

2021

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development for Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Bradley Martin
Walden University

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Bradley Martin

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Walden University

2021

Abstract

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development for Teaching Students

with Intellectual Disabilities

by

Bradley Martin

MA, University of Phoenix, 2012

BS, Western Illinois University, 2002

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

The problem prompting this study was the low achievement levels of elementary students with intellectual disabilities (S-ID) in a large urban school district in the southeastern region of the United States where there was a lack of high-quality teacher professional development (PD) pertaining to the specialized needs of these students. It is important to provide effective support for teachers to provide quality education that increases student achievement for this population of students. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions about the PD of elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting to determine if the available PD was providing the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the academic needs of S-ID in their classrooms. The conceptual framework for this study was Knowles' adult learning theory of andragogy. In this basic qualitative design, data were gathered from six elementary general education teachers who educate S-ID in the general education setting using semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The results of this qualitative study revealed that additional PD is needed to prepare elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting. Participants perceived the current PD model is not preparing them to educate S-ID. Based on the findings, a PD workshop was designed to provide strategies to meet the needs of S-ID. The results of this study and the project may promote social change by providing teachers with training and resources to increase academic achievement for elementary S-ID in the general education setting.

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Dedications

This project study is dedicated to my loving wife, Yvonne, who was my rock and my motivation during the doctoral process. This journey would not have been possible without your love and support. Thank you to my entire family who always encouraged me to accomplish my dream.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank my committee chair, Dr. Tammy Hoffman. Thank you for your guidance, patience, and support. Thank you for guiding me towards the completion of this study. Thank you for listening when I was flustered and providing me with support to overcome obstacles. Without your expertise, this study would not have been possible.

To Dr. Judy Shoemaker, the second member of my doctoral committee, thank you for your support throughout this process. I am grateful for your feedback that guided me in this process.

Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Elsa Gonzalez, my URR committee member. Your feedback and recommendations assisted me in enhancing the study.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Teacher experience, prior training, and education affect the achievement of students with disabilities (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). Research by Powell and Bodur (2019) support the need for quality teaching and professional development (PD) designed to promote student achievement. Jacob et al. (2017) contended that teachers who participated in PD experienced increases in student achievement. The local problem prompting this study is the low achievement levels of elementary students with intellectual disabilities (S-ID) in a large urban school district in the southeastern region of the United States where there is a lack of high-quality teacher PD pertaining to the specialized needs of these students.

Fifteen percent of elementary S-ID in the target school district spends more than 80% of their time in the general education setting. Seven percent of elementary S-ID in the target school district spend 40-79% of their time in the general education setting. In 2018, 27 elementary S-ID took the English Language Arts (ELA) state standardized assessment. Student scores in the target district indicate no elementary S-ID were proficient (scoring level 3 or above) on the 2017-2018 administration of the standardized ELA state assessment, and only three (11%) S-ID made learning gains from the previous school year.

An increased number of S-ID receive their education in the general education environment. Research has focused on whether teachers are adequately trained to teach this population of students. Hopkins et al. (2018) noted that educating students with

disabilities in the general education environment is a challenging task. In a study conducted by Jimenez and Barron (2019), the researchers noted that PD provides teachers with the necessary skills to meet the needs of S-ID. Additionally, the researchers explained that PD should encompass an understanding of the needs of S-ID and provide learner-centered coaching and modeling to address the various needs of this population of students. There is an emphasis on providing teachers with formal and informal PD (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017) to meet the numerous needs of S-ID.

Multiple approaches are used to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Clarke et al. (2016) examined the use of response cards to engage S-ID in the general education curriculum. Research conducted by Faraclas (2018) supported the incorporation of co-teaching methods to promote collaboration among general and special education teachers. However, schools may face budgetary constraints prohibiting them from using this approach. Another approach, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, provides S-ID opportunities with access to the general education curriculum. At its core, UDL promotes positive learner outcomes (Smith & Lowrey, 2017) and provides S-ID opportunities to learn (Vitelli, 2015). As noted by Smith and Lowrey (2017), teachers must be afforded access to PD to fully understand the principles and practices of UDL. Teachers who educate S-ID in the general education setting require a broad skill set to meet the needs of this population. In their findings, Rupper et al. (2018) identified the following five core practices embodying expertise in teaching S-ID: advocacy, systematic instruction, strengths-based approach, individualized

instruction, and collaboration. Research supports the notion that quality PD does influence student achievement (Basma & Savage, 2018; Gess-Newsome et al., 2019).

An examination of an external audit conducted on the targeted school district in 2015 recommended establishing PD for general and special education teachers to learn the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of all students in the district. The target school district currently offers 13 face-to-face and online, self-paced courses relative to educating students with disabilities (S-ID). In 2017, the targeted school district completed the Best Practices in Inclusive Education rating, noting that PD related to implementing best practices for inclusive education was “partially implemented,” and that schools and staff are not using digital PD.

Rationale

Teachers have expressed concerns that they are not prepared to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Hopkins et al. (2018) emphasized that teachers often lack the practical background knowledge and strategies for meeting the special educational needs of this population. Hopkins et al. noted that there is a “critical lack of disability-specific professional learning” (p. 916) available for teachers to educate S-ID. Research by Jimenez and Barron (2019) supports the notion by Hopkins et al. (2018) by explaining that with more S-ID served in inclusive settings, it is imperative that teachers receive PD that includes a strong focus on learner-centered support, skill development, and implementation.

In a 2015 joint policy statement, the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the United States Department of Education set a vision and provided

recommendations for increasing the inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs. One of the recommendations in the joint policy statement was to enhance PD for teachers, staff, and personnel. Through intentional PD and supports, teachers can increase confidence in their abilities to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities (United States Department of Health and Human Services and United States Department of Education, 2015). Though the policy statement by the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the United States Department of Education does not specify how the PD be delivered, it does stress the necessity for the PD to focus in cultural competencies, responsive practices, and positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusion.

The National Council on Disability (NCD) submitted a report in 2018 to the President of the United States and United States Congress titled *The Segregation of Students with Disabilities*. The report is part of a five-report series on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and provided a summation of national patterns for educating students with disabilities in the general education setting along with recommendations for improvement (National Council on Disability, 2018). In the report, the NCD (2018) recommended that staff receive thorough training and education to serve children with disabilities. The NCD made recommendations to the United States Congress to maintain or increase funding to prepare teachers, administrators, and related service providers to implement effective school-wide services that support the inclusion of all students with disabilities. In its recommendation to the United States Department of Education, the NCD stressed the importance of supporting and training teachers to

instruct according to the principals of UDL. The NCD recommended that the United States Department of Education develop and disseminate a resource guide of evidence-based practices that increases access to the general curriculum for S-ID to fully participate with peers without disabilities in the general education setting. S-ID experience multiple benefits from receiving their education in general education classes.

The motivation behind this project study was the 2015 joint policy statement by the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the United States Department of Education, the National Council on Disability 2018 report, and the examination of the external audit conducted on the targeted school district. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions about the PD of elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting to determine if the available PD is providing the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the academic needs of S-ID in their classrooms.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were identified from the literature in the field of special education.

General Education Curriculum (GE): IDEA defines the general education curriculum for students with disabilities as the “same curriculum as for nondisabled children” (34 CFR § 300.320(a)(1)(i)).

Inclusion: “A school district shall use the term inclusion to mean that a student is receiving education in a general education regular class setting, reflecting natural proportions and age-appropriate heterogeneous groups in core academic and elective or

special areas within the school community; a student with a disability is a valued member of the classroom and school community; the teachers and administrators support universal education and have knowledge and support available to enable them to effectively teach all children; and a teacher is provided access to technical assistance in best practices, instructional methods, and supports tailored to the student's needs based on current research" (FLA.STAT.§1003.57(2) (2018)).

Individual Education Plan: "The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is a requirement for all disabled students who are eligible for Exceptional Student Education (ESE). The IEP is the written plan and process that informs the students, parents, teachers and all other education staff which types of ESE assistances will be provided" (Moore, 2017).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA, 2004) defines Least Restrictive Environment as the following: "To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004)).

Student Achievement: The definition of student achievement used for this study is adopted from Florida Statute. Achievement level, student achievement, or achievement

describes the level of content mastery a student has acquired in a particular subject as measured by a statewide, standardized assessment administered pursuant to s. 1008.22(3)(a) and (b). There are five achievement levels. Level 1 is the lowest achievement level, level 5 is the highest achievement level, and level 3 is an indication of on grade level performance. A student passes an assessment if the student achieves a level 3, level 4, or level 5 (FLA. STAT. § 1008.34 (1)(a) (2018)).

Students with Intellectual Disabilities (S-ID): An intellectual disability is defined as significantly below average general intellectual and adaptive functioning manifested during the developmental period, with significant delays in academic skills.

Developmental period refers to birth to 18 years of age (Rule 6A-6.03011, Florida Administrative Code).

Significance of the Study

This study was important because elementary S-ID educated in the general education setting in a local school district are not performing academically, and only 11% made learning gains in the previous school year. It was important to examine whether the current PD model contributed to the lack of student achievement for elementary S-ID. The number of S-ID served in the general education setting, and the demand to increase student achievement for all students has increased. Brock (2018) concluded that the percent of S-ID spending more than 80% of their time in the general education setting has increased from 7.4% to 16.9% from 1990 to 2014. In the target school district, 15% of elementary S-ID spend more than 80% of their time in the general education setting. As the percent of S-ID included in general education continues to increase, it is important to

provide effective support for teachers to provide quality education that increases student achievement for this population of students.

This study may affect school and district administrators and general and special education teachers, and data collected can contribute to social change by providing teachers with training and resources to increase academic achievement for elementary S-ID in the general education setting. Current literature supports the need for teachers to be prepared to teach S-ID in inclusive settings. Gaines et al. (2017) suggested if teachers are not prepared or do not feel prepared, they can become stressed trying to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Data collected from this study can assist teachers through the development of PD to build their capacity to teach S-ID in the general education classroom. Wiers and Miller (2017) stressed the importance of providing teachers with PD to build educator capacity and suggested offering a plethora of resources such as conferences, face-to-face, webpages, and webinars to facilitate instruction. Corona et al. (2017) conducted a study on the impact of teacher PD on self-efficacy with 80 school professionals from 10 schools. Their findings suggested that PD increased self-efficacy and incorporating training for teachers who educate S-ID is critical.

Research Questions

Teachers are responsible for educating all students, regardless of their disability status. Darrow (2016) propounded that federal statutes such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), formerly No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and IDEA hold school and district administrators and teachers accountable for how S-ID perform in the general

curriculum. With increased academic expectations for S-ID, school stakeholders are fundamental in developing educational policies to meet the academic needs of S-ID (Ballard & Dymond, 2017). Zargona et al. (2017) suggested that PD is a necessary entity to ensure teachers have the expertise to implement effective practices for S-ID in inclusive settings. In another study by Akiba and Liang (2016), the researchers reported that teachers' engagement in PD activities is critical for their knowledge, instruction, and increasing student achievement.

The research questions addressed the purpose of this study in gaining understanding of the perceptions about the PD of elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting to determine if the available PD provided the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the academic needs of S-ID in their classrooms.

The following research questions were identified for this study:

RQ1. What are elementary general education teachers' (who teach S-ID in the general education environment) perceptions of the current PD offered within the special education department?

RQ2. What are elementary general education teachers' perceptions of the purpose of PD in relation to teaching S-ID in the general education environment?

RQ3. What types of PD do elementary general education teachers feel are needed to increase the academic achievement of S-ID in the general education setting?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Knowles' adult learning theory known as andragogy. The core principles of andragogy are that adults have a "psychological need to be self-directing, that their richest resource for learning is the analysis of their own experience", and that "their orientation toward learning is one of concern for immediate application" (Knowles, 1975 p. 87). Franco (2019) conducted a study that included a literature review of andragogy. Franco distinguished the central difference between children learning and adult learning is the experiences adults have acquired in their lifetime.

Powell and Bodur (2019) noted that Knowles' theory emphasized the following five assumptions of adult learning:

1. **Self-Concept:** Adult learners are self-directed and autonomous.
2. **Adult Learner Experience:** Adult learners bring their life experiences to learning situations.
3. **Readiness to Learn:** Adult learners are motivated by learning that addresses social roles.
4. **Orientation to Learning:** Adult learners seek immediate application for problem-based concerns.
5. **Motivation to Learn:** Adult learners often are motivated by intrinsic rather than extrinsic factors.

Knowles (1979) established six assumptions toward education, moving away from traditional assumptions in education. Knowles (1979) categorized the assumptions as the purpose of education, the nature of education, the environment conducive to learning, PD, educational responsibility, and the nature of adult learning. Knowles (1979) noted that the purpose of education is to produce a competent person who can apply knowledge to solve a variety of problems. Organizations should establish PD that excites teachers to learn when developing and implementing PD opportunities.

Knowles explained that education is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values with the learner playing an active role as an initiative-taking inquirer. Learning environments should be made up of a rich variety of resources, and organizations must develop systems allowing learners to access those resources. Systematic strategies must be developed and facilitated so PD can be a lifelong process. Knowles' (1979) assumption on the nature of adult learning moved away from pedagogy and toward andragogy. Knowles (1979) contended that the adult learner is "a self-directing organism and is put in the role of diagnosing his/her own needs for learning, translating these needs into learning objectives, and using appropriate resources for accomplishing these objectives, and evaluating the extent to which they have been accomplished" (p. 39). Knowles theory of adult learning focuses on a lifelong process that entails the physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and occupational development of a person.

Adult experiences are paramount in andragogy. Adults define who they are based on the experience they have attained (Knowles, 1975). Professional development

increases knowledge and experience levels in adult learners. Knowles (1975) noted adults attain more meaning to learning they gain through experience than they acquire passively. Knowles asserted adult learners need to participate in planning and evaluating their learning experiences; seek immediate relevance for their professional and personal life, and desire opportunities to engage in problem-based learning (Powell & Bodur, 2019).

The use of adult learning theory helped to examine elementary school general education teachers', who educate S-ID, perceptions of PD in their school district. This was based on the notion that teachers have "specific and unique needs" (Powell & Bodur, 2019, p. 22) and provides a means to examine the extent to which those learning needs are initiated. Professional development for educators is facilitated through multiple methods. Adult learning occurs through job-embedded PD, face-to-face seminars and trainings, and online modules. Teachers must be motivated to attend training to enhance their skill set. Franco (2019) points to the notion that life experiences impact intrinsic motivation in adults. Additionally, Franco suggested that extrinsic factors such as salary and employment might motivate teachers to attend learning opportunities.

Review of the Broader Problem

The literature review will be comprised of six essential themes in special education:

- History of special education in the United States
- Inclusion
- Inclusion Internationally

- Research on perceptions and preparedness for general education teachers
- Research on PD for general education teachers
- Program Evaluation

The information contained in this literature review will provide pertinent background information to support the identified research problem.

History of Special Education in the United States

The history of special education in the United States dates back to 1975 when Congress passed the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA, Public Law 94-142). According to research conducted by Spaulding and Pratt (2015), prior to the passage of the EAHCA, educators believed students with disabilities learned differently in segregated classrooms and schools away from their nondisabled peers. O'Connor, Yasik, and Horner (2016) noted that special education students were educated in self-contained classrooms regardless of their disability category. State institutions housed many S-ID as catalysts for addressing their needs. Kim et al. (2019) compared the development and status of special education in the United States, Korea, and China. Kim et al. (2019) posited that the Civil Rights Movement and pivotal court cases became influential factors leading to the demise of the practice of institutionalizing S-ID. This helped to lay the foundation for S-ID to be included with their nondisabled peers. Cramer et al. (2019) contended the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) laid the foundation for educational equality for all students, leading to current legislation governing the rights of S-ID.

In 1972, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) filed a class-action suit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Gunnar Dybward, advocate for special education, provided expert testimony supporting the treatment of individuals with intellectual disabilities as human beings with the ability to learn and the right to a formal education (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). The court agreed with this contention and ruled in favor of PARC requiring the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to provide an “individualized education” for S-ID (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015, p. 102). With the passage of PARC vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1972), the door was open for advocacy groups in other states to promote similar legislation. This led to the passage of EAHCA (1975) requiring the provision of a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities. Based on their research, Spaulding and Pratt pointed toward a shift in how students with disabilities were traditionally served to an inclusionary model.

In 1990, the EAHCA (1975) morphed into the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA supported multiple provisions under the EAHCA (1975), including the provision for states to provide FAPE in the least restrictive environment, and individualized education programs for all S-ID (Russo & Osborne, 2017). Giangreco (2017) suggested that S-ID should be seen as people first, and not as labels. Giangreco articulated that all S-ID have the right to access to the general education environment, including S-ID, as IDEA (2004) requires school personnel to consider the regular classroom the student would attend if not disabled. Although the consideration for LRE does not necessarily mean inclusion, school personnel should consider this option for S-ID. Zirkel (2017) has conducted a cadre of research on special education and contended

that the IDEA solidified the foundation of child find, eligibility, and FAPE. Additionally, Zirkel propounded that teachers are gatekeepers in the child find process, starting with reasonable suspicion of a disability. Another study by Zirkel (2017) suggested that schools were responsible for providing interventions under the Response to Intervention (RtI) process to assist in making decisions for all students, including S-ID. The RtI process morphed into the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was enacted into law in 2001. In a study conducted by Brownell et al. (2018) the authors examined the shortage of special education teachers. Brownell et al. (2018) noted how sweeping changes in public education led to the requirement of teachers being highly qualified under NCLB. The NCLB placed increased accountability on schools to work toward the academic goal of 100% proficiency for all students. Gelfuso (2017) delved deeper into the accountability measures noted in NCLB. Teacher quality, student achievement, high-stakes, end-of-year assessments became the standards of schools and districts. Similar to Gelfuso, Brownell et al. (2018) examined the requirement for teachers to be highly qualified. According to Brownell et al. (2018), teachers were required to hold a bachelor's degree, state certification or licensure, and competence in the core subject areas they taught. This meant that traditional preparation programs were forced to adapt to prepare teachers for the classroom.

In 2015, Congress enacted the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law. Multiple researchers, including Saultz et al. (2017), and Knackstedt et al. (2018), have studied the requirements under the ESSA. ESSA was a reauthorization of the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The study by Saultz et al. (2017) suggested that the ESSA places specific emphasis on the learning and support of subgroups. Saultz et al. (2017) research focused on the elimination of the highly qualified teacher (HQT) provision that was previously in place under NCLB. States were now responsible for determining quality-teaching practices. Saultz et al (2017) reiterated the requirement that teachers are still responsible for and tied to, student outcomes under ESSA.

Teacher preparation and training have been a focus under ESSA. Knackstedt et al. (2018) explored the shift in improving teacher effectiveness and quality through multiple facets. The research by Knackstedt et al. (2018) suggested that states are responsible for developing and implementing plans to best prepare teachers to meet the needs of S-ID. This includes identifying best practices in special education with a specific focus on pedagogy, rather than the focus on content knowledge as in NCLB. Throughout the transition from one statute to another, the inclusion of S-ID has increased in the United States.

Inclusion

Inclusion and mainstream education are synonymous in the field of education. Inclusive education is not a new concept in education. Since the establishment of the EAHCA (1975), the concept of inclusion started to take shape. Nilholm and Göransson (2017) suggested that the term inclusion began to appear in the 1980s and has since been the focus of research in the field of special education. Many definitions of inclusion exist, with similarities among them. A study conducted by LeMay (2017) suggested that the

lack of a clear universal definition for inclusion has posed challenges for school districts to implement effective practices. Nilholm and Göransson (2017) found four definitions of inclusion in their review of literature (p.441):

- Placement definition: inclusion as a placement of S-ID in general education classrooms
- Specified individualised [sic]: inclusion as meeting the needs of S-ID in need of special support
- General individualised [sic]: inclusion as meeting the needs of all students
- Community: inclusion as the creation of a community

Florida Statute (2018) has adopted the following definition for inclusion:

A school district shall use the term inclusion to mean that a student is receiving education in a general education regular class setting, reflecting natural proportions and age-appropriate heterogeneous groups in core academic and elective or special areas within the school community; a student with a disability is a valued member of the classroom and school community; the teachers and administrators support universal education and have knowledge and support available to enable them to effectively teach all children; and a teacher is provided access to technical assistance in best practices, instructional methods, and supports tailored to the student's needs based on current research.

(FLA.STAT.§1003.57(2) (2018))

For the purpose of this project, the Florida Statute definition defines inclusion.

Inclusive education provides benefits to all S-ID and general education students. In a

study by Zargon et al. (2017), the researchers concluded that students who participate in inclusive education experience grade-level standards, social interactions with non-disabled peers, and display increased levels of engagement. Similar to the study by Zargona et al. (2017), St. John et al. (2018) suggested that students who are included in the general education setting learn from teachers with expertise in the academic subject, have access to resources directly associated with the subject, and learn alongside their non-disabled peers who may also provide them with support. DeMartino and Specht (2018) noted that a primary goal of inclusion is to provide all students with the opportunity to achieve academic performance. McKee and Friedlander (2017) concluded that successful inclusion contains four components. The findings suggested that students who are included make progress on their IEP goals, gains in their personal development and acquisition of knowledge, were welcomed by trained staff and their peers, and their parents are supportive and pleased with their child's education.

Inclusion Internationally

Scholars have saturated the field of special education with researched focused around the attitudes and perceptions of teachers toward inclusion since the movement for inclusive education. The research on inclusion is not limited to schools in the United States, and spans across countries such as Israel (Gavish, 2017), Turkey (Akdağ and Haser, 2017), Kenya (Odongo and Davidson, 2016), Singapore (Poon et al., 2016), and Botswana (Mukhopadhyay, 2014). LeMay (2017) found that school leaders shape perceptions of teachers, and teachers often feel they are not offered adequate support.

LeMay's conclusion was that the execution of inclusion is "dependent on the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and administrators" (p. 38).

Similar to the findings in McKee and Friedlander (2017), Engelbrecht (2017) suggested inclusive education provides students with disabilities with access to education, acceptance, and participation in the general education setting, and quality education. However, questions arise whether general education teachers are prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities (S-ID) in the mainstream setting.

Chrysostomou and Symeonidou (2017) conducted a study involving general and special educators and found that there is a need for PD and collaboration between general and special education teachers to build capacity. Building teacher capacity, according to the study by Spaulding and Pratt (2015) provided effective instruction in adequately educating students with disabilities.

In a study on teacher preparation, Odongo and Davidson (2016) found a positive correlation between teacher preparedness and increased attitude toward inclusion programs in schools. When teachers exhibit a positive attitude toward inclusion, students with disabilities experience success (see Akdağ & Haser, 2017; Odongo and Davidson, 2016; Gavish, 2017), specifically when teachers have been provided training in implementing inclusive practices. In a study conducted by Savić and Prošić-Santovac (2017) the findings suggested that the formulation of negative attitudes teachers toward inclusion might be attributed to teacher conditions and lack of preparation, rather than their views and beliefs toward the concept of inclusion.

Perceptions and Preparedness of General Education Teachers

Much research has been conducted on studying the perceptions of teachers toward inclusion and preparation to educate S-ID. Findings from a study by Hopkins et al. (2018) indicated that teaching S-ID in the general education setting is one of the most challenging aspects of work for teachers. However, in a different study by Olson et al. (2016), the findings suggested that teachers believed general education classrooms are the best settings for S-ID to access the general education curriculum. In a study by Nonis et al. (2016), the researcher examined the perceptions of pre-school teachers. The findings suggested that teachers exhibited concerns attributed to class size, insufficient resources, and facilities to support teachers and students, leadership perceptions, and the lack of training to provide strategies to meet the needs of S-ID in inclusive settings.

One theme common to most of the research is that educators who teach S-ID often do not feel prepared to meet the needs of their students. The idea of inclusion has focused primarily on students with intellectual disabilities served in separate classrooms or separate schools. Malki and Einat (2016) studied the PD needs of teachers to educate S-ID. Based on the results, Malki and Einat concluded that general education teachers require additional support through PD, resources, instructional tools and strategies to teach students with disabilities in the general education setting.

In another study conducted by Faraclas (2018), 48 general and special education teachers were surveyed about PD for a co-taught model. The findings suggested that regular and special education teachers come to inclusion classrooms with different viewpoints based on their backgrounds, training, and experiences. Additionally, the

results of the study support the notion that PD is a viable avenue for providing teachers with skill development to meet the needs of S-ID. Students with disabilities who are included in the general education environment experience multiple educational benefits (Zargona et al., 2017), if they are provided with resources and support. This process involves not only supporting students but also supporting teachers who are actively involved in the process.

Research on perceptions and preparation is not a new concept in the field of education. Cornoldi et al. (2018) conducted a study of 557 teachers from Italy, Spain, and the United States. Findings from Cornoldi et al. (2018) suggested that half of teachers felt inclusion provides benefits for S-ID; however, only one-third of teachers believed they had sufficient training or resources to implement effective, inclusive practices. Furthermore, the findings suggested that factors such as teacher experience and training, as well as the type of disability affected their attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion. In another study conducted by Chitiyo et al. (2019), including 232 teachers, findings suggested that teachers felt inadequately prepared to teach S-ID. Additionally, the findings suggested that almost all teachers believed that PD is essential to building their skill set. In a similar study, Yu (2019) examined the attitudes and perceptions of 41 teachers. Yu concluded that teachers' positive beliefs about inclusion did not match their abilities to implement inclusive practices. Additional findings suggested that teachers were not confident in their abilities even though they had positive beliefs toward inclusion.

Multiple approaches to address pre-service and in-service preparation (Gilham & Tompkins, 2016; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016; McWhirter et al., 2016) have been examined by researchers to determine an effective approach to preparing new teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Along with approaches to study preparation, a study by Woodcock and Hardy (2017) examined PD approaches that influence teachers' perceptions toward inclusive practices in schools.

Professional Development for General Education Teachers (Pre-Service)

Providing general and special education teachers during pre-service preparation has an impact on their attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion. Stites et al (2018) studied the preparation of pre-service teachers to educate S-ID. The findings suggested that it is essential to prepare pre-service teachers because they need to have a favorable view of inclusion to be effective when they begin their teaching career. McWhirter et al (2016) asserted that teacher preparation programs have shifted from teaching traditional knowledge and skills to addressing attitudes toward inclusion, and perceptions of preparedness. In their study, McWhirter et al. (2016) examined the effects of a four-credit-hour pre-service course to college students enrolled in a teacher preparation university in the southwest region of the United States. Both general and special education majors participated in this foundational course. The research findings suggested that the implementation of this course increased positive attitudes toward inclusion and perceptions of preparedness for the students participating in the study.

Cameron (2017) conducted a similar study. The study examined the impact a one-year special education course had on student attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion.

Cameron (2017) found that the implementation and participation in the course had a positive impact on students' attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion; however, it may not have provided them with the knowledge and skillset to teach students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. In another study by Tangen and Beutel (2017), the researchers noted that previous conceptions of teaching students with disabilities fell under the auspice of special education instead of the notion that all teachers have this responsibility. Tangen and Beutel (2017) concluded that all teachers should be versed in pedagogy that promotes learning for all students. Similar to the study by Cameron (2017), Gilham and Tompkins (2016) examined the impact their inclusion course (Inclusion One) had on pre-service teachers. In their study, Gilham and Tompkins (2016) included the following subject matter within the course:

- Troubling history of special education and inclusion
- The divide between diversity and inclusion
- Introducing the concepts of the social model of disability and ableism
- Differentiated instructional practices, UDL, and Inquiry-based learning
- Importance of practical judgment in inclusive education

Based on the findings of Gilham and Tompkins (2016), students participating in this curriculum experienced increased competence and feelings of preparedness to teach S-ID in inclusive settings.

Although pre-service traditional coursework has a positive impact on teacher preparation and perceptions toward inclusion, questions arise as to whether coursework alone is enough to adequately fill this void for teachers. In their study, Stites et al. (2018)

found that high-quality classwork and fieldwork helped pre-service teachers develop sustainable, favorable views about inclusion. Practicum opportunities may provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to gain fieldwork experience. Based on the research conducted, the implementation of coursework with a practicum experience addresses the identified problem. In another study conducted by Da Fonte and Barton (2017), 26 pre-service general and special education educators participated. The findings suggested that teacher preparation programs have an obligation to prepare future educators on inclusion to minimize barriers. Similar to the research conducted by Da Fonte and Barton, Gottfried et al. (2019) noted that teacher preparation programs face increased responsibility to insure general education teachers receive training to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Braga et al. (2018) concluded that inefficient teacher preparation hinders the integration of S-ID in general education settings.

Professional Development for General Education Teachers (In-Service)

The implementation of coursework with a practicum experience addresses the need for pre-service teachers; however, most of the educators teaching are in-service and may have earned their degree prior to receiving in-depth coursework in special education. For these teachers, ongoing, meaningful PD is necessary. Shoulders (2016) suggested conducting a survey of teachers to determine their needs, which will help in developing and implementing meaningful PD. In a study conducted by Gaines and Barnes (2017), the researchers surveyed 90 teachers. Findings suggested that PD is the means for providing knowledge to teachers to increase self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Gaines and Barnes (2017) suggested that effective PD should have an application element that is relevant for teachers to practice what they have learned. Bates and Morgan (2018) support Gaines and Barnes (2017) suggestion that PD have an application element. In their research, Bates and Morgan (2018) noted that there are seven elements of effective PD. Their findings suggest that PD provide teachers with materials they can implement in their classrooms. Professional development should both influence teacher knowledge and practice. Bates and Morgan (2018) support this and noted that PD should positively influence student learning. The study by Bates and Morgan (2018) lay the framework for what effective PD is for educators. Additional findings suggest that incorporating specific strategies to teach specific student populations is a key component of effective PD.

Based on the findings of a study conducted by Woodcock and Hardy (2017), PD may be delivered in multiple approaches such as informal (job-embedded) or formal (workshops, courses) approaches to learning. The findings revealed PD increased the skill set of teachers. Similar to the conclusions of Woodcock and Hardy (2017), Faraclas (2018) asserted that PD provided teachers with skill development to educate S-ID in the general education setting. The research conducted by Bates and Morgan (2018) support contentions by both Faraclas (2018), Woodcock and Hardy (2018) about PD. Bates and Morgan (2018) recommended teachers be afforded opportunities to participate in sustained, ongoing, job-embedded PD to build their skill set. Based on the research, job-embedded PD is a viable option for addressing the needs of in-service teachers who educate students with disabilities in inclusive environments.

Research supports incorporating teacher training in student-centered approaches such as inclusive pedagogy. As noted by Black-Hawkins (2017) inclusive pedagogy moves away from traditional approaches and focuses on learner diversity. Additionally, Black-Hawkins (2017) contended that inclusive pedagogy involves providing something additional or different for learners with particular needs. Inclusive pedagogy involves creating a community culture within the classroom that is supportive for all students. Teachers should be well versed in a myriad of competencies to meet the needs of all students. Florian and Beaton (2018) noted that the inclusive pedagogy approach was established in response to questions about how to provide students with additional support without treating them different from their peers. In a study conducted by Naraiian (2019), findings support the need for teachers to take a different approach to incorporate inclusive practices. Naraiian (2019) suggested general and special educators be introduced to instructional methods for diverse students with diverse needs. Research supports the contention that teachers must have an understanding of who their students are, where they come from, and what supports they need to be successful in their education (Black-Hawkins, 2017; Emerson et al., 2018; Florian and Beaton, 2018). In the study conducted by Florian and Beaton (2018), the findings suggest that the implementation of inclusive pedagogy has a positive impact on students by involving them in the self-assessment process. The systematic implementation of PD is essential to address the problem of supporting the preparedness of general education teachers to educate students with significant cognitive disabilities in inclusive settings.

There is a correlation between PD, teacher perceptions, and successful inclusion programs. In a study conducted by Lowrey et al. (2017), a teacher surveyed reported that PD helped her stay current on best practices and helped to improve her teaching practice. An additional teacher noted that she would advise pre-service and in-service teachers to participate in as many classes and PD opportunities related to special education as possible. Research supports the implementation of pre-service programs (McWhirter et al., 2016; Tangen and Beutel, 2017; Gilham and Tompkins, 2016; Sharma and Nuttal, 2016) to build the capacity of teachers and increase positive attitudes toward inclusion. Similar findings are evident in the research on the implementation of PD of inclusion (see Robinson, 2017). Similar findings in a study conducted by Kwon et al. (2017) support the notion that positive teacher attitudes and perceptions are key factors in successful inclusion programs. It is because of this notion that the focus will be to implement a plan for pre-service teachers and in-service teachers to address the identified problem.

Research supports the development and implementation of PD for general education teachers who educate S-ID in inclusive settings. DeMartino and Specht (2018) suggested the presence of highly qualified teachers in the general education classrooms could significantly affect the performance of S-ID. Wolter (2017) conducted a study and found that during training, teachers learned to see S-ID, as people first, not labels to avoid putting them at-risk for failure in inclusive education. Meadows and Coniglia (2018) found that PD on creating communication between general and special education teachers is needed to educate S-ID in inclusive settings. Teachers should participate in PD to support S-ID in their classrooms. In a study conducted by Walker et al (2018),

researchers surveyed 179 schools to determine the barriers and strategies that promote inclusion for S-ID. Findings suggest that educating S-ID outside general education classrooms represents a barrier for this population. Additional findings suggest that using strategies such as positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) positively affect inclusion.

Differentiated instruction is another strategy teachers can incorporate in inclusive classrooms. Emerson et al. (2018) conducted a study of 19 participants to examine ways to infuse educational theory into practice. Research by Emerson et al. (2018) points to notion that differentiated instruction is a strategy that should be used by teachers to develop structured environments that address the various need and abilities of students in their classroom. Suprayogi et al. (2017) delved deeper into differentiated instruction and concluded that it involves the consideration of differences between students, acknowledging their strengths, and incorporate modifications to instruction to accommodate their limitations. Their findings also revealed that differentiated instruction is the “flexible, equitable, and intelligent way to approach teaching and learning” (p. 292). Savić and Prošić-Santovac (2017) support this notion of providing teachers with opportunities to learn differentiation strategies such as scaffolding instruction for students with disabilities.

Wolter (2017) takes this further by asserting that PD should include interpreting Individual Education Plans (IEP), classroom management, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) practices that support the individual differences in learners. The study by Emerson et al. (2018) provided a comparison between differentiated instruction and

UDL. Emerson et al (2018) noted that UDL differs from differentiated instruction in that UDL addresses learner diversity at the beginning of curriculum, and provides students with skills to be in control of their learning. Universal design for learning moves away from traditional one-size-fits-all modalities of teaching. In another study conducted by Lanterman and Applequist (2018), the researchers examined the perceptions of 77 pre-service teachers. The results of the study suggested that training in UDL had a powerful and positive impact on pre-service teachers. However, not all teachers are familiar with the principles of UDL. In a study of 52 teachers, West et al. (2016) found that instructors lacked confidence in their knowledge and implementation of EDL. Universal Design for Learning, as noted in the study by Lanterman and Applequist (2018), produces positive results. Additionally, teacher training should place emphasis on reading comprehension interventions. Shelton et al. (2019) examined the importance of incorporating structured reading comprehension interventions for S-ID. The research by Shelton et al. (2019) suggested that the need to implement these interventions is important since the number of S-ID served in the general education environment has increased.

Farcaldas (2018) contended that collective participation enhances PD, establishing a support system for learning. Lemons et al (2016) supports Farcaldas (2018) contention and expounded on the need to enhance PD for general and special educators. In another study conducted by Vaughn and Henderson (2016), the findings suggested that training on collaboration helped teachers effectively teach students with Down's syndrome. Professional development for all teachers should be a fluid process. According to Woodcock and Hardy (2017), job-embedded professional learning provided teachers with

effective strategies to support S-ID in inclusive settings. Currently, no universal PD model exists to provide teachers and administrators with the knowledge and skills necessary for inclusion. Professional development should be an ongoing, fluid process with a collaborative component that also contains a cadre of strategies to support student learning and success.

Implications

The focus of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of elementary general education teachers' perceptions of PD. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions about the PD of elementary general education teachers' who teach S-ID in the general education setting to determine if the available PD provided the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the academic needs of S-ID in their classrooms. The knowledge gained from this study has implications on PD for elementary general education teachers who educate students with intellectual disabilities. This project study has implications for social change by providing teachers with training and resources to increase academic achievement for elementary S-ID in the general education setting

The information obtained from this study could be used to develop PD training for elementary general education teachers who educate S-ID in the general education setting. This study could lay the foundation for PD training opportunities for elementary general education teachers districtwide. The findings of this study could influence teacher pedagogy and student outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities.

Summary

The literature review suggested that general education teachers need PD to educate students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting. For inclusion to be successful teachers need training to build a skillset to meet the individual needs of this challenging population of students. Teacher preparation for pre-service and in-service teachers is necessary. The research suggests that teachers who are better prepared have increased attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion, which contributes to student success.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

Introduction

In this section, I will discuss the rationale for selecting a basic qualitative study approach to seek answers to the research questions. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions about the PD of elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting to determine if the available PD is providing the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the academic needs of S-ID in their classrooms. Participants for the study met specified criteria, and data were collected through individual interviews with participants. Steps were taken to establish a positive researcher/participant relationship. Participant responses remained confidential throughout this project study. Participant audio responses are stored in a locked cabinet and will not be shared with anyone. The names of participants were not shared and were coded to protect anonymity. Data were analyzed using a three-tiered approach, and findings were presented using a narrative approach.

Research Design

The nature of the study was a basic qualitative design. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) suggested that qualitative research is used to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon through the experiences of those with direct experience with the phenomenon. Castleberry and Nolen further noted that a qualitative approach allows for a richer, deeper understanding of the meanings people place on actions, events, and relationships. The basic qualitative methodology was used because of the small number

of potential participants, and the alignment toward answering the research questions. The sample for this study was small and purposeful. Because the focus of the research questions was to gather information on the perceptions of general education teachers, the basic qualitative approach was most appropriate. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions about the PD of elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting to determine if the available PD is providing the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the academic needs of S-ID in their classrooms.

A researcher may use multiple means of collecting data in qualitative research. Cypress (2018) noted that interviews and observations are the two most used methods of collecting data in qualitative research. Kalman (2019) noted that qualitative methodology is used to identify concepts or elicit views or perceptions of participants. Kalman further noted that qualitative research is used to develop an understanding of the meaning and experience of people. For this study, qualitative research was used to elicit perceptions from elementary general education teachers who educate S-ID in the general education setting. Basic qualitative methodology may be used when other qualitative methodologies are not suitable to address the research questions.

There were other research designs considered for this project study. Quantitative research was considered; however, it was determined this method was not appropriate based on the small number of participants. A mixed methods research design was also considered for this project study. Mixed methods research design is the “combination and integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study” (Molina-Azorin,

2016, p. 37). The mixed methods approach was not appropriate given the small number of participants available to collect the quantitative data. A grounded theory approach was not appropriate given that data was not analyzed throughout the interview process to create an original theory around the phenomenon. A phenomenology approach was not appropriate because I did not seek to examine lived experiences of participants over an extended period of time. Therefore, basic qualitative methodology was best to address the research questions for this project study.

Participants

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The target population came from elementary general education teachers who currently teach or have taught S-ID in the general education setting. Based on the number of available general education teachers who educate S-ID in the identified district, purposeful sampling was used to draw from teachers in the district and surrounding districts. Purposeful sampling was used based on the targeted criteria that teachers had to work in elementary schools where S-ID were included in the general education setting. Approximately 49 elementary S-ID are included in the general education setting over 80% of the time, and only five elementary S-ID are included in the general education setting over 50% of the time, making the overall population of elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting limited. This population of teachers would be most knowledgeable about educating S-ID in the general education setting.

Number of Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to identify six elementary school general education teachers, who currently teach, or have taught over the past 3 years, S-ID in the general education setting. According to Vasileiou (2018), sample size in qualitative studies has been widely debated. Vasileiou (2018) maintained that sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small, and that there is no straightforward answer to the number needed to achieve results. Liu (2016) noted that researchers use purposeful sampling in qualitative research because they seek to specify the social reality of its findings. Research by Benoot et al. (2016) supported the notions of Liu and further noted that purposeful sampling examines the complexity of different conceptualizations. Creswell (2015) noted that in qualitative research, it is typical for researchers to study a few individuals or cases.

Gaining Access to Participants

The process for gaining access to participants was a multistep approach. The first step was to gain approval of my proposal from my committee and through the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Creswell propounded that obtaining approval from the IRB is essential to protect the research and participants. Once approval from both of these entities has been obtained, the application to conduct the study in the targeted school district was completed. After approval was obtained by the targeted school district, a request was made to the district to identify elementary general education teachers who currently teach S-ID in their classrooms. Participants were invited to participate in the study via email, and participants were provided with consent and

confidentiality agreements. Additional recruitment strategies were incorporated due to low participant turnout. Participants were recruited via social media and were offered an incentive of a \$25 gift card. Individual interviews were scheduled, based on a mutually agreed upon time, with teachers who agreed to participate in the study.

Establishing Researcher/Participant Working Relationship

Establishing a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants was essential to this project study. I established a positive rapport with participants and maintained the confidentiality of the information provided to me. The participants in this study included elementary general education teachers who currently teach, or have taught over the past 3 years, students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting. Participants received a copy of the confidentiality agreement and informed consent forms. The nature and purpose of the project study was disclosed to participants. Throughout the process, I remained unbiased and established a culture that allowed participants to be comfortable and candid in their responses. I aimed to make participants feel at ease and trust the interview process. As a senior administrator for the Office of School Choice Services for the target school district, I do not directly supervise any of the participants who were involved in the study. This helped to establish a trusting relationship between researcher and participant.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of the research process for this project study. Participants were given detailed information about the project study, such as the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, and their role in the study. Participants were given

the opportunity to withdraw from the study if that was their choice. Prior to conducting the research, an application was submitted to seek approval from the Walden University IRB to conduct the study. Once approval was obtained, participants were identified, and permission was obtained via a written consent form. Participants received a copy of the consent form. Creswell (2015) noted that this process requires a sufficient level of trust between research and participant. Transparency was important to ensure all information for this study was fully disclosed. Minimal risks were identified for this study.

Participants were informed of the minimal risks associated with this study. Participants did not endure any physical harm during this study. All efforts were made to minimize any emotional distress to participants in this study. The names of the elementary general education teachers participating in this study were coded using a letter when analyzing the data. Data are stored in a confidential locked area and will be destroyed and disposed of after a period of 5 years as required under Walden University policies.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data can be collected and analyzed within qualitative studies. Because the methodology used for this project study was basic qualitative design, incorporating interviews was an appropriate means of collecting data. Other sources of collecting data were considered such as observations and written surveys. After reviewing these options, interviews were the most appropriate means of collecting data for this project study. After receiving approval from the Walden University IRB, identifying and interviewing participants began in January 2020. The interviews were

semi-structured, with an opportunity for me to ask probing questions for clarification and elicit in-depth responses to the questions.

Interviews

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with participants. Interviews were appropriate for conducting basic qualitative research. Creswell (2015) noted that one-on-one interviews are ideal for participants who are willing to share their ideas comfortably. Cypress (2018) described interviews as conversations with a purpose. Researchers may use structured or semi-structured interviews in qualitative studies. Since interviews are used to elicit information useful to a study (Cypress, 2018), the questions used for this study aligned directly with the research questions. Pre-determined questions were identified (Appendix C) to ask each participant consistent questions. If needed, probing questions were asked for clarification purposes or to elicit in-depth responses to the interview questions. The interview questions were open-ended, which allowed participants to speak freely about their views. Participants were asked questions about their demographics, education experience, and teaching experience. The interview was used to collect data on the perceptions of elementary general education teachers who educate S-ID in the general education environment on the current PD offered within the special education department in the school district; perceptions of the purpose of PD in relation to teaching S-ID in the general education environment; and the types of PD elementary general education teachers feel are needed to increase academic achievement of students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting.

The interviews were scheduled during a mutually agreed upon time between researcher and participant. Permission was obtained from participants to digitally record the audio of the interview. The audio recording was used to transcribe the participants' responses for coding and analysis purposes. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Participants were compensated for participating in the project study with a \$25 gift card. Participants had the right to discontinue the interview or decline to answer any questions during the interview. During the interview, I took detailed notes for the purposes of coding and data analysis. Participants had an opportunity to view the transcripts and findings after the study concluded.

Role of the Researcher

I am currently employed in the target school district as a senior administrator for the Office of School Choice Services; however, I do not directly supervise any of the participants who will be participating in the project study. I have worked for the target school district for 13 years as an educator and administrator. Eleven of my 13 years have been working in special education for the target school district as an educator, school-based administrator, or district-based administrator. As a researcher, I remained unbiased while conducting the research while conducting this project study. All efforts were made to refrain from bias as a result of past experiences or knowledge of the school district. I did not have a working relationship with the teachers who participated in this project study. I worked diligently to establish a positive rapport with the participants in the study.

Data Analysis

Conducting qualitative research allows for multiple means of analyzing the data. One of the challenges of qualitative research noted by Castleberry and Nolen (2018) is analyzing data that is open-ended as opposed to numerical data. Castleberry and Nolen further explained that qualitative research allows a researcher to build a complex, holistic picture in a natural setting. Raskind et al. (2019) noted that data analysis is one of the most powerful stages of qualitative research. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) noted that there is no single way to analyze qualitative data. Data were analyzed using a three-tier approach: transcription, thematic analysis, and interpretation.

Permission from participants was obtained to record the audio of the interviews. After the interviews, they were transcribed into text. The transcriptions are stored in a locked area to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the data. Transcriptions were only viewed and analyzed by me. After interviews were completed and transcribed, thematic analysis was used to analyze data from the interviews. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), researchers seek to describe the meanings of central themes of the participants through interviews. Thematic analysis is a process used to conduct an analysis of qualitative data. Mackieson et al. (2019) reported that thematic analysis provides structure and integrates reflexivity in qualitative research.

Similar to the notion by Mackieson et al. (2019), Castleberry and Nolen (2018) contended that thematic analysis is a descriptive method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns/themes within data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) and Mackieson et al. (2019) both posited that thematic analysis identifies and interprets patterns of meaning in

the data. The small sample size allowed me to deeply analyze the data collected. The process included reading the transcripts multiple times to identify themes in the data. While reading through the transcripts, similar themes were coded by highlighting, circling, or underling, and transferred into a chart for further analysis. The coding of qualitative data involves segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes (Creswell, 2015). Qualitative analysis software was not used to aid in this process. Once themes were identified, data was interpreted and presented in a narrative format. The narrative approach was used to answer the three research questions identified for this study.

Accuracy and Credibility

Once the data was transcribed, themes were identified, and interpreted; participants were sent an individual transcript of their interview. Creswell denoted this process is known as member checking and is used in qualitative studies to support the accuracy of the data. Participants were able to review the themes and interpretations of their interview. This allowed participants to determine the accuracy and credibility of their interview. Participants were encouraged to clarify any misrepresentations of the data analysis of their interview. Creswell (2015) concluded that validating the accuracy and credibility of the findings is of utmost importance. A colleague, within the target school district, who holds an educational doctorate degree, also conducted a peer review. The peer reviewer examined my data, findings, and interpretation of the data. Raskind et al. (2019) noted that using a peer reviewer increases the validity and credibility of qualitative data analysis.

Discrepant Cases

Data were carefully collected, transcribed, coded, and interpreted. Raskind et al. (2019) further noted that discrepancies in data might exist in qualitative research. Throughout the process of data analysis, if any discrepancies existed, they were identified and reported in the findings.

Limitations

One limitation of this project study was the sampling of participants. Participants were selected based on the criteria that they are currently teaching, or have taught over the past three years, at the elementary level and are educating students with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms. Due to the small number of participants and the limited number of teachers in the target school district and surrounding districts who met the criteria, the findings may not be transferrable to larger populations.

Interpretation of Findings

During the interview process, participants shared responses to 13 questions aligned to the three research questions. Follow up questions were asked to participants to clarify or expound on responses. The interview was divided into three sections with each section focusing on one of the research questions. Participants were given an option to participate in the interview via telephone, or via a virtual platform. Interviews were recorded for transcription purposes. Transcriptions were sent to each participant to review for accuracy. All participants indicated they reviewed the transcripts and found no inaccuracies. The interviews were approximately 30 minutes in length. I used transitions to keep the pace and the flow of the interview at a reasonable rate. Five of the six

interviews were conducted over one session. One interview was conducted over two sessions due to connectivity issues. Using a basic qualitative design, an analysis of the data produced several themes that I used to answer the research questions of the study.

Demographic Data

Demographic data was collected from participants to provide an understanding of their background. All six teachers were general education elementary teachers who currently teach, or have taught over the past three years, S-ID in the general education setting. All six participants were female with an average teaching experience of six years. Total teaching experience ranged between one and twenty-eight years. Two of the participants had five or less years teaching experience. Three of the participants had eight to ten years of total teaching experience, and one teacher had more than twenty years of total teaching experience. Total experience teaching S-ID ranged between one and twenty-four years, with an average of eight years between all participants. Three of the six participants had less than five years of experience teaching S-ID in the general education setting, two participants had eight and ten years of experience, and one participant had twenty-four years of experience teaching S-ID in the general education setting. Table 1 displays the teaching experience of participants. The table shows a breakdown of the total number of years teaching and the number of years teaching S-ID in the general education setting.

Table 1*Participant Teaching Experience*

Participant	Number of Years Teaching	Number of Years Teaching S-ID
Participant A	10	10
Participant B	1	1
Participant C	5	4
Participant D	28	24
Participant E	9	3
Participant F	8	8

Five of the six participants held multiple teaching certifications and endorsements. Four of the participants held a certification in Special Education. Three of the six participants held a certification in Elementary Education. Two of the participants held a certification in Early Childhood Education. Three of the participants held a certification or endorsements in English as a Second Language (ESOL). Two of the participants held a certification or endorsement in Reading. Three of the participants reported having preservice training on educating S-ID.

Results for Research Question 1

The open-ended Interview Questions 1, 2, and 3 addressed the research question: *What are elementary teachers' (who teach S-ID in the general education environment) perceptions of the current PD offered within the special education department?*

According to participants, there is a lack of PD for teachers and the current PD model in their district is not sufficient in preparing general education teachers to educate S-ID in the general education environment. The themes that materialized from the analysis of six participants were *training deficits*, *cooperative learning*, and *current model not sufficient*.

Training deficits theme included the lack of available training, and the lack of disability-specific PD for teachers. Three of the participants indicated they have not received any training from their district to support them in educating S-ID in the general education setting. Three participants noted they have attended general PD, but only Participant D noted attending PD specific to S-ID. Participant D indicated she “attended the Access Points workshop courses because I have kids on Access Points.” Access Points are alternative standards for S-ID. Participants noted training deficits in the current PD model in their district. Participant A indicated she “Participant E noted that there is a lack of hands-on training opportunities for teachers to learn and use appropriate strategies in their classrooms. Participant C indicated most of the trainings offered provided general information and not specific to teaching S-ID.

Cooperative learning included strategies identified by participants that have helped prepare them to teach S-ID in the general education setting. Participants were asked to share PD they have attended that has prepared them to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Two participants (Participant D and Participant E) indicated they attended training on Kagan strategies that focused on collaborative learning. Both participants noted that these strategies have proven useful to teaching S-ID in their classrooms. Participant D further asserted that the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and strategies has been helpful in her classroom. Participant E further noted that the strategies she learned at a Kagan conference have been helpful for all students in her classroom. Participant C reported attending PD on family engagement which has helped her to connect with families with S-ID.

Participants were asked if they believed the current PD model in their district prepares them to meet the needs of S-ID in their classroom. One theme that emerged from participant responses was that the *current model is not sufficient*. Participant A indicated that she would have to search for a training pertaining to S-ID because she is not aware of any that exists. In response to the question, Participant B stated: “So personally, I think there could be a little more training to learn how to meet the needs of the students with disabilities in the classroom.” According to Participant C, she had to conduct her own research and talk to other teachers to learn how to educate S-ID in her classroom. Participant C noted the need for additional in-person, hands-on training opportunities for teachers that provide additional feedback. Participant D noted that she believes the current model does prepare teachers to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Of the six participants, Participant D had the most experience teaching S-ID in the general education environment. Participant D further noted that one area that is lacking is school visits and feedback from the district office and would like to see more of that for teachers. Participant E indicated that she felt as though the district did provide training opportunities for teachers, but they are often hard to find. Participant E also indicated the need for more hands-on training because much of the training offered is dry. Participant F indicated the district training model focuses more on ESOL students rather than SWD. Overall, according to participants’ responses, the current PD model in their district is not sufficient in preparing teachers to educate S-ID in the general education environment.

Results for Research Question 2

The open-ended Interview Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 addressed the research question: *What are elementary general education teachers' perceptions of the purpose of PD in relation to teaching students with intellectual disabilities in the general education environment?* According to participants, the purpose of PD is to provide teachers with strategies and resources to meet the needs of students in their classroom. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the six participants were *additional time for students, additional time to plan, behavior challenges, PD provides necessary strategies.*

Additional time for students, additional time for planning and behavior challenges themes included participant accounts of impact and challenges of teaching S-ID in the general education setting. Participants were asked to describe the impact of having S-ID in their classrooms. Participants noted that having S-ID in their classroom would require them to spend additional time with individual students and would require them to spend additional time planning to instruct S-ID. Participant A noted that “it would impact the way I planned, the way I prepared for lessons.” Participant A elaborated further by indicating that she would need to plan for incorporating more tactile, hands-on lessons for S-ID.

Participant C asserted that S-ID impact a classroom in multiple ways. Participant C elaborated by indicating that S-ID impact the way she plans and instructs her students. Participant C stated: “I have to make sure that all of my kids are learning and growing and meeting their own personal gains. I have to make sure that I’m doing my part so that I can meet their needs.” Participant C also indicated that she has established an accepting

classroom culture for all students. As noted by Participant D, “Yeah, there’s a lot going on like for my Access Points kids, you know they’re planning is different because I have to make sure that they’re on their program for a certain amount of minutes, today, but also that they are engaged in the classroom.” Participants felt that having S-ID may pose challenges to planning, delivery of instruction, and assessment.

Participants were asked about additional challenges they face when trying to support S-ID in their classroom. Participant A noted that she does not feel she gives S-ID adequate time due to the number of total students in her classroom. Participant D also noted challenges with providing one-to-one time for S-ID in her classroom. Responses from Participant E are also aligned to Participant A and Participant D. Participant E stated she spends a lot of time drilling and reviewing information for S-ID in her classroom. Participant F also indicated that pacing is a significant challenge educating S-ID because there is little to no time to review and reteach material. Participant D further noted that she has students that display behaviors which make it challenging for her to teach the other students in her classroom. Other participants described acting out behaviors from S-ID that make it difficult to teach all students. Participant B described situation where a S-ID made excessive noise that frustrated other students in her class and impacted the classroom culture. Participant B also stated “probably my other biggest challenge right now is teaching hybrid lessons” in person and online. Participant C noted lack of additional resources and support as a challenge to educating S-ID in her classroom. Participant C indicated she felt lost because she lacked experience and was not sure what to do or how to serve S-ID. Other participants noted challenges assessing

S-ID in the general education setting due to the alternative standards taught to the students.

Professional development provides necessary strategies included teacher perceptions that teachers need additional strategies to teach S-ID in the general education setting. Participants were asked what role PD plays in preparing elementary general education teachers to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Participant responses suggested that PD plays a crucial role in preparing teachers to educate S-ID. All participants indicated that PD provides teachers with knowledge and strategies to teach S-ID in the general education setting. Participant A opined that teacher interactions during PD provide great insight about strategies that work and do not work for S-ID. Participant B stated that “the biggest role it plays is it really impacts and influences your pedagogy.” Participant B expounded on this principle and indicated that the more you become familiar with strategies to educate S-ID and immerse yourself in it, the more it becomes ingrained in your beliefs and becomes a part of a teacher’s pedagogy.

Participant C responded by adding that “with teaching, it’s a job that you always have to have PDs and trainings on just to stay abreast of the new topics and strategies.” Participant C described the role of PD as a crucial and necessary part of teaching. Participant D provided similar responses and further noted that PD provides evidence-based practices that can be helpful for teachers with educate S-ID. Participant E noted that PD provides teachers with every day strategies to implement in their classrooms and to provide helpful resources. Participant F asserted that more disability specific PD is needed to provide teachers with strategies to meet the needs of S-ID.

Results for Research Question 3

The open-ended Interview Questions 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 addressed the research question: *What types of PD do elementary general education teachers feel are needed to increase academic achievement of students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting?* According to participants, additional PD is needed for teachers. Additionally, teachers need training in a cadre of hands-on strategies to increase academic achievement of S-ID in the general education setting. The themes that emerged from the analysis of participant responses were *kinesthetic learning*, *successful inclusion requires PD*, and *increase PD*.

Kinesthetic learning included visual, hands-on, and tactile strategies. Participants were asked how the PD they attended affected the strategies they use in inclusive settings. Participant A indicated PD has taught her strategies that she did not know were available to teach S-ID. Participant B noted that the PD she has attended has helped her assess S-ID. Participant B elaborated that she has used the strategies learned during PD to create individualized assessments based on student need and ability level. Participant D noted the importance of attending PD yearly to learn different strategies.

Participants were asked what strategies they have used with S-ID that have been successful in improving academic achievement. All participants indicated using kinesthetic learning strategies have been successful for S-ID. Multiple participants indicated using strategies like incorporating visuals and manipulatives help S-ID increase academic achievement. Participant A noted “I always like using visual cues or some kind of physical movement that might go with like a vocab word, or definitions, so it helps

with retention.” Other strategies Participant A indicated as being successful were adapting the learning space to be more successful and conducive for S-ID, and using manipulatives in math. Participant B reported using visuals in her classroom to educate S-ID. Participant B stated, “I would say I have found that using visuals is extremely beneficial for students with disabilities.”

Participant C asserted that using behavior charts and incentives have been successful in motivating students to complete their work and remain engaged in the lesson. According to Participant C, “having an incentive that helps with them getting their work done and having that extra motivation ticket to complete activities and lessons has been helpful.” Participant D noted that S-ID have experienced academic success while collaborating with other students at their tables. Participant D explained a strategy she learned in a PD on Kagan strategies. Students are assigned a color and are directed to talk with their partner about a specific topic. Participant D indicated that student collaboration has worked well for her students.

Participants were asked to describe what successful inclusion looks like to them. All participants noted that successful inclusion involved establishing a positive classroom community. Participant A noted that successful inclusion is when “someone that comes into my classroom and might not know that there are different exceptionalities.” Participant B explained “one big thing for me, especially in the beginning of the year, was classroom community. I wanted learners in the room with and without disabilities to not even be thinking about each other’s skills.” Participant C highlighted successful inclusion “looks like to me a space where everyone is learning and everyone is meeting

their own personal goals.” Participant C further noted that “a successful inclusion classroom is just where teachers have the materials to support other students and their resources and also kids are learning at their own pace.” Participant D indicated that successful inclusion requires buy-in from teachers. Participant D opined that teachers “have to be able to be positive and you have to be able to take suggestions” and take positive criticism. “I think that successful inclusion includes when the kids are all coming together and they are able to work with everyone in the classroom.” Participant E explained that successful inclusion involves the notion that students “feel comfortable and work together as a family.” Participant F suggested that successful inclusion involves smaller classrooms comprised of ability grouping of S-ID. Participants viewed successful inclusion as a classroom community where students are not singled out based on their abilities or disabilities.

Successful inclusion requires professional development included the important role PD plays in inclusive classrooms. When asked what role PD plays in successful inclusion, participants suggested that PD plays a critical role in successful inclusion. For example, Participant B stated “I think PD is, it’s really important in inclusion. It will give you, it gives you strategies to use, especially when you’re currently dealing with an active problem in the classroom.” Participant C explained that PD plays a role in successful inclusion by “providing strategies for teachers, resources, ideas, collaboration, and support.” Participant D highlighted “there needs to be more of it. I don’t think, we don’t have enough.” Participant D elaborated and noted that teachers often learn on the fly. She further suggested providing additional PD for paraprofessionals in inclusive classrooms.

Increase professional development included the need for districts to provide teachers with PD opportunities to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Participants shared their suggestions for improving PD in their district to prepare teachers to educate S-ID in the general education environment. All six participants noted suggestions for improving the PD model in their district. Participants believed the current model is not meeting their needs and more is needed to support teachers. For example, Participant A suggested incorporating PD with a focus on accommodations and strategies aligned with specific disabilities. Participant A further elaborated on this idea and noted that she would like to see additional training opportunities that provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate on what strategies work well and what strategies do not work well for students with disabilities. Participant B opined a similar response to the response given by Participant A. According to Participant B, “I think it would be really helpful if the teacher has an opportunity to talk about experiences they’re having in a setting like that.” Participant B indicated that she does not have those collaborative opportunities in her district. The lack of collaboration time was noted by multiple participants.

Participants noted the lack of PD opportunities available for teachers. According to Participant C, “We need it. I really did not have PD on specifically with students with intellectual disabilities. But one is getting it to teachers and then two, making it hands-one and making it useful.” Other participants opined that offering PD that is scaffolded for beginning teachers and veteran teachers would be beneficial. Participant D suggested affording teachers with training opportunities to collaborate with each other. “I think we don’t get time to collaborate enough. I think we’re too busy sitting in all kinds of

meetings.” Participant D elaborated further and noted that the training opportunities she has participated in has not valuable to her time. Participant D recommended a multiple day training to provide teachers with strategies that work. Similar to responses from other participants, Participant E asserted, “My number one goal is that there would just be more available. Participant E elaborated that more is needed for teachers to learn strategies that they can specifically take back to their classrooms. Participant E also noted that PD should include time for teachers to collaborate with each other. She noted that this helps to learn what works well for all students, including S-ID. Participant F also made similar suggestions as other participants. Participant F suggested that PD should include time for teachers to collaborate. Additionally, the training should be multiple days and include hands-on activities. Professional development should also include a focus on training teachers about patience and tolerance for S-ID. Participants also noted that it is difficult for them to take time off from teaching to attend PD.

Conclusions

The results of this qualitative study revealed that additional PD is needed to prepare elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting. Participants asserted that the current PD model in their district is not sufficient in providing resources and strategies to meet the needs of S-ID. Teachers expressed concerns about not feeling prepared to educate S-ID in the general education classroom. Data from this study aligned with the local problem, research questions, and conceptual framework.

The local problem prompting this study is the low achievement levels of elementary students with intellectual disabilities (S-ID) in a large urban school district in the southeastern region of the United States where there is a lack of high-quality teacher PD pertaining to the specialized needs of these students. Participants noted that the PD offered is too general and not specific to teaching S-ID. Participants indicated strategies they have implemented in their classrooms that have been successful in increasing student achievement of S-ID. Similarly, participants noted some of the same strategies should be incorporated in PD for teachers who educate S-ID. As indicated by participants, incorporating kinesthetic learning practices, such as visuals and hands-on learning activities, for S-ID is needed.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions about the PD of elementary general education teachers' who teach S-ID in the general education setting to determine if the available PD is providing the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the academic needs of S-ID in their classrooms. Teachers perceived the available PD is not preparing them to educate S-ID in their classrooms. Participants indicated that they are faced with challenges teaching general education and S-ID in the same classroom. Teachers noted academic and behavioral challenges with this student population. Data collected and analyzed from one-to-one interviews support the need for more PD for elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting.

Data collected from interviews with teachers provided answers to the three research questions. The following research questions guided the interviews for this study:

RQ1. What are elementary general education teachers' (who teach S-ID in the general education environment) perceptions of the current PD offered within the special education department?

RQ2. What are elementary general education teachers' perceptions of the purpose of PD in relation to teaching students with intellectual disabilities in the general education environment?

RQ3. What types of PD do elementary general education teachers feel are needed to increase the academic achievement of students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting?

For RQ1, participants posited that the current PD model offered in their district is not preparing them to teach S-ID. Some participants noted there is little to no PD offered, while other participants indicated the PD is too general. For RQ2, participants asserted that PD plays a crucial role in preparing teachers to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Participants also indicated that PD plays an important role in successful inclusion classrooms. Throughout the interviews with participants, the lack of resources support repeatedly emerged. For RQ3, participants expounded on the types of PD are needed to increase the academic achievement of S-ID in the general education setting. Participants suggested developing PD that provides hands-on learning opportunities for teachers. Additionally, participants proposed incorporating time for teachers to collaborate with each other to discuss strategies that work well academically and behaviorally for S-ID.

The conceptual framework of this study was Knowles Theory of Andragogy. Knowles (1984) asserted the following four principles of andragogy:

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

Data collected from the interviews with participants was aligned with the four principles outlined by Knowles. Knowles (1984) noted that adults to play a part in the planning process of their learning. In reference to the first principle, participants were asked to provide recommendations to improve the PD model in their district. Participants noted that PD specific to teaching S-ID is lacking in their districts. Participants shared suggestions for improving the model by providing strategies and resources they have found to be effective. Participants also indicated that feedback is an important part of the process of learning. Participants recommended follow up feedback sessions so they feel confident in implementing strategies they learn in the PD.

Knowles' (1984) asserted that adult experiences provide the basis for learning activities. In reference to the second principle, participants noted that their lack of experience in teaching S-ID made it challenging to plan and deliver instruction to students. One participant noted that attending PD allows her to build her toolbox of strategies to implement in her classroom. Another participant suggested developing PD that is scaffolded for new and veteran teachers. Although the teacher has taught S-ID for 24 years, the participant indicated she would benefit from attending PD for beginning

teachers. Participants felt as though their lack of experience with teaching S-ID has contributed to challenges they face in their classroom.

Adult learners are motivated to attend PD based on immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life (Knowles, 1984). All six participants in this study teach, or have taught over the past three years, S-ID in the general education setting. Given their experience, the six participants have a vested interest in attending PD that is specific to this disability category. Participants expressed elation and concern teaching S-ID in the general education setting. All participants expressed the importance of providing S-ID with supports to meet their needs and goals. Participants also noted that learning strategies in PD that they could immediately implement in their classrooms was more beneficial to them. Teachers expressed the need to learn strategies that will immediately impact their pedagogy.

Knowles (1984) posited adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented. Participants noted there is a problem with the current PD model in their district. Participants expressed concerns about meeting the needs of S-ID in the general education setting. The data collected and analyzed during interviews with participants supports Knowles' fourth principle. Participants provided suggestions for improving the PD in their district to prepare teachers to increase student achievement for S-ID in their classrooms. Participants provided strategies they have found to be successful in meeting the needs of S-ID and noted the problem is the lack of available PD for teachers to learn the strategies. Overall, the results of the study were aligned with the principles of Knowles theory of andragogy.

The findings from this study may affect school and district administrators, general and special education teachers, and may contribute to social change by providing teachers with PD to increase academic achievement of S-ID in the general education setting. According to Gaines et al. (2017) if teachers are not prepared or feel prepared, they can become stressed trying to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. The participants in this study feel unprepared to meet the needs of S-ID in their classrooms. As a result of this study, I propose a three-day PD workshop for teachers. The PD workshop will provide an overview of S-ID. The training will offer teachers specific strategies that can be implemented in their classrooms. The PD will be relevant and engaging to participants. It will provide hands-on activities for teachers throughout the three days. The training will provide teachers with time to collaborate with each other to share experiences and strategies they find to be successful for S-ID. The training will be relevant and focused on the needs of participants. The goal is to provide teachers with strategies that can be utilized in their classrooms to improve academic achievement of S-ID.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions about the PD of elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting to determine if the available PD provides the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the academic needs of S-ID in their classrooms. According to the findings of the study, teachers perceived the current PD model in their district is not providing them with the resources needed to educate S-ID in the general education setting. Participants suggested incorporating more PD to provide resources and strategies to drive their instruction. After listening to participants during the virtual face-to-face interviews, I designed a 3-day PD to address the deficits identified by participants. The title of the PD is *Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the General Education Setting*. The project is presented in Appendix A.

Rationale

Based on the findings of the study, the project genre I chose was PD. Professional development was the most applicable genre for the current study and the findings. The results of this study revealed that PD is needed to prepare elementary general education teachers to meet the needs of S-ID. Participants indicated an overwhelming need for PD to provide strategies to educate S-ID in the general education setting. The findings from this study align with Knowles' (1975) theory of andragogy. The findings also indicated that teachers were eager to learn strategies to support the needs of S-ID in their classrooms. The PD project focuses on providing an overview of S-ID, planning

instruction for S-ID, and implementing appropriate strategies for S-ID in the general education setting. It is expected that general and special education teachers would benefit from face-to-face PD that is designed to increase their knowledge and pedagogy in delivering instruction for S-ID. This PD training will support the goals of this project, which are to create professional learning opportunities for elementary general education teachers to support S-ID in the general education setting.

Review of Literature

The data attained from the study indicated the need to develop PD. Participants felt additional PD was necessary to meet the needs of S-ID in the general education setting. Because of the findings, I chose PD as the project genre. A 3-day PD workshop might allow teachers to improve their knowledge about teaching S-ID and might provide teachers with strategies to meet the diverse educational needs of these students in the general education setting. The review of literature centered on the following themes: (a) significance of PD, (b) face-to-face PD, (c) PD and student achievement, (d) UDL, and (e) standards-based instruction.

I searched Google Scholar and Walden Library databases EBSCOHost, ProQuest, and Sage for literature. The key terms used in the literature review included: *professional development, teacher training, professional development and student achievement, significance of professional development, effective professional development, face-to-face training, face-to-face professional development, face-to-face versus online training, standards-based instruction, alternative assessment, alternative achievement standards, Universal Design for Learning, and UDL*. Each of the key terms searched produced

multiple peer-reviewed sources. The review and use of numerous sources attained saturation of the literature relating to PD.

Significance of Professional Development

Professional development (PD) is an integral part of the education environment. According to Tran et al. (2020), PD enhances student achievement and is a vital factor for the improvement of teaching quality. Erickson et al (2017) contended that high-quality, evidence-based PD is essential for teachers to obtain the knowledge, strategies, and skills necessary to impact student learning. Increasing the knowledge, skills, and values of teachers, as described by Balta and Eryilmaz (2019), allows a balance between school needs and individual needs that affect school improvement. Similar to Balta and Eryilmaz, Welp et al. (2018) described how PD not only increases knowledge and skills, but also encourages reflective thinking; they also found that attending PD was associated with better perceived teamwork and performance. Training practices with the highest effect sizes include real-life application, use of role-play, reflection on performance improvement, and assessment of strengths and weaknesses. (Erickson et al., 2017). De Simone's (2020) assertion that effective PD contains peer collaboration that includes opportunities to share personal experiences and professional dialogue aligns with the recommendations from participants in this study.

Bredmar (2020) noted that over the past decade, there has been increasing interest in teachers' PD. PD allows teachers to reflect on their learning which can provide significant gains in professional knowledge (Bredmar, 2020). Gutierrez and Kim (2017) contended that PD enables teachers to become familiar with new competencies that align

with new learning standards. Teachers recognized the advantages of PD in the improvement of their expertise. According to Gutierrez and Kim, PD influences teacher perceptions. Avidov-Ungar (2017) conducted a study of 196 teachers and found that teachers' involvement in PD related to their perception of the relevance of the PD and willingness to internalize lessons from the PD.

Research on the significance of PD is not limited to general education students. With the growing number of students with disabilities served in the general education environment, teachers need additional support and training to meet the needs of diverse populations (Livers et al., 2019). Faraclas (2018) also noted that PD is a means of providing teachers with skill development to meet the various needs of students with disabilities. Professional development provides general and special education teachers with skills improve outcomes for students with disabilities (Brownell et al., 2020) in the general education setting.

Face-to-Face Professional Development

Recent research has focused on face-to-face PD versus online PD. DuPaul et al. (2018) noted that teachers that attended face-to-face training reported significantly higher acceptability ratings than participants who attended online training. Smith and Williams (2020) also conducted a similar study on face-to-face PD sessions for middle school language arts teachers. Participants felt more confident after attending the face-to-face PD sessions and felt more confident to educate diverse learners. Gayed et al. (2019) also compared face-to-face and online training for managers of mental health workers and found no significant difference in the manager confidence levels between the face-to-face

and online training model. However, participants exhibited lower retention than participants who attended the online training versus the face-to-face training.

Effective PD includes a myriad of components: (a) the use of learning communities, (b) leadership, (c) resources, (d) data, (e) learning designs, (f) implementation, and (g) outcomes (Powell et al., 2019). Increased accountability outlined in state and federal statutes and guidelines has placed importance on teacher quality and PD (Powell et al., 2019). Teachers face increased pressures from high-stakes testing, accountability, and the standards movement (Powell et al., 2019) to increase student achievement in increasingly diverse classrooms. The research on face-to-face PD and online PD have produced similar results. The research examined for this review supported face-to-face training models. For this reason, the model chosen for this project study was a face-to-face PD approach.

Professional Development and Student Achievement

Teacher PD contributes to student learning and achievement (Nguyen and Ng, 2020; Yurtseven and Altun, 2017). Nguyen and Ng (2020) noted that formal and job-embedded PD contribute to teachers' instructional change. Increased PD is correlated with improved student achievement outcomes (Balta and Eryilmaz, 2019). Prast and Van de Weijer-Bergsma (2018) also noted that participants who participated in PD experienced increased student achievement. Polly et al. (2017) conducted a study examining the effects of a 72-hour PD attended by teachers. The researchers reviewed analyzed data from 300 teachers and 5,300 students and found that teachers who used the

strategies in the PD experienced higher levels of student achievement than teachers who did not implement the math strategies.

Kutaka et al. (2017) conducted a similar study on an elementary math PD. The purpose of their study was to contribute to their understanding of how intensive content-focused PD affected teacher and student outcomes. Students experienced gains after participating in the PD. According to Didion et al. (2020), teacher PD has a moderate and significant effect on reading achievement for students in kindergarten through 8th grade. PD is effective if it is relevant or coherent and should operate in conjunction with student and teacher characteristics (Didion et al., 2020). Additionally, Didion et al. described the impact of teacher PD varied depending on other factors such as teachers' beliefs, grade level cohort relationships, and school climate. Teacher and teacher quality are powerful predictors of student success (Gupta and Lee, 2020). According to Gupta and Lee (2020), student achievement is influenced by the by the capacity of the classroom teacher. Gupta and Lee investigated the effectiveness of a PD model on building teacher capacity and increasing student learning. The model improved student achievement on standardized assessments (Gupta and Lee, 2020) while providing teachers with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of students. Andersson and Palm (2017) also examined the impact of PD on formative assessment had on student achievement. The study by Andersson and Palm contributed to empirical evidence that PD impacts student achievement; they found that students with teachers who attended the PD outperformed students with teachers who did not attend the PD.

Although there is overwhelming evidence that attending PD positive impacts student achievement, some researchers have found no direct effect of PD on student achievement. According to Nichol et al. (2018), students whose teachers attended PD did not achieve higher than students whose teacher did not attend the PD. Jacob et al. (2017) had similar results in their study. Jacob et al. noted limited evidence of positive impacts on teachers' math knowledge, and no effect on student outcomes. Basma and Savage (2018) asserted that longer PD had a smaller effect size on student achievement than shorter PD.

Research on PD and academic outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities is limited. Courtade et al. (2017) conducted a study examining the implementation of a 3-year PD program named SPLASH. Teachers participating in the study reported students with intellectual disabilities experienced growth because of implementing the program. Lemons et al. (2018) suggested teachers implement evidence-based strategies that enhance literacy for students with intellectual disabilities. According to Lemons et al., integrating components of traditional reading instruction into programs for S-ID led to increases in reading skills.

Universal Design for Learning

UDL promotes positive learner outcomes and promotes meaningful access to the general education curriculum for S-ID (Smith and Lowrey, 2017). Al Hazmi and Ahmad (2018) noted that UDL minimizes barriers to instruction for S-ID. UDL plays an important role in extending learning to support general education to all students by allowing teachers to customize the curriculum and the style of teaching (Al Hazmi and

Ahmad, 2018). Rao and Meo (2016) described three components of UDL: (1) multiple means of representation, (2) multiple means of expression, and (3) multiple means of engagement. Al Hazmi and Ahmad further noted that through UDL teachers engage students in the learning process regardless of their abilities. Engaging students is one reason S-ID are successful in the general education setting, because UDL draws on the strengths and weaknesses of the student to engage in learning. Mackey (2019) contended that UDL is most effective when applied to all aspects of learning. Teachers can apply the UDL guidelines to the design of instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments (Rao, Smith, and Lowrey, 2017). Setting instructional goals requires teachers to plan in-depth lessons that incorporate the components of UDL and supports the need for teachers to have training in these principles.

Multiple means of representation incorporates a plethora of resources to facilitate a lesson. Harshbarger (2020) asserted that multiple means of representation could include strategies such as the use of analogies, mnemonics, and visual representations. Students not only learn from these perspectives on content, but also benefit from learning guides to help make sense of the content. Harshbarger contended that even small gestures might have an impact on a student with disability. Harshbarger's findings supported incorporating the use of a cadre of presentation platforms (PowerPoint, Nearpod, etc.) to present information to students. One way for teachers to incorporate multiple means of expression is to have students organize their thinking and track their goals. For S-ID, setting attainable goals may help them to develop a growth mindset. Incorporating

multiple means of engagement has an impact on all students in the learning process (Al Hazmi and Ahmad, 2018) regardless of their abilities.

Research supports using UDL for S-ID in the general education environment. Teachers face challenges to create a positive and encouraging classroom environment, along with motivating students with various needs (Arduini, 2020). Arduini's assertion aligns with the findings from this research study. Participants in this study expressed similar concerns with creating positive and encouraging environments for S-ID. Rao et al. (2017) noted that UDL might expand inclusionary options for S-ID by providing flexible pathways that support students in mastering learning goals. UDL delineates the multiple ways S-ID process, express, and engage with information. Additionally, Rao et al. (2017) noted that UDL expands the capacity of general education classrooms to educate a diverse array of students. Teachers might use the UDL guidelines to plan for supplemental supports for the various individual needs of S-ID. Rao et al (2017) classified this as a menu of options that can be applied in various ways to increase student achievement.

Root et al. (2020), evaluated the effect of a math intervention that utilized UDL framework for students with disabilities and suggested that the UDL principles increased student understanding of the math concepts. In a qualitative study, Coyne et al. (2017) examined the extent S-ID were able to use an online literacy platform called Udio. According to Coyne et al. (2017), S-ID were able to navigate through the platform independently. Additional findings suggested that the platform produced age-relevant content, choice, and socialization that increased student engagement.

In a qualitative study, Scott (2018), sought to understand teacher attitudes and beliefs concerning challenges with implementing UDL. Scott's research is important because he identified the following barriers to implementing UDL: (a) general education teacher support for inclusion, (b) need for administrative support, (c) need for improving general education teacher knowledge of UDL, (d) additional preservice field-based training on UDL, and (e) additional in-service training on UDL. Scott (2018) suggested that general education teachers participate in additional training to bridge this gap in practice and build teacher confidence in the practice of implementing UDL practices. Teachers with increased confidence in implementing UDL incorporated the principles of UDL more in their lessons (Capp, 2020) which may benefit student learning outcomes.

Standards-based Instruction

Standards-based instruction involves teachers instructing students based on standards of skills mastery. Standards-based instruction supports the development of a learning community where problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, and the use of multiple representations are integral to learning in the classroom (Elrod and Strayer, 2018). Teachers plan and facilitate their lessons to organize curriculum and instruction that meet learning standards and student needs (Lewis et al, 2019). According to Elrod and Strayer (2018), teachers need support in the form of collaboration and PD to implement standards-based instruction. Lewis et al. (2019) suggested that teachers are often not fully involved in creating standards and state assessments, and noted that teachers need clarity and consistency, through training, to delve deeper into the standards.

Quenemoen and Thurlow (2019) generated a report titled, *Students with Disabilities in Educational Policy, Practice, and Professional Judgment: What Should We Expect?* In the report, Quenemoen and Thurlow examined standards-based reform as it relates to students with disabilities and noted that standards-based reform should include both content standards and achievement standards. Quenemoen and Thurlow (2019) further asserted that students with disabilities perform across a continuum of performance on state assessments and noted that some students with disabilities are unable to access the general education standards. For these students (1% of the total population of students, or about 10% of students with disabilities) alternative achievement standards are an option. The researchers indicated that setting alternative achievement standards should benefit students with disabilities, not harm them. Therefore, ensuring teachers are trained in delivering alternative achievement standards is important.

Shahbari and Abu-Alhija (2018) explored the training of math teachers in alternative assessment and the impact on their attitudes toward alternative assessment methods. Teachers reported positive attitudes toward alternative assessment after participating in the training. Shahbari's and Abu-Alhija's assertion support PD for teachers with a content focus on alternative assessment and appropriate application. According to Hanreddy and Ostlund (2020), general educators in the United States receive minimal training and information on special education and S-ID. Hanreddy and Ostlund (2020) asserted that general education teachers felt unprepared to teach students with disabilities, and questioned their ability to team S-ID in inclusive settings. When S-

ID are taught by unqualified teachers, their access to equitable learning conditions will be limited. Henreddy and Ostlund suggested school teams incorporate UDL principles and also suggested teachers design lessons with the consideration of the needs of S-ID.

Alternative assessment does not imply that S-ID be educated in a self-contained classroom. Research supports students learning alternative standards should be taught in the general education classroom (Argan et al., 2020, Kleinart, 2020; Sabia and Thurlow, 2019). Students participating in alternative assessments are the most excluded of any group of students with disabilities (Kleinart, 2020) and are often educated separately from their non-disabled peers. According to Sabia and Thurlow (2019), educators and families believe that students with disabilities participating in alternative assessments are best served in alternative placements. Despite challenges, teachers are able to educate students participating in alternative assessments with support proper training (Kleinart, 2020). Parents and educators have misconceptions about educating S-ID in the general education setting. Saunders and Wakeman (2019) posited that students with significant cognitive disabilities (intellectual disability) can learn academic content and social skills in the general education classroom. Students with intellectual disabilities deserve to have meaningful opportunities to learn in the general education setting (Saunders and Wakeman, 2019); however, additional support systems are needed to support the student and the teacher. Saunders and Wakeman further noted that PD and coaching are needed to support inclusive efforts to prepare teachers to meet the diverse needs of S-ID in their classrooms.

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) educates S-ID participating in alternative assessments on Access Points. Access Points are alternative achievement standards target the prominent content of the Florida Standards and are designed to contribute to an aligned system of content, instruction, and assessment (Access Project, 2016). Essential understandings are scaffolds that disaggregate the access points to assist teachers by providing benchmarks along a continuum of complexity to ensure progress toward the access points (Access Project, 2016). Florida State University (2019) established the CPALMS website as a source for standards information and course descriptions. The website identifies the Assess Points and Essential Understandings for all standards in Florida. The website provides additional resources for teachers to develop standards-based lessons for students with disabilities and non-disabled students.

Project Description

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The PD-training workshop is expected to be a collaboration between the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Department and the Professional Learning Department, and myself. The workshop will consist of three days, eight hours per day. The target audience will predominately be teachers; however, administrators may also attend the training. I will serve as the facilitator for the workshop for all three days. I will collaborate with the ESE Department and the Professional Learning Department to establish an appropriate date and time to facilitate the workshop. The recommendation will be for the workshop to be available during the summer months to avoid loss of instruction due to the need for substitute teachers. If this date range will not fit within the

PD calendar, alternative dates will be selected. There is no cost for teachers or administrators to attend the workshop; however, if I conduct the workshop during the school year there will be costs associated with substitute teachers for three days. I will meet with the Professional Learning Department to discuss options for teachers to earn 24 in-service points that will count towards their recertification of their professional certificate. Additionally, I will discuss with the Professional Learning Department options for the workshop to count towards the 20 hours of training for ESE that teachers are required to obtain for their recertification. The location of the training will be centrally located so that teachers from around the county will be able to attend. There are multiple schools with ample space centrally located to accommodate this request. Teachers will need their district-issued laptops to access specific websites during the workshop. All other materials (pens, paper, chart paper, projector copies of the session materials for participants) will be provided by me. My obligations to this project will be to facilitate the sessions for the three days and evaluate participant understanding and mastery throughout the sessions.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers

I do not anticipate any barriers that will prohibit this workshop from taking place.

Roles and Responsibilities One potential barrier that may affect the project is teacher attendance. If I conduct the workshop during the summer, attendance may be limited depending on other obligations of teachers. Additionally, if I facilitate the workshop during the school year teachers may not be able to attend due to funding for substitute teachers. One solution to this potential barrier will be to offer the workshop on multiple

dates and not one time during the year to allow for flexibility. Another potential barrier may be teacher comfort level. Teachers will be asked to share their ideas, participate in icebreaker activities, and engage in collaboration with their table groups. I will establish norms at the beginning of the workshop and will remind teachers of the norms during the workshop. Creating norms will establish a safe environment for teachers to ease their comfort level.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The workshop will be a three-day series open to general education teachers, special education teachers, and administrators. The format will be a combination of teacher-led and participant-led conversations. As the facilitator, I will use an array of activities to keep participants engaged in the workshop. The activities will include a PowerPoint presentation, whole group discussions, small group discussions, individual activities, and icebreaker activities. Teachers will practice planning lessons using the CPALMS website to identify Access Points, resources, and supports for S-ID. As the beginning of each day, participants will be given an agenda outlining the activities for the day. The agenda will include the learning goal that will be reviewed with the participants. Norms will be established as a group at the beginning of the three-day workshop. The norms will be reviewed at the beginning of each day, and throughout the workshop. Appendix A includes an outline of the workshop, including the agenda.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the facilitator is to present the content to the participants in an engaging format. Additionally, the role of the facilitator is to lead group discussions and

activities that align to the objectives and goals of the workshop. For this workshop, I will serve as the facilitator. The role of the participants is to be present, be engaged in the discussion and activities, be on time, and provide feedback after the workshop. The participant's role is also to implement the information learned in the workshop in their individual classrooms.

Project Evaluation Plan

Participants will evaluate the PD workshop using formative and summative assessments. Participants will be asked at the beginning of the workshop to provide a rating on the learning goal using a 1-4 rating scale. After completion of the workshop, participants will be asked to reexamine their rating and make a determination about whether their rating changed. At the end of day one and day two, participants will complete an exit slip called 3-2-1. For the 3-2-1 exit slip, teachers will identify three things they learned during the lesson, two ideas that stuck with them they found interesting, and one question they still have. I will review the questions, combine them into a list, and write them on chart paper. At the beginning of day two and three, I will post the questions for participants to see. Through discussion, the questions will be answered during the workshop. After the completion of the workshop, I will use the exit slips to adapt future PD workshops to avoid any confusion. The exit slips will serve as the summative assessment for this workshop. At the end of day three, participants will write a short reflection about what they learned and how they will use the information to educate S-ID in their classrooms. Participants will also complete an evaluation form that will be used to award in-service points for their certification. Analytic data from the

evaluation will be used to adapt and plan for future PD workshops. The reflection and the in-service evaluation form will serve as the summative assessment for this workshop.

Project Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

The project addresses strategies and resources teachers can use to educate S-ID in the general education classroom. Teachers using the resources and strategies will help to close the achievement gap, improve student achievement, and provide increased opportunities for inclusion for S-ID. The workshop will provide teachers with knowledge on Access Points, UDL, and additional strategies and resources to address the unique needs of S-ID. Teachers will benefit from this workshop because it will allow them to learn and implement strategies with S-ID. Participants will be able to collaborate with their peers on strategies and lesson development for S-ID. This project has the potential for social change by providing teachers with training and resources to increase academic achievement for elementary S-ID in the general education setting.

Far-Reaching

The workshop is designed to meet the needs of local elementary teachers who educate S-ID in the general education setting. The project may benefit teachers at the secondary level (middle and high) who educate S-ID in the general education setting. The workshop has the potential to become part of the local school district's courses and to reach other school districts in the state. As the achievement of S-ID increases and gaps begin to narrow, inclusion may increase for S-ID. Students with intellectual disabilities will experience increased opportunities at all grade levels (elementary, middle, and high).

Conclusion

It is essential that teachers receive quality PD to meet the needs of all students. The PD created as the project for this study will provide teachers with an opportunity to heighten their instructional skills to educate S-ID in their respective classrooms. Increasing these skills has the potential to increasing student achievement for S-ID. Section 3 of this project study provides an in-depth description of the PD training created for this project. The project was created based on the findings of the interviews of participants in the study. This project has the potential for social change by providing teachers with training and resources to increase academic achievement for elementary S-ID in the general education setting.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In this project study, I addressed the problem of the lack of PD for elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting. To answer the research questions, I used a basic qualitative research design with a sample of six elementary general education teachers who currently teach, or have taught over the past three years, S-ID in the general education setting. Participants recommended additional PD for teachers. Based on the findings of this study, I designed a 3-day PD training for general and special education teachers. The PD training is designed to provide teachers with instructional strategies to meet the educational needs of S-ID. In this section, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the project. In addition, I will offer recommendations for future researchers. I will reflect on the importance of the work and will identify how the project may impact social change.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

One strength of the proposed PD project is that the participants indicated they were willing to attend PD to increase their instructional skills to meet the educational needs of S-ID in their classrooms. Participants indicated that PD plays a pivotal role in successful inclusion and preparing teachers to meet the needs of all students. Participants noted the need for additional PD that includes time to collaborate and plan. I designed this project to address the findings and the gap in literature. This PD would allow participants to be actively engaged in the sessions by interacting with each other in small

groups to complete multiple activities. In addition, participants noted that PD should include hands-on activities. This project will provide participants with hands-on opportunities and instructional strategies to incorporate in their lessons. Teachers will benefit from collaborating with other educational professionals who teach S-ID in the general education setting.

Project Limitations

This PD project is not without limitations. One limitation of this project will consist of providing time for teachers to attend PD. Participants communicated concerns about their ability to attend PD and being away from their classrooms. I designed the PD to be facilitated over 3 days. This would require teachers to obtain substitute teachers for the days they would be attending the PD. The PD may be facilitated during the summer months when school is not in session; however, it may impact the number of teachers who are available to attend it based on other commitments.

Participants noted their willingness to attend the PD; however, these notions may not be generalized to the overall population of elementary general education teachers who teach S-ID in inclusive settings. There is no guarantee that educators will participate in the PD or incorporate the instructional strategies in their respective classrooms. In order to remediate these limitations, future researchers may wish to expand the sample to a larger population.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

After reviewing the findings of this study, participants felt unprepared to teach S-ID in the general education setting. The participants indicated the current PD model is not

preparing them to meet the needs of S-ID. Participants made suggestions for improving the current PD model in their districts. As a result, a PD training was produced to address the concerns and needs of participants. The proposed PD is intended to be facilitated over 3 days. Some participants suggested implementing a longer training that would span weeks instead of days. One recommendation would be to explore options for a longer PD training with feedback sessions for teachers. Another alternative approach would be for district staff to visit classrooms and provide hands-on support and feedback.

The proposed project focuses on providing in-service training for teachers who currently teach S-ID in the general education setting. During interviews, participants were asked about any preservice training or education they received. Some participants indicated they received some preservice training; however, they noted their preservice training was general and not specific to teaching S-ID. One recommendation for an alternative approach would be to further examine preservice training or coursework to determine if additional preservice teachers are adequately prepared to educate S-ID.

I selected a basic qualitative design because this approach was most appropriate to answer the research questions for this study. The basic qualitative approach allowed me to probe participants through semi-structured interviews to gather and analyze their perceptions of the PD model in their districts. I still believe the basic qualitative approach was most appropriate to answer the research questions for this study; however, future researchers could apply quantitative or mixed methods approaches as a result of the findings of this study.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

As an educator and education administrator for over 14 years, I have worked diligently to support all teachers and students. Special education holds a special place in my heart, as much of my career has been working with students with disabilities. I believe I have grown as an educator and leader throughout this research process. Although the process has been arduous, I believe it has strengthened my resilience. I believe the coursework prepared me to conduct research and complete this project study. I have learned from this process both professionally and personally. This process has taught me to look through the lens of a scholar. Recruiting participants for this study posed a challenge for me. Prior to conducting this study, I did not have experience conducting qualitative interviews. I have learned from the participants in this study and the challenges they face in their classrooms. Findings from this study support the need for additional PD for teachers. The findings allowed me to reflect on my own leadership and reflect on how I can continue to provide teachers with support to meet the needs of all students.

The process strengthened my skills as a project developer. The process taught me to be unbiased, and to use data to drive instruction through the proposed PD project. I wanted to ensure accuracy of the data through the transcription process. By giving participants the opportunity to review their transcripts for accuracy, it provided me the opportunity to remain unbiased in my analysis. Project development requires extensive research and data analysis. I researched evidence-based practices and strategies for teachers to meet the various needs of S-ID.

I have grown as a leader as a result of conducting this project study. School and district leaders have an inherent responsibility of supporting teachers to increase student achievement and meeting the needs of all students. As a leader of change, I believe in practicing servant leadership. Servant leadership involves serving, listening, and empathizing its stakeholders. This process taught me how to better listen and empathize with teachers who feel unprepared to teach S-ID. It has taught me to be an agent of change and I believe this process has made me a stronger leader. This project will require strong leadership and dedication from district and school leaders. It will require leaders to be understanding of the needs of teachers and allow for flexibility for them to learn the strategies to support S-ID and impact student achievement.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

As I reflect on the importance of my work, I am reminded of the journey that led me to this pivotal point. Many times over this journey I felt despair and reluctance to continue. This process strengthened my resilience, and it was that sense of grit that inspired me to rise above those challenges to complete this project study. Although the outcome of the journey will result in fulfilling my dream of earning my degree, it is the journey that taught me the knowledge and built my capacity as a person and a leader. This process has strengthened my organizational and time management skills. I set reasonable goals and remained dedicated to finishing this project study.

This project study is important to teachers and students. With the increase of inclusion of S-ID in the United States, teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of S-

ID, and the needs of all students. The findings from this project study indicate that teachers feel unprepared and lack the PD to meet the needs of S-ID.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project may contribute to social change by providing teachers with training and resources to increase academic achievement for elementary S-ID in the general education setting. This project is designed to meet the needs identified by participants. The project is designed for elementary general education teachers; however, it may be adapted for middle school or high school teachers. This study is significant for teachers who educate S-ID in inclusive settings. It provides instructional strategies that may improve their pedagogy. Students with intellectual disabilities may benefit academically from teachers who are prepared to meet their needs.

This qualitative study exposed the perceptions of general education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting in regard to the PD in their district. Participant recruitment focused on elementary teachers, with 6 teachers participating in the study. Future researchers may wish to examine the perceptions of additional elementary teachers so data may be more generalized over the population. Additionally, future researchers may consider recruiting middle school teachers who educate S-ID in inclusive settings to gather data on their perceptions. Future researchers may also consider using quantitative or mixed methods approaches to gather additional data.

Conclusion

As the number of S-ID included in the general education setting increases, so does the need to increase teacher preparedness. This study explored how elementary general

education teachers who teach S-ID in the general education setting perceived the PD model in their district. Findings from this study support the need for additional PD to prepare teachers to meet the academic needs of S-ID. All six participants provided suggestions for improving the PD model in their district. Professional development provides teachers with resources and instructional strategies to improve their pedagogy. Using the findings from this study, I created a PD training to address the suggestions from participants. It is my hope that this project will contribute to social change by providing general education teachers with the resources and tools to increase academic achievement of S-ID.

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Appendix A: The Project

Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the General Education Setting
Agenda

Day 1

Timeline	Activity	Notes
8:00 am – 8:30 am	Check-In	Participants will sign in and choose a table to sit at.
8:30 am – 9:00 am	Welcome Overview of the PD	The purpose of the PD will be explained.
9:00 am – 9:10am	Day 1 Goal and Agenda	The goal for day 1 is to build the foundation about S-ID and Inclusion and identify some accommodations for S-ID.
9:10 am – 10:00 am	Ice-Breaker – Marshmallow Towers and debrief	As a table, participants will work together to build the tallest tower using marshmallows and toothpicks.
10:00 am – 10:10 am	Discussion - Working Definition of S-ID	As a small group (table) participants will come up with a definition of Intellectual Disability
10:10am – 10:20 am	Share out definition, similarities, differences	Participants will share out what they discussed in their small groups.
10:20 am – 10:30 am	Break	
10:30 am – 11:00 am	Review PPT Slides 9-12 Intellectual Disability	Defining Intellectual Disability
11:00 am – 11:20 pm	Discussion – Definition of Inclusion	As a small group (table) participants will come up with a definition of Inclusion and share out.
11:10 pm – 12:00 pm	Review PPT Slides 13-16 Inclusion	Defining Inclusion

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch	
1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	Group Activity	What are some challenges of inclusion? What are the benefits of inclusion?
2:00 pm – 2:10 pm	Break	
2:10 pm – 2:45 pm	Review Slides 17-20 Accommodations	
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Review, Wrap-up and Exit Ticket	
3:00 pm	Dismiss for Day 1	

Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the General Education Setting
Agenda

Day 2

Timeline	Activity	Notes
8:00 am – 8:30 am	Welcome and Check-In	Participants will sign-in for attendance
8:30 am – 9:40 am	Day 2 Goal and Agenda Takeaways from Yesterday	Today we will cover the following items CPALMS Access Points Supports for S-ID
9:40 am – 10:40 am	Review slides 27-30	CPALMS Overview and video
10:40 am – 11:00 am	CPALMS Practice	Teachers will take visit the CPALMS website to become familiar with the site and its contents.

11:00 am – 11:10 am	Share out	What did you learn about the site? What did you like? What did you not like?
11:10 am – 11:20 pm	Break	
11:20 am – 1200 pm	Review Slides 34-36	Access Points Overview
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch	
1:00 pm – 1:45 pm	Access Points Activity	Participants will plan a lesson using the appropriate access points and accommodations.
1:45 pm – 2:00 pm	Break	
2:00 pm – 2:45 pm	Collaboration	Teachers will be given time to collaborate with each other on best practices.
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Review, Wrap-up and Exit Ticket	
3:00 pm	Dismiss for Day 2	

Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the General Education Setting Agenda

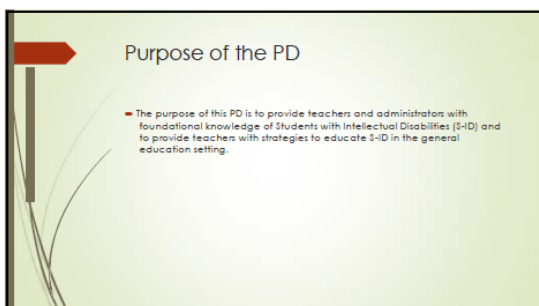
Day 3

Timeline	Activity	Notes
8:00 am – 8:30 am	Welcome and Check-In	Participants will sign-in for attendance
8:30 am – 9:00 am	Ice Breaker Puzzle Pieces And Debrief	Putting all of the pieces together

9:00 am – 9:10am	Day 3 Goals	Today we will cover the following items Universal Design for Learning Strategies PD Review
9:10 am – 10:10 am	Review Slides 41-46	UDL Overview and short video
10:10 am – 10:30 am	Break	
10:30 am – 11:30 am	Review Slides 48-53	UDL Overview
11:30 am – 12:15 pm	Lunch	
12:15 pm – 1:00 pm	Review Slides 54-57	Example UDL Strategies
1:00 pm – 1:45 pm	UDL Activity and Share Out	Take some time to become familiar with the site, and select three potential strategies that you might be able to use in your classroom for S-ID.
2:00 pm – 2:45 pm	Collaboration	Teachers will be given time to collaborate with each other on best practices, things they learned, and experiences.
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Review, Wrap-up and PD Evaluation	
3:00 pm	Dismiss for Day 3	







Day 1

- The goal of today is to cover the following items:
 - Defining Students with Intellectual Disabilities
 - Inclusion
 - What is it?
 - Barriers
 - Benefits
 - Accommodations

Ice Breaker – Marshmallow Tower

- Goal
 - In teams of four (4), your goal is to build the largest, free standing tower, using the materials provided.
- Materials
 - One (1) box of toothpicks
 - One (1) bag of large marshmallows

Ice Breaker – Marshmallow Tower


- Debrief
 - What was your approach to this task?
 - How important was teamwork with this activity?
 - How did your team decide on the design for this activity?
 - What challenges did you face during this activity?
 - How did you overcome those challenges as a team?
 - How did a strong foundation help you in accomplishing this task?



Discussion – 10 minutes

- At your tables, take ten (10) minutes to come up with a group definition of Intellectual Disability

Break – 10 minutes



What is an Intellectual Disability?

- Definition**
 - An intellectual disability is defined as significantly below average general intellectual and adaptive functioning manifested during the developmental period, with significant delays in academic skills. Developmental period refers to birth to eighteen (18) years of age. (Florida Department of Education, 2020)

What is an Intellectual Disability?

- Eligibility (FLDOE Rule 6A-6.03011 Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students with Intellectual Disabilities)
 - Evaluation
 - Standardized individual test of intellectual functioning
 - Standardized assessment of adaptive behavior
 - Includes parent or guardian input
 - Individually administered standardized test of academic or pre-academic achievement
 - Social-development history
 - Compiled directly from the parent, guardian, or caregiver

What is an Intellectual Disability?

- Eligibility (FLDOE Rule 6A-6.03011 Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students with Intellectual Disabilities)
 - Criteria for eligibility (All of the items below must be present)
 - The measured level of intellectual functioning is more than two (2) standard deviations below the mean on an individually measured, standardized test of intellectual functioning;
 - The level of adaptive functioning is more than two (2) standard deviations below the mean on the adaptive behavior composite or on two (2) out of three (3) domains on a standardized test of adaptive behavior. The adaptive behavior measure shall include parental or guardian input;

What is an Intellectual Disability?

- Eligibility (FLDOE Rule 6A-6.03011 Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students with Intellectual Disabilities)
 - Criteria for eligibility (All of the items below must be present)
 - The level of academic or pre-academic performance on a standardized test is consistent with the performance expected of a student of comparable intellectual functioning;
 - The social/developmental history identifies the developmental, familial, medical/health, and environmental factors impacting student functioning and documents the student's functional skills outside of the school environment; and,
 - The student needs special education as defined in Rules 6A-6.0331 and 6A-6.03411, F.A.C.

Discussion – 10 minutes

- At your tables, take twenty (20) minutes to discuss the following:
 - What is Inclusion?

What is Inclusion?

- IDEA does not define inclusion
- Florida Statute 1003.57(1)(a)2 defines inclusion as:
 - A school district shall use the term "inclusion" to mean that a student is receiving education in a general education regular class setting, reflecting natural proportions and age-appropriate heterogeneous groups in core academic and elective or special areas within the school community; a student with a disability is a valued member of the classroom and school community; the teachers and administrators support universal education and have knowledge and support available to enable them to effectively teach all children; and a teacher is provided access to technical assistance in best practices, instructional methods, and supports tailored to the student's needs based on current research.

What is Inclusion?

- To put it simply:
 - Inclusion is the practice of educating all students together
 - Students with disabilities and students without disabilities
 - Regardless of their abilities or readiness
 - With true inclusion
 - Students with disabilities can access the general education curriculum, classrooms, and typical school activities
- Inclusion is not:
 - Just being in a general education classroom

Inclusion Discussion

- What are some challenges of inclusion?
- What are the benefits of inclusion?

Accommodations

- Accommodations may be helpful for S-ID to access the curriculum in the general education setting.
- Four Categories
 - Presentation
 - How the student will access information
 - Response
 - How the student will demonstrate competence
 - Setting
 - Where the student will be instructed and assessed
 - Scheduling
 - When the student will be instructed and assessed

Accommodations for Presentation

- Here are some accommodations to consider based on the need of individual students.
 - Use graphic organizers
 - Use multiple modalities for presenting content (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, etc.)
 - Repeat directions
 - Provide study guides
 - Chunk content into small digestible bites
 - Shorten assignments
 - Peer tutoring
 - Use hands-on assignments
 - Assign alternative projects / assignments as necessary
 - Provide manipulatives

Accommodations for Presentation

- Here are some accommodations to consider based on the need of individual students.
 - Use graphic organizers
 - Use multiple modalities for presenting content (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, etc.)
 - Repeat directions
 - Provide study guides
 - Chunk content into small digestible bites
 - Shorten assignments
 - Peer tutoring
 - Use hands-on assignments
 - Assign alternative projects / assignments as necessary
 - Provide manipulatives

Public Department of Education

Accommodations for Scheduling

- Here are some accommodations to consider based on the need of individual students.
 - Provide students with a visual schedule
 - Use graphic organizers
 - Use planner of agenda
 - Provide a visual timeline for completing assignments
 - Additional time for completing assignments and assessments

Public Department of Education

Accommodations for Setting


- Here are some accommodations to consider based on the need of individual students.
 - Establish learning centers
 - Use study carrels
 - Preferential seating
 - Seat the student near the teacher or a positive role-model
 - Reduce possible distractions
 - Small group learning

Public Department of Education


Review, Wrap-Up, Exit Ticket

Exit Ticket	
3	Things I Learned Today...
2	Things I Found Interesting...
1	Questions I Still Have...

Have a GREATEVENING!!!!



Welcome to Day 2




Takeaways from Yesterday

Goal for Day 2

- Today we will cover the following items
 - CPALMS
 - Access Points
 - Supports for S-ID

CPALMS

- Questions to think about
 - What is CPALMS?
 - How can I use CPALMS to drive instruction?
 - What are Access Points?
 - How do I locate them on CPALMS?



Florida State University (2013). CPALMS. Retrieved from <http://www.cpalms.org/>

CPALMS

- What is CPALMS?
 - CPALMS is an online toolbox of information, vetted resources, and interactive tools that helps educators effectively implement teaching standards. It is the State of Florida's official source for standards information and course descriptions.
 - Access the site using the link below
 - <https://www.cpalms.org/Public/>

Florida State University (2023). CPALMS. Retrieved from https://www.cpalms.org/Public/

CPALMS

- How can I use CPALMS to drive instruction?
 - CPALMS has a plethora of resources to help teachers create lessons.



Florida State University (2023). CPALMS. Retrieved from https://www.cpalms.org/Public/



CPALMS Practice
20 minutes

- With your device, visit the CPALMS website and familiarize yourself with the contents of the site.
- Explore ELA and Math standards for your respective grade level.

CPALMS Share Out
10 minutes

- What did you learn about the site?
- What did you like?
- What didn't you like?



Break – 10 minutes



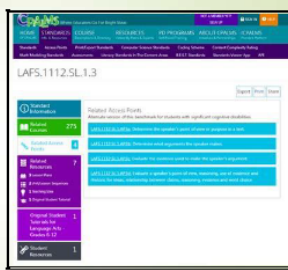
CPALMS

- What are Access Points?
 - Access Points are academic expectations written specifically for students with significant cognitive disabilities. They reflect the essence or core intent of the standards that apply to all students in the same grade, but at reduced levels of complexity. (Florida Department of Education, 2020)
- How do I locate them on CPALMS?
 - Under each standard, there are a set of access points for students with cognitive disabilities.

Florida State University (2020). CPALMS. Retrieved from <https://www.cpalms.org/#/about>

CPALMS

- How do I locate them on CPALMS?



Florida State University (2020). CPALMS. Retrieved from <https://www.cpalms.org/#/about>



CPALMS

CPALMS Access Points Activity

- Use your laptop to visit the CPALMS website
- Identify an appropriate standard based on your grade level
 - Identify the appropriate access point standard associated with the grade level standard
- Use the generic lesson plan template to plan a lesson for your students with intellectual disabilities.
 - Identify accommodations
 - Activities
 - Assessments

Let's Collaborate



Welcome to Day 3



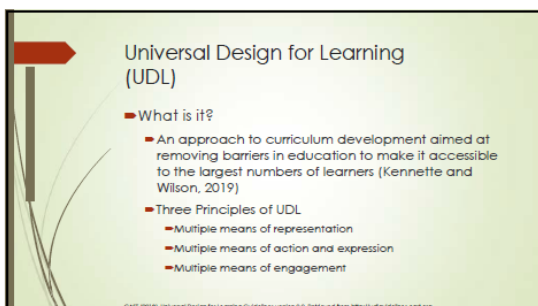


Takeaways from Yesterday



Goal for Day 3

- Today we will cover the following items
 - Universal Design for Learning
 - Strategies
 - PD Review



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- What is it?
 - An approach to curriculum development aimed at removing barriers in education to make it accessible to the largest numbers of learners (Kennette and Wilson, 2019)
- Three Principles of UDL
 - Multiple means of representation
 - Multiple means of action and expression
 - Multiple means of engagement

© 2019 Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 1.0, retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.org>







Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple means of representation
 - The **WHAT** of learning
 - Provide options for **Language and Symbols**
 - Clarify vocabulary and symbols
 - Construct meaning from words, symbols, and numbers using different representations
 - Clarify syntax and structure
 - Make the patterns and properties of systems like grammar, musical notation, taxonomies, and equations explicit
 - Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols
 - Make sure text and symbols don't get in the way of the learning goal
 - Promote understanding across languages
 - Use translations, descriptions, movement, and images to support learning in unfamiliar or complex languages
 - Engage through multiple media
 - Make learning come alive with simulations, graphs, activities, and videos


CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, version 2.0. Retrieved from <http://udg.udel.edu/cast.org>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple means of representation
 - The **WHAT** of learning
 - Provide options for **Comprehension**
 - Activate or supply background knowledge
 - Build connections to prior understandings and experiences
 - Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships
 - Accurate important information and how it relates to the learning goal
 - Guide information process and visualization
 - Support the process of meaning-making through models, scaffolds, and feedback
 - Maximize transfer and generalization
 - Apply learning to new contexts

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, version 2.0. Retrieved from <http://udg.udel.edu/cast.org>

Break – 10 minutes



A hand holding a red marker is pointing to a clock face. The clock face has the text "TIME FOR A BREAK" written on it in a stylized font. The hand is holding the marker as if it has just finished writing or is about to write.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple means of action and expression
 - The **HOW** of learning
 - Physical Action
 - Vary the methods for response and navigation
 - Interact with tools and environments that make learning physically accessible to all
 - Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
 - Open doors to learning with accessible tools and devices

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, version 2.0. Retrieved from <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple means of action and expression
 - The **HOW** of learning
 - Expression and Communication
 - Use multiple media for communication
 - Express learning in flexible ways
 - Use multiple tools for construction and composition
 - Share thoughts and ideas using tools that complement the learning goal
 - Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance
 - Apply and gradually release scaffolds to support independent learning

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, version 2.0. Retrieved from <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple means of action and expression
 - The **HOW** of learning
 - Executive Functions
 - Guide appropriate goal-setting
 - Practice setting challenging and authentic goals
 - Support planning and strategy development
 - Formulate reasonable plans for reaching goals
 - Facilitate managing information and resources
 - Support organization and memory using flexible tools and processes
 - Enhance capacity for monitoring progress
 - Analyze growth over time and how to build from it

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, version 2.0. Retrieved from <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple means of engagement
 - The **WHY** of learning
 - Recruiting Interest
 - Optimize individual choice and autonomy
 - Empower learners to take charge of their own learning
 - Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
 - Connect learning to experiences that are meaningful and valuable
 - Minimize threats and distractions
 - Foster a safe space to learn and take risks

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple means of engagement
 - The **WHY** of learning
 - Sustaining Effort and Persistence
 - Heighten salience of goals and objectives
 - Set a vision for the goal and why it matters
 - Vary demands and resources to optimize challenges
 - Rise to high expectations using flexible tools and supports
 - Foster collaboration and community
 - Cultivate community of learners
 - Increase mastery-oriented feedback
 - Guide learning by emphasizing the role of effort and process

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

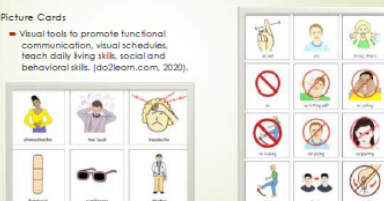
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple means of engagement
 - The **WHY** of learning
 - Self Regulation
 - Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation
 - Set personal goals that inspire confidence and ownership of learning
 - Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
 - Develop and manage healthy emotional responses and interactions
 - Develop self-assessment and reflection
 - Increase awareness around progress toward goals and how to learn from mistakes

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

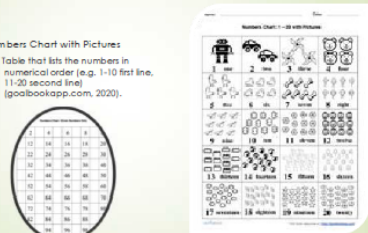
UDL Strategies to Consider

- Picture Cards**
 - Visual tools to promote functional communication, visual schedules, teach daily living skills, social and behavioral skills. (do2learn.com, 2020).



UDL Strategies to Consider

- Numbers Chart with Pictures**
 - Table that lists the numbers in numerical order (e.g. 1-10 first line, 11-20 second line) (goalbookapp.com, 2020).



UDL Strategies to Consider

- Peer Buddies**
 - A Peer Buddy is a student or group of students who support a student with disability to enhance or facilitate positive peer interactions, increase opportunities for socializing and help the student understand and negotiate his or her social landscape.
 - Often an ambassador for the student with the disability and helps the student interpret the environment around him and socialize with others.

Goalbookapp.com, 2020

UDL Strategies to Consider – Collaborative Labelling



Classroom Labels: Share, Read and Classroom Labels

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

ACTIVITY

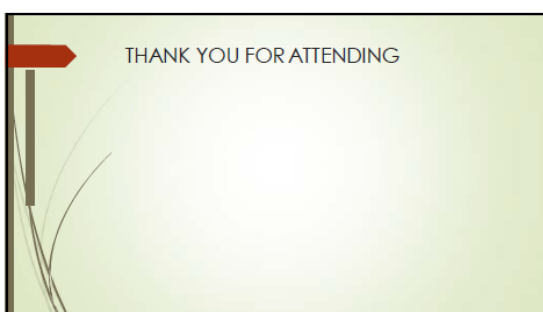
- At your table, visit the following website <https://qaabookapp.com/toolkit/v/strategies>
- Take a few minutes to become familiar with the site, and select three potential strategies that you might be able to use in your classroom for S-ID.
- How will you use the strategy?
- How will this help teach S-ID in your class?

CAST (2011). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 1.0. Retrieved from <http://udg.cast.org>

Let's Collaborate







Facilitator Notes

Day 1

Slide 1: Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the General Education Setting

- No Notes

Slide 2: Welcome and Introductions

- Good morning and welcoming to *Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the General Education Setting*. My name is Bradley Martin, and I am your facilitator for this three-day training. A little about me. I have worked in education for the past 15 years, 10 of which have been supporting students with disabilities. Supporting students with disabilities is paramount to me. As an educator and an administrator, I know the importance of being prepared to meet the needs of all students. I believe this professional development will provide you with the background and knowledge to educate students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting.
- Please take a minute to introduce yourself by telling us your name, number of years teaching, and the grade level you currently teach.

Slide 3: Purpose of the PD

- The purpose of this PD is to provide teachers and administrators with foundational knowledge of Students with Intellectual Disabilities (S-ID) and to provide teachers with strategies to educate S-ID in the general education setting.

Slide 4: Day 1

- The goal of today is to cover the following items:
 - Defining Students with Intellectual Disabilities
 - Inclusion
 - What is it?
 - Barriers?
 - Benefits
 - Accommodations
- It will be important that you engage in the activities and the discussion during this PD. It is my hope that you will collaborate with each other, learn strategies to build your capacity, and ask questions of things you are unsure of or need clarification of.
- Before we begin, does anyone have any questions?

Slide 5: Marshmallow Tower

- We are going to begin with a fun ice breaker activity. You are seated at tables of four. At your tables you have a box of toothpicks and a bag of marshmallows.
- Your goal, as a team, is to use the toothpicks and the marshmallows to build the tallest free-standing tower.
- You will collaborate with your team to discuss the plans for building the tower, the approach you will take, and collaborate on building the tower.
- You will have 30 minutes to complete the task and afterwards, we will debrief and discuss. You may begin

Slide 6: Ice Breaker – Marshmallow Tower

- Discuss the following questions with the group to facilitate discussion.
 - What was your approach to this task?
 - How important was teamwork with this activity?
 - How did your team decide on the design for this activity?
 - What challenges did you face during this activity?
 - How did you overcome those challenges as a team?
 - How did a strong foundation help you in accomplishing this task?

Slide 7: Discussion – 10 minutes

- At your table, take 10 minutes to have a discussion to come up with a group definition of Intellectual Disability.
- Write the definition on the chart paper provided for you.

- After 10 minutes, participants will share out their group definition and comparisons will be made with the whole group.

Slide 8: Break – 10 minutes

- You all have done a great job so far. Let's take a 10 minute break. After the break we will discuss the definition of Intellectual Disability.

Slide 9: What is an Intellectual Disability?

- So, now that we have examined your table's definition of an intellectual disability, let's take a look at how the Florida Department of Education defines a S-ID.
- Read the definition on the screen
- How is the FLDOE definition similar to your table's definition? How is it different?

Slide 10: What is an Intellectual Disability?

- Based on the FLDOE Rule 6A-6.0301, to meet the eligibility for an intellectual disability, a student must meet the following:
- Read the Evaluation section of the slide

Slide 11: What is an Intellectual Disability?

- In order for a student to have an intellectual disability, all of the following must be present:
 - The measured level of intellectual functioning is more than two (2) standard deviations below the mean on an individually measured, standardized test of intellectual functioning;
 - A standard deviation is a measure of how spread out the numbers are
 - Typically, this would mean that the students IQ would be below 70
 - The level of adaptive functioning is more than two (2) standard deviations below the mean on the adaptive behavior composite or on two (2) out of three (3) domains on a standardized test of adaptive behavior. The adaptive behavior measure shall include parental or guardian input;
 - The adaptive behavior measure is an assessment of independent skills.
 - It measures the following
 - Communication and social skills (interacting and communicating with other people)
 - Independent living skills (shopping, budgeting, and cleaning)
 - Personal care skills (eating, dressing, and grooming)

- Employment/work skills (following directions, completing tasks, and getting to work on time)
- Practical academics (reading, computation, and telling time)
- Parents also provide input

Slide 12: What is an Intellectual Disability?

- Along with the previous slide, the following must also be present:
 - The level of academic or pre-academic performance on a standardized test is consistent with the performance expected of a student of comparable intellectual functioning;
 - The social/developmental history identifies the developmental, familial, medical/health, and environmental factors impacting student functioning and documents the student's functional skills outside of the school environment; and,
 - The student needs special education as defined in Rules 6A-6.0331 and 6A-6.03411, F.A.C.
- The evaluation process is extensive and involves a team consisting of school psychologists, school social workers, parents, and teachers.
- The evaluation process must be completed within 60 days of the parent granting consent to complete the evaluation.
- After the evaluations are complete, the team (known as an IEP team) will convene to discuss the results of the evaluations and determine whether the student meets the criteria for an intellectual disability.
- If the student meets the criteria, the team will then create an Individual Education Plan (IEP) outlining the student's current level of performance, needs, goals, and services.

Slide 13: Discussion – 20 minutes

- At your tables, take 10 minutes to discuss the following:
 - What is Inclusion?
- After tables have discussed for 10 minutes, the remaining 10 minutes will be for whole group discussion of the table's definition of inclusion.
- Discuss increase in inclusion nationwide and the need for supports for students and teachers.

Slide 14: What is Inclusion?

- It is important to note that inclusion is not defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Florida statute defines inclusion as:
 - Read the definition on the screen

Slide 15: What is Inclusion?

- So let's talk about what it really means
 - Read bullet points on the screen
- Discuss why inclusion is important for S-ID
- Ask rhetorically for participants to think about what inclusion looks like in their school.
- How do teachers build inclusive classrooms?
- What needs to students have? Teachers?

Slide 16: Inclusion Discussion

- For the next 20 minutes, at your tables, discuss the following 2 questions and place your answers on the chart paper provided:
 - What are some challenges of inclusion?
 - What are the benefits of inclusion?
- As groups discuss, the facilitator will walk around to the various tables to listen to the discussion.
- After the 20 minutes, the facilitator will have the tables share out their answers (10 minutes)

Slide 17: Accommodations

- Discuss how S-ID need accommodations to access the curriculum.
 - Some of the discussion will come from the challenges of inclusion as discussed in the previous slide
- Review the four categories of accommodations and what they mean
 - Presentation
 - Response
 - Setting
 - Scheduling

Slides 18-19: Accommodations for Presentation / Response

- Read through the list of accommodations on the screen
- Ask participants if they have used any of the accommodations and ask how successful the accommodations were for their students.
 - This will foster a short discussion – Call on 3-4 participants

Slide 20: Accommodations for Scheduling

- Read through the list of accommodations on the screen
- Ask participants if they have used any of the accommodations and ask how successful the accommodations were for their students.
 - This will foster a short discussion – Call on 3-4 participants

Slide 21: Accommodations for Setting

- Read through the list of accommodations on the screen

- Ask participants if they have used any of the accommodations and ask how successful the accommodations were for their students.
 - This will foster a short discussion – Call on 3-4 participants

Slide 22: Review, Wrap-Up, Exit Ticket

- Facilitator will conduct a review of what was discussed for today.
- Facilitator will answer any questions participants have.
- Have participants complete the exit ticket.

Slide 23: Have a GREAT EVENING!!!

- Collect exit tickets and dismiss for today

Day 2

Slide 24: Welcome to Day 2

- Welcome to Day 2 of 3 of this PD.
- Review housekeeping issues (bathroom, breaks, etc.)

Slide 25: Takeaways from Yesterday

- Conduct a short review of the information discussed yesterday

Slide 26: Goal for Day 2

- Today we will cover the following items:
 - CPALMS
 - Access Points
 - Supports for S-ID

Slide 27: CPALMS

- Questions to think about
 - What is CPALMS?
 - How can I use CPALMS to drive instruction?
 - What are Access Points?
 - How do I locate them on CPALMS?

Slide 28: What is CPALMS?

- How many people are familiar with CPALMS?
- Have you ever used it to look up standards and resources?
- Read through the bullet points on the screen
- Click on the link to show the participants the CPALMS site

Slide 29: CPALMS

- Read the following:
 - How can I use CPALMS to drive instruction?
 - CPALMS has a plethora of resources to help teachers create lessons.

- Take a few minutes to show participants how to navigate through the website.
 - Show them the grade levels
 - Show them the resources
 - Show them the standards

Slide 30: CPALMS

- Participants will watch a brief video as an example of what was discussed in the previous slide

Slide 31: CPALMS Practice

- With your device, visit the CPALMS website and familiarize yourself with the contents of the site.
- Explore ELA and Math standards for your respective grade level.
- Give participants approximately 20 minutes to be able to access the site and explore it.
 - Walk around to the tables to assist participants as needed

Slide 32: CPALMS Share Out – 10 Minutes

- Bring the group back together and facilitate a 10 minute discussion using the following questions:
 - What did you learn about the site?
 - What did you like?
 - What didn't you like?

Slide 33: 10 Minute Break

- Participants will be given a break to stretch and use the restrooms

Slide 34: CPALMS – Access Points

- What are Access Points?
 - Read through the definition on the screen
- Read: How do I locate them on CPALMS?

Slide 35-36: CPALMS – Access Points

- Facilitator will review the examples on the screen
- It is important to discuss with participants how access points are scaffolds of the standard.
 - Teachers are already teaching the scaffolds to build knowledge to all students.
 - As a teacher, you are not reinventing the wheel to teach the standard, but rather teaching it at the level of the student through a scaffolding mean.

Slide 37: Access Point Activity

- Use your laptop to visit the CPALMS website
- Identify an appropriate standard based on your grade level

- Identify the appropriate access point standard associated with the grade level standard
- Use the generic lesson plan template to plan a lesson for your students with intellectual disabilities.
 - Identify accommodations
 - Activities
 - Assessments
- Participants will plan a lesson using the template provided
 - This will give participants the opportunity to practice finding the access points and planning the delivery of instruction for S-ID
 - Allot 45 minutes for teachers to conduct this activity
 - The facilitator should walk around and assist teachers as needed with the site and planning the lesson
 - Allot 10 minutes to debrief on the activity once completed

Slide 38: Let's Collaborate

- After a 15 minute break, teachers will be give 45 minutes to collaborate with each other. This time will be used for participants to share ideas with each other, discuss strategies that they have found to be successful.
- Participants will be reminded to use the time productively to learn from each other and talk about similarities they are facing in their classrooms.
- After 45 minutes, the facilitator will do the following:
 - Facilitator will conduct a review of what was discussed for today.
 - Facilitator will answer any questions participants have.
 - Have participants complete the exit ticket.
 - Participants will be dismissed for Day 2

Day 3

Slide 39: Welcome to Day 2

- Welcome to Day 3 of 3 of this PD.
- Review housekeeping issues (bathroom, breaks, etc.)

Slide 40: Takeaways from Yesterday

- Conduct a short review of the information discussed yesterday

Slide 41: Goal for Day 3

- Today we will cover the following items:
 - Universal Design for Learning
 - Strategies
 - PD Review

Slide 42: Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Read the slide as is

- What is it?
 - An approach to curriculum development aimed at removing barriers in education to make it accessible to the largest numbers of learners (Kennette and Wilson, 2019)
- Three Principles of UDL
 - Multiple means of representation
 - Multiple means of action and expression
 - Multiple means of engagement

Slide 43: UDL at a Glance

- Participants will watch a short video about UDL
- After the video ask the following:
 - What did you see in the video that was helpful?
 - Are you doing any of this already in your classrooms?

Slide 44: Universal Design for Learning

- Multiple means of representation
 - The WHAT of learning
 - Provide options for Perception
 - Provide options for Language and Symbols
 - Provide options for Comprehension
- Read through the slide as is

Slide 45-47: UDL – Representation

- Discuss how there are multiple ways to represent and present information to students
- Discuss how this represents the WHAT of learning
 - What are we learning
- Read through the slides and stop to discuss the examples provided for:
 - Perception
 - Language and Symbols
 - Comprehension
- Use this time to facilitate a discussion about the strategies and how to use them in their lessons.
- Ask participants to discuss how they may have used these in their classroom already and if not, how they may incorporate them.
- Discuss how these strategies are universal and how they can be used with any lesson and with any student.
- It is putting things into perspective that this is a mindset for teaching.

Slide 48 – Break

- Participants will be given a 10 minute break

Slides 49-51: UDL – Expression

- Explain how this is the HOW of learning
 - Explain how we can use different ways for students to respond
 - S-ID can respond using multiple ways, even physical movement
 - Discuss the importance of communication and how to teach effective communications.
 - Technology can be your friend in this venture.
 - There are so many different tools available to teachers to help in this process
 - Planning is essential in this process. Failure to plan, is planning to fail
 - Read through the bullets

Slides 52-54: UDL – Engagement

- As the facilitator reads through the bullets on these slides, discuss the following:
 - This is the WHY of learning
 - Engagement is a critical component of learning
 - It is essential that students take ownership of their learning
 - This will help to increase engagement
 - Remember your classroom is a safe learning environment for all students to explore their learning and share their ideas.
 - Hold students to highest levels of accountability
 - Just like in this PD, foster collaboration and a sense of community within your classroom.
 - Teach coping strategies
 - And model, model, model

Slides 55-58: UDL Strategies to Consider

- Read through the bullets on the slides
 - As the facilitator reads through the slides discuss the items below
- Discuss the importance of using visuals for S-ID
- Labelling to provide S-ID with opportunities to be able to effectively express their feelings.
- Daily Schedules (Consistency is key)
- Adaptive skills
 - Remember that S-ID need continuous support in daily living skills as discussed in day 1
- Peer buddies help to foster a positive classroom culture of acceptance.
 - Students without disabilities can learn from S-ID and vice versa
- Collaborative labelling is a great way for students to learn routines.
 - Remember, consistency is essential

Slide 59: Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Activity

- At your table, visit the following website
<https://goalbookapp.com/toolkit/v/strategies>
- Take a few minutes to become familiar with the site, and select three potential strategies that you might be able to use in your classroom for S-ID.
 - How will you use the strategy?
 - How will this help teach S-ID in your class?
- Participants will have 35 minutes to work on this activity
- The facilitator will walk around to the tables to assist as needed
- The facilitator will bring the participants back to the whole group and will debrief about the strategies they chose for 10 minutes. The discussion should focus on what they learned, was it helpful, how will they use these strategies to help S-ID meet their academic needs in their classroom?

Slide 60: Let's Collaborate

- Participants will be given 45 minutes to collaborate with each other. This time will be used for participants to share ideas with each other, discuss strategies that they have found to be successful.
- Participants will be reminded to use the time productively to learn from each other and talk about similarities they are facing in their classrooms.

Slide 61: Review, Wrap-Up, and Evaluation

- After 45 minutes, the facilitator will do the following:
 - Facilitator will conduct a review of what was discussed for today and over the 3-day PD.
 - Facilitator will answer any questions participants have.
 - Have participants complete the final evaluation
 - Once participants have completed the evaluation, they will be thanked for participating in the PD and will be dismissed.

References

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from

<http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

(2018). Accommodations: Assisting students with disabilities. Tallahassee, FL.

Florida State University (2020). CPALMS. Retrieved from

<https://www.cpalms.org/Public/>

Daily Instructional Lesson Plan	
Content Area(s)/Course/Grade:	Unit:
Lesson Topic:	Date:
Teacher:	School:
Indicator(s)/Sub-Outcome(s)/Expectation(s):	
Student Outcome(s):	
Context for Learning	
Instructional Delivery	
Opening Activities/Motivation:	
Procedures:	
Assessment/Evaluation (Formative/Summative)	
Closure:	

Professional Development Evaluation Form

Date: _____ PD Title: _____

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The objectives and agenda of the session were clearly communicated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The objectives of the session were relevant to my learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The activities of the session helped me to better meet the stated objectives. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The activities of the session met my learning style as an adult learner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The stated objectives were met by the presenter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I plan to use what was learned at the session. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please comment:

1. Areas of strength: Specifically, what did you find effective in the professional development experience?

2. Areas for Improvement: Specifically, how could the professional development experience be improved?

Exit Ticket

3	Things I Learned Today...
2	Things I Found Interesting...
1	Question I Still Have...

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

What are elementary general education teachers' (who teach S-ID in the general education environment) perceptions of the current professional development offered within the special education department?	
1. Does your district provide training to assist elementary general education teachers in working with students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting? If so, please describe the types of training you have received.	
2. What types of professional development or training have you attended to prepare you to educate students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?	
3. Do you believe the current professional development model in your district prepares you to meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom? Why or why not?	
What are elementary general education teachers' perceptions of the purpose of professional development in relation to teaching students with intellectual disabilities in the general education environment?	
4. How does having students with intellectual disabilities impact your classroom?	
5. What challenges do you face when trying to support students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?	
6. Did any of your pre-service training prepare you to teach students with intellectual disabilities? Explain	

7. What role does professional development play in preparing elementary general education teachers to educate students with intellectual disabilities in the general education environment?	
What types of professional development do elementary general education teachers feel are needed to increase academic achievement of students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting?	
8. How has the professional development that you have been a part of affected the strategies you use in the inclusive classroom?	
9. What strategies have you used with students with intellectual disabilities that has been successful in improving academic achievement?	
10. What does successful inclusion look like to you?	
11. What role does professional development play in successful inclusion?	
12. What suggestions do you have for improving professional development in your district to prepare teachers to educate students with intellectual disabilities in the general education environment?	
13. Do you have anything you would like to add?	

Number of years teaching _____

Number of years teaching S-ID _____

Professional Teaching Certifications

held _____

Did you have any pre-service training on educating S-ID _____

Appendix C: Sample Interview Transcript

Participant B Interview Transcript

Duration:"00:32:09.0900000"

00:00:41.800 --> 00:01:56.862

Researcher: Hi, is this [REDACTED]?

Participant B: Yep this is [REDACTED]

Researcher: Hi, this is Bradley. How are you today?

Participant B: Good, how about yourself?

Researcher: I am doing OK. Thank you. How was your? How was your day? Was it pretty good?

Participant B: Yeah it was good. It was a good day. I have to say

Researcher: Yeah, you gotta cherish those because the way the things have gone this year. It is definitely been very challenging for everybody that I have talked to. That is for sure.

Participant B: Definitely it's you really never know what you're walking into this year. I will say.

Researcher: It's definitely a unique year. I don't know how long you've been teaching, but..

Participant B: It's actually my first year as a teacher. You can only imagine

Researcher: You have definitely, you have definitely had challenges. That is for sure. Acclimating to being a first year teacher and, and, then with everything, with the pandemic it's definitely been, definitely been a challenge, I bet.

Participant B: Oh yeah, it's been a lot of figuring things out, but where there's a will, there's a way.

Researcher: Yeah, yeah, wow.

Participant B: I have great support where I teach, so I'm definitely happy about that.

Researcher: Very good and you teach 5th grade.

Participant B: Yep, I teach 5th grade

00:01:58.280 --> 00:04:11.500

Researcher: Um, well, thank you for taking the time to, to, meet with me this afternoon. I definitely, definitely, appreciate it.

Participant B: Yeah

Researcher: The interview itself probably won't take that long, probably, probably 30 minutes or less. Actually not a lot of questions. On the interview just approximately 13 questions that maybe a couple additional questions as we go along for clarification, but but they're gonna focus around three main areas of the first area has to do with professional development that you have attended. The second focus area is around your perception of, of, the purpose of professional development in relation to teaching students with intellectual disabilities. And then the third, um area focus is the type of professional development that you feel is needed for teachers to increase student achievement for students with intellectual disabilities.

Participant B: Okay

Researcher: As indicated in the consent form that you signed in provided back to me, the responses that you provide me are confidential. So no identifying information from you will be in in my final write up at all,

Participant B: Okay

Researcher: so you know your name will not be used. You will be known as, as, just to participant within the study.

Participant: Okay

Researcher: And the information that we do talk about today, though, as indicated in the consent form, will be audio tape for transcription purposes only. Once I transcribe the interview today, I will send it to you so you can review it for accuracy. And if there are any concerns after you reviewed it, then you can definitely let me know. But the information from the transcription will be used by me to identify, and analyze data based on the themes that I come up with and, and, see from all the participants in in the study.

00:04:11.500 --> 00:04:29.400

Participant B: OK, sounds great.

Researcher: Alright. Do you have any questions before we get started?

Participant B: No, I think I'm good to go.

Researcher: Alright, so let's go ahead and get started, then. As I indicated before the first few questions here are going to focus on professional development that you, you, have attended.

00:04:29.400 --> 00:04:49.940

Researcher: Does your school or district provide training to assist elementary general education teachers in working with students with intellectual disabilities in the Gen Ed setting? And if so, can you describe for me the types of training you have received.

00:04:49.940 -->00:05:25.010

Participant B: So as far as working with students with disabilities, my district hasn't provided any hands-on training that had to do specifically with that. Um, they had given me some English as a second language support, but that's a different realm, so no official trainings that are hands on or anything like that, but information is usually given to me and articles are shared with me. Things like that.

00:05:25.010 --> 00:05:57.990

Researcher: So as of right now, and I know this is your first year with regard to teaching, but you haven't seen any specific training or have attended any specific training to gather knowledge to teach students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive setting?

Participant B: Yes, no, we haven't. We haven't had any official training, so it's my first year like you said, but I haven't heard of any or have any.

00:05:57.990 --> 00:07:33.230

Researcher: Um so, what types of professional development training have you attended that you feel as though might have prepared you for teaching students with intellectual disabilities?

Participant B: Just professional development,

Researcher: Yeah, or I mean, it could either be meetings or, or, or, conferences or things like that as well.

Participant B: Can you repeat that question one more time? I'm sorry,

Researcher: Yeah, So what types of professional development or training have you attended that you feel as though has prepared you to teach students with intellectual disabilities in the classroom?

Participant B: OK, awesome, so one training that I've been to is i-Ready training. I don't know how familiar you are with that program. OK, so that was really helpful because when I met with the facilitator who's doing the training, it was one on one. So we really got to look at my data and talk about how to use that in teaching. And specifically, the students who have intellectual disabilities. She was able to show me like this is their grade level and support with here's some extra resources here's some reteach resources. Here's some more scaffolded material for students, something a little bit more visual for a visual learner, so that was really helpful in thinking about how I would help my students in the classroom who did have disabilities.

00:07:33.230 --> 00:07:57.730

Researcher: And will expound upon on that a little bit later on with regards to some of those strategies that you, you, have learned in that that training, because I want to touch upon that a little bit more as well, because I'm curious to know of those strategies that that you learned in that that training how you've been able to translate that a little bit further with, with, students towards student achievement as, as, well.

Participant B: Yes, definitely.

00:07:57.730 --> 00:09:20.460

Researcher: Do you believe then, that the current professional development model in in your district or school prepares you to meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom? And why or why not?

Participant B: So personally, I think there could be a little bit more training to learn how to meet the needs of the students with disabilities in the classroom. I'm fortunate enough that when I went to school, I got certified in special education as well. So that really for me, I have a lot of background knowledge going into teaching because so much of my program was focused on supporting students with disabilities. So for me I have this knowledge and I work with another new teacher who's not certified in special education. So I notice there's some a little bit of disconnect in the types of support we could give students. And also the expectations of students. Um, so I think, especially with new teachers having more support there and training there would help us service the classroom little better.

00:09:20.460 --> 00:10:54.630

Researcher: With regard to um, professional development, either in general or, or, more specific, what do you think that the training model that's currently in place. Um, do you feel as though that more is needed regarding specific disabilities like trainings at that focus around a certain exceptionality or should they be more generalistic or and or both? Do you feel as though that the model that is currently in place needs to, to, have specifics, to certain specific exceptionalities and general strategies that assist teachers.

Participant B: Personally, I think just more general strategies. Because I've noticed with the students with disabilities, it's really the strategies that work for that student aren't tied to the disability they have, but just to the students. So sometimes a strategy that might work really well for a certain type of learning disability also might work for another one and just having all of those in your bank as a teacher really prepares you when you do see a student who's struggling with meeting a need. To have another OK, I could try this, or I could try another strategy that I know from learning so many general ways that I, I, could support students with needs.

00:10:54.630 --> 00:12:52.920

Researcher: OK, the, the, next set of questions are going to focus on, as I mentioned before, your perception of the purpose of professional development in relation to, to, teaching students with intellectual disabilities.

Participant B: Okay

Researcher: So, um, how does having students with intellectual disabilities impact your classroom?

Participant B: So one of the biggest impacts personally in my classroom is I have one student with a disability who is very expresses himself verbally making murmurs or just kind of white noise. And the other students in my classroom in the beginning of the year were getting extremely frustrated with that.

Researcher: And because of the, the, the, verbal expressions at the other student was, was, was, doing in the class.

Participant B: Yeah, so any type of noise he does verbal and also just like, he'll tap his desk or things like that just to, to, make noise. So the other students, especially during independent work time, it was becoming frustrating for them and it was affecting the class cultural a little bit before we had a full class conversation and talked about how everybody's dealing with different things and everybody's making noises sometimes at the wrong moment and everybody needs, needs, a way to express themselves when

they're working and we. But before that, I notice the student was being ostracized because of that, so it was important to me and it was important to me to realize once I got impact is happening to address it and see a change, which I'm thankful was successful

00:12:52.920 --> 00:13:50.380

Researcher: Gotcha. And so, it sounds as though they said it could have been possibly exhibit, exhibit some type of challenge to teach um students with, with, intellectual disabilities? Are there other challenges that you see or that you've experienced that you face when trying to support students with disabilities or students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

Participant B: I would say another challenge is thinking about how you're going to be like assessing the students with disabilities.

Researcher: In what way?

Participant B: Formally, to be more specific.

Researcher: So through the means of like alternative assessments.

Participant B: Yeah, like thinking about what assessments and what to include on them, the length of them, the supports to give while they take the assessment. I would say that was a challenge in the beginning of the year.

00:13:50.380 --> 00:14:42.110

Researcher: Are there any other current challenges that you face? Besides the assessment part of it, anything relation to planning anything in relation to delivery of instruction?

Participant B: I would say. probably in my other biggest challenges, right now we're teaching hybrid. So some of the students are learning watching the classroom live from home on Zoom, and a few of those students are students with disabilities and it is really hard to support them without being able to give manipulatives, being able to instead of having them show something digitally showing it, tactilely, it's really hard to do that, not in the classroom setting.

00:14:42.110 --> 00:15:52.550

Researcher: What do you feel, as though, is the role of professional development? And what role does professional development play in preparing elementary general education teachers to educate students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive classroom?

Participant B: I would say the biggest role it plays is it's really impacts and influences your pedagogy. I was like I mentioned before, I was fortunate enough that in undergrad and graduate studies I got to study disabilities and get some similar trainings you would get in professional development and it just intertwined with my pedagogy and thinking about all students as a whole child instead of and, and, supporting and finding different ways to support, I think the more you familiar, familiarize yourself with it, and immerse yourself in it, the more it really gets ingrained in your beliefs and. For me, that is the biggest role. I would say that it plays, especially in an inclusive room where the range could be so, so vast.

00:15:52.550 --> 00:18:38.090

Researcher: Sure. You mentioned, that your degree was in special education.

Participant B: Yes

Researcher: So with your pre service training or collegiate courses that you, you, took. You mentioned earlier that, um the overall generalized view of, of, special education helps you to prepare for instructing students all students within a classroom. Because of the strategies that you learned and an approaches that you learned. Are there other specific courses or, or, that you took that were specific to students with intellectual disabilities? Or was it just more generalized on what the overall coursework showed for special education?

Participant B: So I, we did have to take specific classes about like specific types of learning disabilities. I know autism was a really big course we had to complete. Also, to get that certification I needed to do field work in special education where I was in an inclusive co-taught classroom.

Researcher: In an inclusive co-taught classroom?

Participant B: Yes

Researcher: Which included what grade level?

Participant B: Fourth

Researcher: 4th grade.

Researcher: And how do you feel that experience went with regard to helping to prepare you?

Participant B: I think that experience really helped prepare me because I got to really familiarize myself with the pacing and the supports needed working with students with disabilities. Um, it really brought light to me that it's not important just to get through the material, but to spend more time to get an understanding of the material is much more

valuable than get to try to tack on skill after skill after skill. So that was really helpful. It was also really helpful to see some of the accommodations and modifications the teacher would make, and when she would make them and the different expectation she would grade students based off knowing their background and their struggles and their needs. I just felt like seeing it hands on and getting to talk to someone who is teaching students in an inclusive classroom, it just really gave me a realistic approach to teaching when I started.

Researcher Very Good

00:18:39.150 --> 00:21:10.765

Researcher: Um, the, the, last set of questions that I have are going to focus a little bit on student achievement. For students with intellectual, intellectual disabilities in relation to professional development, you've expounded upon a few things already that touch upon that. Um? You mentioned in and you can even use that prior experience prior to teaching in your internships as well to answer these questions as well.

Participant B: Okay, perfect

Researcher: If you haven't had anything specific this current year with regard to, to, professional development, I mean you talked a little bit about the i-Ready and things like that as well, but question is how has the professional development that you've been a part of affected the strategies you use in the inclusive classroom?

Participant B: Um, like I mentioned before. My training really helped me think about assessment, which is really something I'm still thinking about as a first year teacher. Um? Because in the, it's tempting to give all students the same assessment across the board and see where they land. For me, I personally do, I don't do that. I make different assessments for different groups of students, based on their skills and their needs. So assessing them in a different way really does show me what they know rather than just giving me a grade. So for example, one of my students with disabilities he tends to rush if he's given independent work during quiet time, especially an assessment. And he's not able to show that he understands. If I pulled him with the same assessment, ask him the questions or really give him maybe a whiteboard instead of a piece of paper, he's able to show that he understands the material and he's able to accurately answer everything on the assessment. So that I would say is one area that is, it really, it really prepared me to just think about assessing students in a different way and not always just being a paper pencil test, but thinking of different ways to assess students to really find out what they know, not just what they can put on paper.

00:21:10.765 --> 00:22:23.510

Researcher: Very good. What, what strategies then have you used with students with intellectual disabilities that you have found to be successful in improving student achievement?

Participant B: I would say I have found that using visuals is extremely beneficial for students with disabilities. Using checklist has been extremely beneficial in my classroom for my students with disabilities. Another thing is holding them to a little bit of a higher expectation than maybe they're at the moment. Once I've noticed with my students with disabilities if they are given an opportunity to do something that's a little bit above their level, it can be a motivating factor for them to strive and to really think deeply about the material because they, they, want to get to that higher level. And i-Ready in fifth grade, they can see the level right on the top of the screen. They're very aware of it. They're very aware that it's tied to their intellectual, what they, what they can produce. So I would say. Holding them to a higher expectation has been successful in my classroom.

00:22:23.510 --> 00:24:50.190

Researcher: And what do you, what, what, does successful inclusion look like to you?

Participant B: One big thing for me, especially in the beginning of the year, was classroom community. I wanted learners in the room with and without disabilities to not even be thinking about each other's skills. And in the beginning, like I said, students were very aware that the student making, making, noise in the room. It was tied to his disability and that student as well had expressed himself to the class and said I can't, I can't help myself, but to make noise because I have some things going on in my brain. So that was something that I noticed when the classroom community was more tense it wasn't as a successful learning environment for both learners with and without disabilities. Another thing that's important to me in an inclusive classroom is just like entry points for each student, and opportunities for success grade students.

Researcher: So I was gonna say how, can you expound upon that a little bit with entry points?

Participant B: So with entry points I notice in the beginning of the year I needed to start giving more, especially for the students with disabilities. So for example, if we're working on a reading assignment giving sentence starters to help frame their thoughts, I saw huge difference once I started doing that or giving entry points in the text. OK, let's read paragraph 30. Instead of just giving them this whole long text. Giving them an entry point and then they can read that targeted paragraph. Oh let's how's the character acting there? How can you describe him? Because he's acting that way. So giving them those

thinker questions, giving them those entry points really helps them think about the material. And I always like to incorporate opportunities for success. Like I said with students who don't do well on standard paper and pencil assessments, I like to incorporate other types of assessments so they always feel like they have an opportunity to also be successful and to show what they understand.

00:24:50.190 --> 00:26:22.390

Researcher: So, so with the increase in inclusion nationwide and, and, and, and, here as well, what role do you see professional development playing in successful inclusion?

Participant B: I think professional development is, it's really important in inclusion. Um, it will give you, it gives you strategies to use, especially when you're currently dealing with like an active problem in your classroom. I imagine if when I was dealing with my class community, getting a little tense, related to my student and how he was expressing himself if I had some type of support through professional development, I could have expressed that and gotten specific feedback on that which would have been really helpful. Also just any tools. Sometimes you come from special professional development like actual physical tools that they tell you about. Like I know we use a lot of elastic bands in my classroom, for students who like to have some movement and I've gained a, from another teacher like a, like a checklist, and a daily schedule, that's a whiteboard. Things like that. I feel like you learn about in professional development and it's, it's, helpful 'cause sometimes they'll provide them. Or you can go out and decide. OK, this is something I can see working in my classroom. I'm going to get it. I'm going to use it.

00:26:22.390 --> 00:27:00.560

Researcher: So you mentioned at the beginning as well, and touched upon it just now in the last question that the types of professional development um, that you look for to help you are, are, more hands on approach like something that you can take with you to, to, use tomorrow in your in your classroom for students, things that that you can take with you and actually utilized. Correct?

Participant B: Right. Yeah, I would say that's super helpful as a new teacher, especially who doesn't have like that, that build-up of all materials from years past.

00:27:00.560 --> 00:27:58.690

Researcher: So then, what suggestions do you have for improving professional development in your school or district to better prepare teachers to educate students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive setting?

Participant B: I think with professional development it's more exposure to talking about. I think it would be really helpful if the teacher come in opportunity to talk about experiences they're having in a setting like that. Um, where my district? We don't. We don't really have that.

Researcher: So being able to have a session to be able to sit down with other teachers to share those experiences and what's worked and what hasn't worked.

Participant B: Yeah, like collaboration, I guess is the best way to put it. I would make more collaboration with the staff. I think everyone can share their insights and it would be really helpful.

00:27:58.690 --> 00:28:59.660

Researcher: Um? You mentioned that you are this is your first year teaching, right?

Participant B: Yeah,

Researcher: Um and that your pre service training was in special education, and are you working towards your certifications right now or have your certifications right now? Your teaching certificate?

Participant B: So I'm working. I still have to complete my ESOL requirement. I got certified in New Jersey

Researcher: OK.

Participant B: So in New Jersey I have my certification, but here I have to get that ESOL.

Researcher: 'cause that'ss gotta transfer over.

Researcher: So then what, what areas of, of, do you hold with regard to certification?

Participant B: In New Jersey?

Researcher? Yeah

Participant B: So I have a teacher of students with disabilities is one and then K6 general education as the other certificates.

Researcher: So in translation from there to here, it be like ESE all grade levels and then K6 elementary?

Participant B: Yeah

00:28:59.660 --> 00:31:56.949

Researcher Uh, do you have any questions or anything that you would like to add or expound upon that we've already talked about?

Participant B: No, I don't think so. I think I think I definitely went into some detail when I answered.

Researcher: That is all the questions that I have. I told you it would be relatively quick. Yeah relatively quick and painless, um? So the next step on what will happen is that I will, um, transcribe as I mentioned earlier, the interview. Um. I will send it over to you in a Word Document so you can, can, review it and just give you a time frame to say if you don't see anything by this particular date then I'll assume that everything is OK within the parameters of the transcription. As indicated in the consent form there's a \$25 Amazon gift card for an incentive, for participating, so what I'm going to do is I will drop that off at your school beginning part of next week for you with your name on it to the front office people. I'll have it in an envelope and I'll let you know after I have dropped it off. That way you know to expect it as well.

Participant B: Sounds Great

Researcher: I definitely appreciate you taking the time. I know that as we mentioned earlier, it's definitely challenging for any teacher to take time out of their busy schedule to, to, do something like this. So I definitely feel...

Participant B: No thank you, it was honestly, I could nerd out about education probably. Alright, so I was worried I was going to do that to you.

Researcher: No listen. I, I, I've been in education along time and, and, I've worked with students with disabilities at that for a very long time. And so it's..

Participant B: That is something especially when I heard was about students with disability. I'm so passionate about so I was like yes, of course I'll do that.

Researcher: And I definitely appreciate that because I think we both share that same, that same notion of special education. Because I, I, definitely have held special education very dear to me for, for, all of my career not only in education but in non-profit as well.

Participant B: That's great. It's amazing. It's amazing some of the things you can learn when you really dive into it.

Researcher: Absolutely. Absolutely. Well. If you have any,

Participant B: Well, best of luck with your dissertation.

Researcher: Thank you. And if you have any other questions you got my email address.

You can definitely give me a call between now and

Participant B: Definitely, and if you ever need any future help, feel free to reach out it was it was a pleasure.

Researcher: I definitely, definitely appreciate that. Thank you so much.

Participant B: Yes it was. It was nice connecting with you and meeting you.

Researcher: Yes, thank you so much and you have a great evening. OK

Participant B: Yes you too. Thank you.

Researcher: Take care bye

Participant B: Bye.

Interview Ended 00:31:56.949