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Teachers Who Question Pull Out and State Testing for Learning Disabled Students

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Abstract

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Karen G. Gary

MA, Touro University, 2008

BA, Fullerton University, 1979

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

General and special education teachers in a northern California school district (NCSD) have concerns about the academic performance of students with learning disabilities (SwLD) as they frequently have deficits in English language arts and math on state-mandated assessments. Teachers at NCSD were concerned about the pull-out model where SwLD are often educated outside of the general education classroom and routinely miss classroom instruction. The purpose of the study was to explore the general and special education teachers' perceptions about the current pull-out model for SwLD as preparation for the state-mandated assessments. This case study was guided by constructivist theory. Purposeful sampling was used to select 4 special education teachers and 3 general education teachers for interviews. Data were analyzed inductively and the following three themes emerged: the pull-out service delivery model needs to be revised, the preparation for the state assessment is primarily the role of the general education teachers, and state-mandated assessment scores are not an accurate representation of their students' abilities. The project that developed out of these results is a recommendation for a coteaching model to replace the existing pull-out program in order to offer SwLD an inclusive setting in which they can be prepared for the state mandated assessments. The implication for positive social change is that well prepared SwLD will hopefully be successful at the state mandated assessment and hence, have the opportunity to graduate from high school which, in turn, will allow them to continue in college or a professional career.

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Dedication

In loving dedicate this research study to my husband, hero, and best friend Ronald D. Gary. His support, patience, and unconditional love were a continual inspiration throughout this doctoral journey. I genuinely LOVE you and rest in PEACE.

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Section 1: The Local Problem

The Local Problem

The data indicate that students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) in a northern California School District (NCSD) score far below grade level in English language arts and math on educational assessments (California Department of Education [CDE], 2018). Most students with SLD have deficits in English language arts and math and require specialized academic support due to their learning disabilities (CDE, 2018). A hypothesis to explain this poor performance is that general and special education teachers implement different instructional practices. According to a special education teacher at one of the elementary schools in the NCSD, general and special education teachers work in separate learning environments to support students with SLD; teachers address grade-level standards with different activities and styles of instruction.

The term *service delivery model* refers to a continuum of services for students with learning disabilities; additionally, researchers have used it to identify where they have received special education services (Bru et al., 2012). Leaders in the NCSD have used a pull-out service delivery model where teachers educate students with learning disabilities outside of the general education classroom. However, because students with SLD miss core instruction in the general education classroom when they are pulled out, there is concern among general and special education teachers. Students with SLD transition and are pulled out of the general education setting into the learning center at least two times each day for 45 minutes to 1 hour, according to an NCSD special education teacher. Consequently, the pull-out model service model may cause students

problems in mastering content on state-mandated assessments because they have missed instruction from general education teachers.

The director of special education at NCSD noted that students with SLD could face challenges regarding the English language arts and math Common Core content on state-mandated assessments. In the setting where this study will be implemented, students with SLD continue to perform lower than their grade-level peers without SLD on state-mandated assessments. Therefore, a problem exists, and the NCSD leadership was interested in learning more about how general and special education teachers view the pull-out service delivery model on students' performance with SLD on state-mandated assessments.

Rationale

At local elementary schools in the NCSD, improving students' performance with SLD was the desired outcome for teachers and the director of special education. By examining the service delivery model and general and special education teachers' role regarding students' academic needs with SLD, school leaders can use the study's findings to maximize their students' academic performances on state-mandated assessments. Educators tend to have different teaching styles and work in different learning settings, potentially causing learning gaps for SLD students. A special education teacher mentioned that special and general education teachers' views, and teaching styles were diverse and rarely addressed. In the meantime, students with special learning needs in the NCSD have performed below grade level on state-mandated assessments (CDE, 2018).

Some teachers in the NCSD indicated that general and special teachers have rarely communicated about the instructional time that students with SLD have missed each day. A general education teacher commented, "Students with SLD always left the classroom to go to the learning center and miss important instruction." The director of special education in the NCSD stated that general and special education teachers at the elementary school level engaged in fragmented and limited dialogue about student achievement. The director also asserted that general and special education teachers did not generally have opportunities to work together effectively and collaborate regarding SLD students.

Another teacher in the local setting indicated that collaborative practices between general and special education teachers regarding state-mandated assessments and SLD students are seldom addressed. Educators faced challenges regarding meeting the academic needs of students with SLD. The goals outlined in individualized education plan (IEP) could be why all students with SLDs have continued not to perform better on state-mandated assessments as evidenced by data from 2016 to 2018. In this project study, I addressed a possible gap in practice between what is recommended by research about the service delivery model and practices among general and special education teachers who instruct students with SLD at the elementary school level in the NCSD.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In the setting where this study was conducted, students with SLD were not proficient in English language arts and math, as evidenced by scores on state-mandated assessments (CDE, 2018). Additionally, general and special education teachers expressed

concern that students with SLD have missed vital instructions from the general education setting due to the service delivery model, which causes them to be pulled out daily into the learning center. Moreover, instruction in the general education setting differed from instruction provided by the special education teacher in the learning center. For example, the general education teacher provided Common Core Standards-based instruction in the regular classroom setting; conversely, the special education teacher provided specific instructional support during a pull-out setting with instruction focused on the IEP. Teachers used the IEP to outline student eligibility, service hours, and the service model for students with SLD; hence, general and special education teachers must implement the services identified in the IEP to meet students' needs with special learning needs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Because students with SLD missed instructions provided by the general education teacher, a problem existed for students with SLD, who have not shown academic gains in English language arts and math on state-mandated assessments.

There was a need to explore the general and special education teachers' role relative to academic support for students with SLD and examine the pull-out service model used in the NCSD. Understanding the instructional practices that general and special education teachers implemented informed these educators how to best support the English language arts and math needs regarding students with SLD. According to Obiakor et al., (2012), some students with SLD who participated in a pull-out services model did not demonstrate academic progress. Thus, educators should identify the most appropriate service model for students with special learning needs as these students require access to the Common Core content embedded in state-mandated assessments. A

teacher in the NCSD indicated that she was uncertain whether students with SLD are prepared to take the Smarter Balance Achievement Test (SBAT). The SBAT is the state-mandated assessment administered to all students in California in third through eighth grade. Thus, the NCSD administered the SBAT to students with and without SLD in third through eighth grade. Data regarding academic performance on the SBAT are depicted on the CDE's (2018) California School Dashboard (CSD) report.

Local educational agencies have used CSD, an online reporting tool, to denote schools and student groups' performances on state and local measures, identify academic strengths, and understand areas of improvements on the SBAT. The CSD is based on five performance levels, and different color represents each level on a different color on a gauge. The lowest performance level is red, orange is the second-lowest level, yellow is the midpoint level, green is the second-highest level, and blue is the highest performance level. The U.S. Department of Education (2018) indicated that from 2016 to 2018, students with SLD at the elementary school level in the NCSD have continued to remain in the lowest performance levels in English language arts and math compared to other student groups. A graphic display of student performance levels on the CSD in English language arts and math relative to students with and without learning disabilities is found in Appendices A to C. Pseudonyms for the elementary schools in the NCSD have been used, and these are Schools A, B, and C on the CSD data.

The director of special education at NCSD addressed the elementary school general and special education teachers at a district-wide meeting and inquired about student performance levels and collaborative efforts between general and special

education teachers regarding the achievement gaps between student groups on the SBAT. An NCSD special education teacher mentioned a lack of collaboration among general and special education teachers regarding the achievement gap on the SBAT. Also, an NCSD general education teacher stated that general and special education teachers hardly discussed students with SLD and the SBAT. Hence, teachers have indicated a need to explore general and special education teachers' roles regarding how best to support students with SLD at the elementary school level. Consequently, the director of special education at NCSD decided to address the local problem and requested that this study be conducted.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Leaders of U.S. schools have adopted Common Core Standards for Grades K-12 in English language arts and math. These standards outline grade-level expectations for students in the general education setting, without regard for students with SLD. Thus, general and special education teachers expressed concerns regarding how to best support students' academic needs with SLD (Haager & Vaughn, 2013). According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2006), students with SLD must receive Common Core Standards-based instruction, as well as appropriate accommodations and modifications. Standards-based instruction is routinely implemented in the general education classroom or an inclusive setting.

In an inclusive setting, students with and without SLD coexist. General and special education teachers work together or co-teach to provide students with SLD daily access to Common Core Standards; they better prepare these students for the expectations

regarding state-mandated assessments. However, in the local setting where this study was conducted, teachers do not use a fully inclusive model but a pull-out service delivery model. In a pull-out service model, students with SLD leave the general education classroom and push into the learning setting. Therefore, students with SLD missed Common Core instruction that may benefit their performances on the state-mandated assessment. Research has indicated that students with learning disabilities have shown academic improvements due to being in an inclusive service model (Katz & Mirenda, 2002; Teigland, 2009). Within a full inclusion setting, students with and without exceptional learning needs coexist, and they all receive daily Common Core instruction (Hodkinson & Deverokonda, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that general and special education teachers have regarding the current service delivery model and their roles as related to instructional practices for students with SLD to increase their achievement on state-mandated assessments.

Definition of Terms

The terms used in this study include the following:

Collaboration: Collaboration refers to a process where teachers share resources and decision-making responsibilities to improve student outcomes (Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009).

Common Core Standards: Common Core Standards refer to a set of high-quality academic expectations in English language arts and mathematics that school leaders and teachers use to define the knowledge and skills that all students should master by the end

of each grade level to remain on track for success in college, career, and life (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010a).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The ESSA (2015) is an educational policy, enacted in the United States by President Barack Obama, that outlines what U.S. state leaders must do to meet the needs of all children, including students with disabilities, second language learners, and all neglected or students at risk.

Inclusive classroom: An inclusive classroom is a general education placement or least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with learning disabilities. In most U.S. states, leadership has referred to inclusion as the placement for students with disabilities in classrooms together with their peers (Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2020).

Learning disability: A student identified as having a learning disability has mild to moderate difficulties with various academic and social skills. A learning disability is described as a neurological disorder. A learning disability can be associated with visual, auditory, speech, or cognitive processing disorder (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014)

Significance of the Study

This study regarding the local problem was useful to the NCSD, as data were generated regarding the service delivery model and assessment practices. School leaders will use findings from these data to shape professional development for general and special education teachers. Due to professional development, teachers accessed effective evidence-based methods to improve professional practice (Jones, Ratcliff, Sheehan, & Hunt, 2012). An examination of the service delivery model and teachers' perceptions regarding their roles was solved as well as the local problem, the gap among students

with and without SLD regarding academic achievement, was closed and positive social changes to improve and maximize the academic performance for students with SLD on state-mandated assessments was accomplished.

Research Questions

I investigated how special and general education teachers view their role regarding students with SLD and their performance on state-mandated assessments and their perceptions regarding the pull-out service delivery model. Due to educational accountability policies, school leaders implement practices to increase student achievement (CDE, 2018). Research has indicated that general and special education teachers have diverse perceptions and opinions about educating students with SLD and service delivery models (Dorji, 2015). The following research question guide this study:

1. What are general and special education teachers' perceptions about educating students with special learning needs for success on state-mandated assessments?
2. What are the perceptions of general and special education teachers about the impact of the pull-out service delivery model used in the school district?

Review of the Literature

For this literature review, I explored academic research regarding special education, general and special education teachers, service delivery models, and instructional practices for SLD students. This review was guided by the constructivist theory, which postulated that people learn from each other in a social setting (Lenjani, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

The constructivist theory is a learning theory in psychology that researchers can use to explain how people may acquire knowledge and learn; therefore, researchers may apply the constructivist theory to education (Creswell, 2009). Researchers defined the theory as indicating that acquiring knowledge is meaningful and related to real-life situations (Lenjani, 2016). Social constructivists believe that people seek to understand the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2009). In the context of learning, students can accomplish a task or learn a lesson; perform a role play consisting of lawyers, judge, and jury for a simulated court case; or conduct an election for classroom leaders, instead of memorizing the related procedures and policies (Steele, 2005). Hence, children with SLD will significantly benefit from this approach due to their difficulties in generalizing from classrooms to other settings (Steele, 2005).

According to Lambert et al. (2002), "The development of personal schema and the ability to reflect upon one's experiences are key theoretical principles" (p. 14). Four principles guide how learners create and assimilate new information and meaning from their experiences: (a) experiential needs to connect new ideas to what they already know, (b) self-direction and a need to exercise choices and prioritize work, (c) learners' need to have the information they construct to apply to their lives, and (d) performance-centered learning, which drives a learner to engage and be reflective (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2007).

With these fundamental principles, the nature of social and reflective inquiry is of paramount importance; for example, the first principle states that to introduce new concepts, teachers must first discuss some related ideas already familiar to them.

According to Duhaney and Duhaney (2000), this practice is vital for students with SLD due to their low self-esteem and repeated failure experiences. Teachers should begin by using something familiar to instruct students, resulting in learning that does not seem overwhelming and frustrating (Steele, 2005).

Another principle underlying the constructivist approach focuses on key ideas and the relationships of these ideas within and across subject areas (Ellis, 1997). Applying this principle, teachers prioritize and teach the most important facts related to key ideas, so students are not overwhelmed with memorizing. Many children with SLD have substantial deficits in memory (Steele, 2005). Learning key ideas is fundamental to the constructivist theory concept and forms how a student with SLD comprehends more complex lessons over time.

Another critical principle found in the constructivist approach to learning and instruction is active learning; when students are actively involved in the lesson, they learn and retain the information (Duhaney & Duhaney, 2000; Steele, 2005). Student involvement, especially for children with SLD, keeps them focused on topics of interest. This method is of paramount importance because students with SLD may have short attention spans (Duhaney & Duhaney, 2000). Ellis (1997) stated that teachers could instruct students to summarize, paraphrase, predict, and use visual images, which would all involve active learning; through this method, students with SLD could understand and remember better. Additionally, the constructivist approach's critical practices include role play, art, and group projects, useful for clarifying and reinforcing instruction (Ellis, 1997; McAnaney & Wynne, 2016).

In line with a constructivist approach to instruction, educators should be reflective during collaboration; thus, educators who deal with children with SLD can build on teachers' prior knowledge in a social context, allowing them to develop as educators (Lerner, 2003; Metin, 2017). Regarding this study, there are multilayered realities and interpretations among general and special education teachers regarding their roles, the service model, and state-mandated assessments for students with SLD. I aimed to understand how special and general education teachers view the pull-out service delivery model and perceive their role regarding students with SLD performance on state-mandated assessments. Therefore, fundamental principles and practices embedded in the constructivist theory align with this study as general and special education teacher participants attempt to construct meaning to improve professional and instructional practices to increase students' academic achievements with SLDs on state-mandated assessments.

Review of the Broader Problem

In this chapter, I completed a literature review with the importance of both teachers' understanding of student achievement. To maintain relevance and accuracy, I focused on keywords, such as *accountability mandates, co-teaching models, California school dashboards and support systems, general and special education teacher collaboration regarding student achievement, learning centers, special education,* and *service delivery models.* I conducted these searches using the databases JSTOR, ERIC, ProQuest, and ProQuest Educational Journals. By examining the sources, I confirmed that general and special education teachers working together (i.e., co-teaching) would

better prepare students with SLD for the expectations regarding state-mandated assessments.

Also, evidence indicated that an inclusive service model increases academic achievement for students with learning disabilities (Katz & Mirenda, 2002; Teigland, 2009). These resources provided different perspectives and data, which will help schools implement this approach or model successfully while highlighting what needs to be considered for useful, practical application. In this review, I focused on general and special education teachers' roles relative to academic support for students with SLD (see Obiakor et al., 2012). For example, general education teachers must provide Common Core Standards-based instruction in the regular classroom setting. In contrast, the special education teacher provides specific support during a pull-out setting. Through the literature search, I discovered that increasing student achievement for students with SLD should be advocated by utilizing effective pull-out service models within the NCSD (see Selvaraj, 2015). According to Galvan and Galvan (2017), a researcher should complete a comprehensive and updated review of the topic to demonstrate a research topic's command. An indicator that saturation was reached in the literature review was when searches resulted in recurrences of the same authors and articles related to students with SLDs and general and special education teachers.

Special education. Significant reforms have occurred in U.S. special education policies and practices from 1966 to the present (Clark et al., 2018; Zumeta, Zirkel, & Danielson, 2014). The historical development of special education began due to compulsory attendance laws, enacted in the early 1900s, that required public school

attendance. However, students with disabilities were excluded from public schools until the late 1960s and early 1970s (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998). The Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education (1954) influenced aspects of education laws regarding students with disabilities and prohibited state leaders from denying education to any of their citizens (Civil Rights Movement, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Consequently, in 1965, the U.S. Congress passed the Bureau of Education Handicapped Act under Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965; Zumeta et al., 2014). Leaders created the acts as the framework for current legislation regarding students with disabilities. Leaders used the ESEA (1965) to provide federal funding for students with disabilities and Title VI to provide schools with grants for programs for students with disabilities.

In the 1970s, most states' education laws required school leaders to educate students with disabilities. In 1973, federal law passed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to allow students with disabilities to be mainstreamed in the general education classroom. In 1974, Public Law (PL) 93-380 was added as an amendment to ESEA and provided programs for students with disabilities and gifted and talented students (Thornburg & Mungai, 2016; Weintraub & Ballard, 1982). In 1975, President Gerald Ford signed public legislation PL 94-142. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (ESHCA) was later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004, PL 101-476). From 1990 to 2006, IDEA was amended several times and is now referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). In 2006, President George W. Bush reauthorized the IDEA (2006) as the Individuals with

Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2006) and added improved services for students with disabilities. One of IDEIA (2006) benefits is that it measured student achievement on state-mandated assessments by an Academic Performance Index (API). The API was later replaced by the CSD, as referenced in the study's rationale section. Also, leaders used the IDEIA (2006) to mandate school inclusion. Therefore, school leaders had to mainstream or include students with special learning needs into general education classrooms either fully or partially, whereby students with SLD spend part of the school day in the special education setting and the remainder of the day with general education teachers (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2016; Thornburg & Mungai, 2016). This body of findings provided a more in-depth understanding of the significant reforms in policy and practiced through U.S. special and general education teachers in the United States. This literature set provided context for how special and general education teachers view the pull-out service delivery model's effect on students with SLD and their performances on state-mandated standardized tests. Therefore, future researchers may use this literature review as a reference guide in providing schools with the requirements for educating students with disabilities (see Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2013).

Throughout the years, federal law has developed and expanded U.S. education laws. For example, IDEA (2004) expanded components of PL 94-142, and students with special needs had access to free and appropriate public educations (FAPE) in LREs. Furthermore, the LRE provides educational services for students with special learning needs the opportunity to be educated in the same classroom as nondisabled students (Kirby, 2017; O'Connor et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special

Programs, 2013). This body of literature provided empirical information regarding the development of education laws for children with disabilities. Thus, this body of findings was used as an empirical justification for general and special education teachers in providing educational programs for children with disabilities in a general education classroom.

Service delivery models. The service delivery model refers to a continuum of services for students with learning disabilities. Service delivery models are used to determine where students with SLD's will receive special education services. The IEP team members determine the academic model by outlining student eligibility, service hours, and the service model for students with SLD (PL 101476.). Hence, general and special education teachers implement the services identified in the IEP to meet students' needs with special learning needs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Various special education service delivery models can be used to support students with SLD, such as inclusion, learning centers or resource classrooms, and a special day class (SDC; Metin, 2017). This body of literature provided initial information regarding the types of service delivery models for students with SLD; thus, educators can use this knowledge pool as reference points to implement the model in their classrooms and teaching strategies.

According to the FAPE mandate, students with SLD cannot be denied access to the same opportunities that general education students experience (Murawski, 2009). Researchers have emphasized the need for general and special education teachers to implement services outlined in the IEP (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011; Murawski, 2009). Teachers follow the service delivery model outlined in the IEP for students with SLD;

thus, general and special education teachers must implement these services to meet students' needs with special learning needs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Consequently, Bru et al. (2012) argued that students with SLD must receive Common Core instruction to obtain success on assessments; for example, when students with SLD participate all day in an inclusive general education service model, they make more significant academic gains (Morningstar et al., 2015). Zyngier (2014) indicated that when general and special education teachers worked collaboratively to provide instruction, students with SLD experienced academic growth and were better prepared for state assessments. This body of findings documented evidence on the importance of providing students with SLD the same opportunities as general education students.

Controversy remains regarding the identification of the most effective service delivery models for students with SLD. General and special education teachers have diverse views regarding the most appropriate and effective service delivery model for SLD (Lalvani, 2013; Missiuna et al., 2016). With this finding, Sahoo et al. (2015) underlined the need to identify effective service delivery models to be used by teachers to focus on children with SLD in rural and urban areas. The authors added that children with SLD could exhibit academic difficulties disproportionate to their intellectual capacities, thereby making this need increasingly vital (Sahoo et al., 2015). This body of findings provided initial justification for identifying and understanding the most effective service models for students with SLD. Teachers can use these findings to gain relevant knowledge on the most effective service delivery models depending on their current learning environments or classroom settings.

Inclusion. Inclusion is used in special education with various definitions among parents, students, and special and general education teachers (Baldiris Navarro et al., 2016; Smith, 2017; Vlachou et al., 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education and the Office of Special Education Programs, inclusion or regular class placement refers to a class wherein students with learning disabilities receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for 0% to 20% of the school day (Smith, 2017). Others have defined inclusion as students with learning disabilities in a classroom environment, along with their nondisabled peers, where they spend their entire school days in mainstream settings (Baldiris Navarro et al., 2016; Giangreco et al., 2010). The goal of inclusion is to provide students with special learning needs access to Common Core instruction with their peers without special learning needs (Friend, 2014). Thus, inclusion has become a global trend in education and requires general and special education teachers' collaboration and participation (Hwang & Evans, 2011). This body of literature provided initial information regarding the definition of inclusion and its benefits for children with SLD.

Placing students on an IEP in the LRE is a U.S. state and federal mandate (Marx et al., 2014). According to PL 142 and the IDEA (2004), students with SLD must receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Researchers have identified the inclusion model as the least restrictive model or environment for students with SLD and are included in a general education classroom (Bru et al., 2012; Lalvani, 2013; Marx et al., 2014; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Hence, general and special education teachers must co-teach to provide students with SLD daily access to Common

Core Standards (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). Consequently, students with SLD receive Common Core instruction from two certified educators to increase their successes on state-mandated assessments (Bru et al., 2012). This body of literature provided additional context regarding an inclusion model, which can be useful for students with SLD because it is reported as the least restrictive setting. Thus, this body of knowledge is aimed to prepare students with SLD for the expectations regarding state-mandated assessments (see McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

Several benefits are linked to inclusion. Authors have outlined that social benefits for children with SLD have improved after implementing inclusive practice (Evan & Weiss, 2014; Holmes et al., 2015; McCurdy & Cole, 2014). Wiener and Schneider (2002) compared the social and emotional functioning of children with SLD in response to the following educational settings: in-class support, resource room, inclusion class, and self-contained.

The study's findings showed that children in inclusion classes who received in-class support had higher self-perceptions of mathematics competence and had fewer problem behaviors than children receiving resource room support (Wiener & Schneider, 2002). These data indicated that students had more satisfying relationships, had positive social and emotional experiences, and had fewer problem behaviors than children in self-contained special education classes (Wiener & Schneider, 2002). Hirsch (2015) arrived at a similar finding; increased student socialization was found when students in SLD were in regular education programs. Hirsch added that this finding occurred because students with SLD were more engaged in general education classrooms than in special education

classrooms. Further, Barton (2016) revealed that students with SLD in inclusive settings acquired appropriate behaviors from the modeling of students without disabilities and could build relationships with their peers. This body of findings provided empirical support to inclusive practices for children with SLD, which is shown to have a positive influence on learning outcomes.

There are academic benefits of inclusion for students with SLD. Authors have outlined various academic benefits of inclusion for students with SLD, including peer role models for academic skills, increased achievement on IEP goals, enhanced skill acquisition and generalization, and higher expectations (Holmes et al., 2015; Katz & Mirenda, 2002; Mangope & Mukhopadhyay, 2015; Smith, 2017). The findings of the study by Katz and Mirenda (2002) and Öztürk Samur and İnal Kızıltepe (2018) defined integration (of students with disabilities into inclusive settings) as an effective way of providing academic, functional, and necessary skills of instruction equal to those provided in more segregated settings. Furthermore, Scalf (2014) reported that students with disabilities placed in inclusive settings scored higher on standardized testing and made higher education gains than students receiving their instructions in a pull-out setting. This body of findings provided empirical evidence regarding other inclusion benefits, such as children's academic outcomes with SLD. Therefore, this knowledge pool was used as an empirical justification for inclusive practices in educational settings to improve student learning outcomes for children with SLD.

Educators and teachers have varying viewpoints about the most appropriate service delivery model to the user for children with SLD. Authors have aimed to identify

the most appropriate service delivery model for this population (Blum et al., 2015; Lalvani, 2013; Mangope & Mukhopadhyay, 2015). Lalvani (2013) investigated educators' views regarding a full inclusion service model and noted that inclusion was grouped into the following three themes: privilege, compromise, and social justice. Some teachers viewed inclusion as a privilege, which was beneficial for some students with SLD; other teachers viewed inclusion as a compromise and believed that students with SLD could comprehend learning through individualized instruction (Blum, Wilson, & Patish, 2015; Pelatti, 2016). Conversely, teachers who viewed inclusion as social justice believed most students with special learning needs would benefit from inclusion (Blum et al., 2015; Pălășan & Henter, 2015). This body of findings provided practical information regarding the varying viewpoints that teachers have regarding an inclusion model. These findings provided initial justification for the current study in delving further into the topic and provide initial justification for the current study in delving further into the topic and gaining a deeper understanding of how general and special education teachers view state-mandated assessments given to students with SLD.

Attitudes of teachers toward inclusive education have a crucial role in the effective implementation of inclusion practices. Several educators favored inclusion (Dias & Cadime, 2015). Dias and Cadime (2015) explored teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in education settings in Portugal to identify teachers' personal and professional variables that had influenced these attitudes. The results of the study indicated overall positive attitudes toward inclusion (Dias & Cadime, 2015). The study

results showed that having previous personal contact with a person with special educational needs predicted more positive affective attitudes (Dias & Cadime, 2015).

Additionally, Dias and Cadime (2015) found that having previous experience teaching classes, which included students with and without special educational needs, predicted less positive behavioral intentions. Yeo et al. (2016) arrived at a similar finding of teachers' attitudes and experiences with inclusive education. Yeo et al. conducted a qualitative study on inclusion based on focus group interviews with 202 teachers from 41 resourced primary schools; Yeo et al. identified teachers' positive and negative experiences in implementing inclusion.

Yeo et al., (2016) indicated that stress was the most dominant negative experience among teachers, which stemmed from challenging behaviors and instructional difficulties of catering adequately for diverse needs in the same classroom. However, the overall findings indicated that most teachers reported positive experiences and satisfaction with pupils' progress (Yeo et al., 2016). Further, the teachers indicated positive feedback given the new learning they had gained by implementing inclusive practices (Yeo et al., 2016). This body of findings provided empirical evidence regarding the positive benefits of inclusive practices for children with SLD. These findings provided more contexts on the positive perceptions' teachers have toward inclusion, which can help implement inclusion. Teachers' attitudes are vital in its effective implementation.

Educators have strong beliefs regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. However, some educators remain concerned about the barriers linked to inclusion. McCurdy and Cole (2014) pointed out this finding when

noting several benefits of inclusion. McCurdy and Cole added that barriers could arise during the implementation of inclusive practices. Some teachers reported concerns regarding their lack of knowledge about inclusion, effective collaboration, and positive self-efficacy regarding SLD students in inclusive learning environments (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou 2010; McCray & McHatton, 2011). McCray and McHatton (2011) studied undergraduate elementary and secondary adult learners who enrolled in a course regarding inclusion for students with SLD in the general education classroom. McCray and McHatton indicated that teacher participants had different attitudes and views regarding inclusion. Many participants had limited knowledge about learning disabilities and individualized instruction; moreover, they needed the experience of teaching in an inclusive setting to broaden their knowledge (McCray & McHatton, 2011). The study's findings indicated all teacher participants reported that students with SLD needed the experience of learning in an inclusive classroom with their grade-level peers (McCray & McHatton 2011). This body of findings provided empirical evidence regarding the barriers that are linked to inclusion. This knowledge pool can help educators and institutions focus on factors when implementing practices linked to inclusion.

Another barrier linked to inclusion is that some general education teachers may not have access to workshops or experience teaching students with SLD. According to Smith (2017), this lack of workshops may cause teachers to feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed. Armstrong et al. (2011) similar indicated that teachers were apprehensive about an inclusive learning environment. The study's findings indicated that teachers

needed more support in building their collaboration and positive self-efficacy with students with SLD using an inclusion model (Armstrong et al., 2011). Given such perceptions regarding barriers to inclusion, Hirsch (2015) argued that teachers must discuss the barriers and find ways to work around those barriers for the greater good of all. Thus, when barriers are addressed, teacher teams can find ways to overcome these barriers and make the experience of inclusion beneficial and manageable to all involved (Smith, 2017). This body of findings provided practical information regarding teachers' initial viewpoints regarding an inclusion model, including how educational institution leaders can support teachers. This literature body provided initial context on requesting support that educators need to build and honor to build and honor their skills in implementing an inclusion model for children with SLD.

Another barrier found in inclusion practices is the perception of adding further responsibilities to already busy teaching schedules (Tiwari et al., 2015). According to Tiwari et al. (2015), general education teachers have expressed apprehension about adding SLD students in regular education classrooms. General education teachers believe that students with SLD have specific needs due to their disabilities; therefore, teachers have perceived these students as requiring more attention than students without disabilities (Tiwari et al., 2015). Savolainen et al. (2012) arrived at a similar finding, stating that general education teachers had many concerns about the consequences of including children with disabilities in their classrooms and the additional commitment required from them due to inclusive practices applicable for students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Thus, these teachers' perceptions of added responsibilities

hindered their willingness and acceptance to adopt the inclusion method (Savolainen et al., 2012). This body of findings provided empirical evidence regarding teachers' perceptions and apprehension toward inclusion. These findings can be used by educational institutions that promote inclusive practices by educating and supporting teachers on their concerns and viewpoints concerning inclusion.

Learning Centers

Learning centers or resource classrooms are other types of service delivery models for students with SLD. Researchers have identified learning centers or resource classrooms as a restrictive setting for children with SLD (Cosier et al., 2013; McGill & Allington, 2005). In a learning center or resource classroom, students with SLD participate in the general and special education settings. Students with SLD are pulled out of the general education environment and pushed into the learning center or resource room for 30 to 45-minute blocks; they are then taught in smaller groups ranging from five to 15 students. However, school leaders who use this model may cause students with SLD to miss significant general education instruction in areas of need (Bishop, 2016; Cosier et al., 2013). McGill and Allington (2005) stated a similar conclusion, indicating the pull-out model intrinsic within learning centers or resource classrooms could cause students with SLD to become confused due to the different instructional strategies used by general and special education teachers.

This body of knowledge provided more contexts regarding learning centers or resource classrooms and its characteristics as a more restrictive environment than an inclusion model. As such, this body of literature justified the current study in searching

for effective teaching methods for children with SLD. The findings can underscore the need for school systems to provide students with SLD with practical, research-based interventions aside from learning centers or resource classrooms (see Pfiffner et al., 2016).

Many have defined learning centers or resource rooms as beneficial settings for students with SLD to gain academic achievement; for example, Aktulun and Kızıltepe (2018) evaluated the effectiveness of using learning centers to support the development of language and academic skills of children. During the implementation period, learning centers were established and organized. Thus, 35 children in the experimental group were in this setting for about 75 to 90 minutes every day for 8 weeks. The study results indicated that arrangements in the learning centers provided significant and positive contributions to the development of children's language, literacy, and mathematics skills (Aktulun & Kızıltepe, 2018). The findings indicated that knowledge acquired in the learning centers allowed the children to gain English language development regarding reading, phonics, and phonemic awareness (Aktulun & Kızıltepe, 2018). This finding meant the children increased their interests in sound games and books. They were willing to examine written materials while recognizing the upper/lower-case letters, plain/italic letters, and punctuation marks (Aktulun & Kızıltepe, 2018). Consequently, the authors added that the learning center sessions positively supported the children's reading development (Aktulun & Kızıltepe, 2018). This body of findings provided empirical evidence regarding the positive benefits of resource rooms or learning centers for children in need of support in developing language, literacy, and mathematics skills.

Activities offered to the children with SLD in learning centers or resource rooms have been useful and beneficial for child development. Researchers have argued that ongoing studies and activities offered in learning centers effectively promote children's language and academic skills (Aktulun & Kiziltepe, 2018; Uyanık et al. (2018). Aktulun and Kiziltepe (2018) noted that the resource room or learning center environment created an atmosphere wherein all children's active participation remained supported. The authors added that these environments significantly contributed to developing children's language, literacy, and math skills (Aktulun & Kiziltepe, 2018). Uyanık et al. (2018) arrived at a similar finding and indicated that learning centers effectively supported children's cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor development areas. The authors noted activities found in learning centers, such as playing games every day, were beneficial for children with SLD.

According to Uyanik et al. (2018), leaders of learning centers for students provided optimal benefits when children with SLD spent 8 weeks in specially arranged learning centers. This body of knowledge provided practical information regarding the positive contributions that result from learning center or resource room environments, specifically toward child development. Additionally, educational instructors can use this body of knowledge as a reference guide for implementing effective strategies for learning for children with SLD.

The special education teacher can provide strategic academic instruction for students with SLD in resource room settings; however, these teachers have faced challenges linked to resource room or learning center strategies. Authors have argued that

resource room teachers must be supported regarding implementing strategies that could promote learning-disabled students' success in regular education classrooms (Haager & Osipova, 2017; Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) studied general education classroom teachers' perspectives and learning support/resource teachers. The findings of the study indicated that teachers were increasingly aware of the value of collaboration. However, the findings indicated teachers tasked to implement resource room or learning center strategies faced a series of challenges. The challenges teachers experienced included time constraints, ad hoc planning, and limited professional development opportunities (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016).

Dev and Haynes (2015) similarly noted that teachers benefit from workshops, ongoing collaboration, and preparation regarding a resource room setting. This workshop is vital to address given that teachers' skills and roles are crucial to the effectiveness of resource rooms and learning centers for students' academic achievement and social skill development with SLD (Dev & Haynes, 2015). This body of knowledge provided initial contexts regarding the challenges faced by special education teachers in resource rooms. School leaders can use this literature pool as a reference to identify ways that educators can be helped and supported to yield optimal results for children with SLD.

California school dashboard and systems of support. From 1966 to the present, U.S. general and special education programs have followed state accountability mandates (Zumeta et al., 2014). Accountability was measured in the United States by an API and produced data generated from standardized assessments (Hess & Rotherham, 2007). Leaders of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) education policy used data based on student achievement to hold school leaders accountable for closing the achievement gap between students in general and special education in English language arts and math (Halveron & Thomas, 2009). Due to such accountability measures, I explored practices in a local education agency to examine possible causes regarding the achievement gap and how special and general education teachers view their role in the pull-out service delivery model.

Currently, the educational curriculum follows the Common Core Standards, and a different monitoring system measures accountability. The CSD is the accountability measurement used to monitor school performance levels and student achievement for all students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). Students with special learning needs can gain more success on mandated standardized assessments. Standards-based reform has been in existence since the 1980s (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; Jennings & Rentner, 2006); thus, NCLB mandated reform that required local educational agencies to use data to monitor student progress. Accountability measures mandated by NCLB have increased student achievement awareness and are driven by curriculum and instruction (Kallick & Colosimo, 2009).

Conversely, the NCLB policy was replaced by ESSA (2015). The ESSA governs K-12 education policy in the United States and mandates that all state leaders implement the same or Common Core academic standards. Leaders must use assessment instruments to prepare all students to be college or trade school ready upon graduation from high school (ESSA, 2015). State accountability measures remain in place, and the CSD is used to monitor student achievement on standardized assessments (CDE, 2018; Levin et al., 2018).

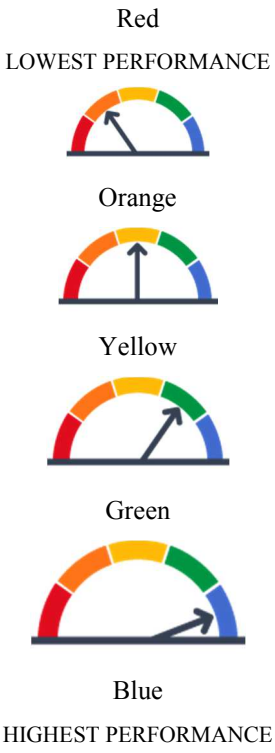
The CSD is an online tool that leaders of school districts and schools use to identify students struggling with state-mandated assessment (CDE, 2018; Levin et al., 2018). CSD presents these reports to monitor student performances and progress on both state and local levels. Student performances on the state measures are based on data from both the current and prior years. Any school district, charter school, or student group with at least 30 students in both the current and prior year receives a performance level for each applicable state measure (CDE, 2018; Levin et al., 2018). Performance on the CSD is displayed with five performance levels, and each is assigned a different color: The colors read from top to bottom: blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. Blue represents the highest performance level, while red represents the lowest performance level. A needle indicates the measure's performance level in Figure 1 (CDE, 2018).

The CSD depicts a charter school's, school district's, or student group's performance on a state measure and is graphically displayed by a gauge arranged into five different colored segments to represent the five performance levels. An arrow points to the color that corresponds to the performance for that measure. Figure 1 shows the five

analog gauge meters used on the CSD. Each gauge meter is a half-circle dial with five segments, and each segment represents a different performance level.

Figure 1

California Schools Dashboard Meter.

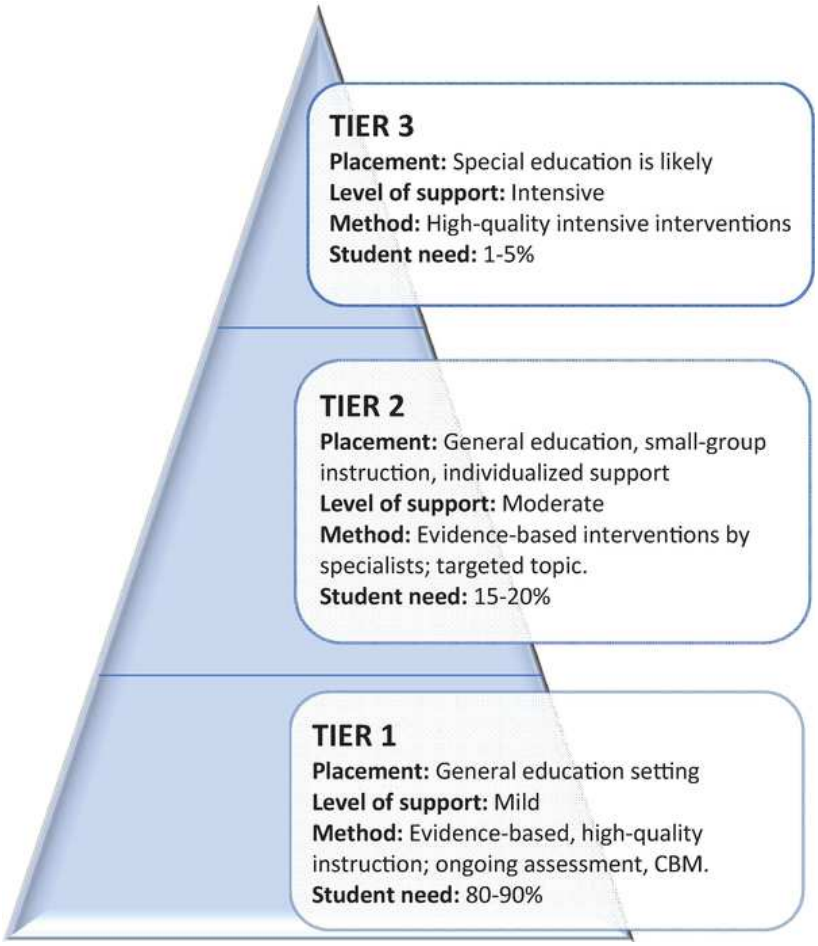


Special education services include multi-tiered support systems that can begin with a response to intervention (RTI). RTI is a new service delivery method being implemented in schools (Barnes & Harlacher, 2008). To provide more uniformity to the current literature, Heinemann et al. (2017) defined three levels of RTI, wherein each level or tier referred to the general descriptors of the strategies implemented in an increasingly intensive method. Figure 2 shows an illustration of these three levels of RTI with each level presenting corresponding the percentage of students requiring the specific tier's

level of intervention and a description of each of the following: typical placement, level of support, method of intervention, and student need presented as a percentage of the student population requiring such interventions within each tier (Heinemann et al., 2017).

Figure 2

Response to Intervention Levels 1-3.



Response to Intervention is the gateway to identification for many students with SLD. Hudson and McKenzie (2016) and Cook et al. (2014) defined RTI as the required specific learning disability assessment determinant in most United States districts.

Moreover, RTI is a comparative approach through which students with learning disabilities are identified, assessed, and educated (Hudson & McKenzie, 2016). After several weeks of academic support within the RTI model, a special education teacher assesses students with SLD for special education services if they continue to have challenges in English language arts or math (Cook et al., 2014; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016).

An increasing number of educators have applied the three-tier model. Authors have outlined the model's key principles and ways to implement these (Barnes & Harlacher, 2008; Legere & Conca, 2010). Barnes and Harlacher (2008) delved into utilizing the three-tier model and aimed to understand the steps for implementation to aid learning for children with SLD. Barnes and Harlacher outlined the implementation of the three-tier RTI system, which included 60 minutes of core instruction for all students (Tier 1), 30 minutes of supplemental instruction for those students requiring additional interventions (Tier 2), and additional specialized instruction for those requiring maximum additional support (Tier 3).

As a student changed tiers (Tier 1 to 2 or Tier 2 to 3), the interventions' intensity increased. Legere and Conca (2010) indicated a similar finding, stating that intervention intensity was measured using several factors, including the intervention (duration, session frequency, and length) and the student-to-teacher ratio. For example, when the student-to-teacher ratio decreased in size, interventions became more intense (Legere & Conca, 2010). This body of knowledge provided more context regarding the RTI model and its implementation in classroom settings for children with SLD. This finding showed an

option for a useful teaching model or strategy to enhance children's academic performance with SLD.

Throughout the RTI instruction, educators monitor the progress of the students. Authors have underscored the importance of progress monitoring in RTI to determine whether students have progressed at a satisfactory rate toward attaining a level of mastery (Gore et al., 2014; Heinemann et al., 2017; Werts et al., 2014). Gore et al. (2014) noted that one key component to successful RTI implementation was a formal and organized assessment system. Gore et al. indicated that assessment, progress monitoring, and instruction were points of focus tied together within the RTI model; thus, these should be prioritized. Richards et al. (2007) and Heinemann et al. (2017) furthered this finding and stated that progress monitoring served two purposes: (a) The data collected were used to make decisions about instruction, interventions, and placement within tiers by evaluating the students' strengths and needs; and (b) continual progress monitoring would determine whether the student was responding to the intervention. Thus, data collected from progress monitoring facilitate the decision-making process when determining what tier to place students.

This literature body provided empirical information regarding the importance of progress monitoring steps in an intervention, such as RTI. This knowledge pool can serve as a reference point for educators in understanding children with SLD and where they currently stand among the three tiers, facilitating the decision-making process on the support that these children need. Furthermore, this body of findings underscored the importance of having students assessed and monitored frequently and continually for

schools to quickly identify and respond when students do not meet academic standards or the aligned goals for intervention.

Children with SLD need special education services (Werts et al., 2014). Authors have posited that the implementation of RTI can cater to children with SLD needs when implemented correctly, and when teachers are knowledgeable (Pelatti et al., 2016; Petersen, 2016). As such, along with the implementation of RTI, there is a need to prepare and equip teachers in the RTI model, including implementing evidence-based interventions and ongoing progress monitoring (Pfiffner et al., 2016; Richards et al., 2007). Pfiffner et al. (2016) underlined the need for general and special education teachers to be allowed to build the capacity to support students with learning difficulties best. Pfiffner et al. indicated that interventions for children with disabilities were more effective in giving special education services and doing interventions. Such as RTI when the teachers had the workshop and skills to implement such programs. This body of findings provided practical information regarding the importance of workshops, educating teachers, and implementing special education services and interventions.

Co-teaching models. Bryant-Davis, Dieker, Pearl, and Kirkpatrick (2012) and Murawski and Bernhardt (2015) defined co-teaching as special and general education teachers in the same classroom through sharing application, teaching curriculum, and evaluating responsibilities. Various co-teaching approaches have been developed from this crucial principle, such as one teaching/one observing, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and teaming (Friend, 2014). One of the models developed to achieve instructional growth for all learners is the co-teaching model derived from co-teaching. Friend and Cook (2013) and Gerlach (2017) referred to the co-teaching model as an inclusion or push-in model that would include special education, a service provider, and a general education teacher in a single classroom setting. Buerck (2010) defined co-teaching as the practice of more than one teacher simultaneously teaching a single class, such as having a team of co-teachers to include a general education teacher and a special education teacher or sharing a single general education classroom at regularly scheduled times. This body of findings provided empirical information regarding the co-teaching model's definition and the variety of co-teaching instructional approaches for teaching children with SLD.

Another model in line with co-teaching is the collaborative team model, a special education service delivery program conducted in the general education classroom using general and special education teachers co-teaching. Teachers using this model provide instruction as part of each student's IEP while teaching nonspecial education students (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2010; Murawski & Bernhardt, 2015). This body of knowledge

provided more in-depth information regarding other alternative models related to co-teaching, such as the collaborative team model.

Co-teaching is an instructional strategy that educators can implement in several ways. Authors have underscored educators' need to implement different co-teaching strategies and engage in co-teaching with general education colleagues to meet students' needs with SLD (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016; Prizeman, 2015; Ricci et al., 2017). Pancsofar and Petroff (2016) studied teachers' experiences with co-teaching as an inclusive education model, including the different co-teaching approaches. The findings indicated that teachers most frequently reported implementing an approach to co-teaching in which one teacher designed and delivered a lesson, and the other teacher provided individualized support to specific students with learning disabilities (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016).

This method was found as the most effective strategy or approach to co-teaching and the following aspects of co-teaching: multiple years with co-teachers, time spent daily with co-teachers, and several current co-teachers (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016). Ricci et al. (2017) indicated a similar conclusion, defining a strong need to develop teachers' collaboration and co-teaching skills under university faculty supervision. The findings indicated that educators reported positive outcomes and growth in their teaching skills resulting from planning and constructing lessons. Additionally, these educators could meet children's diverse learning needs from the study's local community (Ricci et al., 2017). This body of findings provided initial, empirical information regarding the positive benefits that co-teaching has on educators and students alike. Furthermore, this

knowledge pool underscored educators' need to hone and develop teachers' collaboration (see Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016).

Co-teaching team models have positive outcomes for children with SLD. Authors have argued that the co-teaching team model significantly reduces or close learning achievement gaps (Bishop, 2016; Gerlach, 2017; Ramani & Eason, 2015). Bishop (2016) examined the academic influence on reading and mathematics when school leaders had used collaborative and co-teaching teams for high incidence special education students as the service delivery model in a suburban school district. Bishop indicated the importance of delving further into inclusion models for children with SLD, such as the collaborative team model.

Bishop revealed that the collaborative team model, based on co-teaching, offered a useful service delivery model for SLD students. The results indicated leaders of schools and programs who used an inclusive co-teaching model between the special and general education teachers performed at an even higher rate (Bishop, 2016). Gerlach (2017) studied the co-teaching instructional model and its use in general education classrooms for SLD children. Gerlach noted positive student outcomes of students in co-taught classrooms. Positive student academic outcomes in math and reading performances of students with SLD may have derived from implementing a carefully designed co-teaching model.

At times, co-teaching models can present teachers with challenges. Authors have argued that co-teaching has resulted in teachers being unsure of their classroom roles due to a lack of workshops and collaboration (Robinson, 2017; Schwab et al., 2015;

Tzivinikou, 2015). Robinson (2017) revealed several general and special education teachers reported that they felt inadequate in delivering one or more service models. Most teachers indicated that an additional workshop was needed in this area to assist in increasing student achievement (Robinson, 2017). This finding was in line with Tzivinikou (2015), who highlighted the need for teachers to be collaborative and familiar with co-teaching models to ensure that student learning is optimized. Tzivinikou emphasized parallel teaching and alternative teaching as the most widely encouraged in the local school district. Teachers must plan jointly, ensuring that teachers deliver instruction to different groups simultaneously (Tzivinikou, 2015). This body of findings provided empirical evidence regarding how teachers can support the implementation of co-teaching models. Co-teaching models have been reported as practical ways of enhancing student growth and achievement for children with SLD, thereby making this finding important to this current study.

The implementation of co-teaching practices in inclusive educational settings can present challenges for teachers. Based on teachers' experiences, there is often a gap between the potential effectiveness of co-teaching and actual classroom practice (Shin et al., 2016). Shin et al. (2016) studied special education and general education preservice teachers' co-teaching experiences to identify potential practices for improving teacher workshop and service delivery. Shin et al. (2016) indicated that both special and general education teachers believed that co-teaching practices provided them opportunities to communicate and work collaboratively. Shin et al. (2016) found that both special and general education teachers acknowledged the significant influences of personalities on

co-teaching and challenges in implementing co-teaching. Both groups had similar and conclusive insights regarding the potential effectiveness and challenges of co-teaching practices in classroom settings.

Chitiyo (2017) stated similarly and conducted a study with 77 teachers working in inclusive settings in the North Eastern United States. The results indicated both special and general education teachers perceived a lack of necessary skills to implement co-teaching (Chitiyo, 2017). Chitiyo (2017) reported from the findings that co-teaching requires many resources for its successful implementation, which should be addressed by educational institutions. This body of findings presented empirical evidence that even though there are many co-teaching benefits, both special and general education teachers often need support in building co-teaching skills, vital for successful implementation (see Chitiyo, 2017; Shin et al., 2016).

Similarly, Fluijt et al. (2016) and Wilson, McNeil, and Gillon (2015) outlined challenges faced by special and general education teachers. Fluijt et al. (2016) reported that special education teachers reported that they lacked content knowledge, and general education teachers reported that they needed more workshops regarding accommodations and modifications outlined in the IEP. Wilson et al. (2015) added that general education teachers who supported students with SLD often lacked knowledge in collaborative and co-teaching practices, specifically in language and literacy instruction for children with SLD. This body of findings provided empirical evidence on how teachers, both special and general education teachers, can support co-teaching implementation. These changes

yield positive benefits for academic growth among children with SLD when duly addressed.

Teacher Collaboration and Student Achievement. Student achievement is improved through systematic teacher collaboration. Authors have posited that teacher collaboration involves having a systematic process, wherein educators work together interdependently to analyze and to influence their professional practices to achieve better results for their students, their teams, and their schools (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2002; DuFour et al., 2010; Simonovski, 2015; Werts et al., 2014). With the importance of effective teacher collaboration, several policies have been developed and implemented to increase student learning among children with SLD (Simonovski, 2015). For example, ESSA (2015) was developed and established. The ESSA is an educational policy requiring teachers to use evidence-based instructional strategies and collaborative practices to increase student achievement. The IDEA (2006) was reauthorized and reintroduced; it advocates the concept of collaboration by asking state departments of education to promote collaboration between the general and special education teachers (Werts, Carpenter, & Fewell, 2014). This literature body provided a context on how collaboration among general and special education teachers can be promoted in line with ESSA's established policies (2015) and IDEA (2006).

Students and teachers benefit when teachers engage in collaborative practices. According to Thornton et al. (2015) and Cozemius and O'Neill (2002), collaborative practices in a collegial atmosphere includes sharing teachers' expertise, diverse practices, and supporting each other. Thornton et al. (2015) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of inclusive practices in science instruction to best support high school students with SLD in the general education classroom. The results indicated a functional relationship

between the introduction of collaborative teaching and improvement in both participants' performance on daily biology tests (Thornton et al., 2015). The findings indicated multiple benefits of collaborative pre-teaching for students with SLD in general education classrooms (Thornton et al., 2015). Conroy (2016) underlined a similar conclusion, stating that collaborative pre-teaching was vital to facilitate concept development for SLD children. Conroy noted that building background knowledge on collaborative pre-teaching effectively implemented and promoted inclusion concerning students' education with SLD (Conroy, 2016). This body of findings provided initial, empirical justification regarding the positive benefits resulting from collaboration practices, such as collaborative pre-teaching between general and special education teachers.

Evidence has shown the positive influences that result from teacher collaboration. Authors have reported that teachers who collaborate positively influence student learning and student achievement (Vescio et al., 2008; Werts et al., 2014; Woodland et al., 2013). Rubio-Valera et al. (2012) and Vescio et al. (2008) reported that systematic collaboration among educational stakeholders positively influenced instruction and improved learning and promotes academic achievement. McKenzie (2011) and Jones et al. (2012) furthered this finding and indicated that the continuum of specialized academic services for students with SLD was improved through routine collaboration and ongoing collaborative practices, thereby influencing student achievement. The authors added that collaboration in instructional planning methods for students with SLD could promote learning outcomes (Jones et al., 2012; Woodland et al., 2013). This body of findings provided

empirical justification that interactive collaboration among general and special education teachers can clarify their roles and enhance instructional practices that influence students' achievement with special learning needs. This body of knowledge can be used as a reference guide for educators in exploring effective collaborative teaching methods among teachers designed for children with SLD, given that this method can increase student achievement (see Werts et al., 2014).

In addition to collaboration regarding instructional practices and planning, collaboration regarding teachers' interactions is vital. Authors have defined collaboration as an interactive communication style amid educators that involves shared teaching, decision making, and goal setting regarding diverse learners (Cook & Friend, 2010; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Voltz & Collins, 2010). Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) revealed that effective collaboration among teachers promoted success for students with learning disabilities, while Friend and Cook (2012) indicated that collaboration between general and special education teachers was fundamental to effective instruction for students with diverse learning needs. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2007) defined collaboration between special and general education teachers as one of the knowledge domains included among professional teaching standards. This body of knowledge provided empirical information regarding the importance of collaboration between general and special education teachers. This finding showed the need for local school agencies to develop instructional practices, planning for children with SLD, and emphasizing teacher collaboration to enhance student learning and student outcomes. Thus, these findings provided educators with empirical guidance about using

collaboration as a modern teaching approach to create building blocks for children with SLD (Fuentes & Spice, 2015).

There are various viewpoints of educators regarding the use of collaboration in their schools. Authors have noted barriers in the workplace toward collaboration (Lee & Randal, 2013; Leonard & Leonard, 2003). Leonard and Leonard (2003) performed a study with 56 teachers about their schools' perceptions of collaboration. In their performed study, collaboration occurred during faculty meetings, grade-level meetings, departmental meetings, meetings at the beginning of the school year, special education meetings, and peer observations (Leonard & Leonard, 2003). Leonard and Leonard revealed that most teachers believed collaboration was minimal and identified finding time to collaborate as a major barrier. Leonard and Leonard reported that general and special education teachers agreed that other barriers, such as a lack of commitment, lack of compensation, avoidance of additional work, preference to work alone, competition for test scores, resistance to change, and lack of interest, adversely influenced collaboration. Goldstein (2015) concluded similarly and added that barriers to collaborative practices included planning time and a more collegial atmosphere. Goldstein noted school leaders should foster an environment more conducive to learning, as teachers could cultivate a greater sense of community. This body of knowledge provided empirical justification for the support that is needed by teachers to implement effective practices linked to collaboration. Given the outline of barriers to collaborative practices, such perceptions of barriers should be addressed to ensure effective learning outcomes for children with SLD (Golstein, 2015; Leonard & Leonard, 2003).

Despite the perceived barriers of collaboration in teaching, teacher participants in several studies have provided suggestions to promote collaboration in the schools (Anaby et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2013; Leonard & Leonard, 2003). Those teachers suggested workshops, professional development, additional common planning opportunities, and administrative support while promoting collaboration (Leonard & Leonard, 2003; Steinbrecher et al., 2015; Stough et al., 2015). Brown, Friend, and Cook (2013) added to these recommendations, stating that instruction delivery should be shared between general and special education teachers to promote collaboration and collaboration activities. This body of findings provided empirical recommendations aligned with teacher perceptions regarding the barriers of collaboration in schools. This body of knowledge was used as an empirical guide for educational institutions when implementing and promoting collaboration activities for teachers who support SLD students.

Special education teachers must demonstrate effective skills in collaboration when educating students with SLD. Collaboration is one major characteristic identified in an inclusion model (Baldiris Navarro et al., 2016; Evan & Weiss, 2014; Robinson, 2017). According to Evan and Weiss (2014), the inclusion setting for students with SLD is most effective when general and special education teachers collaborate. Obiakor et al. (2012) stated a similar conclusion, indicating that collaboration among general and special education regarding students with SLD would lead to successful inclusion. Similarly, Robinson (2017) aimed to identify the challenges of working collaboratively in the inclusive classroom expressed by general and special education teachers. Robinson

indicated that teachers had several challenges working collaboratively, which included ongoing workshop emphasizing co-teaching models, collaboration, and working collaboratively, which included ongoing workshops emphasizing co-teaching models, collaboration, and working collaboratively, which included ongoing workshops emphasizing co-teaching models, collaboration, and classroom management strategies co-planning periods, teacher selection guidelines for inclusion classes, and administrative involvement. This body of findings provided initial ways in which teachers could be supported in practice regarding collaborative principles. This body of knowledge provided further contexts regarding the challenges and optimal opportunities for working collaboratively, as perceived by teachers as they offer support to students with SLD (Baldiris Navarro et al., 2016).

Implications

The results of this study provided insight on general and special education teachers' perceptions of the pull-out services delivery model, their roles and responsibilities regarding students with SLD, and their perspectives about the state assessment administered to students with SLD. Understanding the teachers' perception provided the NCSD with data to reevaluate the current service model and introduce a more effective inclusive service model to better students with SLD and allow teachers to co-teach to support all students. Based on the results of this study, a professional development workshop was developed. The professional development workshop will allow administrators and general and special education teachers to identify students' needs with SLD and determine the most appropriate service model to provide students

with equal access to common core standards. Thus, students with SLD will be better equipped to increase their performance on the state-mandated assessment.

Summary

In Section 1, I focused on the local problem that existed among special and general education teachers and their views regarding the pull-out service delivery model on students' performance with SLD on state-mandated assessments. Students with SLD in third through sixth grade have performed below grade level on state-mandated assessments in the NCSD; additionally, they participate in a pull-out service delivery model. Due to the pull-out model, teachers expressed concern that students with SLD miss vital instruction when they leave the general education teacher's classroom and go to the special education teacher's classroom (Barton, 2016; Wright, 2016). The rationale for this study was based on evidence of the local problem and scholarly literature. Related terms were defined, and a review of the conceptual framework that influenced this study was provided. In summary, researchers have shown that general and special education teachers are responsible for students' academic success with SLD.

The subsequent section included the qualitative methodology used in connection with the central phenomenon. Section 2 covered the research design and approach, setting and sample, instrumentation and materials, data collection techniques, analysis methods, assumptions, and limitations related to the research methodology. I addressed anticipated ethical practices to protect the participants and their human rights and obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval before beginning data collection.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding their roles and responsibilities relative to students with special learning needs, as well as their views about the service delivery model used at the elementary school level in the NCSD.

Research Design and Approach

A qualitative methodology is the most appropriate approach to explore participants' perspectives (Glesne, 2011). This case study design provided an opportunity for me to collect and analyze data to answer the research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of general and special education teachers about educating students with special learning needs for success on state-mandated assessments?
2. What are the perceptions of general and special education teachers about the impact of the pull-out service delivery model used in the school district?

Section 2 includes the justification for choosing a qualitative research approach and a rationale to support the use of interviews. Other topics covered in this section include instrumentation and materials, data collection and analysis, monitoring by an external auditor, and a description of measures that protected the participants' rights.

Participants and Selection Criteria

The participants included three general education teachers and four special education teachers. Each participant was invited to participate in this project study. The

participants consented to participate and were chosen based on the research design criteria. The criteria were based on the following:

- General and special education teachers have a current California teaching credential in special or general education.
- General and special education teacher have experience teaching students with special learning needs for 5 or more years.
- General and special education teachers have taught third through sixth-grade students who have an IEP.

I used purposeful sampling to select the participants who were willing to participate in this study. General and special education teachers were selected because they are key informants regarding the study topic. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) described key informants as individuals who have specific knowledge about the local problem. According to Creswell (2012), a researcher should choose participants who have knowledge and experience regarding the local problem under investigation. Creswell also noted that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select the setting or participants, considering that the selection will help the research to address the local problem and research questions. Information collected from the sample group generated data about the central phenomenon under study.

Because the purpose of a study was descriptive and exploratory, working with a smaller number of participants helped me to engage in deeper inquiry with respondents (Lodico et al., 2010). Merriam (2009) reported that smaller sample size could be a key factor as a smaller participant group can provide valuable and detailed accounts of

experiences about the research topic. Hence, a small sample group allowed me to associate closely with each respondent and gain an in-depth examination of the problem while accounting for their perspectives on the local problem. Seven participants volunteered and consented to participate in this project study.

Originally, I invited 13 participants; however, four participants declined to volunteer due to time constraints. Thus, I conducted this study with a minimum of seven teachers and determined throughout the interview process that I reached a point of saturation or redundancy with fewer participants. Sampling is recommended until a point of saturation or redundancy is reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lodico et al. (2010) noted that a researcher must avoid bias in the data collection process. To avoid researcher bias, I did not interview the special education or general education teachers who work at the school site where I am employed. Information collected from the sample group generated data about the central phenomenon under study.

Gaining Access to Participants

After receiving IRB approval (#12-23-19-0249327) from Walden University to gain access to participants, I emailed the superintendent of the school district. The email included a letter of cooperation requesting permission to complete the project study's data collection process. When the superintendent signed the letter granted permission to begin data collection, I forwarded the letter of cooperation to IRB. After IRB received the signed letter of cooperation from the superintendent, I was permitted to begin the data collection process.

Role of the Researcher

I have worked as an educator for 10 years at one of three elementary schools in the special education program in the NCSD. I interviewed special education and general education teachers at the other two elementary schools. I teach in the NCSD, but I do not work with special education or general education teachers at the other elementary schools. I have a professional relationship with the teachers, but I do not serve in an administrative position at any school site. Hence, the relationship I have with participants did not affect the validity of the data collection process. I implemented steps to ensure ethical research by using member-checking and peer debriefing to guarantee the data's accuracy and dependability. My goal regarding this study was to examine the perceptions of special and general education teachers regarding their roles regarding academic achievement for students with learning disabilities and their service model views. Lodico et al. (2010) noted that the researcher decides to what degree she or he will become involved with the participants. During the data collection process, I assumed a role as facilitator and completed the face-to-face interview process. After a systematic analysis of the data, I collaborated with the participants and shared data findings. At the study's conclusion, I expressed my gratitude to each participant with a thank you card.

Ethical Protection of Participants

Before beginning the data collection process, I met with the participants to address the course of action to ensure ethical practices. All participants in this study were treated and respected ethically. Participants were identified in the study by pseudonyms

to protect their identity; for example, general and special education teachers are referred to as participants 1-7 throughout the data analysis.

I informed the participants that I obtained permission from the superintendent and Walden University to conduct this study and their participation in the study would not compromise their safety, health, or privacy. Participants are human subjects and have the right to participate or decline participation or not answer any questions that make them uncomfortable. The data collected for this study are protected and stored in files with a secured password and will be shredded and destroyed after 5 years.

Data Collection

I used an inductive analysis of the data obtained from interview transcripts to identify themes and developing categories. Emerging themes were reviewed to identify perspectives of the respondents. According to Creswell (2012), a researcher needs to have a basic sense of the data to identify emerging themes and concepts that surface to organize data and determine if more data are needed effectively. Data from interviews were recorded in an organizational matrix to represent and report findings and format themes. I used the qualitative research software program NVivo (12) to interpret and organize reoccurring words, themes, and patterns spoken by respondents during the interview process. The use of NVivo (12) supported the validity and credibility of the data (see Lodico et al., 2011).

During the entire data collection process, I was an objective informant; however, Lodico et al. (2010) reported that a researcher's background and experiences could influence the data. Hence, I had an external auditor monitor the data collection method to

ensure that scientific, unbiased, and accurate research techniques were implemented. The external auditor is an independent researcher with expertise in qualitative research methods and no affiliation with the NCSD. The external auditor was hired to verify that findings were grounded in data, themes were appropriate to the data, and data summary was provided to the NCSD.

Data collected from the interviews were triangulated from the different perspectives of the participants who had different roles as teachers within the NCSD at the elementary school level. For example, all general and special education teachers teach students in third through sixth grade who participated in this study. According to Creswell (2012), data can be triangulated from multiple perspectives to increase the validity of data findings and conclusions. Summarily, triangulation can be completed with various data sources that include observations and interviews with individuals who have diverse perspectives (Merriam, 2009). I conducted member checking to ensure that all data collected were credible, accurate, and representative of the research's sum.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), peer debriefing and trustworthiness are key components as the emphasis is given to the credibility, transferability, dependability, and objectivity of the research. Member checking and peer debriefing was completed by participants in the study to review the conclusions documented in the transcribed interviews and field notes. Peer debriefing was implemented to increase the likelihood that an evaluation of the data warrants future publications. The participants affirmed that I accurately recorded their responses and avoided bias.

Also, Glesne (2011) noted that the concept of *trustworthiness* would help to control bias and add credibility to a qualitative research study. The external auditor determined that the research findings were grounded in the data, that themes were appropriately related to the data, and that I controlled biases. An overall analysis and interpretation of data helped me to create a detailed final summary, which I then shared with the NCSD. All raw data will be stored in a locked file and available upon request. Discrepant cases did not arise, as I managed this study by maintaining standards supported by the deontological framework. Glesne (2011) asserted that a deontological framework proposes that a researcher promote justice, respect, and honesty to evaluate any discrepant cases that surface with the participants or researcher.

The initial codebook can be found in Appendix B. The final codebook can be found in Appendix C. A representation regarding the hierarchy of the themes, subthemes, and codes can be found in Appendix D.

Data Analysis Results

Three themes arose from this iterative, qualitative analysis: (a) teachers' experience, (b) service delivery model, and (c) state assessment. Each theme encompassed several subthemes and codes.

Theme 1: Teachers' Experience

This theme was largely driven by four questions/prompts in the interview:

1. Please describe your background in education.
2. How long have you been teaching and supporting students with special learning needs?

3. What is your perception of the role of the general education teachers to prepare students with learning disabilities for the state assessment?
4. What about the perception of your role as the special ed teacher to prepare students with SLD for the state assessment?

This theme was also composed of two subthemes: time in role and teacher role. These two subthemes highlight the participants' varying experience and demonstrate the perceived responsibilities of a general education teacher and a special education teacher. All subthemes and examples of quotes that motivated these subthemes are provided in the following sections.

Time in role. All participants described how long they had been working as teachers. These descriptions were coded in two ways: “special learning needs teacher” and “general education teacher.” Five participants provided the length of their experience working as a general education teacher. All participants had at least 5 years of experience working in general education and some had ten years of experience. For example, participant 3 noted, “Well, I've been teaching for about six years at the upper elementary grades and I've taught grades three and four during that time. And my preference is fourth grade. I really like the fourth grade.” Most participants shared their experience working with different grade levels as well. Participant 7 stated, “I have worked as a general teacher in grades three to six for the past 10 years.”

Furthermore, five participants described the amount of experience they had working as special learning needs teachers. The amount of experience for these participants ranged from five years to nine years. For example, participant 3 responded,

"I've been teaching about six going on seven years in the special education program." Similarly, participant 2 said, "I have worked in special education for 5 years." Participant 3 also went on to describe the type of work experience in this field:

> Well, this time, the whole time that I have been teaching, I primarily worked as a special education teacher and I have worked in the learning center. Some people call it the resource center. That is primarily what I have been doing, working in the resource center, supporting students with special learning needs.

Other participants also shared similar experiences for how they functioned in their role. Participant 6 mentioned, "Well, for my entire time as a resource teacher, I have supported students with special learning needs and giving them service based on the goals and objectives that are outlined in their IEP. So, every day for the last six years."

Teacher role. All participants described their perspectives on what roles teachers had based on their specialty (e.g. general education or special education). These responses were coded as 'role of general education teacher,' 'role of general education teacher,' or 'overlapping roles of general and special education teachers.'

All participants had responses that were coded as 'role of general education teachers. These participants clearly described their opinions of the responsibilities a general education teacher had in educating students. For example, participant 2 noted, "they teach to the state standards throughout the school year in all various subject areas math, reading, writing in fifth grade students take science aspect testing." Similarly, participant 5 reported, "I think it's important for me review the grade level content and

really teach." In addition, participant 3 shared that general education teachers also had responsibilities for students with special learning needs. This participant said

> I believe their role as a general education teacher is to. Make sure that they implement the accommodations and modifications that are described in the IEP and provide the accommodations, meaning that they make sure that the student has the best seat in the class room to meet their needs, that they receive extra time to complete assignments, they give the students breaks as needed, and modify the classwork if needed.

General education teachers also shared their view of their own role. For example, participant 4 described their experience as a general education teacher:

> As a general education teacher, I perceived my role when I taught general ed and had students with IEPS and were mainstreamed into my classroom, I perceived my role as being a responsible member of the IEP team, and should monitor the progress of the general ed and the special ed students who were in my class and follow the goals and objectives that were outlined in their IEP.

Participant 1 also commented on the general education teacher's role in relation to the special education teacher, "It is important for me to try to implement the accommodations that are described in the IEP to…collaborate with the special education teacher." This participant also noted the connection of this role to the student's success on the state assessment, "[I] try to help the special education student feel comfortable in my classroom, especially when I'm teaching and I'm going over content that I know they will be tested on state assessment."

Participants also had responses that were coded as ‘role of special education teacher.’ These participants supplied their opinions of the responsibilities a special education teacher had in educating students. A current special education teacher, participant 2, described working with the general education teacher, “I act as a support for those teachers. We so we work on the IEP goals, but also practice and practice taking tests.” This participant went on to share an additional role for testing, “a big part of being a special education teacher is sharing test accommodation information.”

Similarly, participant 3 stated, “I do feel like the special education teacher has to also provide accommodations, be knowledgeable of accommodations and modifications on the test to help the student be successful and also to use the IEP as a roadmap.” Participants described the importance of the IEP for informing what their role was as special education teachers. For example, participant 4 noted:

> And my primary responsibility was to monitor how the students were doing on the goals and objectives they had in their IEP. And it was so important for me to have a relationship, establish a relationship with the general education teacher to make sure they were aware of the goals, aware of the accommodations and modifications that the student needed, aware of the service time.

Lastly, one participant noted the overlapping role of the general education and special education teacher. This participant, participant 3, described how both teachers, “have a responsibility to keep the needs of the student in front of them and to share what's going regarding the students with special learning needs and work as a team. The teachers have to make sure that they're supportive and implement the accommodations

and modifications." These participants were clearly aware of their students' needs and were able to share their opinions about how each teacher fit into the education system to ensure their students' success.

Synthesis of teachers' experience theme. In summary, the teachers' experience theme had the most references and all participants contributed opinions to this theme. This theme addressed the first research question, encompassing information about general and special education teachers' perceptions toward educating students with special learning needs for success on state-mandated assessments. The special education and general education teacher's role were described by most participants and they all reported their experience in education. All participants described what they viewed as general education teachers' responsibilities, including preparing students for the state assessment and educating students in general subjects, such as math, reading, and science. Additionally, all participants described what they viewed as the responsibilities of special education teachers. These responsibilities included following the individualized education plan of their students and making sure they received proper accommodations. Lastly, one participant described the overlapping roles of the general and special educations teachers.

Theme 2: Service Delivery Model

Two interview questions largely drove this theme:

1. Describe your views of the service delivery model used in the district.

2. What do you think the strengths and weaknesses are of the service delivery model that you just described?

This theme was composed of two subthemes: service delivery model type and perception of service delivery model. These subthemes represented the strengths and weaknesses of different service delivery models. All subthemes and examples of quotes that motivated these subthemes will be provided in the following sections.

Service delivery model type. All participants provided the type of service delivery model they used in their respective schools. These comments were coded 'pull-out' or 'inclusion model.' Five participants shared that they used the pull-out service delivery model within their school. For example, participant 7 described, "the students are pulled out sometimes they are pulled out of my classroom to go to the learning center."

Similarly, participant 2 said "So it's considered pull-out… And those are for students who have various academic needs." This pull-out system was a frequently listed service model type for participants.

In contrast, two participants described the use of an 'inclusion model' as their service delivery model. Participant 3 mentioned:

> Well, we use the least restrictive environment, which is the inclusion model. A component of the model includes the learning center. So with the inclusion, the students with an IEP participate in the general education classroom most of the day and they are pulled out and push into the learning center with the special ed teacher for 45 mins to 1.5 hours for at least three to five days during the week. So, it is a dual model inclusion and the learning center.

Similarly, participant 6 reported, “We use a model that includes…some students are fully included in the general ed classroom and they push into the learning center for a certain amount of time during the day, every day.”

Perception of service delivery model. All participants reported their perception of the service delivery model used in their school. The sentiments were coded as ‘weakness,’ ‘strength,’ ‘not satisfied,’ or ‘depends on the student.’ All participants shared their belief about the success of their school’s service delivery model and in some cases described when it would work.

All participants identified a weakness in their current service delivery model. Several participants noted that the pull-out service delivery model posed problems for the general education teacher because students could miss material covered by this teacher. For example, participant 2 conveyed, “I have had a lot of challenges with general education teachers, not being happy that I’m pulling their students out of their class at certain times and with parents being upset that their children are being pulled out of general education too much.” Besides, participant 2 recounted, “it is challenging and hard for the student when they are pulled out to go into the learning center and they miss important, important teaching from the general ed teacher. The common core standards are taught in the general classroom.” Another sentiment shared was the requirement for collaboration between general education and special education teachers for this pull-out service delivery model to work. Participant 4 said, “if the teachers aren't working together collaboratively, possibly co-teaching, that would not be a benefit.” Furthermore, participant 5 described a consequence of this model if collaboration was lacking, “So our

weakness is that sometimes it can be very disruptive to have both teachers talking while trying to teach. That's hard to get around sometimes."

In contrast, four participants also indicated the strengths they identified for their school's service delivery model. For example, participant 3 shared, "Another benefit of the pull-out component is that special education teachers can do some front-loading or review regarding the lessons taught in the general education class." Similarly, participant 4 noted, "I have a smaller classroom size and that the benefit and I'm able to focus more on specific strategies that are going to help the students with special learning needs access the curriculum when they go back to General Ed."

Participants also shared their opinions of the utility of their school's service delivery model. Three participants were 'not satisfied' with their service delivery models. Participant 2 said, "I personally don't like that the students are pulled out sometimes they're pulled out of my classroom to go to the learning center." Participant 2 even identified the service delivery model as one of the worst parts of the job, "A big part probably on the top of the list that parts that I am not too fond about with my job is the service delivery model in which we are using."

In contrast, three participants found that the service delivery model could work in some conditions, but that it 'depends on the student.' For example, participant 4 mentioned, "So my views of this model are different, you know, because it benefits some students and not others." In a similar sentiment, participant 1 shared, "I think it depends on the students. Well, the model is good for some of the students, but I think it's not good for other students."

Synthesis of service delivery model theme. In summary, all participants contributed information to the service delivery model theme. This theme addressed the second research question, describing general and special education teachers' perceptions about the impact of the pull-out service delivery model used in the school district. Participants described two service delivery models: the pull-out model and the inclusion model. All participants shared their opinions on the efficacy of these models and described their strengths and weaknesses. The second theme, service delivery model, was composed of two subthemes: service delivery model type and service delivery model perception. All participants identified weaknesses with their service delivery models and four identified strengths. Many participants were not satisfied with their service delivery model and some felt that the model could work for some, not all students

Theme 3: The State Assessment

The third and final themes were created based on responses to two interview questions/prompts:

1. What is your perception of the state assessment?

2. What is your perception of the actual state assessment for students with learning disabilities specifically?

This theme was composed of two subthemes: perception of the state assessment and challenges with assessment. These subthemes present the different perspectives from participants about the state assessment and challenges students face when taking the state assessment. Participants reported their opinions on how adequately the state assessment

tested students. Both these subthemes and examples of quotes that motivated these subthemes will be provided in the following sections.

Perception of state assessment. All participants offered their perceptions of the state assessment. Participants responses were categorized as follows: 'against assessment,' 'benefits of assessment,' or 'indifferent.' Six participants were against the use of the state assessment alone for testing individuals with learning disabilities. For example, participant 3 said, "I don't really like the state assessment for any students. It is a standardized test and I don't think it's really the best tool to use to determine how well students are doing academically." Similarly, participant 7 described, "The SBAT be a challenge in tests. It is a standardized test. And I don't think it really judges the ability of the students in general or special." Participant 5 went on to propose the elimination of the state assessment, saying, "I think educators should get rid of it altogether. Yes. We should get rid of that." Most participants did not believe the state assessment was an accurate representation of their students' abilities.

Despite the overwhelming belief that the state assessment was not a good indicator of ability, one participant identified some benefits of this assessment. Participant 2 admitted, "I also see that benefit for me, too as the special education teacher. Just to make sure I collect the data that is needed to ensure that I give proper instruction to students." In addition, one participant was indifferent toward the assessment. Participant reported 4, "I've always felt indifferent about the state mandated assessments. Because I really don't think that they are the best indicator of how the students are doing on their grade level standards."

Challenges with assessment. Most participants identified challenges that students faced when preparing to take the state assessment or when taking the state assessment. Participants responses were categorized as: 'emotional,' 'test-taking skills,' or 'attention.'

Four participants recalled observing emotional reactions from their students when they would take the state assessment. For example, participant 3 described anxiety as an unfortunate consequence of the state assessment. This participant shared, "You know, sometimes students have anxiety about taking test. I think the tests cause the students to have anxious and causes teachers to be anxious. And I just do not think it is the best way to assess how good students are doing in school, especially those with special learning needs." Similarly, participant 7 described, "I really don't think it really judges how well students do makes them nervous cause a lot of stress. So, I don't I don't I don't I don't really like it." In addition, participant 4 noted, "But I think the students with special learning need often have emotional disorders and they lack a lot of experience with testing, especially now since the test is basically completed online on the computer where years ago they used paper and pencil."

Three participants also raised test-taking skills as an obstacle that students faced when taking the state assessment. Participant 6 stated, "The voices that speak to them on the tests. They are like robotic voices and they are not clear. The students oftentimes have trouble understanding what they are saying. So, I wish that the voices were more authentic and not so robotic." Similarly, participant 4 shared:

> They lack a lot of experience with testing, especially now since the test is basically completed online on the computer where years ago, they used paper and pencil. So, a lot of the students do not have that computer experience, do not have computers at home, so they do not have a lot of experience with taking a test on a computer.

Lastly, one participant identified maintaining attention as a problem that several students face. Participant 2 said, "I chose to go to special education, because I did see the frustration on students faces in special education. We were just frustrated with some had a difficult time sitting still, but they were expected to stay quiet and still in their seats."

Synthesis of state assessment theme. In summary, the state assessment theme incorporated information about the participants opinions of the state assessment and the challenges they identified with this assessment. The participants were generally against the state assessment due to its inability to accurately evaluate students with learning disabilities. In addition, participants recognized several challenges they observed their students experiencing when preparing for or taking the state assessment. These challenges included emotional problems, inadequate test-taking skills, and attention difficulties.

Summary

This study identified and explored the role of general and special education teachers regarding the education of students with learning disabilities. This study also evaluated the effect of the pull-out service delivery model on students' performance with learning disabilities on state-mandated assessments. From the interviews with participants

three themes arose covering topics that related to the research questions: teachers' experience, service delivery model, and the state assessment.

The teachers' experience theme was composed of two subthemes related to the amount of experience teachers had in their roles and their opinions on general education and special education teachers' roles. Five participants provided their length of experience working as a general education teacher. They had at least five years of experience working in general education and some had ten years of experience. Besides, five participants shared how much experience they had working in special education. The amount of experience for these participants ranged from five years to nine years. The second subtheme within the teachers' experience theme was teacher roles. All participants described what they viewed as the responsibilities of general education teachers, including preparing students for the state assessment, and educating students in general subjects, such as math, reading, and science.

Additionally, all participants described what they viewed as the responsibilities of special education teachers. These responsibilities included following the individualized education plan of their students and making sure they received proper accommodations. Lastly, one participant described the overlapping roles of the general and special educations teachers.

The second theme, service delivery model, was composed of two subthemes: service delivery model type and service delivery model perception. All participants reported the type of service delivery model used in their schools. Five participants described a pull-out service delivery model and two participants described an inclusion

model. In addition, participants conveyed their perception of the service delivery model, including the model's utility and its strengths and weaknesses. All participants identified weaknesses with their service delivery models and four identified strengths. Many participants were not satisfied with their service delivery model and some felt that the model could work for some, not all, students.

The third and final theme, state assessment, was composed of two subthemes: perception of state assessment and state assessment challenges. All participants discussed their opinions of the state assessment, with six participants believing it should be modified or replaced and one participant feeling indifferent about the assessment. All participants described challenges their students faced that hindered their success on this assessment, including emotional problems, a lack of test-taking skills, and attention difficulties.

The responses that participants provided during these semi-structured interviews highlighted teachers and the school system's roles in educating students with learning disabilities. These interviews also provided information about challenges that students and teachers face that should be addressed to improve these students' education.

Section 2 provided an overview of a qualitative research design grounded in social constructivists to understand the world in which general and special education teachers work. The research will be conducted to explore the central phenomenon related to certain school district employees' perceptions regarding their role specific to students with SLD and the service model used in the NCSD. Sampling techniques were clarified, and stakeholders were identified as key informants who will provide rich descriptions for

future data analysis. Guidelines for data collection methods and ethical issues were addressed. Details regarding instrumentation and documented steps to ensure credibility and internal validity regarding data collection strategies, findings, and analysis were discussed. After carefully transcribing the data, findings emerged by general and special education teachers. Themes indicated by the teachers were the service delivery model, teacher roles, and the state assessment. The common theme among general and special education teachers was the service delivery model.

In Section 3, I provide an overview of a professional development workshop that is driven by data and related literature review. I present the workshop's goals, rationale, implementation, evaluation, and implications for social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

A professional development workshop was created to align with this research study (see Appendix A). The workshop was designed to address the study findings, focusing on general and special education teachers' themes and best practices found in the literature review in this section. This section contains a discussion of the project's goal, rationale, description, evaluation plan, target audience, implications, and literature review. The study findings portrayed that the key cause of the low performance in specific content areas on the SBAT among students with SLD is the service delivery model adopted in the NCSD. Students in the elementary schools in the NCSD participate in a pull-out service delivery approach, in which special education teachers instruct

learners with SLD outside of the general education classroom. As a result, students with SLD consistently missed vital instruction.

I formulated the professional development workshop for administrators and teachers to address the problem focused on more effective ways to serve students with special learning needs. The idea of this professional development workshop was to introduce a structured technique and elicit support from the administration. Administration can adjust the current service delivery model so that students with SLD are included in the general education classroom without interruption to increase their learning and performance on state-mandated examinations. Administrators are the gatekeepers and decision-makers regarding programs such as the service delivery model. Hence, they would benefit from participation in professional development to understand teachers' perceptions and acquire knowledge regarding teacher concerns about the pull-out service delivery model and its impact on students with SLD.

Administrators such as the director of general education, the director of special education director, principals, as well as general and special education teachers received an invitation to participate in a 3-day professional development workshop. Each day the workshop focused on a theme identified during interviews with general and special education teachers and analyzed in Section 2. As the facilitator, I guided the workshop using equipment, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, hands-on activities, and small-group collaboration. The workshop addressed three modules titled, "The Pull-Out Model and Data Findings," "Inclusion," and "Co-teaching Models." The three modules contain a purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and resource materials.

Rationale

Based on the study findings presented in Section 2, I selected a professional development workshop as the genre for this project. The findings revealed that most general and special education instructors perceive that implementing a pull-out delivery model is the primary reason a large proportion of students with SLD perform poorly in math and English language arts. The pull-out delivery model causes students with SLD to miss instructions in the general education classroom. The problem identified in Section 1 of the study is the execution of an ineffective pull-out service delivery model in district elementary schools for students with SLD. The most suitable solution to eradicate this problem is to provide general and special education teachers and school administrators with a more structured approach. Such a strategy is only possible with the adoption of a professional development program. Steinert et al. (2019) noted that a professional development model is an effective strategy for improving student instruction, enhancing instructional quality, refining administrative roles, and increasing school activities' general effectiveness.

A professional development project is also a suitable genre for this workshop because its purpose is to explore general and special education instructors' perceptions of the faults of the presently executed pull-out service delivery models in the elementary schools. Administrators of these schools participated in the project to re-evaluate the pull-out model and address their general and special education teachers' perceptions and experiences.

The issue of low performance of students with SLDs due to use of the pull-out delivery model will be addressed by inviting schools' administrators and teachers to the professional development workshop, which will help them comprehend the significance of re-evaluating the pull-out service delivery model. This professional development workshop aims to enable school administrators and respond to elicit responses from their general and special education teachers on how to amend the special education service delivery model so that learners can miss less general instruction time learning common core standards state-mandated tests. A professional development workshop will enable the interaction of teachers and administrators. Administrators are often leaders who create transformations in decision-making processes that impact education effectiveness (Steinert et al., 2019). Through a professional development workshop, teachers and school administrators play a crucial role to enhance instruction and learner attainment for SLD students. The late reauthorization of the ESEA further gives districts and states flexibility to utilize federal finances to support administrators and teachers (Zhang & Park, 2019). For example, districts and states can utilize these finances to offer teachers and administrators professional growth regarding teacher growth and retention. As a result, a professional development workshop is suitable for this project since it aims to help school administrators react to general and special education teachers' concerns regarding the current pull-out service delivery model. From the study findings in Section 2, the literature review themes comprise school administration, special education, the least restrictive environment, accommodations, students with SLDs, and state testing.

Review of the Literature

To locate suitable and current research to guide the formulation of the professional development workshop, I conducted a review of the literature mainly using the Walden University Library catalogs. Other databases employed to find relevant and recent studies include Google Scholar, ProQuest educational journals, ERIC, JSTOR, and SAGE. These are all reliable sources of scholarly peer-reviewed articles for the formulation of the professional development program. The search terms that were adopted to find the articles comprised *school administration and special education, least restrictive environment, accommodations, students with SLDs and state test,* and *the pull-out delivery model.*

In the literature review in Section 1 of the study, I described the constructivist theory, which suggests that human beings learn from one another in a communal environment. The constructivist theory supports the professional development workshop's aim, which is to help school administrators re-evaluate the current pull-out delivery model and device a service delivery model that will enable students with SLD to learn from other students in a social context (Newman, 2019). The findings in Section 2 of the study revealed that the pull-out delivery model's key problem is that it denies students with SLD the opportunity to learn in general education classrooms during different parts of the day. As a result, learners with SLDs miss significant parts of general education instruction.

The literature review I present in Section 3 supports the formulation of a professional development workshop to stimulate the currently executed service delivery

model's re-evaluation, precisely the pull-out delivery approach. The re-evaluation of the service delivery model is aimed at helping students with SLDs integrate fully with other students and hence enable them to improve their academic performances on math and English language arts on mandatory state tests. The literature review describes the key themes that were realized from the study findings in Section 2, encompassing least restrictive environment, push-in delivery model, accommodations, school administration and special education, and students with SLDs and state testing.

Least Restrictive Environment

The *Least Restrictive Environment* (LRE) is a statutory phrase that is documented in the 20 USC 1412(a) (5) of the IDEA. The provision of the LRE is that children with incapacities, encompassing those in private and public institutions, should be instructed together with the nondisabled children. The act further provides that separate teaching, special classes, and other non-inclusions of the disabled children from typical educational setting should only happen when the severity or state of the incapacity of a student is such that schooling in everyday class context using supplementary services and assistance cannot be attained reasonably (Voulgarides, 2020).

The LRE implies that a student with incapacity should be instructed in a similar class setting and be mainstreamed with nondisabled peers to the maximum to make sure that the learning-disabled child received a free and appropriate public education. Initially, before the sanctioning of IDEA, disabled children were separated and segregated from the mainstream classroom settings (Robinson & Mueller, 2020). Such occurrences are also prevalent in modern society, as revealed from the study findings in Section 2.

However, the key aim of the LRE requirement is to make sure that children under special education programs are included in the general education setting as frequently as possible. DeMonte (2020) noted that under IDEA, both preschool and school-age children who are eligible for special education programs are entitled to instruction in the LREs suitable for their necessities. For school-age students, the presumptive LRE is the normal class where peers without learning disabilities participate (DeMonte, 2020). The International Convention on the Rights of Individuals with Disabilities of 2006 also stipulated administrations' accountability to offer inclusive learning for all students' education stages (Arstein-Kerslake & Flynn, 2016). The convention encourages administrations worldwide to integrate students with learning disabilities into the mainstream learning environments to give them equal access to Common Core standards in their respective schools or communities (Abulibdeh et al., 2020). Governments are further required to facilitate accommodations that provide access to state adopted curriculum and learning congruent with the LRE in academic, emotional, and social aspects at the maximum level.

Benefits of the least restrictive environment. Giangreco (2020) asserted that the LRE is not a locality or setting, but it is an important principle that monitors children's educational programs with SLDs. According to the special education statute, a learning-disabled child should learn together with peers, both learning disabled and nondisabled. When a student's IEP team meets, it deliberates on different aspects, including the child's present level of performance, strengths, and weaknesses. The team further deliberates on the LRE for every child's learning.

The term LRE is linked to both inclusion and mainstreaming, which are significant for children's educational growth with SLDs. A mainstream class environment is a typical learning classroom. As a result, mainstreaming is described as the measure of placing a student with SLD in the general learning environment for several or most of the education days (Harklau & Yang, 2020). The term *mainstreaming* was initially employed in the 1970s to designate instructing learners with learning disabilities and those without learning disabilities in the same classroom environment. Gilani et al. (2020) discovered that the primary benefit of mainstreaming students with SLDs is that it enables them to be in a natural setting compared to how they would be in special classrooms. Children with SLDs are projected to function in the community alongside their peers. Keeping the students with SLDs in general class environments offers them prospects to learn crucial life skills, particularly the abilities which entail socialization. Mainstreaming further inspires students with SLDs to excel academically by providing challenges they can overcome (Gilani et al., 2020). When students with SLD remain in the general education class full time, they typically perform higher and attain more academic proficiency than students who stay in a self-contained special education setting.

On the other hand, an inclusion classroom setting is a typical learning environment with learners with and without SLDs. Inclusion is described as an instruction technique, which concentrates on integrating learners with SLDs in the school community (Agu & Omenyi, 2020). Further, inclusion targets having students with SLDs engage in classroom sessions and extracurricular activities. The benefits of inclusive instruction in the LRE are that it is an approach concerned with reducing and eradicating

obstacles to learning, participation, and education access for all students, particularly for the disadvantaged ones such as the learning disabled and those subjected to various discriminations. The mutual feature of learning institutions where inclusive instruction is implemented is academic excellence (Agu & Omenyi, 2020). An inclusive approach in the LRE is facilitated by aspects such as collaborative teamwork, a mutual framework, examining efficiency, meaningful IEPs, effective use of support personnel, clear responsibility associations among instructors, typical educator possession, and family engagement.

Learners with SLDs in the LRE further gain extra benefits, which extend beyond learning. These students can develop associations with nondisabled peers, enabling them to have role models regarding appropriate conduct. Nondisabled learners further benefit from comprehending persons with learning incapacities (Williamson et al., 2020). Educational benefits for the nondisabled learners also comprise additional education specialist in the classroom, offering small-team, individualized tutoring, and aiding in the growth of academic alterations for all pupils who require them. Non–learning disabled students in the LRE learn to comprehend that the pupils with SLD are part of the school community and can make significant contributions through their exceptional talents and gifts (Williamson et al., 2020). Learning institutions also benefit from implementing full inclusion since funds allocated for special education programs can now be used to finance and improve inclusive instruction. Williamson et al. (2020) further determined that the LRE enables learners with SLDs and their families to be part of the school community and aids them to be significant parts of the neighborhood.

LRE and disadvantages. Educational research focuses on the disadvantages of the LRE to both children with SLDs and those without learning disabilities. Chander (2016) argued that special education learners subjected to LRE programs such as mainstreaming are unlikely to acquire the specialized amenities they require. Whereas mainstreaming is considered an educational approach that many uses as a technique used by learning institutions to save funds by downsizing special instruction provisions. There is a further concern of the instruction students' suitability with SLDs acquire in a general classroom environment. Most general education classroom instructors have minimal to no workshop in special education and evaluation approaches, and as a result, they can create unrealistic goals for students with SLDs (Chander, 2016).

To the non-learning-disabled students, the LRE and mainstreaming programs are perceived as unjust practices. In some blended classrooms, instructors typically spend more time and give more attention to students with SLDs, leaving learning without a SLD struggling to get academic assistance (Mukhopadhyay, 2016). Regarding socialization, mainstreaming leads students to develop adverse views concerning peers with SLDs, mainly if they observe that they are getting more attention and academic help than the typical students. Most teachers who support inclusion perceive that all learners with SLDs should be completely incorporated in the general instruction environment even when these students are disruptive to the typical pupils. A vital disadvantage of this requirement is that if a student with SLD disrupts the teacher too much, it can stop the entire learning for the rest of the learners (Dagli & Öznacar, 2015). Administrators, parents, and general education instructors worry that complete inclusion can reduce the

class's standard of education and make academic excellence less important than socializing.

LRE and improvement. Various techniques have been suggested to improve the effectiveness of the LRE. Using qualitative research, Abulibdeh et al. (2020) found out that the barriers of the LRE can be addressed through the selection of equipment, tools, programs, and technologies that best facilitate the integration of students with SLDs and typical learners. These components should further support students' academic and curriculum performance with SLDs (Abulibdeh et al., 2020). The LRE can further be improved by making students with SLDs active members of the school community and assisting them in attaining quality educational results and social proficiency (Agu & Omenyi, 2020). The blended environment can be stimulated further by creating a supportive school society, determining and reducing learning and involvement obstacles. Systematic collection and analysis of data concerning the effectiveness of the LRE in schools is also a proper technique of improving inclusivity.

There are different kinds of data, which can inform schools, school administrators, and districts about their progress towards the aim of the LRE (Meller, 2017). Sharing and evaluating inclusive measures information with instructors, learners, parents, and the broader society is a significant initial stage toward establishing a data-driven institution and discussions regarding special education placement and services. Information can be disseminated to parents in school meetings and workshops, with learners at assemblies and personnel during school leadership teams, board and executive leadership meetings, and principal seminars (Meller, 2017). Engaging all stakeholders

can help learning institutions and districts formulate a mutual inclusive visualization and short-term and long-term objectives. Access to high-quality information can also result in better use of data. The current information, organized, interpreted, and disaggregated easily, enables instructors to draw inferences with confidence and device a cause of action.

When learning institutions and districts make an obligation to constant enhancement, respond to teachers' vision, and implement information to monitor their progress, change can occur. The alliance between divisions and across schools' results in enduring programmatic and instructional progress, and administrators and teachers feel empowered to make responsible decisions (Meller, 2017). By implementing a model that focuses on data, schools and districts can formulate a more inclusive environment for learners with SLDs. Reframing inclusion and employing a data structure can help move students with SLDs from the disconnectedness of special learning to general education's belongingness.

Push-in Delivery Model

Seruya and Garfinkel (2020) noted that push-in delivery services occur in the general learning classroom environment. Both special and general education instructors and other professionals, such as occupational and speech therapists, work collaboratively to offer differentiated instructional support. Push-in providers bring the coaching and other required materials to the learners, both learning disabled and non-learning-disabled. For instance, a reading instructor can go into the classroom to work with learners during English language arts sessions. In a push-in delivery program, services are delivered via

informal supports, response to intervention (RTI, IEPs), and other academic interventions (Seruya & Garfinkel, 2020). There are two strategies of the push-in delivery program that are commonly adopted in elementary schools. The first strategy is collaborative instructing, which applies the principle of "two heads are better than one" (Linders et al., 2018). With the collaborative technique, the special and general education instructors work together with students with and without special learning needs.

However, the logistics of collaborative teaching is challenging since educators are needed to create adequate collaborative planning time every week to recognize how they will divide the co-teaching roles. The other concern is that students with SLD might require direct attention, and hence the special education teacher may desire to integrate techniques and create minor pull-out teams and teach the entire class collaboratively. The second strategy of the pull-in delivery program is small group teaching. Some special education instructors can work with minor teams of students with SLDs within the mainstream classroom environment (Linders et al., 2018). The small team-teaching strategy is most suitable for special education instructors needed to teach a specific curriculum area rather than teaching to the whole class. The key reason why the small team instruction technique is prevalent is that most teachers perceive that removing students with SLDs from the general classroom environment makes them feel segregated from their typical learning setting.

Benefits of the push-in delivery model. The notion of offering a push-in delivery program is starting to be more typical in schools. It is one of the IDEA requirements to offer an LRE for all learners in special education programs. Watt and

Richards (2016) asserted that instructors are supposed to differentiate lessons to facilitate all learners' teaching in the classroom. Even though this may necessitate additional workshops for typical education instructors, Watt and Richards (2016) noted that it would help formulate a classroom community that enables learners to support one another and not feel segregated. The most remarkable benefit of the push-in delivery approach, when compared to the push-out delivery technique, is that learners with SLDs miss less instructional time since they do not spend much time moving from one classroom setting to another. Due to fewer movements between classrooms, the push-in delivery program eradicates disruptions on learners' daily routine. A push-in delivery model further has a socialization benefit since it enables students with SLDs to get more direct association with all learners and instructors (Ehren, 2016). Students with SIDs can also learn and practice aptitudes in the general teaching environment, keeping them in the LRE.

Disadvantages of the push-in delivery model. The push-in delivery model poses some disadvantages, especially to the learners with SLDs. With this model's adoption, learners have minimal chances to acquire explicit and tailored instruction to aid them in acquiring abilities they require to comprehend the curriculum (Hurwitz et al., 2020). The push-in delivery program is further linked with co-planning teaching and working around differences in instructional techniques, which can pose challenges for educators. Rodriguez (2019) argued that the push-in delivery model creates an environment where there are numerous distractions for learners in the general education setting, making it difficult for students to learn, especially those with attention concerns such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Executing the push-in delivery technique is

further a disadvantage since learners with SLDs must establish authentic connections with the blended classroom teachers and manage their schedule to integrate efficiently with them.

Watt (2018) contended that the general education instructors are encountering a significant amount of pressure to ensure that the general education students thrive academically and further make sure that students with SLDs progress educationally. In a blended education forum, most learners with SLDs are considered to have similar high-stake testing values like their general education peers. Some teachers' key challenge when adopting the notion of a push-in delivery program is that the curriculum they are anticipated to spearhead is rapidly-paced (Baecher & Bell, 2017). Teachers are held up to high standards of covering the curriculum driven by a specific pacing guide, which is problematic since it slows down learners who have challenges in accessing the curriculum at a similar pace.

Improving the push-in delivery model. In the primary and intermediate classes, the push-in delivery program can be improved using two strategies, which are guided reading and interactive writing. Green et al. (2019) noted that both guiding reading and interactive writing are familiar to primary and intermediate teachers and thus regarded as the ideal practice to improve the push-in delivery program. Guided reading is described as an approach where instructors pull together small teams of students for precise instruction in reading. The classroom environment's organization using literacy centers and guided reading is an efficient approach to implementing a pull-in delivery program for remedial reading and special education. Wolfengagen et al. (2020) emphasized that in

guided reading, the classroom teacher assembles a directed reading team and organizes the remaining learners to content or literacy-focused centers. In the meantime, the remedial reading or special education instructor can work in the classroom and organize an extra team for directed reading or even work in literacy hubs with teams chosen by disability or need.

The guided reading model further enables instructors to have an opportunity to work directly with both general and special education learners. Interactive writing, on the other hand, typically involves the entire class. It is a process where the instructor and learners share a mutual experience or information base, which can be the center of the writing. The interactive writing approach further lends itself to a small team, homogenous teaching (Wolfengagen et al., 2020). The special education teachers can create small groups of learners who need the same support level to work on writing and reading to improve students' ability to engage efficiently in the entire class during collaborative writing.

Accommodations. The term *accommodation* is adopted to designate a change of equipment, curriculum format, or setting, enabling a student with an SLD to access content and accomplish assigned work (Smith et al., 2017). Accommodations in special education enable learners with SLDs to engage in the educational setting. Because accommodations do not change the content being instructed, teachers are expected to use the same grading scale for pupils with SLDs as they do for learners without learning disabilities. An excellent example of accommodation is the use of visual supports for students with a visual impairment. Students with visual problems can be accommodated in the general classroom setting when they adopt worksheets and large-print books during instruction. Smith et al. (2017) argued that the key significance of accommodations is that they are used to address the barriers of having students with SLDs in the typical education classroom environment.

There are generally two accommodations implemented to support general and special education students in one classroom. The first area is instructional accommodations, which support the delivery of classroom instruction or related equipment, materials, and tools for teaching (De Backer et al., 2019). Learners with SLDs who need instructional accommodations learn the same content as their peers without learning disabilities who do not require these accommodations. Testing accommodations, on the other hand, are changes to the test format or its administrative processes. Testing accommodations change how learners are examined but do not alter what an assessment determines (De Backer et al., 2019). Frequently implemented accommodations include

using a test with a small group of students, allowing dictation or scribes, and having the test read aloud.

School administration and special education. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) indicated that administrators for special education systems are typically accountable for special education programs, schools, and departments' routine operations. Administrators can be accountable for formulating program objectives, employing and supervising professionals, assessing learner progress, meeting budgets, and ensuring compliance with special education policies. School administration needs teachers to have a special education degree, which necessitates an undergraduate degree in special education. A degree in special education is needed for authorization to instruct students with SLD in grades K-12 (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Administrative staff, such as principals, special education administrators, and superintendents, are essential in retaining general and special education teachers. Further, administrators' responsibility in support and retention for special education teachers is especially important considering the history of isolation and exclusion from general education that most special education teachers have encountered. However, more importantly, administrators in schools are engaged in decision-making for all local school districts' activities and processes. Fowler et al. (2019) argued that administrators are expected to familiarize themselves with obtainable resources to support teachers, families, and students' varying necessities, which is used to ensure that all students' academic and social needs are achieved. Administrators are further responsible for maintaining a safe school environment that encourages teachers and students to do their best in a pleasant and healthy setting (Fowler et al., 2019). They are also required to remain proactive in formulating and implementing strategies to make sure that teachers

develop culturally responsive roles required to work with diverse learners and their families. These roles make administrators accountable for re-evaluating the current pull-out service delivery model in the NCSD.

State testing. The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) acknowledges the function that district-wide and state assessments of instructional results have on attaining high educational values for learners and documents the information for public review. For learners with SLDs, these assessments usually present both required opportunities and critical problems. Learners with SLDs must be offered an equal opportunity to participate and demonstrate skills and knowledge in district-wide and state tests. Since policies such as IDEA necessitate that both general education students and learners with SLDs be educated collaboratively, state and district-wide tests should be administered to all pupils and be educated collaboratively. State and district-wide tests should be administered to all pupils. However, modification and accommodation decisions need to be made to enable even students with SLDs to successfully undertake the district-wide and state tests (Pawar et al., 2020). Modifications and accommodations regarding the testing environment can be provided for students with SLD, including additional response time, presentation format, a flexible setting and time of day, and preferential seating.

The accommodation regarding additional time requires the teacher to adjust a timer that will not time out an assessment and close the testing session. Regarding presentation, teachers need to evaluate whether the student with an SLD can listen and follow spoken prompts from the computer, digital device, or the teacher proctor. The modifications on flexible scheduling require the teacher to assess whether the student performs best in the morning or afternoon and if the student with SLD takes any medications that dissipate over time (Komalasari et al., 2019).

The students with SLD should be placed in the most suitable environment to have maximum concentration while undertaking a state test. Modifications and accommodations on state tests should align with the changes required in a school environment to integrate both general and special education learners in the same classroom.

Project Description

The interview data helped me understand general and special education teachers' perceptions regarding the current service delivery model and their roles and responsibilities regarding students with special learning needs. The project is designed to evaluate the current service delivery model and introduce a more effective service model. General and special education instructors and administrators will be the targeted audience and participate in a three-day professional development workshop.

Existing Supports

There are existing supports and resources in the NCSD. The professional development workshop for general and special education teachers and administrators will be conducted in the learning center at the NCSD office. The NCSDs' location is equipped with many resources, such as access to the learner center, administrative personnel, materials, and equipment that participants will need during the workshop. Another resource is the NCSD technology support team to provide technical support for the participants as needed. Also, general and special education teachers will earn professional development hours for their participation in the workshop. Teachers can use professional development hours for advancement in the NCSD's salary schedule.

Potential Barriers

There are potential barriers that could interfere with the implementation of the project-based workshop for teachers and administrators. For example, a three-day timeline is needed to implement the workshop effectively. However, adding and scheduling three dates and times to the preestablished school district calendar could be a possible barrier. Furthermore, I need cooperation from all administrators or program managers to participate in the workshop. Lack of cooperation from any one of the individuals could delay the workshop. Also, a possible barrier could surface regarding teacher workshops that were previously scheduled by the NCSD and conflicts with this workshop's dates.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Implementation of the workshop and timetable will be proposed and scheduled at the beginning of the school year before the school year begins. During this time, there are fewer routines and responsibilities that teachers and administrators have on their schedules. The proposed schedule will allow participants to attend the three-day workshop.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Researcher

My roles and responsibilities as the researcher are to implement professional development as data findings and the literature review drive it. My roles and responsibilities also include the following:

- Obtain approval from the NCSD Superintendent to add the three-day workshop to the master school calendar.

- Prepare and provide all resources for the participants, including refreshments.
- Submit a request to the NCSD to reserve the learning center at the district's office because it is equipped with computers, tables, chairs, and internet access required for the workshop.
- Present and facilitate the activities during the workshop.
- Collect and analyze the evaluation forms.

Project Evaluation Plan

The teachers and administrators will evaluate the professional development workshop and complete an informal evaluation form at the end of day one and two. The purpose of the evaluation form is to monitor their learning and make accommodations or modifications as needed during the workshop. Teachers and administrators will also complete a final summative evaluation form on the last day of the professional development workshop. Teachers and administrators will be asked to share their perceptions of the daily activities and evaluate the workshop's overall content. The evaluation plan assessed the overall professional development workshop to ensure that objectives were met, concerns were addressed, and program goals were identified. This derived information on the evaluation will allow administrators to plan necessary program changes, workshops further, and provide the facilitator with feedback that will drive future presentations.

On the first day of the workshop, I will introduce and display a parking lot chart and ask participants to record and post questions that will promote further feedback to be addressed during a break or at the end of each workshop day. I will begin each day of the

workshop and state the purpose of each session and review the learning goals and objectives. This will provide participants with an awareness of what to expect each day and activate their prior knowledge. During each workshop day, participants will be engaged in meaningful experiences and activities that include evaluating the current pull-out service delivery model, reviewing state assessment data, and information regarding co-teaching. Meaningful learning experiences are needed to achieve the desired learning outcomes (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014). Due to the importance of understanding the purpose of learning outcomes, the evaluation process is an important part of professional development (Lakin, et al. 2016; Randel, Apthorp, Beesley, Clark, & Wang, 2016).

Participants will be asked to write a reflection daily on their evaluation form. The reflection will confirm the participant's learning, reactions, and use of new knowledge (Guskey, 2009). Before closing each of the three workshop days, participants will complete the evaluation form. Thus, the feedback will generate data regarding possible agenda or activity changes. On the last day of the workshop, participants will complete the final workshop evaluation form. The feedback from the evaluation will be shared with the school district's Superintendent. I hope that the administration will approve the use of a co-teaching model, and general and special education teachers will implement the co-teaching model to serve students with special learning needs more effectively.

Project Implication and Potential Social Change

This project has the potential to promote social change for teachers as well as students in general and special education classrooms. The change begins with inviting administrators and teachers to participate in a professional development workshop. As

these individuals participate in this professional development, they will share ideas, evaluate the current service delivery model, and possibly adopt a more effective service delivery model. Participants will learn how to implement research-based co-teaching strategies in an inclusive classroom setting. These methods will improve instructional practices and increase student performance for students, especially students with special learning needs. Thus, promoting social change resulting in improved teacher practices and better-educated students with special learning needs.

Local Community

This project addressed general and special education teachers' concerns and findings in the local elementary schools in the NCSD. Their concerns are related to the current pull-out current service delivery model and students with SLD that participate in state-mandated assessments. The project was designed to examine or re-evaluate the current pull-out service delivery model, explore general and special education teachers' perceptions about the model, and their perceptions about administering the Smarter Balance Achievement Test (SBAT) to students with learning disabilities.

To ensure that students with learning disabilities thrive on the SBAT, they need uninterrupted access to common core instruction in English Language Arts and math. However, students with learning disabilities in the NCSD participate in a pull-out service delivery model, whereas they are pulled out of the general education classroom and miss academic instruction necessary to support their performance on the SBAT.

Administration in the NCSD has the authority to re-evaluate and change the current service delivery model for students with special learning needs in grades third

through fifth. To address teachers' concerns regarding the service model, it is important to invite teachers and specific administrators to participate in the professional development workshop. Thus, during the workshop, participants will re-evaluate the current service delivery model, acquire knowledge about co-teaching and inclusion, and compare the current pull-out service delivery with a more effective co-teaching service delivery model. The expectation is to promote positive social change for administration, teachers, and students with special learning needs.

During the professional development workshop, participants will learn about instructional practices and learning activities related to co-teaching that will be implemented in an inclusive classroom setting. Besides, students with SLD will be educated in the same setting as their grade-level peers without SLD. This approach will likely improve students' academic performance with SLD in the classroom and on state assessments.

Far-Reaching Implications

This project's work can demonstrate ways to include paraeducators and parent volunteers into a co-teaching classroom during instructional times. Thus, increasing the number of adults in the classroom to provide support for teachers and students. As teachers and administrators gain greater insight regarding the importance of a co-teaching model for general and special education teachers, all students benefit, especially students with special learning needs. Hence, leading to positive social change for all general and special education teachers, parents, paraeducators, and students with special learning needs. It will also reduce the achievement gap between general and special education students on state-mandated assessments. Moreover, this project plan has a broad focused

vision, which could be adopted and implemented by other school districts in the United States.

Conclusion

Section 3 provided a description of the project, an explanation regarding the project's goals, and the subsequent literature review. The goal of the project is designed to provide a three-day professional development workshop for teachers and administrators. This professional development workshop will be implemented to evaluate the current pull-out delivery model. As a result, participants would be able to:

1. List the strengths and weakness of the current service pull-out delivery model,
2. Understand the perceptions of general and special education teachers about the current pull-out service delivery model,
3. Analyze assessment data to identify the achievement gap Between students with and without special learning needs, and
4. Review co-teaching models.

In this section, I developed an implementation plan and schedule regarding project delivery. I described the resources needed to implement the project, potential barriers, and implications for social change and clarified far-reaching implications. In the literature review, there was a focus on the need for professional development, least restrictive environment, benefits of the least restrictive environment, disadvantages of the least restrictive environment, the pull-out delivery model, accommodations, school administration, special education, students with SLD and state testing, change, as well as

clarified far-reaching implications. Section 4 will reflect on the knowledge and skills I obtained while involved in this project-based study.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The implementation of the project has its strengths and limitations. This section presents those strengths and limitations, as well as recommendations to address the problem, a reflection on what was learned about the research process, and the growth I made as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. The section concludes with an overall reflection on the importance of this project study and its potential effect on social change, its implications, and future research directions.

The data findings collected during the interviews were crucial in designing the workshop. Another strength is that administrators have the authority to implement a program evaluation or change and general and special education teachers are hopeful that administration will approve a new service delivery. The professional development workshop provides an opportunity for administrators and teachers to better understand data findings, co-teaching, and inclusive classroom practices. As these educators gain knowledge from the workshop, they become more equipped to team teach and help students with learning disabilities increase their performance on state-mandated assessments.

The workshop also provides an opportunity for general and special education teachers to collaborate. During this 3-day professional development workshop, these educators engage in reflective collaboration, share ideas, and participate in various

activities. This project allows the local school district to share this professional development experience with other school districts and county offices. I anticipate that participants' knowledge during the workshop will be used to establish and implement a successful service delivery model next school year for students with SLD in the NCSD.

The workshop has clear goals and learning outcomes, and it includes research-based instructional strategies. However, it also has its limitations. The local school district administration could decide not to adopt a co-teaching model or an inclusive service delivery model for students with special learning needs and continue to use the existing pull-out model for students with special learning needs. Thus, students with SLD would continue to miss vital instruction given in the general education classroom. School administrators who have participated in co-teaching workshops believe it is an effective best practice (Nierengarten, 2013). Other limitations to consider are unavailability on the school district's master calendar if other professional development workshops take precedence, in which case I may not be permitted to conduct the professional development workshop this school year as planned.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The local problem described in Section 1 focused on general and special education teachers and their roles and responsibilities regarding support for special learning needs students. I could have selected a different way to frame the local problem. For this study, I selected a qualitative case study. However, I could have selected an alternate approach. For example, I could have focused on a program evaluation regarding the pull-out service delivery model. Lodico et al. (2006) indicated that a program

evaluation is used to examine specific activities with goals and objectives quantified through formative and summative feedback from participants. A program evaluation would have allowed me to assess the value of a pull-out model. After conducting a program evaluation, the administration could use data findings from an *evaluation report* to reconfigure the pull-out service delivery model structure. If I used a program evaluation as an alternate approach, the evaluation report's findings would be presented to the NCSD and would not be published in a journal.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Regarding scholarship, I perceive myself as a lifelong scholar in the world of academia. Lifelong learners like myself have a passion for learning, exercise patience, resilience, and humility. I am passionate about learning, sharing knowledge, reading, and listening to the ideas of others. During my doctoral journey, I steadied the course and spent many hours searching for and reading peer-reviewed articles regarding my research topic. I developed and submitted so many drafts that I stopped counting. I also faced challenges with previous committees and had to self-advocate and petition Walden for a committee change. A respectful and compatible relationship between the committee and the adult learner is critical to the success of this process. Despite many challenges, I developed patience as a scholar during the process of conducting this research. I devoted many hours during the reading process, searching for articles, collecting and analyzing data, and adhering to my current committee's guidance and support. Thus, I learned to be a scholarly writer. As a doctoral student at Walden University, I enhanced my scholarship through many semesters of course work, proposal writing, perseverance, participation in

valuable Blackboard discussions with fellow students. I developed a project study to add to the body of educational research. My journey as a scholar has enriched my life with knowledge about research and writing that I will use in the future to support individuals who seek to develop projects that promote positive social change within educational systems.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner, I have acquired knowledge, skills, and experience in the field of education. I am a skilled practitioner in special education and hold an Educational Specialist Credential. I have over three decades of expertise in general and special education. During my tenure in education, I have worked and volunteered in communities and served as a leader and agent for change in and out of local school settings. I am a practitioner who is objective, discrete, and truthful. I speak passionately about the needs of all teachers and students, especially students with special learning needs. The methodology I used regarding this project study allowed me to use findings to develop this professional development project for administrators and general and special education teachers.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

When I reflect on my experience as a project developer, I am reminded of my daughters' academic experiences. During their school experiences from elementary school through college, I supported them with developing various school projects in which they had to do research, create a hypothesis, collect data, and address data findings. The experiences with my daughters paved the way for my journey as a project

developer. However, before the experiences with them regarding project development, I did not have experience developing a project of this magnitude alone. While developing this project, essential components were involved. I analyzed data to identify emerging themes and use the themes to outline and create a literature review. I strategically used themes to determine goals, learning outcomes, an agenda, activities, and an evaluation plan to develop this project. My goal was to develop a project that addressed concerns of general and special education teachers who support students with special learning needs. To accomplish this goal, I had to identify the most beneficial way to address the concerns identified from the study findings regarding the current service delivery model. Through collaboration with colleagues and my committee chair, I decided that school administrators and teachers would be appropriate for individuals to participate in this project. Administrators are key participants because they are the decision-makers who can re-evaluate a service delivery model and execute change. The experience of developing a project was personally and professionally rewarding. I am pleased that I can add the words "project developer" to my curriculum vitae.

Project Developer

The first project I developed was during my master's degree journey. It included a one-day professional development. However, the professional development workshop I created for this study was far more challenging. Developing a project from beginning to end is an incredible responsibility because many essential components must be addressed. During this part of the process, I needed to decide the relative project genre, align it with themes, findings, and a second literature review. I used these components as a guide for

developing this project. As I mentioned, I developed a smaller workshop while completing my master's degree, but that experience does not compare to the scope and sequence that this project required. Not only did I complete in-depth planning, but I also carefully developed agendas, goals, learning outcomes, activities for participants, daily schedules, norms, PowerPoint presentations, and an evaluation plan.

An evaluation plan is useful for a professional development workshop. Feedback will help me assess the effectiveness of each component presented during the three-day project. After the professional development, I will share the evaluations' findings with the administration and the district superintendent. This part of the evaluation process feels risky; however, I realize the importance of sharing the information as they are entitled to review the evaluation results. I will provide the general and special education teachers and administration with a summary of the evaluation results through email. I hope and pray that the district will allow me to present the professional development workshop to expand my scholarship and leadership skills.

Leadership and Change

I have worked as an educator for over 30 years. My first leadership role started when I worked as an instructional associate at the elementary school level. During that time, I worked closely with the principal, vice-principal, and district office; coached K-6 grade general and special education teachers; and organized/facilitated monthly parent support groups. During my tenure as an instructional associate, I worked within the public school system with four principals who exemplified leadership qualities and abilities at the elementary school level that contributed to my leadership abilities.

In 2007, I received a congressional award from California as the special education teacher of the year in the county where I am employed. For the past 17 years, I have worked as a leader in special education and advocated for equity among general and special education teachers and students with special learning needs. My leadership also includes work with academic leaders, students, colleagues, service providers, instructional aides, community organizations, and parents. During the development of this project, my professional knowledge was cultivated through reading, conducting research, collecting data, data analysis, and project development. I was able to accomplish this through perseverance and support from my committee at Walden University.

Through dedication, hard work, and patience, I learned to be committed to my academic growth and development. As I developed this workshop and addressed general and special education teachers' concerns and students' needs with SLD, I realized that these educators and students require effective teacher leaders and learners in the inclusive classroom setting. All teachers have strengths, teaching styles, and areas of expertise. Thus, I believe the leadership qualities I have benefits to teachers and students. I am a patient and supportive leader who understands how to facilitate professional growth and development, especially amid challenging circumstances.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The project study findings and the literature review revealed a need to re-evaluate the service delivery model to better support teachers and students with special learning needs. This project will likely encourage administrators to change the current service

delivery model and adopt a co-teaching approach. This change would address general and special education teachers' concerns, eliminate the use of a pull-out service delivery model, and provide uninterrupted instructional time for students with special needs who need to increase their overall academic performance.

Students with special learning needs will likely increase their performance on the state-mandated assessment at the elementary schools' local level. With a co-teaching and inclusion model, general and special education teachers will co-teach, and students with SLD will engage in uninterrupted instruction in content areas and improve their success on state-mandated assessments. A professional development workshop regarding inclusion and co-teaching among general and special education teachers should be expanded to all classrooms at the elementary at the local level.

Furthermore, this project could be used at the state level or school districts to evaluate or compare pull-out models' effectiveness. School districts that are considering the use of a co-teaching model could use this project as a reference. The findings from data could be shared with school districts where there are concerns about the pull-out model. Moreover, this workshop could be organized into mini professional development sessions to be offered to teachers at the beginning and end of the school year. Feedback from each session would help the facilitator enhance upcoming professional development and eventually gain an opportunity to share the professional development workshop with a larger audience via a digital and synchronous platform.

In the future, data from the project evaluations could be used to drive future workshops or determine the effectiveness of the workshop. Future research for this

project should include teachers who support students with special learning needs in middle and high school. Throughout the United States, schools use pull-out service models for students in the 7th through 12th grades. Consequently, these students also miss the essential instructional time that is provided in the regular education classroom.

Conclusion

Section 4 provided a discussion regarding the project's strengths and limitations, recommendations to address the problem, a reflection of what I learned about the research process, and the growth I made as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. While reflecting on the overall project study, the overall process was personally and professionally rewarding. The opportunity to develop this project study was one of the most important experiences in my life. This experience was my opportunity to advocate for educators who support students with special learning needs. While developing this project study, especially during the face to face interviews in Section 2, I provided general and special education teachers with an opportunity to be reflective and have autonomy in a safe and confidential setting. I am grateful and humbled that this is the last sentence I write, representing years of hard work, dedication, prayers, sacrifices, love from family, friends, and a loving soulmate.

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Appendix A: The Project

This project is a professional development workshop to provide general and special education teachers and administrators with an opportunity to evaluate and improve the current service pull-out delivery model. The second component of this training is to introduce an inclusion model. During the three-day training, teachers, and administrators will participate in a training titled, A Co-Teaching Approach. Participants will engage in discussions, review data, evaluate the current model, examine inclusion and co-teaching models, and engage in hands on activities.

The design

The three-day training is guided by the fundamental principles and practices embedded in the constructivist theory. This theory is aligned with this study to help participants construct meaning to improve professional and instructional practices among administrators and general and special education teachers.

The Target Audience

The targeted audience for this professional development is general and special education teachers of students in grades 3 to 5 and administrators in the local school district, such as the directors of general, special education, curriculum, and the elementary school site principals.

Goals

The goals of this training include:

The participants will review and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current pull-out model.

The participants will review and discuss the state assessment data.

The participants will review and discuss data findings.

The participants will review and discuss inclusion.

The participants will review six co-teaching models that best support students with SLD.

The participants will collaborate about best practices that create effective instructional delivery for students with SLD.

Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes for this professional development is to improve instructional and professional experiences for administrators as well as general and special education teachers and of students with special learning needs. Enhance the collaboration practices between general and special education teachers. Introduce administrators, general education, and special education teachers to inclusion and co-teaching models and provide administrators and teachers with an alternative to the pull-out service model.

Timeline

The timeline for this professional development is three consecutive days. The training will occur over a three-day period for seven hours each day. Each day, the participants will engage in activities, work collaboratively in small groups, and review data. At the end of each training day, participants will complete an evaluation that will be used to identify areas to be adjusted for future planning.

Housekeeping Norms:

- Avoid sidebars
- Enjoy the refreshments during the training
- Please silence cell phones
- Location of the restrooms
- Please respect break and lunch times
- Notetaking is encouraged in the notebooks at each table

Agenda

Day-One Workshop PD Workshop - Module 1 Pull-out, Assessments, and Data Findings

8:00 - 9:00 am Review the agenda, Goals and Objectives, Breakfast

9:00 - 9:10 am Housekeeping

9:10- 9:40 am Activity 1 – Introductions

9:40 - 10:15 am Activity 2 - Brainstorm

10:15 -10:30 am Break

10:30 - 11:15 am Activity 3 -PPT regarding the pull-out model

11:15 - 12:15 pm Activity 4 PPT - review the student assessment data

12:15 – 1:30 pm Lunch

1:30 – 2:15 pm Activity 5 PPT - review the interview findings

2:15 – 3:15 pm Activity 6 – Group activity regarding inclusion/discussion

3:15 - 3:30 pm Activity 7 Wrap-up, evaluation form, and closure

The timelines may shift based on discussions during the training.

Day 1 – Goal(s)

The participants will review and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current pull-out model.

The participants will review and discuss state assessment data.

Day One Activities

Activity 1: Introductions/Ice Breaker. Following a review of the goals, participants will engage in an ice-breaker activity. Participants will be given an index card to record their name, position in the school district and write a word or phrase that describes their teaching style. After the index cards are completed, participants will exchange cards with another person and the individual that receives the card will be asked to introduce that person.

Activity 2: During this brainstorm activity, participants will use the notepads provided for each participant and list the strengths and weaknesses of the current pull out service delivery model. The goal of this activity to prompt participants to be reflective about the model.

Activity 3: Participants will view a PPT/video regarding special education and the pullout model.

Activity 4: Participants will review a PowerPoints regarding state assessment and interview data.

Activity 5: Participants will review the interview data findings.

Activity 6: Participants will participate in an activity to frontload the topic regarding inclusion.

Activity 7: Participants will complete the evaluation as the closing activity. Resources: agenda, handouts, index cards, pens, pencils, notepads, Power point presentation, videos, evaluation form, and chart paper.

Agenda

Day-Two Professional Development Workshop - Module 2 Inclusion

A Co-Teaching Approach

8:00 – 9:00 am Welcome, Review Agenda, Goals, Breakfast

9:00 - 9:10 am Housekeeping

9:10 - 9:30 am Activity

9:30 - 10:30 am Review Inclusion - video

10:30 -10:45 am Break

10:45 - 11:15 am Activity

11:15 - 12:30 pm Lunch

12:30 - 1:00 pm Collaboration

1:00 - 2:00 pm Think/Pair/Share

2:00 - 3:00 pm Discussion Topics about inclusion

3:00 - 3:30 pm Wrap-up, Formative Assessment, and Closure

The timelines may shift based on discussions during the training.

Day 2 Goal:

The participants will review and discuss state mandates regarding special education and inclusion.

Day 2 Activities:

Activity 1: Following a review of the learning goals, participants will engage in a think-pair-share activity and define the word inclusion. Partners will share out what was discussed with the whole group.

Activity 2: Participants will view a PPT about special education and inclusion. Prior to the showing the PPT, participants will be prompted to take record notes during the PPT in the note pads.

Activity 3: Participants and the facilitator will engage in a whole group discussion regarding thePPT. During and after the PPT presentations, questions and answers will be facilitated by the presenter. The goal of this collaboration is to better understand inclusion.

Activity 4: Participants will be organized in partners groups and think-pair-share about the following statement: Learn, Lead and Live Inclusion and Accessibility. After the partner groups collaborate, they will out with the whole group.

Activity 5: Participants will complete the evaluation form.

Resources: agenda, handouts, pens, pencils, notepads, chart paper, PPT, video, evaluation form.

Agenda

Day-Three Professional Development Workshop - Module 3

8:00– 9:00 am Welcome, Review Agenda, Goals, Breakfast

9:00 - 9:10 am Housekeeping

9:10 - 9:30 am Activity

9:30 - 10:30am Review co-teaching models – video/PPT

10:30 -10:45 am Break

10:45 - 11:15 am Partner Activity

11:15 - 12:30 pm Lunch

12:30 - 1:00 pm Collaboration

1:00 - 2:00 pm Think/Pair/Share

2:00 - 3:00 pm Discussion Topics for Collaboration

3:00 - 3:30 pm Wrap-up, Evaluation form, and Closure

The timelines may shift based on discussions during the training.

Timeline Topics – Day 3

Day 3 Goal(s)

Participants will review six co-teaching models, research based instructional strategies, and learning activities.

Participants will identify and label the co-teaching models and select a co-teaching model that best meets the needs of the students and teachers in the classroom.

Activity 1: Following a review of the goals, participants will view a video that focuses on co-teaching models.

Activity 2: Participants will engage in a think-pair-share and discuss the co-teaching models.

Activity 3: Participants will engage in a guided discussion about co-teaching. During this activity, a question and answer time will be provided. The goal of this activity is a collaborative effort to help all participants understand the challenges, benefits, and goals of coteaching.

Activity 4: Participants will complete the final evaluation.

Co-teaching Models
The first co-teaching model is called *Team Teaching.* This teaching model is most often used in a special and general education programs. During this model, two teachers with several years of experience team teach and engage in targeted planning, are experts at implementing instructional strategies, learning activities, and collaboration. Both teachers provide instruction at the front of the classroom.
The second co-teaching model is called *Station Teaching*. During station teaching, both teachers focus on a specific part of a lesson. Each teacher is responsible for teaching specific content to students and repeats the instruction with small groups of students during multiple times and at a certain time of the school day. In addition, teachers organize other stations in the classroom where students can work independently or practice working on content taught previously by a teacher.
The third co-teaching mode is called P*arallel Teaching*. During this type of instruction, there are two teachers in the classroom who organize students into two groups and provide instruction simultaneously. This teaching model allow teachers to differentiate the instruction for students and classroom management is less of a challenge.

The fourth co-teaching model is called, *One Teach, One Observe*. This model requires both teachers to spend a great deal of time organizing and developing the content and a professional working relationship. During this co-teaching model, one teacher is providing direct instruction to students and the other teacher is observing and collecting data regarding student participation, on task behavior, and recording notes.
The fifth co-teaching model is called *One Teach, One Assist*. During this co-teaching model, one teaching has the responsibility to work as an assistant. However, the teachers can change roles and provide instruction while the other teacher can work one-one with struggling students. During this model one teacher is not being utilized effectively and possible lacks expertise in academic content knowledge.
The sixth co-teaching model is called *Alternative Teaching*. During this model, teachers works with small groups of students to accelerate their learning or allows them to work on missed assignments.

Training Resource Coteaching Handout

Directions: Please pair with your partner and check Yes or No for each of the statements regarding a co-teaching relationship.

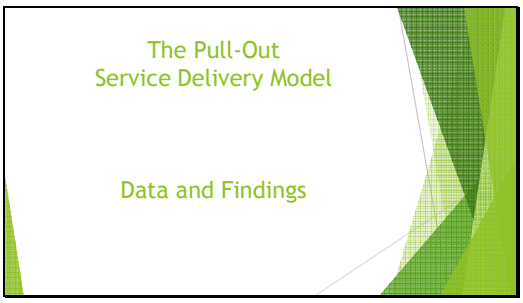
Yes	No	A Coteaching Relationship
		We will share ideas, content, and resources
		We will share the responsibility of what to teach.
		We will be flexible and implement modifications as needed.

		We will implement accommodations as outlined in the IEP.
		We will use UDL strategies and differentiate instruction.
		We will complete routine progress monitoring.
		We will use the most effect coteaching model during a lesson.
		We will train paraeducators and parent volunteers how to provide support in the classroom.
		We will implement effective classroom management strategies.
		We will attend the IEP and parent conference.
		We will make learning fun for all students.
		We will provide parents with systematic student progress.
		We will schedule times to collaborate.
		We will include students in classroom decision making.
		We will analyze student data to monitor instruction and student learning.
		Total

Created by Gary, K., This handout is aligned with the professional teaching standards outlined by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The list above is specific to the roles and responsibilities required for general and special education teachers to effectively coteach and maintain a successful and professional relationship.

PowerPoint Presentation – Pull-Out Interview Data

Slide 1



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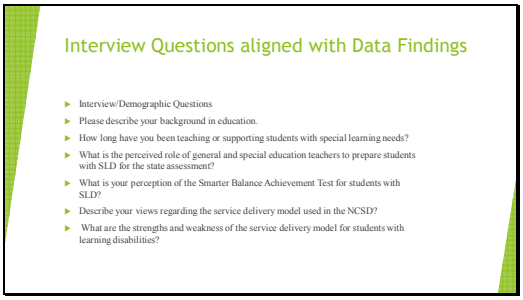

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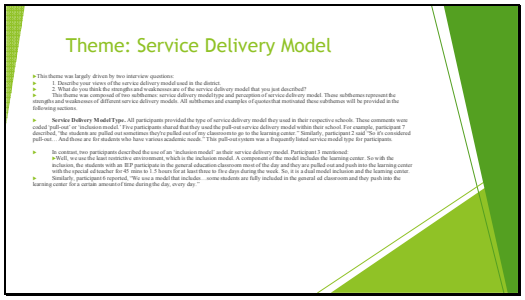

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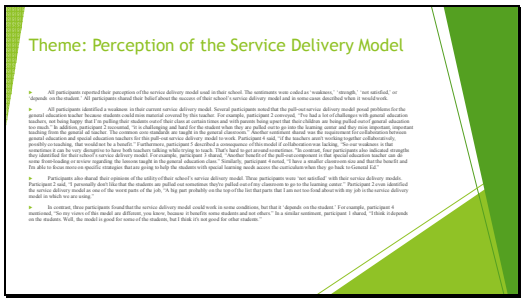
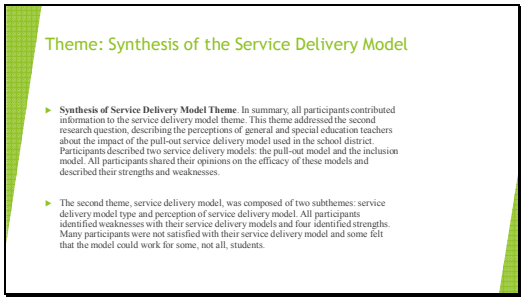
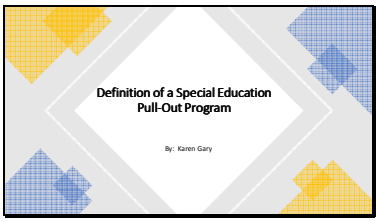


Slide 5

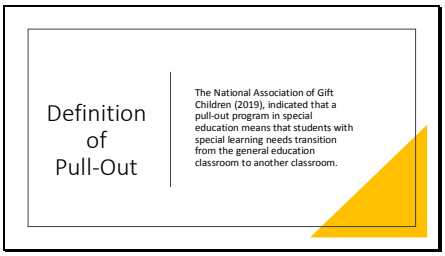


PowerPoint Presentation – The Pull-Out Program

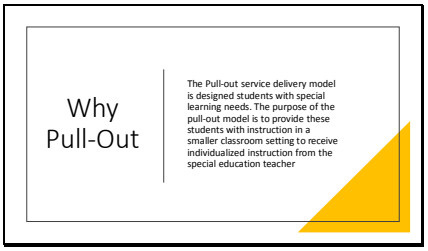
Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3



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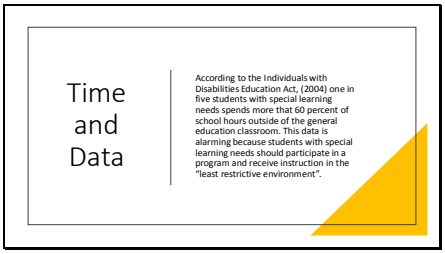

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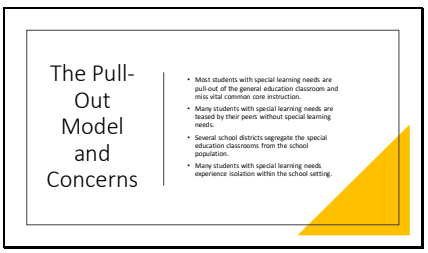

Power Point Presentation – SBAT Data

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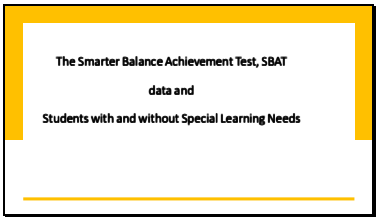

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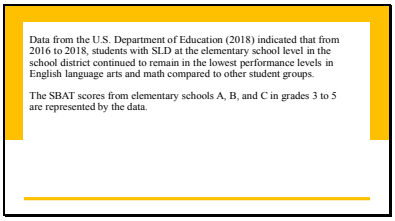

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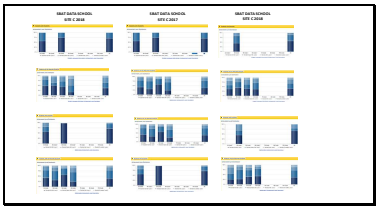


Video: Special Education: Everything you Need to Know

Video: Essential Elements of Co-Teaching: The Six Approaches

References

Avella, Frank., (2019). *Special education: everything you need to know.* Teachings in Education, Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H90Po8tHbOU&feature=youtu.beurl of video webpage

Brewer, Tanya., (2017). Essential elements of co-teaching: The Six Approaches. Retrieved from: https://youtu.be/21UeMPnO6-Y

TRAINING EVALUATION FORM

Professional Development Workshop

Day 1 and 2

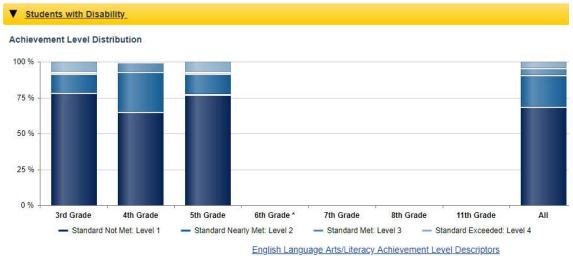
Date_____

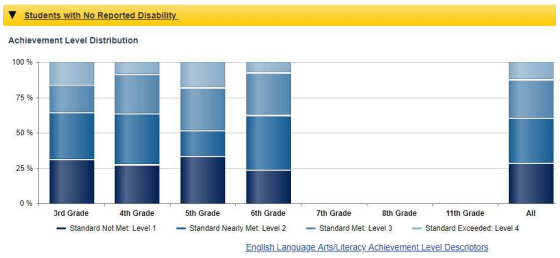
Please use the following rubric scores (1-Poor, 2-Fair, 3-Good, 4-Excellent)

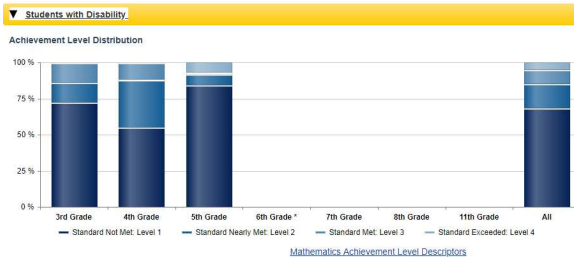
CONTENT	1	2	3	4
The materials were organized and user friendly				
The content of the training was applicable to my role				
I would recommend this training to other administrators and teachers				
The handouts were aligned with the activities				
The activities were engaging				
PRESENTATION				
The presenter was knowledgeable about the topic				
The presenter was professional and prepared				
The presenter addressed questions and prompted participation from the group				
Additional Comments				
What recommendations do you have to improve the training?				
What information would you like to know more about?				
Additional Comments:				

Final Evaluation Form – Day 3				
Date:				
Please use the following rubric scores. (1-poor, 2-fair, 3-good, 4-excellent)				
Title of the Training: Date:				
Facilitator's Name: Location:				
Evaluation Categories	1	2	3	4
Goals and learning outcomes were clear				
Goals and objectives were aligned with				
the learning activities				
Content was relevant to my role				
Quality of the training				
Pace of the training				
Facilitation of the training				
Comments:				
What part of the training was most helpful?				
What part of the training could be improved or changed?				

School Site A 2016







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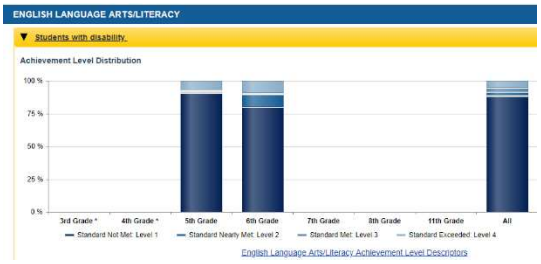

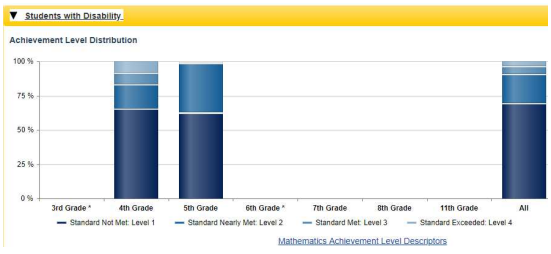

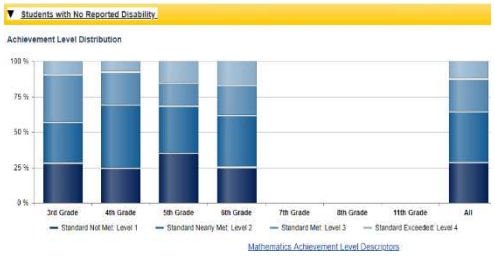

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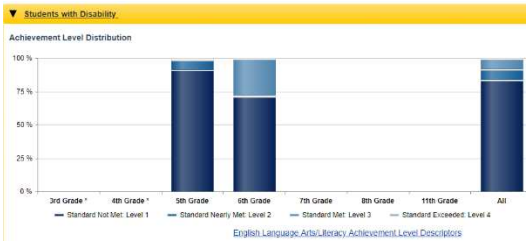
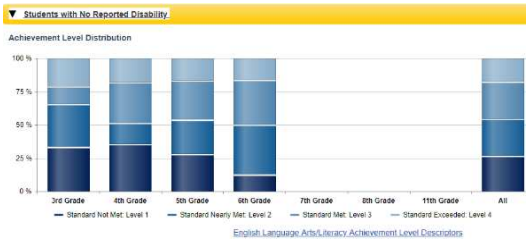
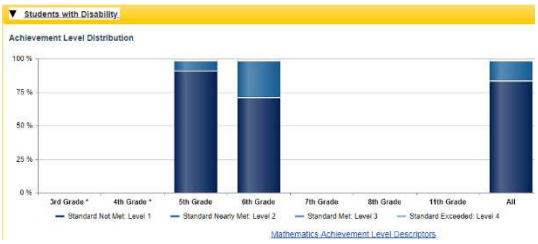


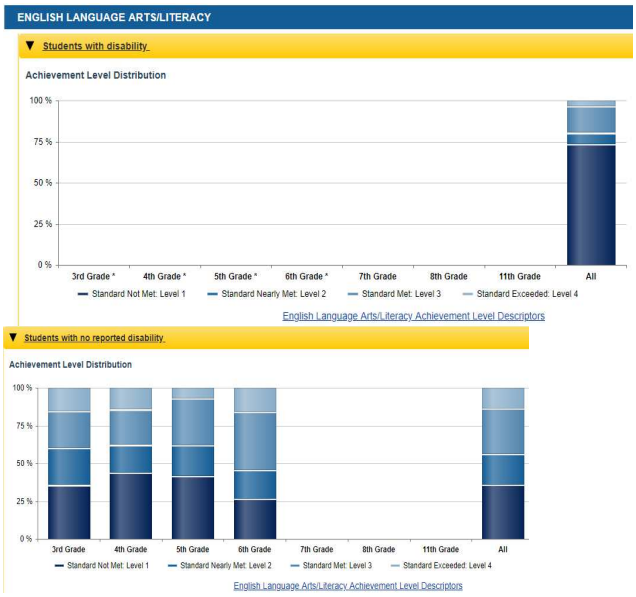




Data School Site B 2016

School Site B 2017

School Site B 2018 (continued)



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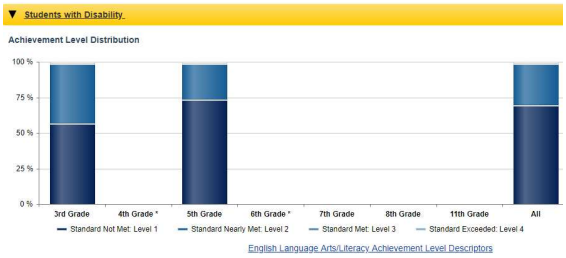

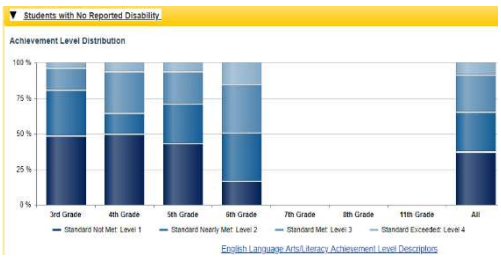

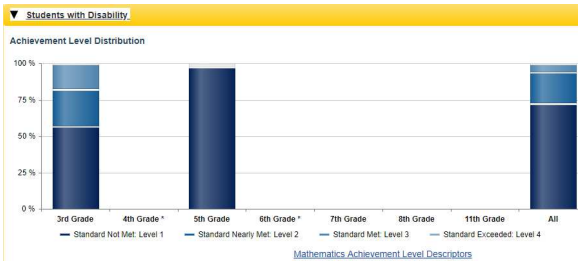

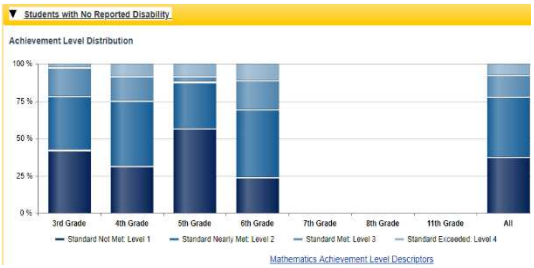

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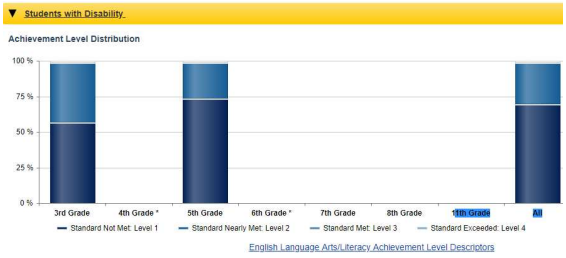

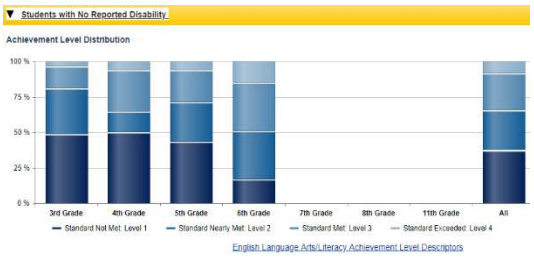

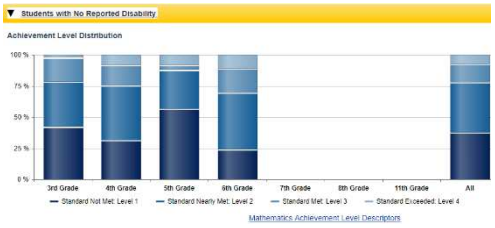

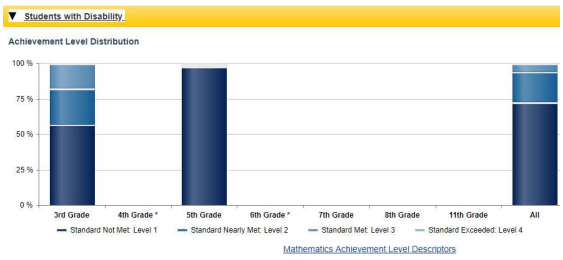

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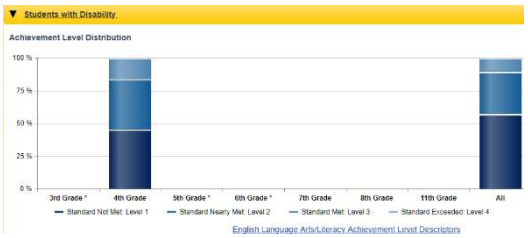

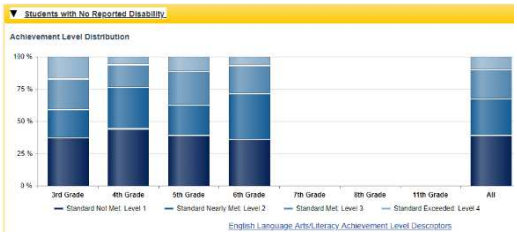

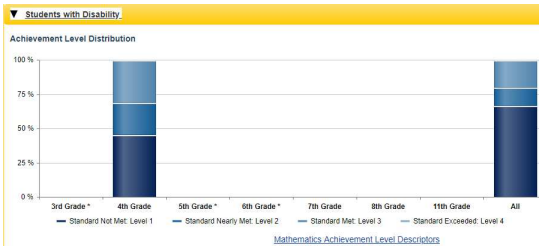

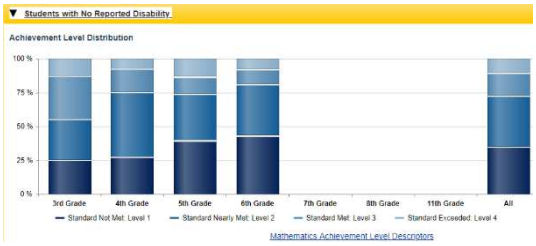

Appendix B: First Codebook

Name	Files	References
degrees and training	1	1
experience as a teacher	7	10
number of students	1	1
overlapping roles of general and special learning teachers	1	1
perception of service delivery model	7	12
perception of state assessment	7	16
role of general education teacher	7	8
role of special education teacher	7	10
service delivery model	3	4
strengths of service delivery model	4	5
student needs to take state assessment	1	1
time as a general ed teacher	1	1

time as a special learning needs teacher	5	5
weaknesses of the service delivery model	7	11
working with students with special learning needs as a gen ed teacher	1	1
working with students with special learning needs as a spec ed teacher	1	1

Appendix C: Final Codebook

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Description of code	Text description/example
Teachers' experience	Time in role	Special learning needs teacher	Describes the amount of experience that special education teachers had.	"Yes, but overall, I've been teaching about six going on seven years in the special education program."
		General education teacher	Describes the amount of experience that general education teachers had.	"Well, I've been teaching for about six years at the upper elementary grades and I've taught grades three and four during that time. And my preference is fourth grade. I really like fourth grade."
	Teacher roles	Role of general education teacher	Describes the opinions of what the role of a general education teachers is.	"I believe their role as a general education teacher is to. Make sure that they implement the accommodations and modifications that are described in the IEP and provide the accommodations, meaning that they make sure that the student has the best seat in the class room to meet their needs, that they receive extra time to complete assignments, they give the students breaks as needed, and modify the classwork if needed."
		Role of special education teacher	Describes the opinions of what the role of a special education teachers is.	"And then a big part of being a special education teacher is sharing test accommodation information. My students in general education must receive the accommodations they need in the general education classroom. So usually the accommodations that we give for the class, we also carry on over to the statewide assessments, which is also part of their IEP."
		Overlapping roles of general and special education teachers	Describes the overlaps in the roles of the general and special education teachers.	"You know, they both have a responsibility to keep the needs of the student in front of them and to share what's going regarding the students with special learning needs and work as a team. The teachers have to make sure that they're supportive and implement the accommodations and modifications."

Service delivery model	Service delivery model type	Pull-out	Describes the pull-out service delivery model.	“So, it's considered pull-out. So, it's a pull up service. And those are for students who have various academic needs.”
		Inclusion	Describes the inclusion service delivery model.	“Well, we use the least restrictive environment, which is the inclusion model. A component of the model includes the learning center. So with the inclusion, the students with an IEP participate in the general education classroom most of the day and they are pulled out and push into the learning center with the special ed teacher for 45 mins to 1.5 hours for at least three to five days during the week. So, it's a dual model inclusion and the learning center.”
	Perception of service delivery model	Weakness	Describes participants views of the weaknesses of the service delivery model.	“However, it became a problem for my students who are really struggling, who had more than one hour of service. I have students who have three hours of service. So that would mean I would need to pull them during specific times, therefore I got a lot of pushback and it was stated that I shouldn't be pulling them at this time.”
		Strength	Describes participants views of the strengths of the service delivery model.	“So I have a smaller classroom size and that the benefit and I'm able to focus more on specific strategies that are going to help the students with special learning needs access the curriculum when they go back to General Ed. So I think it could be a benefit if I create a schedule where I try to avoid pulling them out at it at times when they feel that they don't miss the Common Core instruction that they need to hear to help them access the content. I mean that going to be on the state assessment. So, I think that's a benefit.”
		Not satisfied	Describes participants who were not satisfied with their service delivery model.	“I personally don't like that the students are pulled out sometimes they're pulled out of my classroom to go to the learning center. During times when I'm really teaching something that they need to hear, and they need to be in the classroom for

				that for that lesson. Is it the content that I know is on the is on the SBAT? So, it can be a challenge sometimes. And so, I would I don't think overall the pull-out model is the best model for kids."
		Depends on the student	Describes participants who believe the service delivery model could work for some students.	"I think it depends on the students. Well, the model is good for some of the students, but I think it's not good for other students."
State Assessment	Perception of state assessment	Against assessment	Describes participants reasons for disapproving of the state assessment.	"I don't really like the state assessment for any students. It is a standardized test and I don't think it's really the best tool to use to determine how well students are doing academically."
		Indifferent	Describes participants reasons for being indifferent to the state assessment.	"I've always felt indifferent about the state mandated assessments. Because I really don't think that they are the best indicator of how the students are doing on their grade level standards."
		Benefits of assessment	Describes some benefits of the state assessment.	"I also see that benefit for me, too as the special education teacher. Just to make sure I collect the data that is needed to ensure that I give proper instruction to students."
	Challenges with assessment	Emotional	Describe emotional challenges students face.	"You know, sometimes students have anxiety about taking test. I think the tests cause the students to have anxious and causes teachers to be anxious. And I just do not think it is the best way to assess how good students are doing in school, especially those with special learning needs."
		Test-taking skills	Describes the barrier of lacking test-taking skills.	"You know, if the students take it online and, you know, General Ed, and special education students take it online. students with special learning needs they struggle with the technology because it is online. The voices that speak to them on the tests. They are like robotic voices and they are not clear. The students oftentimes have trouble understanding what they are saying. So, I wish that the voices

			were more authentic and not so robotic."
	Attention	Describes the barrier of inattention.	"I chose to go to special education, because I did see the frustration on students faces in special education. We were just frustrated with some had a difficult time sitting still, but they were expected to stay quiet and still in their seats."

Appendix D: Hierarchy of Themes, Subthemes, and Codes

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