Prepared	80	75
Not prepared	20	25
Support within district		
Teacher	80	75
Administration	20	25
Common planning		
None (before grant)	100	100
Weekly (with grant)	100	100
Frequency of inclusion support		
None	0	25
Daily	20	25
Weekly	40	25
Monthly	40	25
Additional support		
More planning	30	50
Extra assistant	20	0
Materials	30	50
Smaller class	20	0

(table continues)

Codes	Percentages of GET Responses	Percentage of SET Responses
Additional professional development		
Visit schools	60	50
How to collaborate	10	0
Instructional strategies	10	25
Resources	20	25

The data were analyzed until no new variations in the information appeared, and coding was no longer achievable. Themes and theme statements were developed from codes that emerged from the data analysis. The theme and theme statements provide answers to the three research questions. Table 7 reflects the themes and theme statements that were found after coding and triangulation.

Table 7

Themes and Theme Statements

Theme	Theme Statement
Perceptions	General and special education teachers had a positive or negative perception of providing inclusionary practices to students with disabilities.
Coteaching training	General and special education teachers should have adequate training when they are expected to implement inclusion.
Collaboration times	Collaboration times among general and special education teachers were an important part of implementing inclusion.
Preparedness	General and special education teachers felt both prepared and not prepared to teach inclusion.

(table continues)

Theme	Theme Statement
District support	Teachers needed support from within the district for inclusion.
Planning times	General and special education teachers needed common planning times to address the needs of inclusion and students with disabilities.
Amount of support	The amount of support that teachers received for inclusion varies from none, daily, weekly, and monthly.
More needs for support	Teachers have expressed a need for additional support to provide inclusion.
Professional development needs	Recommendations from general and special education teachers were suggested to help them improve the implementation of inclusion.

Finally, after themes and theme statements were developed, I looked at the relationship of the theme to the conceptual framework. Table 8 shows the themes and how each one relates to each component of the conceptual framework.

Table 8

Theme and Conceptual Framework

Theme	Self-concept	Learner experience	Readiness	Orientation	Motivation
Perception	X	X			X
Coteaching training	X		X	X	X
Collaboration times	X	X	X	X	X
Preparedness to coteach	X	X			X

(table continues)

Theme	Self- concept	Learner experience	Readiness	Orientation	Motivation
District support	X	X	X	X	X
Common planning times	X	X	X	X	
Amount of support	X	X	X	X	X
More needs for support	X	X	X	X	X
Professional development needs	X	X	X	X	X

Based on the literature summary and the teachers' perceptions of inclusion, similar ideas were noted. The themes that emerged from the interviews could address the challenges of implementing inclusion in this school district. The following theme statements emerged from that data: teachers' perception of inclusion, training regarding coteaching, general and special education collaboration opportunities, teachers' feelings while coteaching, teachers support within the district, common planning times for general and special education teachers, frequency of support for inclusion, teachers' perception of general education students in inclusive classrooms, additional supports needed by teachers, and teachers' recommendation for professional development regarding inclusion. The adult learning theory focuses on five assumptions on how adults learn: "self-concept, adult learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation of learning, and motivations to learn" (Knowles, 1989, pp. 77-78). All of the themes relate to at least 3

out 5 of the conceptual framework assumptions. Five of the themes related to all of the assumptions in the conceptual framework. The themes and their relationship to the adult learning five assumptions aligned to provide answers to the three research questions. The study revealed no discrepant data. In the next section, the study's findings were organized using the nine theme statements that emerged from the data. The documentation for the results came from interviews and direct quotes that provided the participants' perspective on the interview questions.

Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive as effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the strategies, and what teachers thought they needed to help them improve implementing inclusion practices. Nine themes were revealed from the results and findings of the study. The nine themes are aligned with the research questions and the conceptual framework. The five key assumptions of the adult learning theory, the conceptual framework that guided this study, are aligned to the participants' responses in this section. Nine themes were developed from commonalities throughout the data analysis. Theme statements were developed from the themes which summarized the participants' answers in the data. Next, each theme, theme statement, and results are presented.

Theme 1: Perception/Positive and Negative Perceptions of Teachers

Positive perception. Ninety-percent of general education teachers and 75% of special education teachers had a positive perception of inclusion. GET1 stated, "I like having the special education students in class rather than being pulled out for services."

GET2 expressed, “The majority of special education student benefited from inclusion,” while GET3 explained, “I enjoy teaching inclusion.” GET4 communicated that “the pros for inclusion were positive for both general and special education students.” General and special education teachers expressed that inclusion benefits are great for both general and special education students and felt that inclusion was a great opportunity for students to have positive interactions in an academic setting. GET7 and GET8 stated “My perception of inclusion is positive.”

SET1 and SET3 expressed that “they felt inclusion was a great opportunity for special education students to get positive interaction and boost self-esteem.” SET4 commented that the “benefits from inclusion outweighed the negatives.” SET5 stated, “Inclusion was a lot of work but very beneficial to students.” SET8 emphasized inclusion was a positive and stressed that “both general and special education teachers needed to be organized and team players to be successful.”

Negative perception. Ten percent of the regular education teachers and 25% of the special education teachers expressed negative perceptions of inclusion. SET2 commented, “Inclusion was an additional weight to the teacher work load that teachers already experienced.” SET7 expressed that “inclusion was not well received in her school, and general education teachers felt that inclusion was an additional burden to their teaching requirements.” GET6 felt that inclusion had a negative impact on both general and special education populations.

The findings in Theme 1 support 3 of the 5 assumptions of the adult learning theory (self-concept, learner experience, and motivation). Ninety percent of the general

education teachers and 75% of the special education teachers had a positive view of themselves in the inclusion classroom. Ten percent of the general education teachers and 25% of the special education teachers reflected a negative view in the inclusion classroom. A positive view or negative view of oneself in a learning environment aligns with the self-concept and learner experience assumptions (Malik, 2016). A teacher's willingness to improve or motivation can also result in positive and negative perceptions of concepts and learning (McCray, 2016). Thiers (2016) states that human emotion and motivation are factors of adult learning. The majority of general and special education teachers had a positive perception regarding inclusion.

Theme 2: Coteaching Training/Adequate Training to Coteach

Some training. Both general and special education teachers felt that coteaching training was beneficial to implement inclusion with success. Twenty-percent of general education teachers and 50% of special education teachers reported that they had some training within the last year. GET4 and GET5 expressed that they “attended sessions at the beginning of last school year from the district on best practices for inclusion that included following the individualized educational plan and coteaching.” SET3 stated that “the only training that she had received was self-driven webinars that she felt she needed to help her improve.” SET4 and SET6 disclosed that both of them had “attended a 1-week coteaching in-service with the special education director the past summer.” SET8 expressed, “I attended a national special education conference and heard several break-out sessions on inclusion this past year.”

No training. Eighty-percent of general education teachers and 50% of special education reported that they had not received any training within the last year. Participants, GET1, GET2, GET3, GET6, GET7, GET8, and GET9, reported “none” when asked what training they had attended in the last year. SET1, SET2, and SET7 also stated “none” to how much training they had attended in the last year. Both general and special education teachers expressed concerns for improving inclusion with no training in the last year.

Several of the participants expressed how they wished that would have been allowed to train before implementing inclusion. GET3 stated that she felt she could have been more effective with training. SET7 commented, “Both general and special education teachers need the training to implement inclusion with fidelity.”

Theme 2, coteaching training, aligns with 4 of the 5 adult learning theory assumptions (self-concept, readiness to learn, orientation, motivation). Self-concept, readiness to learn, and motivation address how if the adult does not feel supported in learning, learning will not be positive (Yarbrough, 2018). The majority of general education teachers and half of the special education teachers had no training and expressed how they would have liked training before implementing inclusions. The orientation of learning relates to adults seeing the value of learning (Malik, 2016). Both general and special education teachers expressed the need to learn whether they attended training or did not attend any training.

Theme 3: Collaboration times/Collaboration Time Among Teachers

No collaboration before the grant. Before the district received a grant to provide additional collaboration time, all general and special education teachers reported that no time for collaboration regarding inclusion. GET1, GET4, and SET3 indicated that collaboration time among general and special education teachers as a “weakness before the grant.” GET7 revealed that there was “no collaboration between teachers;” however, “aides were the communication between general and special education.” SET3 stated, “Planning was an issue.” General education expressed that educational assistants were communication between general and special education.

Weekly collaboration with grant weekly. The district had received a grant opportunity that allows general and special education teachers to collaborate one-time per week for one hour. The teachers were getting paid with a stipend through the grant to participate in the collaboration. Unanimously, general and special education teachers reported with the grant opportunity that teachers participating in inclusion settings were collaborating one-time per week for 1 hour. GET2, GET5, GET9, and GET10 emphasized the importance of collaboration time among teachers and the educational assistants in their classroom. GET8 reported, “The formal collaboration time happened one-time per week and then as the need arises.” SET1 and SET6 expressed that “they rely on the educational assistants to communicate between the general and special education teacher after collaborating the one-time per week.” SET4 stated that “in addition to the one-time per week, teachers were e-mailing and texting to collaborate.”

Collaboration aligned with all five assumptions of the adult learning theory. The adult learner must connect the learning to his/her own life (Thiers, 2016). Collaboration among adults in a safe, learning environment where the learning is connected to individual experiences and self-motivation helped improve the individual's value to the learning (Yarbrough, 2018). When teachers can meet to learn new teaching strategies for inclusion and see the benefit for themselves and students, the adult learning theory becomes prevalent during collaboration times (Thiers, 2016).

Theme 4: Preparedness/Teachers Prepared and not Prepared to Coteach

Prepared. Eighty-percent of general and 25% of special education teachers felt prepared to coteach. GET4, GET5, SET1, SET3, SET4, and SET5 indicated that were very prepared to coteach. GET4 expressed, "I already teach in small groups and differentiate. Coteaching is just adding another level." GET7-10 and SET 8 felt 80% prepared to teach coteach. GET7 communicated that "She had been doing inclusion over a decade and could meet students' needs in different ways." "The pairing up of teachers, the class size, and the students' individual needs" were areas that SET6 felt could pose issues for them feeling as prepared as general education teachers.

Not prepared. The lower level of preparedness due to teacher experience and insufficient formal training made general education teachers feel less prepared. GET 6 stated that "the preparedness level for her was 50% due to her lack of experience." Special education teachers expressed not being prepared for them was due to the lack of training and common planning with the general education teacher. SET2 expressed that she was not prepared to coteach due to "the lack of training and common planning with

the general education teacher.” GET3 communicated that her lack of preparedness was “lack of experience.” SET7 conveyed “Larger class sizes with high needs also caused feelings of being unprepared.”

Eighty percent of general education teachers who felt prepared to coteach had also communicated their years of experience with an assistant in their class as a confidence booster. GET7, GET9, SET1, and SET7 communicated that educational assistants were used for small group instruction, to keep data on students with disabilities, and gather instructional resources. GET5 stated, “The assistant could make or break the inclusion experience for both teachers and students.” SET1 disclosed that “the educational assistants were her life line to the general education teachers.” SET2, SET4, and SET8 communicated that they could only coteach in one or two classes per grade, where they “felt they more of an assistant than the teacher.” The assistants were heavily relied on to serve the inclusion students that the teachers could not teach.

Self-concept, learning experience, and motivation are the adult learning theory assumptions that are aligned to theme 3, preparedness. When teachers can reflect on individual experiences of success or failure, adult learning can occur based upon the adult’s need to learn (McCray, 2016). The majority of general education teachers and most special education expressed a sense of preparedness to coteach. The preparedness related to the teacher’s experience during inclusion, feeling of confidence while teaching, and motivation to learn to improve the teacher’s inclusion experience. The lack of preparedness was also related to the teacher’s experience, confidence level, and motivation to learn. General and special education teachers needed to experience

positive confidence levels and experiences to grow their motivation to learn inclusion strategies (Goddard & Evans, 2018).

Theme 5: District support/Teachers Needed District Support for Inclusion

Teacher support. Both general and special education teachers revealed that they receive more teacher support than administration support for inclusion. Eighty percent of the general education teachers stated their main teacher supports came from either the special education teachers or Response To Intervention (RTI) teachers. GET1 communicated that “the special education teachers assisted them with modifications to assignments and what works for certain students.” GET2 and GET7 stated, “Special education teachers helped to address individual student needs to meet success.” GET5 presented, “The RTI teacher assisted general education teachers with independent reading levels for students struggling in reading so that they could adapt the core curriculum to meet the students’ needs.”

Seventy-five percent of the special education teachers expressed that their support came from general education teachers or RTI teachers. SET2 and SET5 revealed that “general education teachers share their knowledge of how the special education student performs while the assistant is in the classroom.” SET6 communicated, “The RTI teachers report bi-weekly progress monitoring of skills to the special education teacher to adjust the student’s needs in the inclusion setting.” SET4 conveyed that “the RTI teacher was important in tracking the progress along with individual goals to help the students grow academically in the inclusion setting.”

Administrative support. Administrative support was only provided to 20% of general education teachers and 25% special education teachers. The special education teacher has provided general education teachers with the most support during the summer training opportunities. GET4 stated, “special education had provided her with the most support when providing training opportunities in the summer.” GET6 expressed that “principals were very open and always willing to help when a question regarding inclusion was presented.” SET1 disclosed, “The principal was the main support level at the school for the special education teachers during the day.” SET8 also communicated that “the special education director was always available via phone or e-mail to answer any questions.”

All of the general and special education teachers consistently expressed the “importance of a support system, whether it was teacher support or administrative support.” General education teachers felt that any support that they were provided only improved their inclusion practices. SET8 stated, “I do not always know the answers to many questions and get caught off-guard by being expected to know the answer.” SET1 expressed, “The pressures of inclusion could be strenuous at times when she did not know the answer.” Special education teachers indicated the importance of the supports but sometimes felt unsure of answers that they were providing to support the teachers. The most significant inclusion stressor for special education teachers was the pressure of always not knowing answers to questions that they may be asked throughout a day.

Theme 5, support, addressed all the assumptions in the adult learning theory (self-concept, learner experience, readiness, orientation, and motivation). Thiers (2016) stated

that adults have to take ownership of the learning to see the value and benefit of their own lives. A support system, whether teacher or administration, needs to allow individual teachers to address their own learning needs in a risk-free environment where they feel valued.

Theme 6: Planning times/Common Planning Times Needed for Teachers

No common planning before the grant. The answers discovered for common planning times were the same as the answers in Theme 3, collaboration. Before the district got an inclusion grant, all general and special education teachers reported common planning time as “none.” GET2, GET3, GET4, GET5, SET1, SET2, and SET4 all stated, “Common planning times were not occurring before we got the grant.” Teachers noted that common planning among them had always been an issue.

With grant weekly. Both general and special education were unanimous in reporting that with the grant that they had common planning times one-time per week for 1 hour after school. All teachers were being compensated with a stipend from the grant to stay one hour each week after school to plan for inclusion. GET1 and GET6 explained that “1 hour per week was still not enough time for planning to meet the students’ needs.” General education teachers revealed that in reality, that true planning was only happening about two times per month because of other meetings and personal appointments after school. SET2 disclosed that “teachers needed more than 1 hour to plan effectively.” SET4 suggested that “more planning time be offered in the coming years.”

All teachers felt that common planning was a necessity to implement inclusion. General education teachers communicated that it was harder for them to be open during

the common planning times due to their lack of knowledge of inclusion. GET3 stated, “I do not feel competent during the planning sessions many times.” GET5 disclosed that she “felt a session on how to plan effectively would benefit everyone.” The special education teachers expressed that many times the common planning time consisted of teaching general education basic special education knowledge. SET8 revealed that “She felt a special education law class might be good for the general education teachers to hear.” While all teachers communicated that common planning was needed, GET2, GET3, GET4, SET2, and SET4 agreed that the “time was not being spent to address the inclusion needs of students with disabilities,” either due to lack of a safe learning environment or lack of knowledge.

Common planning times addressed four of the five assumptions of the adult learning theory. Adults do not learn like students do; therefore, human emotion, motivation, and the relationship of the learning to self are key factors to successful adult learning (McCray, 2016). The teachers recognized the importance of the common planning time. However, some revealed that the common planning was not a risk-free environment where everyone’s learning is valued. The optimal environment for adult learning needs to include positive assumptions for productive learning so that all see the benefits and value (Thiers, 2016).

Theme 7: Amount of support/Varied Support Time for Teachers

No support. There were no general education teachers who expressed that they never had any support for inclusion practices. Twenty-five percent of special education teachers replied that they had no support for inclusion services. SET2 stated that the

“special education support was lacking.” SET4 communicated, “I can’t recall the last time that she had received support from the special education department.”

Daily support. Twenty percent of the general education teachers and 25% of the special education teachers reported that they received daily special education support. GET1 and GET10 disclosed that the “daily support they received had an educational assistant in their classroom during core academics”. SET3 stated that the “support varies day-to-day to include educational assistants, purchasing materials to support inclusion, and special education support from the district office.” SET8 provided in her answer that “daily support came from the availability of the special education director to always answer questions either by phone, e-mail, or text.”

Weekly support. Forty percent of the general education and 25% of the special education teachers responded that they were provided weekly inclusion support. GET2 and GET9 expressed “weekly check-ins from the special education teacher were the weekly support that they were receiving.” GET5 explained that “weekly support comes from the special education teacher, principal, educational assistant, or RTI teacher.” However, SET1 and SET7 stated their weekly support came from the “special education director.”

Monthly support. Monthly support was communicated as the frequency of support for 40% of general education teachers and 25% of special education teachers. GET3, GET7, and GET8 stated that monthly support was from the “special education teacher.” GET6 commented that “monthly support was from the principal completing

informal observations.” SET5 emphasized that “continued monthly support was viewed as coming from the district special education department.”

All five of the assumptions of the adult learning theory were aligned in theme 7, amount of support. This theme relied heavily on teacher emotion to learning from the support that was supplied to each teacher. The amount of support offered to teachers impacted both general and special education teachers’ positive and negative learning experience. Teachers related the inclusion support to their success or failure to address the needs of both general education students and students with disabilities. The adult learning theory applied to the amount of support given to teachers, teachers’ feelings toward inclusion support, the success of all students, and independence to learn from the support that was given to each teacher.

Theme 8: More needs for support/Needs for Additional Support for Inclusion

More planning. Thirty percent of the general education teachers and 50% of the special education teachers expressed a need for more planning to support inclusion. GET1 stated that “more planning time with the inclusion teacher would help her implement inclusion.” GET2, GET3, and GET5 explained that “additional planning among general and special education teachers would help address the individual needs of students in inclusion classrooms.” In contrast, SET2 explained that “additional planning could be used to provide success stories of strategies that have worked in previous classes.” SET3, SET6, and SET8 expressed that more planning would “allow both general and special education teachers opportunities to discuss the needs of students with disabilities and differentiate instruction to maximize learning.”

Extra assistant. Only 20% of general education teachers who felt an additional assistant would be a good support to grow inclusionary practices. No special education teachers reported this as a need. GET6 revealed, “An additional assistant in the classroom seven hours per day would allow general education teachers to provide more opportunities for small group instruction for all students.” GET9 suggested an extra assistant could assist the class by providing consistent modifications and accommodations daily.

Materials. Fifty percent of special education teachers and 30% of general education teachers reported that hands-on materials would help implement inclusion. SET1 reported that a helpful support for inclusion would be “instructional materials that could be used daily for inclusion.” SET5 and SET7 discussed how they could use “more materials that supported state standards to differentiate instruction for students in the inclusion classroom.” SET4 expressed that “more manipulative materials to use in small groups would be beneficial.” Additionally, GET4 and GET10 emphasized that “more materials to reach lower-achieving students could improve inclusion.” GET8 stated, “More hands-on materials that correlated with standards for the grade level would be an asset in the classroom.”

Smaller classes. Only twenty percent of general education teachers felt that smaller class sizes would be advantageous when required to have an inclusion classroom. GET2 expressed that “inclusion was an extra load for teachers, and teachers should have a smaller class size to lighten the teaching load.” GET6 and GET7 stated that “smaller class sizes would be a nice incentive to gain buy-in from general education teachers.”

Special education teachers did not see smaller class sizes as a betterment for the implementation of inclusion.

Theme 9: Professional development needs/Teacher Recommendations

Visit other schools. The opportunity to visit other schools that were successfully implementing inclusion was the most recommended professional development for both general and special education teachers. Sixty percent of general education and 50% of special education teachers believed that visiting successful inclusion schools would be the most useful professional development. GET1, GET2, GET4, GET8, GET9, GET10, SET2, SET4, SET6, and SET8 explained that seeing teachers making inclusion work would help them more than anything. GET1 and GET2 explained that “seeing teachers making inclusion work would help them more than anything.” GET4 stated, “I feel spending a day with a school where inclusion was thriving would help me understand the concept better.” GET8 communicated that being able to “visit model inclusion classrooms would be beneficial.” GET9 and GET10 felt that they could learn from observing and talking to other teachers where inclusion was successful would help them with the implementation.

Special education teachers expressed that they would like the opportunity to observe and ask the coteachers questions that she had for implementing inclusion. SET2 stated that “for her seeing is believing and she needed to see inclusion in action to learn more strategies.” SET4 revealed, “I would like the opportunity to not only observe but also ask the teachers in the different schools questions that I have while implementing inclusion.” SET6 and SET8 discussed how actually seeing inclusion strategies in

practice and being able to take notes would “help them when implementing inclusion in their school.”

How to collaborate. Professional development on collaboration was the least need among both general and special education teachers. There was only one general education teacher who felt those teaching teachers how to collaborate effectively would be beneficial. GET7 communicated that “she felt neither the general nor special education teachers were collaborating to benefit the students, and there was a need for training on how to collaborate to benefit both teachers and students.”

Instructional strategies. The need for professional development regarding instructional strategies was reported by only one general education teacher and two special education teachers as a need. GET3 felt the benefit of additional instructional materials would “help them modify the material so the material could be used to meet small group needs.” SET1 expressed the “need for better instructional strategies that could assist the general education teachers with teaching the grade-level content knowledge to students with disabilities that were not at grade level.” SET5 stated, “All teachers could use an in-service on new instructional strategies to improve teaching and reach all students.”

Resources. Professional development that provided resources that could be used in inclusive classrooms was revealed as essential by both general and special education teachers. Twenty percent of general education and 25% of special education teachers expressed useful resources for inclusion as a suggestion for training. GET5 explained that they needed professional development that provided them with “usable resources that

they could use immediately.” GET6 expressed that “actually acquiring the resources during the training would benefit her.” SET3 discussed how there was an “urgency for resources that addressed standards in her school.” SET7 stated that “resources for lower-performing students could be beneficial for teachers and students.” Both general and special education teachers discussed the need for resources that could be used immediately after professional development.

Teachers have communicated during individual interviews that additional support and more professional developments regarding inclusion are needed to improve inclusion implementation. Both themes, more needs for support and professional development needs, align with all five assumptions of the adult learning theory. Teachers are more eager to learn when they feel they have input concerning instructional struggles for them (Malik, 2016). When teachers felt that learning took place in an environment where risks were not viewed as negative input, they made connections to their personal teaching strategies and saw the benefits of improving themselves (Thiers, 2016). The suggestions of additional supports and more professional development from general and special education teachers aligned with the assumptions of self-concept, learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation of learning, and motivation from the adult learning theory.

Summarizing Answers to the Research Questions

RQ1: During the interviews, both general and special education teachers stated that coteaching was the inclusion practice that they implemented for students with disabilities. The number of years of experience coteaching and having an educational assistant in the classroom were disclosed as having the greatest impact on a teacher’s

level of preparedness to implement inclusion. Teachers expressed that they relied on educational assistants for small group instruction and tracking data on students with disabilities while coteaching.

RQ2: The data revealed that teachers felt a teacher's perception of inclusion, lack of common planning or time to collaborate, and the district's sparse support as the challenges for implementing inclusion. General and special education teachers communicated that overall their perception of inclusion was positive; however, the additional workload of inclusion and the lack of time to collaborate created a negative perception of inclusion. Teachers revealed that they did not have common planning times or time to collaborate among general and special education teachers before the district received a federal grant which provided them with common planning and collaboration times after school. The teachers' interviews indicated that administrative support for inclusion was limited. Teachers provided the most support to each other for inclusion.

RQ3: Both general and special education teachers expressed that the frequency of support for inclusion, more support for inclusion, and additional professional development opportunities could improve implementing inclusionary practices. Teachers stated weekly and monthly support as the greatest amount of support within the district. The interviews also disclosed that the amount of support that teachers were provided impacted their perception of inclusion. General and special education teachers communicated that they would have liked more opportunities to attend coteaching trainings prior to implementing the practice. The most suitable additional supports that

teachers felt would help them improve implementing inclusion were found to be more planning time and instructional materials that would assist them with differentiating the curriculum. General and special education teachers communicated that they needed to visit schools where inclusion was successful as the most relevant professional development for improving inclusion.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness included four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Credibility was established through the researcher that remained open to the participants' answers, reported exact content portrayed by the participants, and analyzed the data following the research design (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). General and special education teachers' perceptions of the challenges of implementing inclusion were collected through one-on-one interviews either by phone or Google Meet to observe the social distancing guidelines. After the interviews were concluded, each participant was e-mailed a transcript of his/her interview to review for accurate reporting. The transcript reviewed by each participant completed member checking (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Next, each participant's transcript was compared to my interview notes and observations to create codes. Triangulating the data was the next step in the analysis. The participants' responses were correlated to the codes that emerged and the two types of participants. After the correlation of the codes to responses, themes and theme statements were developed from the codes that had emerged. The final step was to determine the relationship of the themes to the conceptual

framework. Trustworthiness ensured that equitable data were collected for the research study.

Transferability was established by developing a thorough description of the setting, context, and research design. Anyone reading the study would conclude from the study what applied to specific situations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Purposeful sampling was used to select 10 general education and eight special education teachers for this study. Each participant gave thorough responses during the interview. Participants shared teaching experiences and perceptions about inclusion openly, allowing the findings to transfer from this study to another scenario for transferability.

Dependability was established through an audit trail and member checking. The audit trail provided specific details to the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data ensuring that the findings are participants' ideas excluding researcher bias (Saldana, 2016). The data collection included a detailed process for collecting data through interviews. After the interview process, member checking was performed to ensure the participants' responses were accurate before data analysis began. The data analysis involved analyzing the data for codes, themes, and theme statements.

Triangulation and the correlation of themes to the conceptual framework were also a part of the data analysis. Data analysis was reported stating the themes and theme statements using quotes from participants that supported each theme. Neutrality in data collection, data analysis, and data reporting addressed dependability.

Confirmability was established through reflexivity by keeping a journal. The journal reflected my values and interest in the research and data so that I remained neutral

throughout the study (Saldana, 2016). The research study was completed in the district where I am employed; therefore, I had to ensure that my personal bias about inclusion in the district was not included in the data interpretation. I used an interview guide during each interview to maintain fidelity and neutrality. When each interview was completed, I reflected in the journal, where I followed the guide without bias. After each interview, I listened to the interview, read the transcript, and read my notes that ensured the data's consistency. In the journal, I reported any of my personal feelings that I felt from each interview to ensure that the data was a true representation of the participant's answers. Each participant then reviewed the transcript for the accuracy of responses. The journal also allowed me to express my values and beliefs throughout the data collection, data analysis, and data reporting to refrain from reporting any form of my personal bias in the research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive as effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the strategies, and what teachers thought they needed to help them improve implementing inclusion practices. Coteaching was the inclusionary practice that teachers were implementing and perceived to be effective. A teacher's perception of inclusion, lack of common planning or collaboration time, and limited support from the district impacted inclusion implementation. Teachers felt that additional support for inclusion, more common planning times, instructional materials for differentiating the curriculum, and visiting other schools that were implementing inclusion with success would help them

improve their inclusionary practices. Nine themes emerged after analyzing the data completely that explain general and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion. The nine themes supplied answers to the research questions and aligned with the conceptual framework. The themes that emerged from the data are: teachers' perception of inclusion, training regarding coteaching, general and special education collaboration opportunities, teachers' feelings toward coteaching, teachers support within the district, common planning times for general and special education teachers, frequency of support for inclusion, additional supports needed by teachers, and teachers' recommendation for professional development regarding inclusion.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings and the implications of the study. The limitations of the study and my recommendations for further research were also presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes with my potential impact of social change as a result of this research study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Past researchers have discovered that the challenges of implementing inclusion have been related to teachers lack of knowledge regarding inclusion and coteaching (Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Wedin & Wessman, 2017). Recent studies reflected the challenges of inclusion to a teacher's perception of inclusion and the amount of time devoted to professional development (Gavish, 2017; Ozmantar, 2019; Pugach & Peck, 2016). The research problem addressed in this study was that general and special education teachers are not consistently implementing inclusion practices to support students with disabilities in HSD. The research problem was supported by a gap in practice at HSD (i.e., inclusion practices not being implemented) and a gap in the literature (i.e., reasons inclusion practices are not being implemented) that helped me address the challenges teachers perceive to be the reasons for implementing inclusion practices. The purpose of this study was to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive as effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the strategies, and what teachers thought they needed to help them improve implementing inclusion practices. I used a basic qualitative design to answers to the research questions in this study. Qualitative research seeks to find descriptive answers to a problem that describes how people encounter particular interactions to a phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The study findings revealed that 90% of the general education teachers and 75% of special education teachers had a positive perception of inclusion. Eighty percent of general education teachers had no training regarding coteaching within the last year;

however, only 50% of special education teachers had received coteaching training. The majority of general and special education teachers felt prepared to coteach and implement inclusionary practices. Collaboration time and common planning times among general and special education teachers did not occur prior to the district receiving a federal grant that allowed for the collaboration and common planning after school. Teacher support was reported as the most district support for implementing inclusion. Both general and special education teachers expressed that more planning time than already allowed and academic materials as additional support needed for them to implement inclusion. Visiting other schools implementing inclusion well was the professional development that both general and special education teachers felt would be the most beneficial for them.

Knowles's (1980) adult learning theory was the conceptual framework that grounded this study. The adult learning theory focuses on five basic assumptions: "self-concept, adult learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation of learning, and motivation to learn" (Walker, 2017, p. 360). The five adult learning assumptions were reflected in the nine themes that emerged from the data analysis.

I used purposeful sampling to gather the participants for this study. The participants were chosen from a population of approximately 115 professionals in a small, rural district in the southeastern United States. The inclusion criteria for participants were implementation of inclusion in the past 2 years, professional general or special education license in the state, and 1 year of teaching experience. No participants were drawn from the middle school in the district where I work.

The study findings provided the answers to my research questions through the grounded conceptual framework and thorough data analysis. The nine themes that emerged from the data support existing research on the teachers' perceptions of challenges of implementing best practices for inclusion. As a result of this study and the findings, I gained a deeper understanding of the teachers' perceptions toward inclusion and the challenges of implementing inclusion in the HSD.

Interpretation of the Findings

The literature reviewed for this study reflected that the challenges for general and special education teachers providing inclusion are minimal knowledge about inclusion, lack of instructional support, having negative perceptions toward inclusion, the need for more professional development, challenges with coteaching, and the need for school change (Versland & Erickson, 2017). The findings of this study may contribute to the existing research on inclusion and the challenges that teachers face when implementing inclusion (see Lancaster & Bain, 2019; Lyons, 2016; Macias, 2017). Additionally, the current study findings may reinforce that for inclusion to be successful for students with disabilities, school districts need to provide quality and equitable professional development opportunities for general and special education teachers in which the teachers have voiced their educational needs (see Chang & Pascua, 2017; Macias, 2017; Wedin & Wessman, 2017). The study findings may also contribute to improved inclusionary teaching practices, positive teacher perceptions toward inclusion, and grade-level growth for students with disabilities. By identifying the teachers' perceptions of the challenges of implementing best practices for inclusion, both general and special

education teachers may better fulfill the responsibility of implementing inclusion in today's classrooms.

The general and special education teachers who participated in this study shared inclusion practices that they used for students with disabilities, challenges they encountered when implementing inclusion, and suggestions for what they needed to improve implementing inclusion. The nine themes that emerged are teachers' perceptions of inclusion, training regarding coteaching, general and special education collaboration opportunities, teachers' feelings toward coteaching, teachers support within the district, common planning times for general and special education teachers, frequency of support for inclusion, additional supports needed by teachers, and teachers' recommendations for professional development regarding inclusion. Next, the research questions are correlated with the corresponding themes, interpretations of findings, and supporting literature.

Interpretation of Findings of RQ1

RQ1 was: What inclusion practices do general and special education teachers implement for students with disabilities? Coteaching was the practice that both general and special education teachers reported as the district's inclusionary practice. Teachers reported that they felt prepared to coteach by using small group instruction and differentiating the curriculum to facilitate inclusion. Both general and special education teachers reported educational assistants as a positive attribute to coteaching in the district. Both general and special education teachers stated that the individualized educational plans were followed to accommodate the individual needs of students with disabilities.

Theme 2: Training regarding coteaching. In Chapter 4, the findings revealed that most of general education and half of the special education teachers had received no training within the last year regarding coteaching. Both general and special education teachers expressed they would have preferred training before implementing coteaching. I found the responses to be surprising because of the lack of training regarding coteaching. If teachers are expected to implement coteaching strategies with success, they should be provided with the training to promote success for both teachers and students. Coteaching training aligned with the adult learning theory assumptions of self-concept, readiness to learn, orientation of learning, and motivation (see Thiers, 2016). Adults need to be able to relate to the new learning to see the value of the learning and feel confident in practicing new learning (McCray, 2016).

One of the key successes of coteaching is when administrators and teachers worked together, listened to each other's needs, and provided follow-up support to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Oh et al., 2017; Wilson et al., 2018). Additionally, successful coteaching happens when general and special education teachers are provided with training and support to assist teachers with the new teaching strategies (Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Wedin & Wessman, 2017). Bettini et al. (2017) found that using teachers to conduct professional development successfully with coteaching helped increase coteaching experiences overall. Furthermore, research has showed that school districts that offered coteaching training, continuous support, and opportunities to observe positive coteaching environments have the best success rates (Conderman & Hedin,

2017). Teachers need to be provided with adequate training before implementing coteaching to benefit students with disabilities.

Theme 4: Teachers' feelings toward coteaching. In Chapter 4, the findings revealed that the majority of general education teachers and one quarter of the special education teachers felt prepared to coteach to implement inclusionary practices. Both general and special education teachers utilized their educational assistant to teach small groups, monitor the progress of students with disabilities, and gather resources to differentiate instruction. When coteaching among the general and special education teachers occurred in the inclusion classroom, the special education teacher was viewed as an assistant with minimal opportunities to teach the lesson. In the current study, I found that the level of teacher preparedness was attributed to their years of experience with an educational assistant in the classroom. The level of preparedness to coteach aligned to the adult learning theory assumptions of self-concept, learning experience, and motivation (see Malik, 2016). A teacher being prepared to coteach hinged on the teacher's previous coteaching experiences, confidence level with coteaching, and his/her motivation to improve coteaching skills (Thiers, 2016).

The responses regarding the feelings of general and special education teachers toward coteaching were not what I was expecting to receive. The teachers felt prepared to coteach; however, their knowledge of coteaching was not accurate. Both general and special education teachers expressed that educational assistants were sharing coteaching responsibilities. Coteaching is supposed to be a general and special education teacher taking turns teaching, observing, monitoring, providing student feedback, and

differentiating instruction to meet the students' needs in the class (CITE). The general and special education should plan together and collaborate daily to monitor the instruction that is being provided. The teachers expressed that coteaching was actually occurring with an assistant, and this would not be coteaching. I believe the teachers need more professional development and support to coteach effectively.

Knowing the role of coteaching and opportunities to grow individual teaching abilities was found to be essential for success between general and special education teachers during coteaching (Chang & Pascua, 2017; Lyons, 2016). When teachers are provided with individual support regarding coteaching, their level of preparedness increases while feeling positive about themselves (Tyler, 2016). Priyadarshini and Thangarajathi (2016) suggested that teachers needed professional development regarding coteaching and how to use educational assistants in the inclusion classroom. Due to the consistently changing educational requirements, both general and special education teachers needed more practicum experiences addressing coteaching to increase their self-confidence levels in the inclusion classroom (Ozmantor, 2019). Lastly, the education majors' curriculum needs to be evaluated frequently to ensure that the future teachers have the academic knowledge and coteaching strategies necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom (Alexander et al., 2016; McKay, 2016; Ozmantor, 2019).

In the current study, I found coteaching to be the practice that general and special education teachers implement for students with disabilities in the district. The majority of the teachers in this study felt prepared to coteach. Teachers communicated how they

valued an inclusion educational assistant in the classroom, and the inclusion educational assistant connected to their positive perceptions of coteaching and confidence level. The findings for RQ1 and the findings from peer-reviewed literature confirmed the answer to RQ1.

Interpretation of Findings of RQ2

RQ2 was: What are the challenges that general and special education teachers encounter when implementing inclusion practices for students with disabilities?

Theme 1: Teachers' perception of inclusion. The results in Chapter 4 indicated that participants had negative perceptions of inclusion because they viewed it as an additional workload to the teacher's day as well as having a lack of collaboration time regarding inclusion. However, overall, general and special education teachers had a positive perception of inclusion. General and special education teachers felt that the benefits of inclusion outweighed the negatives. The findings regarding perceptions toward inclusion also came as a surprise to me. I assumed that the overall perceptions of inclusion among teachers would have been more negative. I believe that positive inclusion perceptions produce academic achievement for students with disabilities. The teachers' perceptions of inclusion supported all five of the adult learning theory assumptions. An adult's emotions, motivation, perception of self, and willingness to improve were a result of either positive or negative perceptions of inclusion (Yarbrough, 2018).

A teacher's positive or negative perception of inclusion was an important factor in the success of implementing inclusion (Amr et al., 2016). The views toward inclusion

became contradictory and limited when teachers had a negative perception (Amr et al., 2016; Sandu, 2017). The negative or positive perception of inclusion influenced the teachers' expectations of students with disabilities significantly (Sandu, 2017; Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019). Teachers' negative perceptions toward inclusion were defined by feelings of inadequacy to teach inclusion, minimal collaboration time, and misidentification of students with disabilities (Moreno-Rodriguez et al., 2017). Furthermore, Stites et al. (2018) suggested that general and special education teachers should be given more time to plan and collaborate with each other to increase perceptions from negative to positive.

Theme 3: General and special education teachers' collaboration

opportunities. In Chapter 4, the results indicated that prior to a district grant, general and special education teachers did not collaborate due to time constraints. With the grant, general and special education teachers are collaborating one time per week for 1 hour after school. Collaboration among general and special education teachers is important to the success of inclusion. I hope the district realizes the importance and continues the collaboration opportunities after the grant. The teachers are getting paid a stipend through the grant to stay after school. Collaboration is aligned with the five assumptions of the adult learning theory. General and special education teachers needed a risk-free environment to collaborate where each teacher can see the value of the learning and the benefits provided by collaborating (Thiers, 2016).

Priyadarshini and Thangarajathi (2016) suggested that teachers should communicate in a risk-free environment where both general and special education

teachers feel their input is valued. Bridich (2016) emphasized that there will be minimal student success in the inclusion classroom without time to collaborate. A teacher's feeling of unpreparedness for student success came from the lack of time to collaborate and plan with grade-level peers (McKay, 2016). Administrators needed to incorporate a time into the master schedule for collaboration time among general and special education teachers to plan for inclusion (Kaufman, Felder, Ahrbeck, Badar, & Schneiders, 2018; McKay, 2016; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). Woodcock and Hardy (2017) argued that administrators played an intricate part in collaboration to improve inclusion practices.

Theme 5: Teachers' support within the district. The findings indicated that administrative support was limited in Chapter 4, coming from the special education director and principal. General and special education teachers expressed that the support they received from the special education director and the principal was the availability to answer questions via email or phone call, brief meetings, and purchasing instructional materials for teachers. Teacher support was the primary level of support for inclusion. Special education teachers, general education teachers, and RTI teachers were prominently the supports within the district. I was very surprised that the teachers were the primary source of support for the district. I think that there should be additional support from the district. A teacher's main focus should be to teach and to support school staff after his/her teaching is at level that shows academic progress for students in the classroom. Teachers expressed that the administrative support was limited coming from the special education director and principal. Teachers' support within the district addressed all five assumptions of the adult learning theory. The support system was an

important way for teachers to express their learning needs in a risk-free environment where they see the learning purpose and value (Thiers, 2016).

The administrator's role has shifted from a traditional approach to a cooperative approach in schools today as presented in related literature (Kalinovich & Marrone, 2017). Administrators and teacher leaders provided useful feedback to grow teacher self-efficacy and learn new strategies outside the teacher's comfort zone (Balyer et al., 2017; Timothy & Agbenyega, 2018). Ustun (2017) explained that administrators and teacher leaders needed to model and support teachers in the inclusion classroom to gain maximum learning for the adult and students. Alila et al. (2016) noted teachers should not be controlled by administrators but supported to grow learning for every student in their classroom. Lastly, Timothy and Agbenyega (2018) concluded that general and special education teachers should support each other and share best practices in inclusion classrooms to create an ideal inclusion model. The general and special education teachers in this district are beginning to plan together to share best practices and support each other to improve inclusion through a federal grant.

Theme 6: Common planning times for general and special education

teachers. In Chapter 4, the findings indicated that before a grant for the district, both general and special education teachers responded that common planning time was a problem in the district and was not occurring. The district acquired a grant that provided general and special education teachers a common planning time after school. Common planning time is important for general and special education teachers that are implementing inclusion. Teachers need time to discuss what each teacher will teach, how

and who will remediate, and what data will track academic success. The common planning was for one-time per week for one hour. Teachers were receiving a stipend for participating in the grant. I hope the district will realize the importance of common planning and continue common planning after the grant. Self-concept, learner experience, readiness to learn, and orientation are the four of five assumptions aligned to the adult learning theory. Optimal learning for adults allowed each adult to see the value of the learning, reflect on individual emotions, and discover the relationship of the learning to oneself in a risk-free environment (Yarbrough, 2018).

Oh et al. (2017) explained that one of the challenges of inclusion was the lack of common planning times for general and special education teachers. In today's schools, administrators must create a schedule where general and special education teachers are provided with a common planning time to discuss student and teacher needs (Versland & Erickson, 2017). Balyer et al. (2017) discussed the importance of common planning times to address inclusion for both general and special education teachers. Timothy and Agbenyega (2018) emphasized the need for providing general and special education teachers to broaden the learning for students with disabilities in inclusion classes. To meet students' needs in inclusion classrooms, general and special education must have the opportunity to plan together at the same time to grow best practices for inclusion (Mestry, 2017).

A teacher's negative perception of inclusion, the lack of time to collaborate and plan before a district grant, and the limited support from administrators were indicated as the challenges that general and special education teachers encountered when

implementing inclusion. Teachers had a negative perception of inclusion because of the additional work devoted to inclusion and the lack of time to collaborate with general and special education teachers. Collaboration and the common planning times were not occurring before the district acquired a grant that provided time after school for common time for teachers to meet and plan to address inclusion challenges. Teachers provided the most support for each other regarding inclusion. Administrators were noted as only providing a minimal amount of support for inclusion. The findings for RQ2 and the peer-reviewed literature's findings extended the knowledge of teachers' challenges when implementing inclusion.

Findings of RQ3

RQ3: What do general and special education teachers think they need to help them improve implementing inclusionary practices?

Theme 7: Frequency of support for inclusion. In Chapter 4, the findings indicated that the highest frequency of support teachers were provided for inclusion was weekly or monthly. General education teachers stated that weekly or monthly check-ins from the special education teacher and common planning times with the special education teachers were important for them when implementing inclusion. Special education teachers indicated that their weekly or monthly support from the district special education office was crucial. I suggest that the frequency of support for inclusion should be reviewed and adjusted to individual teacher's needs. Some teachers will need more than weekly or monthly support to implement inclusion successfully. The frequency of

support that teachers received for inclusion impacted the perceptions that teachers have regarding inclusion.

The frequency of support is aligned with the five assumptions of the adult learning theory. The teachers' emotions for general and special education students and the feelings regarding the amount of support impacted the teachers' needs for inclusion (Thiers, 2016). Teachers related their success or failure rates for students to positive supports they have been provided for inclusion (Yarbrough, 2018). Teachers needed to be able to express their needs for support of inclusion to see the benefits in their classroom.

Oh et al. (2017) reported that for successful inclusion to occur that teachers need continued consistent support, scheduled collaboration and common planning times for general and special education teachers, and opportunities for teachers to share positive and negative feedback regarding student progress. Bettini et al. (2017) noted that inclusion experiences were increased when administrators provided mentoring and support with consistency during the school year. Woolfsen and Durkin (2018) argued that teachers who work together to meet the same goals toward student achievement encounter success for general and special education students. Teachers expressed the frequency of support and setting goals for all students to experience academic growth are beneficial to grow inclusion (Bettini et al., 2017; Conderman & Hedin, 2017; Oh et al., 2017).

Theme 8: Additional supports needed by teachers. In Chapter 4, the findings indicated that general and special education teachers had identified various additional

supports that would assist them in providing inclusion. More planning time, an extra educational assistant, instructional materials that differentiate for lower-performing students, and smaller class sizes for inclusion teachers are supports teachers identified as a need for implementing inclusion. I agree with the responses to the additional supports that teachers need. The main supports were more planning time and instructional materials that differentiate. General education teachers will need more instructional materials that differentiate because most general education teachers did not have college classes that taught them how to differentiate. The five assumptions of the adult learning theory are aligned with the need for more supports. Teachers were more engaged in learning when they think their input was valued and recognized the new learning benefited them in providing inclusion practices (Thiers, 2016).

Hannas and Hanssen (2016) argued that teachers are expected to provide inclusion practices with minimal support. General and special education teachers voiced their concerns and needs for implementing inclusion without feeling these needs were overlooked by administrators when addressing additional supports (Martzoukou & Elliot, 2016). McKay (2016) indicated that teachers' frustrations when implementing inclusion were the lack of common planning times among general and special education teachers and an insufficient supply of academic materials to address individual student's needs. Zhu et al. (2017) stated that teachers were required to teach in classrooms containing the maximum limit of students while addressing the needs of students with disabilities. Lastly, Amr et al. (2016) reiterated that general education teachers are apprehensive

regarding inclusion due to their lack of knowledge for addressing the learning need of students with disabilities.

Theme 9: Teachers' recommendations for professional development

regarding inclusion. To improve the implementation of inclusion, general and special education teachers felt that more professional development should be provided that is focused on their needs. In Chapter 4, the findings indicated that teachers expressed visiting schools where inclusion is successful as the top professional development. I agree that seeing inclusion in practice where teachers and students are successful would be a professional development that teachers view as applicable to meeting their needs. Many adult learners learn best by seeing what is expected of them rather than being told (Walker, 2017). The other professional developments that teachers indicated they would want are learning how to collaborate, instructional strategies that address skills below the grade-level standards, and resources that could be used in the classroom immediately. Professional development needs addressed the five assumptions of the adult learning theory. Teachers needed to be able to voice their professional development needs in a risk-free environment that allowed them to connect the learning to themselves and see the positive gain of knowledge for inclusion (Walker, 2017).

Professional development should be planned according to the needs of the participants (Macias, 2017). Orakçı et al. (2016) noted effective professional development should provide general and special education teachers with the opportunity to express their needs so that administrators can plan accordingly. Bettini et al. (2017) determined that professional development should allow teachers to learn and implement

the knowledge at their own pace. Professional development opportunities should be planned to know that teachers can feel the stress of inclusion when they do not have the opportunity to collaborate with peers and administrators (Bridich, 2016; McKay, 2016; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). The most effective professional developments are planned based upon the teachers' needs and provide continued follow-up to grow the individual teachers (Alila et al., 2016; Balyer et al., 2017; Ustun, 2017).

The frequency of support, need for additional support, and professional development pertaining to inclusion were revealed as what teachers thought they needed to help them improve inclusion practices. Teachers indicated that they felt weekly or monthly support from peers and administrators was necessary to ensure the implementation of inclusion with fidelity. Teachers expressed that additional supports and professional developments are needed for them to implement inclusion effectively; additionally, teachers provided specific supports and professional developments that they believed would help to improve when implementing inclusion. The findings for RQ3 and the research from the peer-reviewed literature extended the knowledge that teachers expressed as their needs for improving inclusion.

Limitations of the Study

This study had two limitations. The first limitation was a limited sample size from a small sample size of 10 general education teachers and eight special education teachers from a small, rural district. The responses were gathered from in-depth interviews were limited to represent only the inclusion practices and challenges to implementing inclusion for one district in one state. Generalizations should not be made

beyond the scope of this study. The themes that emerged during data analysis may not reflect what general and special education teachers portray as challenges for providing inclusion in their school. The data are limited to one interview per interviewee and may not capture more than a snapshot of that particular time.

The second limitation was the participants were only from elementary schools in one district in one state. Middle and high schools may not be able to transfer the same results of this study. The scope of this study cannot be generalized beyond the limitations.

Recommendations

This research study supports existing research on the challenges of implementing inclusion. This study reveals nine overall themes emerging from the data that propose teachers' perceptions of challenges implementing best practices for inclusion. My research results may provide additional supports and professional developments that address challenges teachers face when implementing inclusion for the district. At the district level, I recommend that leaders review the four additional supports that teachers expressed they needed to improve inclusionary practices in this study. The additional supports are more planning time, an extra educational assistant in every inclusion classroom, instructional materials that help teachers differentiate the curriculum, and smaller class sizes for inclusion teachers. Another recommendation would be for principals and district supervisors to plan professional development opportunities based on general and special education teachers' four suggestions. Additionally, the study's results may be beneficial for administrators who are hiring general and special education

teachers. They should select candidates who have positive experiences with inclusion.

My recommendations for further research studies on challenges of inclusion are:

- including middle and high school participants into the participant selection;
- increasing the number of participants to include surrounding districts to gather more teachers' perceptions of the challenges of implementing inclusion;
- increasing the number of participants to include teachers from throughout the United States to gather more diverse teachers' perceptions of the challenges of implementing inclusion;
- including parents into the participant selection to collect their perceptions of inclusion.

Implications

The implications for positive social change in my research study may influence academic success for students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms. The students in this district with disabilities continually score considerably below their nondisabled peers in reading and math (NCES, 2018). Students with disabilities have continually declined, scoring proficient or advanced in reading/language arts and math since 2013 (NCES, 2018). Researchers stated that the general education setting is continuously changing to meet the academic needs of students with disabilities in the inclusion setting (Brennan, 2019; Gaines & Barnes, 2017). In this study, I have shared additional supports and professional development that teachers feel they need to improve the challenges of inclusion and increase academic success for students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom.

Furthermore, research studies showed that an improved understanding of inclusion might result in teachers focusing and tracking the educational gains for students with disabilities (Gavish, 2017; Kirby, 2017; Mestry, 2017). The findings of this study may improve general and special education teachers' understanding of inclusion. By creating an improved understanding of inclusion, general and special education teacher may improve their inclusionary teaching practices, have a positive teacher perception toward inclusion, and produce grade-level growth for students with disabilities. When teachers understand the purpose of inclusion, then students with disabilities may increase learning opportunities, thereby potentially improving graduation rates, teacher self-efficacy, and job opportunities in the community.

Conclusion

A teacher's perception of the challenges of implementing best practices for inclusion was the focus of this basic qualitative study. I presented the data on inclusion practices that currently being used, challenges for implementing inclusion, and what teachers feel they need to improve inclusionary practices. For teachers and administrators to see success with inclusion, they must know the benefits and obstacles of inclusion practices to plan for success in the general education setting (Gunnulfsen & Moller, 2016; Weber & Young, 2017; Wedin & Wessman, 2017). Both general and special education teachers should know their role in the classroom, plan together weekly, collaborate daily about student achievement, and be provided with a plethora of opportunities to grow their individual teaching needs (Chang & Pascua, 2017; Lyons, 2016; Timothy & Agbenyega, 2018).

Inclusion is a growing trend in public education that can benefit children with disabilities when individual learning needs are met in the least restrictive environment. The school's fundamental purpose is to ensure that students learn and process knowledge from best teaching practices (Alila et al., 2016). Common planning times can provide teachers the opportunities to share best teaching practices to improve inclusion for students with disabilities. Secondly, teachers also need time to collaborate and focus on each student's needs to provide inclusionary practices consistently. Furthermore, additional supports and professional development should be viewed as collaborative opportunities for general and special education teachers to learn effective teaching strategies so that all participants feel that student learning is a collective responsibility. Lastly, when general and special education teachers collaborate to determine the importance of consistently providing best practices for inclusion, then the members can recognize the value of individual input, plan inclusive professional development based on teachers' needs, and respect inclusionary best practices support from administrators.

References

- Alexander, S., Brody, D., Muller, M., Ziv, H., Achituv, S., Gorsetman, C.,... Miller, L. (2016). Voices of American and Israeli early childhood educators on inclusion. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 8(1), 16-38. doi:10.20489/intjecse.239574
- Alila, S., Uusiautti, S., & Maata, K. (2016). The principles and practices of supervision that support the development of inclusive teacherhood. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(3), 297-306. doi:10.5539/jcl.v5n3p297
- Allen, J. G., Harper, R. E., & Koschoreck, J. W. (2017). Social justice and school leadership preparation: Can we shift beliefs, values, and commitments? *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 12(1), 1-19. Retrieved from www.icpel.org
- Amankwaa, L. (2016). Creating protocols for trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 23(3), 121-127. Retrieved from tuckerpub.com
- Amr, M., Al-Natour, M., Al-Abdallat, B., & Alkhurma, H. (2016). Primary school teachers' knowledge, attitudes and views on barriers to inclusion in Jordan. *International Journal of Special Education*, 31(1), 67-77. Retrieved from www.internationalsped.com
- Babbie, E. (2017). *Basics of social research* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Balyer, A., Ozcan, K., & Yildiz, A. (2017). Teacher empowerment: School administrators' roles. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 70, 1-18. doi:10.14689/ejer.2017.70.1

- Bettini, E., Benedict, A., Thomas, R., Kimerling, J., Choi, N., & McLeskey, J. (2017). Cultivating a community of effective special education teachers: Local special education administrators' roles. *Remedial and Special Education, 38*(2), 111-126. doi:10.1177/0741932516664790
- Bonati, M. L. (2018). Collaborative planning: Cooking up an inclusive service-learning project. *Education and Treatment of Children, 41*(1), 139-151. doi:10.1353/etc.2018.005
- Brendle, J., Lock, R., & Piazza, K. (2017). A study of co-teaching identifying effective implementation strategies. *International Journal of Special Education, 32*(3), 538-550. Retrieved from www.internationalsped.com
- Brennan, A. (2019). Differentiation through choice as an approach to enhance inclusive practice. *REACH Journal of Special Needs Education in Ireland, 32*(1), 11-20. doi:10.1080/13603116.2019.1625452
- Bridich, S. M. (2016). The invisible schism: Teachers' and administrators' differing perceptions on education reforms. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 24*(87), 1-25. doi:10.14507/epaa.242192
- Bryant, J. P. (2018). A phenomenological study of preschool teachers' experiences and perspectives of inclusion practices. *Cogent Education, 5*(1), 1-12. doi:10.1080.2331186X.2018.1549005
- Buckley, J. B. (2019). A grounded theory of education for sustainability in the postsecondary classroom. *The Review of Higher Education, 42*(3), 965-989. doi:10.1353/rhe.2019.0026

- Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K. A., & Crawford, L. M. (2016). *The scholar-practitioner's guide to research design*. Baltimore, MD: Laureate Publishing.
- Casserly, A. M., & Padden, A. (2018). Teachers' views of co-teaching approaches in addressing pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in multi-grade classrooms. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 33*(4), 555-571.
doi:10.1080/08856257.2017.1386315
- Chang, C. H., & Pascua, L. (2017). The curriculum of climate change education: A case for Singapore. *The Journal of Environmental Education, 48*(3), 172-181.
doi:10.1080/00958964.2017.1289883
- Conderman, G., & Hedin, L. (2017). Two co-teaching applications: Suggestions for school administrators. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 53*(1), 18-23.
doi:10.1080/00228958.2017.1264815
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Deas, K. (2018). Evaluating common core: Are uniform standards a silver bullet for education reform? *Educational Foundations, 31*(3/4), 47-62. Retrieved from www.questia.com
- Edwards, R., & Holland, J. (2020). Reviewing challenges and the future for qualitative interviewing. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 23*(5), 581-592. doi:10.1080/13645579.2020.1766767

- Everett, D. (2017). Helping new general education teachers think about special education and how to help their students in an inclusive class: The perspective of a secondary mathematics teacher. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 13(3), 1-13. Retrieved from www.wholeschooling.net
- Fullan, M. (2016). *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gaines, T., & Barnes, M. (2017). Perceptions and attitudes about inclusion: Findings across all grade levels and year of teaching. *Cogent Education*, 4(1313561), 1-11. doi:10.1080/2331186X.2017.1313561
- Gaitas, S. & Martins, M. A. (2017). Teacher perceived difficulty in implementing differentiated instructional strategies in primary school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(5), 544-556. doi:10.1080/13603116.1223180
- Gavish, B. (2017). Four profiles of inclusive supportive teachers: Perceptions of their status and role in implementing inclusion of students with special needs in general classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 61, 37-46. Retrieved from www.journals.elsevier.com
- Goddard, C., & Evans, D. (2018). Primary pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion across the training years. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(6). doi:10.14221/ajte.2018v43n6.8
- Gunnulfsen, A. E., & Moller, J. (2016). National testing: Gains or strains? Schoolleaders' responses to policy demands. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 16(3), 455-474. doi:10.1080/15700763.2016.1205200

- Hannas, B. M. & Hannsen, N. B. (2016). Special needs education in light of the inclusion principle: An exploratory study of special needs education practice in Belarusian and Norwegian preschools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 31*(4), 520-534. doi:10.1080/08856257.2016.1194576
- Hartee, A. (1984). Malcolm Knowles theory of andragogy: A critique. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 3*(3), 203-210.
doi:10.1080/026013784003030Ifat,
- L., & Weissblueth, E. (2017). A discrepancy in teachers and principals' perceptions of educational initiatives. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 5*(5), 710-714.
doi:10.13189/ujer.2017.050502
- Johnson, L. R. (2017). *Community-based qualitative research: Approaches for education and the social sciences*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Kalinovich, A. V., & Marrone, J. A. (2017). Shared leadership: A primer and teaching recommendations for educators. *Journal of Leadership Education, 16*(1), 205-215. doi:10.12806/V16/I1/I1
- Kauffman, J. M., Felder, M., Ahrbeck, B., Badar, J., & Schneiders, K. (2018). Inclusion of all students in general education? International appeal for a more temperate approach to inclusion. *Journal of International Special Needs Education, 21*(2), 1-10. doi:10.9782/17-00009
- Kirby, M. (2017). Implicit assumptions in special education policy: Promoting full Inclusion for students with learning disabilities. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 46*(2), 175-191. doi:10.1007/s10566-0169382-x.

- Kocbeker-Eid, B. N. (2016). What do Turkish prospective primary teachers promise for inclusion? *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(7), 235-248.
doi:10.11114/jets.v4i7.1555
- Koch, K., & Thompson, J. C. (2017). Laughter filled the classroom: Outcomes of professional development in arts integration for elementary teachers in inclusion settings. *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 22(2), 1-11.
doi:10.18666/LDMJ-2017-V22-I2-8373
- Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: Andragogy versus pedagogy. Rev. and updated ed.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education.
- Knowles, M. (1989). *The making of an adult educator.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lancaster, J., & Bain, A. (2019). Designing university courses to improve pre-service teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of evidence-based inclusive practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(2), 51-65.
doi:10.14221/ajte.2018v44.2.4
- Lyons, W. (2016). Principal preservice education for leadership in inclusive schools. *Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 17(1), 36-50. doi:10.33524/cjar.v17i1.242
- Macias, A. (2017). Teacher-led professional development: A proposal for a bottom-up structure approach. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, 8(1), 76-91.
Retrieved from www.cpp.edu

- Majoko, T. (2016). Inclusion in early childhood education: Pre-service teachers voices. *Early Child Development and Care, 188*(11), 1859-1872.
doi:10.1080/03004430.2015.1137000
- Malik, M. (2016). Assessment of a professional development program on adult-learning theory. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy, 16*(1), 47-70.
doi:10.1353/pla.2016.007
- McCray, K. H. (2016). Gallery educators as adult learners: The active application of adults learning theory. *Journal of Museum Education, 41*(1), 10-21.
doi:10.1080/10598650.2015.1126058
- McKay, L. (2016). Beginning teachers and inclusive education: Frustrations, dilemmas and growth. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 20*(4), 383-396.
doi:10.1080/13603116.2015.1081635
- Meadows, M. L., & Caniglia, J. (2018). Co-teacher noticing: Implications for professional development. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 22*(12), 1345-1362. doi:10.1080/13603116.2017.1420827
- Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (2019). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mestry, R. (2017). Empowering principals to lead and manage public schools effectively in the 21st century. *South African Journal of Education, 37*(1), 1-11.
doi:10.15700/saje.v37n1a1334

- Moreno-Rodríguez, R., Lopez, J. L., Carnicero, J. D., Garrote, I., & Sánchez, S. (2017). Teachers' perception on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom in Ecuador. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 5(9), 45–53. doi:10.11114/jets.v5i9.2573
- Nassaji, H. (2020). Good qualitative research. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(4), 427-431. doi:10.1177/13262168820941288
- National Assessment of Educational Progress, State Assessments. (2018). *The nation's report card*. Retrieved from nces.ed.gov
- Oh, K., Murawski, W., & Nussli, N. (2017). An international immersion into co-teaching: A wake-up call for teacher candidates in general and special education. *Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship*, 6(1), 1-20. Retrieved from www.josea.info
- Orakçı, S., Aktan, O., Toraman, C., & Çevik, H. (2016). The influence of gender and special education training on attitudes towards inclusion. *International Journal of Instruction*, 9(2), 107-122. doi:10.12973/iji.2016.928a
- Ozmantar, Z. K. (2019). A phenomenological study of practicum experience: Preservice teachers' fears. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 15(1), 135–150. doi:10.29329/ijpe.2019.184.9
- Pancsofar, N., & Petroff, J. G. (2016). Teachers' experiences with co-teaching as a model for inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20:10, 1043-1053. doi:10.1080/13603116.2016.1145264

- Priyadarshini, S., & Thangarajathi, S. (2016). Effect of selected variables on regular school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 10*(3), 28-38. Retrieved from psycnet.apa.org
- Pugach, M. C., & Peck, C. (2016). Dividing practices: Preservice teacher quality assessment and the (re)production of relations between general and special education. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 43*(3), 3-23. Retrieved from files.ccte.org
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Reese, L., Richards-Tutor, C., Hansuvadha, N., Pavri, S., & Xu, S. (2018). Teachers for inclusive, diverse, urban settings. *Issues in Teacher Education, 27*(1), 17-27. Retrieved from www.itejournal.org
- Reyes, M. E., Hutchinson, C. J., & Little, M. (2017). Preparing educators to teach effectively in inclusive settings. *Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators Journal, 26*(1), 21-29. Retrieved from www.srate.org
- Roberts, M., & Guerra Jr., F. (2017). Principals' perceptions of their knowledge in special education. *Current Issues in Education, 20*(1), 1-17. Retrieved from cie.asu.edu
- Romanuck Murphy, C. (2018). Transforming inclusive education: Nine tips to enhance school leaders' ability to effectively lead inclusive special education programs. *ScholarWorks, 8*(1), 87-100. Retrieved from [doi:10.5590/JERAP.2018.08.1.07](https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2018.08.1.07)

- Rosenbloom, R., Mason, R. A., Wills, H. P., & Mason, B. A. (2016). Technology delivered self-monitoring application to promote successful inclusion of an elementary student with autism. *Assistive Technology*, 28(1), 9-16. doi:10.1080/10400435.2015.1059384
- Rozenfelde, M. (2018). Support system for promoting the process of inclusion of learners with special needs in general education institutions. *Education Reform in Comprehensive School: Education Content Research & Implementations Problems*, 131-160. doi:10.177770/ercs2018.3610
- Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sandu, R. (2017). A study of attitude of secondary school teachers toward inclusive education. *Indian Journal of Health & Wellbeing*, 8(6), 422-426. Retrieved from www.ijmra.us
- Schlein, C. (2020). Critical and narrative research perspectives on in-service intercultural teaching. *Theory into Practice*, 59(3), 321-331. doi:10.1080/004-5841.2020/1740019
- Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (2017). Making inclusion work with co-teaching. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 49(4), 284-293. doi:10.1177/0040059916685065
- Sharp, L. A., Simmons, M., Goode, F., & Scott, L. (2019). Enhance and extend preservice special educators' learning with curricular content knowledge. *Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators Journal*, 28(1), 52-60. Retrieved from www.srate.org

- Stites, M. L., Rakes, C. R., Noggle, A. K., & Shah, S. (2018). Preservice teacher perceptions of preparedness to teach in inclusive settings as an indicator of teacher preparation program effectiveness. *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education, 9*(2), 21–39. doi:10.2478/dcse-2018-0012
- Strogilos, V., Stefanidis, A., & Tragoulia, E. (2016). Co-teachers' attitudes towards planning and instructional activities for students with disabilities. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 31*:3, 344-359. doi:10.1080/08856257.2016.1141512
- Thiers, N. (2016). Educators deserve better: A conversation with Richard Dufour. *Educational Leadership, 73*(8), 10. Retrieved from www.ascd.org
- Timothy, S. & Agbenyega, J. S. (2018). Inclusive school leaders' perceptions on the implementation of individual education plans. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 14*(1), 1-30. Retrieved from www.wholeschooling.net
- Turnbull, A. & Truenbull, R. (2020). Rights, wrongs, and remedies for inclusive education for students with significant support needs: Professional development, research, and policy reform. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 45*(1), 56-62. doi:10.177/1540796919896097
- Tyler, D. E. (2016). Communication behaviors of principals at high performing title 1 elementary schools in Virginia: School leaders, communication, and transformative efforts. *Creighton Journal of Interdisciplinary Leadership, 2*(2), 2-16. doi:10.17062/CJIL.v2i2.51

- Ustun, A. (2017). Effects of the leadership roles of administrators who work at special education schools upon organizational climate. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 5(3), 504-509. doi:10.13189/ujer.2017.050323
- Versland, T. M., & Erickson, J. L. (2017). Leading by example: A case study of the influence of principal self-efficacy on collective efficacy. *Cogent Education*, 4(1), 1-17. doi:10.1080/2331186X.2017.1286765
- Walker, J. (2017). Shame and transformation in the theory and practice of adult learning and education. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 15(4), 357-374. doi:10.1177/1541344617699591
- Weber, L., & Young, G. (2017). High school administrators and inclusion: A review of the literature. *Antistasis*, 7(1), 13-25. Retrieved from www.semanticscholar.org
- Wedin, A., & Wessman, A. (2017). Multilingualism as policy and practices in elementary school Powerful tools for inclusion of newly arrived pupils. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 9(4), 873-889. Retrieved from www.iejee.com
- Wilson, C., Woolfsen, L., & Durkin, K. (2018). School environment and mastery experience as predictors of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs towards inclusive teaching. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 92(4), 548-573. doi:10.1080/13603116.2018.1455901
- Woodcock, S., & Hardy, I. (2017). Probing and problematizing teacher professional development for inclusion. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 83(2017), 43-54. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2017/02/008

- Yarbrough, J. R. (2018). Adapting adult learning theory to support innovative, advanced, online learning. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 35, 1-14. Retrieved from www.springer.com
- Yob, I., & Brewer, P. (n.d.). Working toward the common good: An online university's perspectives on social change, 1-25. Retrieved from fmlaster.wordpress.com
- Zagona, A. L., Kurth, J. A., & MacFarland, S. Z. C. (2017). Teachers' views of their preparation for inclusive education and collaboration. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 40(3), 163-178. doi:10.1177/08884641792969
- Zhu, J., Li, H., & Hsieh, W-Y. (2017). Implementing inclusive education in an early Childhood setting: A case study of a Hong Kong kindergarten. *Journal of Early Child Development and Care*, 189(2), 207-219.
doi:10.1080/03004430.2017.1307841

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of inclusion of special education students in the general classroom?
2. What is your perception of teaching in inclusion settings?
3. What professional development regarding inclusionary practices have you attended in the last year?
4. What knowledge do you have regarding coteaching?
5. How prepared do you feel to coteach?
6. What are some accommodations and/or modifications that you use on a regular basis to meet the needs of students with disabilities?
7. How often do general and special education teachers collaborate to discuss the progress of students with disabilities?
8. What data do you use to track the progress of students in your classroom?
9. How often do you use data to maximize learning opportunities for students with disabilities?
10. How prepared to you feel to provide inclusion in your classroom? Why?
11. Who has provided you with support to grow inclusion services in the general education setting? Describe the support.
12. How often do you have common planning times for general and special education teachers?
13. How often are you provided special education support for inclusion practices?

14. How do you think the support that you are provided for inclusion helps to ensure academic growth for all students in the general education setting?
15. Explain how prepared you feel to implement inclusion practices, coteach, and track data for students with disabilities?
16. What support(s) do you feel would benefit teachers providing inclusion?
17. What professional development opportunities do you think would help you and other teachers improve the implementation of inclusion?

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Date:

Time:

Interview Code #:

Location of Interview:

Parts of the Interview**Introduction****Interview Questions**

Hi, my name is Julie Miller and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. Thank you very much for taking the time for this interview. Your participation in this educational project on teachers' perceptions of challenges for implementing best practices for inclusion is really important for a study. This study will help general and special education teachers determine effective inclusion strategies and also challenges for implementing inclusionary practices. I would like to review a few items with you. I want to remind you of the voluntary nature of this study. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one in this school district will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, the data gathered from you will be deleted and not used in the aggregated data. If I ask you a question that you do not want to answer or if you need to stop the interview at any time, just let me know. The one-on-one interview will be

Parts of the Interview**Interview Questions**

voice recorded and last approximately 45-60 minutes. Additionally, I will be taking notes. When we finish the interview, I will ask each participant will be asked for their response to the transcription. I will ask each participant to email me any suggested corrections for accuracy. This study may be published and in publication, we will not use your name.

Do you have any questions?

Are you ready to begin?

Question 1:

What is your perception of inclusion of special education students in the general classroom?

Question 2:

What is your perception of teaching in inclusion settings?

Question 3:

What professional development regarding inclusionary practices have you attended in the last year?

Question 4:

What knowledge do you have regarding coteaching?

Question 5:

How prepared do you feel to coteach?

Question 6:

What are some accommodations and/or modifications that you use on a regular

Parts of the Interview**Interview Questions**

basis to meet the needs of students with disabilities?

Question 7:

How often do general and special education teachers collaborate to discuss the progress of students with disabilities?

Question 8:

What data do you use to track the progress of students in your classroom?

Question 9:

How often do you use data to maximize learning opportunities for students with disabilities?

Question 10:

How prepared to you feel to provide inclusion in your classroom? Why?

Question 11:

Who has provided you with support to grow inclusion services in the general education setting? Describe the support.

Question 12:

How often do you have common planning times for general and special education teachers?

Question 13:

How often are you provided special education support for inclusion practices?

Question 14:

How do you think the support that you are provided for inclusion helps to ensure academic growth for all students in the general education setting?

Parts of the Interview**Interview Questions****Question 15:**

Explain how prepared you feel to implement inclusion practices, co-teach, and track data for students with disabilities?

Question 16:

What support(s) do you feel would benefit teachers providing inclusion?

Question 17:

What professional development opportunities do you think would help you and other teachers improve the implementation of inclusion?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Introduction

I am Julie Miller and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. Thank you for consenting to be a part of my doctoral study. I want to remind you of the voluntary nature of this study. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one in this school district will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. Now, I would like for you to read and sign a consent form for participation in the study. Do you have any questions about the consent form?

I have 29 years of experience in education with a large portion of my classroom experience as a special education teacher. When general and special education teachers were required to implement inclusion, then I quickly noticed frustration levels rise for them. Therefore, I want to investigate what general and special education teachers perceive are effective inclusionary practices, challenges of implementing the strategies, and what teachers think they need to help them improve implementing inclusion practices.

This interview will last between 45-60 minutes. I will use a voice recorder to record your responses to the interview questions. Please feel free to elaborate on your responses. My goal is to obtain a rich description on what general and special education teachers perceive are effective inclusionary practices, why they are not implementing the strategies, and what teachers think they need to help them improve implementing inclusion practices.

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as frustration and stress. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The general and special education teachers may benefit by learning to address the challenges of providing inclusion practices to students with disabilities. The teachers' perceptions may change from negative to positive. The learning opportunities for students with disabilities may potentially improve graduation rates by students having access to grade level standards, student self-efficacy, and job opportunities in the community.

Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of inclusion of special education students in the general classroom?
2. What is your perception of teaching in inclusion settings?

3. What professional development regarding inclusionary practices have you attended in the last year?
4. What knowledge do you have regarding coteaching?
5. How prepared do you feel to coteach?
6. What are some accommodations and/or modifications that you use on a regular basis to meet the needs of students with disabilities?
7. How often do general and special education teachers collaborate to discuss the progress of students with disabilities?
8. What data do you use to track the progress of students in your classroom?
9. How often do you use data to maximize learning opportunities for students with disabilities?
10. How prepared to you feel to provide inclusion in your classroom? Why?
11. Who has provided you with support to grow inclusion services in the general education setting? Describe the support.
12. How often do you have common planning times for general and special education teachers?
13. How often are you provided special education support for inclusion practices?
14. How do you think the support that you are provided for inclusion helps to ensure academic growth for all students in the general education setting?
15. Explain how prepared you feel to implement inclusion practices, coteach, and track data for students with disabilities?
16. What support(s) do you feel would benefit teachers providing inclusion?
17. What professional development opportunities do you think would help you and other teachers improve the implementation of inclusion?

Conclusion

I would like to thank you for your participation in the interview. I will be in contact with you to clarify information or complete member checking. Do you have a preferred method of contact? The information that you provided me with during this interview, may have a potential effect on general and special education teachers' perceptions when implementing inclusion. Should you have any questions later, I can be reached by email or phone. Thank you.