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Inclusion of Students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities in the General Education Setting

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Danielle Jania

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, Lewis University, 2006

MS, Dominican University, 2003

BS, Monmouth College, 2000

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

In recent years, states have been interested in the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend being educated in the general education environment. Students with moderate intellectual disabilities at a suburban high school in Illinois consistently spend more than 80% of their educational time in the special education environment. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the self-efficacy of secondary school co-teachers at the local level to support the academic needs of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom. The theory of teacher self-efficacy provided the conceptual framework for this study. The self-efficacy of eight special education co-teachers and 11 general education co-teachers at a suburban high school in Illinois was examined to determine their willingness to volunteer to co-teach in a general education classroom that includes students with moderate intellectual disabilities. Interviews were analyzed using typological analysis, with four themes emerging from the data: accommodations and modifications, professional development, personal experiences, and inclusion. Implications for social change include improving educational opportunities for students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Based on these themes, a three-day professional development program was developed to provide special education and general education co-teachers with strategies to differentiating instruction in order to increase their self-efficacy when teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education environment in the hope that it will improve the learning experiences for students.

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Dedication

First, I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my mother. My mother has been an educator her entire life. In fact, she even gave up her dream of getting her doctoral degree to make sure my brother and I had everything that we needed in life. Even now as a retired teacher/administrator, she continues to be a mentor to many people. Her love and support throughout the years has made me the woman I am today and for that, I am beyond grateful. Please know how grateful I am that you always pushed me to be the best person I could be.

Second, I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my father. My father has always put his family before himself and showed me what the definition of hard work is. Without his support and love, I wouldn't be where I am today. He was my biggest cheerleader from the first day I picked up a basketball and has continued to cheer me on through this entire doctoral journey. I know I don't tell him enough, but I forever grateful for the love and support he has shown me.

Next, I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my Nanee. It is hard to believe that received her wings seven years ago. In fact, I started this doctoral degree because her passing left such a void in my life. My Nanee taught me what it was like to just love. She enjoyed watching me in every sport event, graduation, work accomplishment, etc. I wish she was here for this milestone in my life, but I know she is looking down from heaven and smiling because she is proud of my accomplishments. She taught me that I can do anything that I put my mind to.

Last, but not least, I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my brother. I would not change anything about our years growing up together. It is a great feeling when you can call your brother your best friend. My brother has taught me what it is to be kind, to love, and to just enjoy life. It has been a comfort to know he is always just a phone call away. He has always taught me it is okay to be different and not to worry about what others think of you. Just know that I am your biggest fan and I love you!!!

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to acknowledge my friends who have been a support system through my entire doctoral journey. Dawn, you have put up with my moods, craziness, tears, and venting. Lisa, your knowledge in math and technology was something that I could not have gone without. Christy, you have kept me focused when I wanted to give up and quit. They say family extends beyond blood, and my friends have been a strong support system that was needed during this difficult time. I love you all and appreciate you more than you will ever know.

Second, I would like to acknowledge Dr. James Miller, my committee chair, for always being there for me. Dr. Miller provided the guidance, support, and encouragement that I needed through this journey. There were many times he believed in me more then I believed in myself. I would also like to thank Dr. Slonski, my co-chair, for assisting me with perfecting my professional writing and providing me with ideas that were beneficial to my research. I could have never completed this doctoral degree without the support of these two wonderful, caring, and highly educated individuals.

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Section 1: The Problem

Parents and community groups have spent several years to ensure students with moderate intellectual disabilities are educated among their general education peers. National and state-level legislation have even created laws to support this aim. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind Act are two of the laws that require students with moderate intellectual disabilities to receive an education in the least restrictive environment (LRE; Pratt et al., 2017; Sauer & Jorgensen, 2016). Students' placement in the LRE is determined at the students individualized education plan (IEP) meeting and is a team decision. The IDEA requires the IEP team to include the child's parents/guardians, at least one general education teacher, at least one special education teacher, a representative of the local educational agency, related service providers (if applicable), and the student, especially when the student is of the age of 14 (Brock, 2018).

To meet the needs of students with moderate intellectual disabilities under IDEA, schools have offered a continuum of services, ranging from the LRE in the general education setting to the most restrictive placement in a separate school. One of the strategies many schools have adopted to increase the number of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom is co-teaching (Pratt et al., 2017). Co-teaching is defined as a teaching partnership between a general education teacher and a special education teacher (Pratt et al., 2017). For co-teaching to be effective, students with moderate intellectual disabilities need access to the general education curriculum and the specialized instruction the special education teacher brings

to the classroom (Weiss et al., 2020). Both the general education teacher and the special education teacher need to also have a positive attitude toward having students with moderate intellectual disabilities in their co-taught classroom setting (Saloviita, 2020).

Even with the co-teaching strategy in place, students with moderate intellectual disabilities have limited access to the general education environment compared to their peers with specific learning disabilities. According to recent data, in 2019, 50% of students in the United States with moderate intellectual disabilities spent less than 40% of their school day in the general education classroom, with only 17% spending more than 80% of their school day in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). This number varies greatly compared to their peers with specific learning disabilities, where only 5% spent less than 40% of their school day in the general education classroom and 71% spent more than 80% of their school day in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Research has often shown secondary school general education and special education co-teachers do not feel they can support students with moderate intellectual disabilities, even when the instructional strategy, such as co-teaching, is provided by the district (Hetzroni & Shalev, 2017).

The Local Problem

This project study included an examination of teachers' self-efficacy and the effect it has on their ability to administer various instructional strategies in the co-taught setting to meet the needs of students with moderate intellectual disabilities. A teachers' self-efficacy can affect their willingness to volunteer to co-teach. The setting for the study was a high school in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. The local high school has a

total enrollment of 1,780 students, with 17% having a disability (Illinois Department of Education, 2019). The district fully adopted the co-teaching model strategy in 2005. Each year special education teachers and general education are given the chance to volunteer to co-teach. But there are few teachers who volunteer each year, which has caused the district to assign teachers to co-teach who have not volunteered. The district also offers instructional classes, functional classes, and a resource room for students with moderate intellectual disabilities, but these specific classes do not allow students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be educated among their general education peers. Thus, this study included an exanimation of the self-efficacy of special education and general education teachers and the strategies they use in the classroom.

Definition of the Problem

The No Child Left Behind Act and IDEA have mandated that students with disabilities be placed in the LRE (Pratt et al., 2017; Sauer & Jorgensen, 2016). The problem is that secondary school students with moderate intellectual disabilities, at the local level, have limited access to the general education environment (Boler, 2016; Illinois Department of Education, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). States and local school districts have various methods to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities are spending in the general education environment, but the data over the past 3 years show that students with moderate intellectual disabilities are not spending increased amounts of time in the general education environment (U.S. Department of Education, 2017, 2019). An important aspect of high school is social interaction. By not being educated in the general education environment, students with

moderate intellectual disabilities can miss out on the social interaction with their general education peers (Chung et al., 2019).

One factor affecting the time students with moderate disabilities spend in the general education classroom is that teachers do not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom setting (Kirby, 2017). For the successful inclusion of students with disabilities, teachers need to have a positive attitude toward the principle of inclusion of students with disabilities (Kirby, 2017; Odongo & Davidson, 2016). But secondary school general education and special education co-teachers often feel they do not have the ability to support students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting (Hetzroni & Shalev, 2017). If administrators in secondary schools do not increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the inclusive setting, these students will not be prepared for the inclusive world they face after high school graduation (Chen, 2017).

Rationale

Addressing the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities into the general education classroom became the focus of this study because of the lack of research on students with moderate intellectual disabilities being included in the general education classroom (Gifford et al., 2018; Kirby, 2017). Integration of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in an inclusive setting leads to an enhancement in their quality of life (Chen, 2017). Students with moderate intellectual disabilities who participate in an inclusive education environment provides them opportunities to build relationships and social skills by interacting with their general education peers (Chen,

2017). Further, students with moderate intellectual disabilities can learn academic content, improve adaptive behavior and functional skills, build social competence, and develop friendships with their peers when participating in an inclusive classroom setting (Brock, 2018).

With the increase of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom, general and special education teachers need to be prepared and feel comfortable teaching students with this specific disability (executive director of pupil personal services, personal communication, October 28, 2019). But teachers who teach in inclusive settings have reported high levels of stress. The number of stress-inducing factors they experience can adversely affect their wellness, job performance, and student outcomes (Weiss et al., 2018). Some teachers also view inclusion as a privilege for students with moderate intellectual disabilities and feel they are better serviced in a resource room (Kirby, 2017). This personal feeling of teachers may come from their lack of training to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom. Teachers may also feel that having students with disabilities included in the general education classroom brings social gains at the cost of academic gains and can have a negative impact on teachers and instruction (Cooc, 2019; Kirby, 2017).

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The Illinois State Board of Education has charged local special education administrators with increasing the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education environment or LRE (executive director of

pupil personal services, personal communication, October 28, 2019). For these students to be educated in the LRE, they need to spend 80% or more of their day in the general education environment (Illinois Department of Education, 2019). But in the state of Illinois, only 4% of students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend 80% or more of their day in the general education classroom, whereas 51% spend less than 40% of their day in the general education setting (Illinois Department of Education, 2019). Additionally, 16% of students with moderate intellectual disabilities receive their education in an alternate facility, separate from their general education peers (Illinois Department of Education, 2019).

The local high school went through an audit by the state of Illinois in November 2017 to review the amount of time students with all disabilities were spending in the LRE. The state specifically looked at the educational environment codes for each student with a disability. Code 1 is categorized as a student with a disability spending 80% or more of their day in the general education environment (Illinois State Board of Education, 2020). Code 2 is categorized as a student with a disability spending 40%–79% of their school day in the general education environment. Code 3 is categorized as a student with a disability spending less than 40% of their school day in the general education environment. Code 4 is categorized as a student with a disability being educated in a separate public day school. Code 8 is categorized as a student with a disability being educated is a separate private day school.

Through this audit it was determined most students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend their school day in Code 3 or Code 4 (executive director of pupil

personal services, personal communication, October 28, 2019). The school currently has 1% of students with moderate intellectual disabilities who spend more than 80% of their day in the general education classroom (executive director of pupil personal services, personal communication, October 28, 2019; Illinois Department of Education, 2019). The school also has 6% of students with moderate intellectual disabilities who spend their school day in a separate education facility (executive director of pupil personal services, personal communication, October 28, 2019; Illinois State Board of Education, 2020). These findings prompted school leaders to put a plan in place to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education environment (executive director of pupil personal services, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

The school leaders increased the number of classes offered at the co-taught level and added a resource room for students with all disabilities to use. The school currently offers co-teaching in a variety of subject areas. Co-teaching is offered in the subject areas of math, English, and reading. In math, co-teaching is offered in Pre-Algebra, Math I, Math II, Math III, and Financial Algebra. In English, co-teaching is offered in English I, English II, English III, and English IV. Freshmen reading and sophomore reading are also offered in the co-taught setting. The variety of co-taught classes allows freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students with a moderate intellectual disability to all have access to a special education teacher in their class and be educated among their general education peers. In this specific school, the general education teacher is certified in the

specific subject area that is being taught and the special education teacher is certified in teaching students with all disabilities.

Even with the revised plan put into place, the amount of time the students with moderate intellectual disabilities spent in the general education environment did not increase, and they continued to be separated from their general education peers (Illinois Department of Education, 2019). The school in this study has a lower percentage of students with moderate intellectual disabilities spending time in the LRE than the state of Illinois, despite using the co-teaching model. If the problem is not addressed at the local school, the result could be the school facing another audit from the Illinois State Board of Education and students with moderate intellectual disabilities continuing to be excluded from the general education environment (executive director of pupil personal services, personal communication, August 17, 2020; Sauer & Jorgensen, 2016).

The general education teachers and special education teachers in the co-taught setting have been challenged with providing modifications and accommodations to allow students with moderate intellectual disabilities to participate in the general education setting. Teacher education programs for students with moderate intellectual disabilities, historically, have focused on the use of behavioral methods and a basic skills curriculum, which is possibly the reason secondary school general education and special education teachers do not feel prepared to teach this specific population (Hetzroni & Shalev, 2017; Lawson & Jones, 2018). This lack of self-efficacy can affect their ability to administer the instructional strategies needed in the co-taught setting for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be successful. This problem needs to be addressed in the local

setting so students with moderate intellectual disabilities can be educated along with their general education peers.

Evidence of the Problem from Professional Literature

High school years are crucial for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to determine their aspirations for the future, cultivate lifelong relationships, and become contributing citizens of society (Chung et al., 2019). For students with moderate intellectual disabilities to develop these specific skills, it is crucial they are integrated into the inclusive high school setting. Individuals with moderate intellectual disabilities are characterized as having limitations in their language and communication abilities, which are needed to be included in the general education setting (Hetzroni & Shalev, 2017). Social skills and the ability to independently follow directions are important skills needed for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be included in the general education classroom (Gifford et al., 2018). But even with limitations, general education classrooms are the best context for accessing the general education curriculum and practicing social skills for students with intellectual disabilities (Brock, 2018).

For students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be included in the general education environment, specific teaching collaborative strategies, such as co-teaching, should be implemented (Pratt et al., 2017). Co-teaching aims to meet the specific needs of students by providing targeted, individualized instruction in a structured environment (Lehane & Senior, 2020). Co-teaching can be used to increase the amount of time students with disabilities spend in the general education environment (Pratt et al., 2017). However, the implementation of co-teaching varies across the specific teachers who are

implementing it (Weiss et al., 2020). Research has examined the use of differentiation (Civitillo et al., 2016), indicating the importance of teachers for their readiness to integrate various differentiated instructional activities, their understanding of students' differences in the classroom, and their understanding of which teaching strategies work best with what type of learning to gain insight on inclusive practices in the general education classroom (Rachmawati et al., 2016). Further research has shown that teachers do not use a structured process for planning, arranging, and implementing supports for students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom (Thompson et al., 2020). Additionally, teachers have expressed concerns regarding certain disabilities being included in the general education classroom (Alnahdi, 2020). Classroom teachers do not always have the necessary expertise to adapt the education to meet the needs of students with moderate intellectual disabilities and report they do not have the time to deliver appropriately differentiated curriculum and well-prepared lessons (Engvik et al., 2018).

Definitions

This section contains definitions of the concepts that will be discussed throughout my study.

Accommodation: An accommodation is a change in a procedure that does not change the measurement of work the student with a disability needs to complete (Illinois State Board of Education, 2020).

Individualized education plan (IEP): IEPs are legal documents that outline the details of the services, goals, and accommodations that will be provided to a student with a disability (Harvey et al., 2020).

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA): IDEA obligate states to identify, assess, and serve all students with disabilities (Rossetti et al., 2020).

Least restrictive environment (LRE): Placing a student in the LRE presumes the first placement option considered for the student with a disability is the regular classroom in the school that the student would attend if he/she were not disabled, with appropriate supplementary aids and services to facilitate such placement (Giangreco, 2020).

Moderate intellectual disability: A student with a moderate intellectual disability has general intellectual functioning that adversely affects their educational performance, and the student also has deficits in adaptive behavior manifested during the developmental period (Illinois State Board of Education, 2020).

Modifications: Modifications for students with disabilities are items that are changed for the student to succeed in the regular classroom setting (Illinois State Board of Education, 2020).

No Child Left Behind Act: The purpose of NCLB was to close the achievement gap in public schools for math and reading based on ethnicity, race, and language and to ensure all teachers are highly qualified (Adler-Greene, 2019).

Resource room: A resource room includes students who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for at least 21% but not more than 60% of the school day (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Secondary school: Secondary schools in the United States typically consist of 3 or 4 years of high school and do not specialize in one type of program, such as vocational or college preparatory (National Center for Education and Statistics, 2019).

Specific learning disability: A student with a specific learning disability has a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language, that may manifest itself in the impaired ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations (Illinois State Board of Education, 2020).

Significance

The significance of this study is relative in terms of its application to the field of special education in general and its application to the local school, district, and community. The study is significant to the field of special education because it may allow school districts to understand how teachers' self-efficacy can affect their implementation of instructional strategies in the co-taught setting to meet the learning needs of students with moderate intellectual disabilities. It is also significant to the local district, school, and community because it may allow for an increase in the number of students with moderate intellectual disabilities that are educated in the general education setting.

Application to the Education Field

Research has been conducted on the inclusion of students with specific learning disabilities in the general education setting but not for students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Gifford et al., 2018; Kirby, 2017). A major goal of placing students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education environment is to allow them to

have a comfortable transition into the real world after high school (Chen, 2017). When students with moderate intellectual disabilities are included in the LRE, they are allowed the opportunity to build better relationships and social skills by interacting with their peers (Chen, 2017). Students with moderate intellectual disabilities who are included in the general education classroom also have access to general education teachers with expert knowledge in their content area (Brock, 2018). Therefore, this study addressed ways to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education environment.

Local Application

The local high school has a total enrollment of 1,780 students, with 14% having a a moderate intellectual disability (Illinois Department of Education, 2019). There is a continuum of services offered at the local high school, such as general education classes, resource support, co-taught classes, instructional classes, and self-contained classes. Integration into the general education setting at the local high school of students with moderate intellectual disabilities is determined at the student's IEP meeting. A general and special education teacher attend every IEP meeting when placement is determined. Currently, there are 1% of students with moderate intellectual disabilities that spend more than 80% of their school day in the general education environment, and 6% of students with moderate intellectual disabilities that are educated at a separate facility (executive director of pupil personal services, personal communication, October 28, 2019; Illinois Department of Education, 2019). This project study examined teachers' self-efficacy and

the effect it had on their willingness to volunteer to co-teach in an inclusive classroom setting that includes students with moderate intellectual disabilities.

Research Question

Based on the problem that has been identified the following research question was developed: How do high school general education teachers and special education teachers support students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting? The research question in this study guided the interview questions along with the four sources of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological information. How special education teachers and general education teachers perceive their self-efficacy was examined as another reason for the lack of inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom.

Review of Literature

Numerous studies have been conducted on how the self-efficacy of a teacher can affect their performance in the classroom (Alnahdi, 2020; Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1993; Shaukat et al., 2019; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001Zee & Koomen, 2016). Research has shown that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more likely to try new lessons in the classroom, teach to a variety of learning styles, and be willing to collaborate with other teachers. The purpose of this project study was to examine the self-efficacy of secondary school general education and special education teachers at the local level and the effect it has on

supporting the academic needs of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom.

Before beginning the study, an intensive search was completed for peer-reviewed articles on the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education setting through the Walden Library, ProQuest, ERIC, Education Source, and Google Scholar. I looked for statistics on the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities, as well as students with specific learning disabilities and severe intellectual disabilities, in the general education setting. I also searched for research on self-efficacy, specifically teacher self-efficacy, and the theoretical concepts surrounding them. Local data on the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities, specific learning disabilities, and severe intellectual disabilities were collected through databases found at the Illinois Department of Education website, and national data were collected through the U.S. Department of Education website. The search terms used included *self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, students with moderate intellectual disabilities, LRE, co-teaching, teacher perceptions on students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education setting,* and *students with moderate intellectual disabilities and inclusion.*

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this project study was self-efficacy, including, but not limited to individual self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, and collective self-efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy was by established as part of Bandura's (1977, 1986, 1997) social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory is a framework for understanding human

motivation, learning, and behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). The social cognitive

theory is grounded on the ideas that people can and do make decisions about their

behavior based on environmental and psychological cues. Critical factors influence the

degree to which those environmental and psychological cues impact human behavior

(Bandura, 1977, 1982). Self-efficacy is an important aspect of the social cognitive theory

because it indicates how a person perceives his or her ability to accomplish various tasks

(Bandura, 1993).

Bandura (1977) described self-efficacy as a person's estimate that a given

behavior will lead to certain outcomes. Perceived self-efficacy is concerned not with the

skills one possesses but with the perception of what one can do with the skills they

possess (van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001). Bandura further described self-

efficacy as the organization of necessary activities and evaluation of what specific

abilities are needed to accomplish those activities to show a certain performance.

Bandura added that a person sometimes can successfully execute the behavior required to

produce the outcomes. Bandura stressed the strength of belief people have in their own

effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will try to deal with certain situations. The

construct of self-efficacy provides a credible theoretical framework for evaluating

teachers' preparation confidence, or willingness to volunteer to work in an inclusive

setting for students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Alnahdi, 2020).

Additionally, Bandura (1977) noted that self-efficacy is shaped through mastery

experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional

states. Mastery experiences refer to how individuals interpret their past performances. For

example, experiences of success increase self-efficacy and experiences of failure can decrease self-efficacy (van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001). Another important factor of self-efficacy is seeing others perform successfully (van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001), which can be accomplished through vicarious experiences. Verbal persuasion is important to self-efficacy because if people are convinced or could be convinced of their abilities, they will be more inclined to give their best effort (van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001). For example, if a person is reassured of their ability to accomplish a task in front of others, the self-efficacy of that person is likely to increase (Bandura, 1993). Lastly, stress can have a significant negative impact on positive self-efficacy (van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001). Stress can affect a person's interpretation of their ability to accomplish a task successfully, which could result in a reduced sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

People who are persistent and continue to put forth effort, even when obstacles occur, have high self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Multiple researchers have suggested that teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy make efforts to involve all students in a meaningful way in their classroom (Alnahdi, 2020; Shaukat et al., 2019; Zee & Koomen, 2016). These efforts include creativity in teaching style, productive classroom management, and a willingness to cooperate with other staff members. Teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy tend to create a learning environment in their classroom which is warm and helpful to students with all disabilities (Shaukatet & Al Bustami, 2019).

Theory of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) theory of teacher efficacy was founded on the social cognitive theory of Bandura (1977). Teacher self-efficacy is a teacher's ability to provide knowledge and influence student behavior, even for those students who are unmotivated or challenging (TschannenMoran & McMaster, 2009). Tschannen-Moran et al. theorized that teacher efficacy is influenced by mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. Verbal persuasion can increase a teacher's self-efficacy but should be paired with other sources of efficacy to provide teachers the encouragement needed to expand and strengthen their teaching skills, such as observing a proficient teacher (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Allowing the teacher to practice a new skill in a supportive environment before being observed can also increase their psychological arousal (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Thus, new knowledge presented in a professional development can improve teacher self-efficacy if they are given the time to practice the skills in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Variables such as school climate, principal behavior, sense of community among school staff, and school decision-making procedures are also important for a teacher's sense of their professional efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to be organized in their classrooms and readily prepared to teach all lessons (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). These same teachers are more readily prepared and willing to adapt the curriculum and instruction for students with disabilities (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001;

Silverman, 2007). When things in the classroom do not go as expected, teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to face the adversity with a positive attitude (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). High self-efficacy in a general education teacher can also lead to them being more patient and more willing to spend extra time supporting a student with a moderate intellectual disability (Silverman, 2007).

In contrast, teachers with low self-efficacy can have a negative impact on the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom. Low self-efficacy frequently comes into play based on the subject area the teacher is teaching, the academic level of students, and whether the teacher is teaching outside their area of expertise (TschannenMoran & McMaster, 2009). This can include a general education teacher having to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities inside of the general education classroom, without any assistance from a special education teacher, or without the proper training. Teachers with low self-efficacy also tend to give up on students who do not catch on quickly, hold a negative view on student motivation, and have a strict classroom management system (Silverman, 2007).

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy can be increased when instead of looking at a teacher as an individual, school administrators look at teachers as a collective group. Collective teacher efficacy is a group attribute rather than the collection of individual teachers self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Collective teacher efficacy refers to the general perception that teachers in a school make an educational difference to their students over and above the impact of their homes and communities (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Individual teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are based on their perceptions of

their individual classroom performance in the school, whereas collective teacher efficacy

beliefs are social perceptions based on the capability of the entire school faculty

(Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). A school staff with a high level of collective teacher

efficacy believe that all students are teachable and can be motivated to achieve at high

levels (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Collective teacher self-efficacy can be

important in a co-taught situation since two teachers are constantly working together and

working with other co-teachers in the school.

Court Cases of Students with Disabilities

Federal and certain state laws, regulations, and court cases have established key

principles that guide the education of students with disabilities (Johns, 2016). Many

people have the misconception that public education is guaranteed to children by the

federal constitution, when according to the 10th Amendment, it is regulated at the state

level (Yell et al., 1998). In 1893, in the case of *Watson v. City of Cambridge*, the

Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that a child who was mentally challenged could not

benefit from instruction, was troublesome to other children, and was unable to care for

himself could be expelled from a public school (Yell et al., 1998). The White House

Conference on Children (1910) was an attempt to bring attention to the education of

children with disabilities by shifting the perspective of people to institutionalize students

with disabilities to allowing them to be educated in a public-school setting (Yell et al.,

1998).

By 1918, all states had passed compulsory education laws, which required all

children attend a public school or a state-accredited private school for a certain period

(Yell et al., 1998). Even with the laws in place, students with disabilities were frequently excluded from public schools. In *Beattie v. Board of Education* (1919), the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld a ruling that a student with a disability could be excluded from public school because this student's disability caused him to have a facial deformity and to also drool, which caused disruption to the classroom environment. However, the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that cited the 14th Amendment to support their ruling that students could not be denied the right to be educated based on race provided a turning point for parents of disabled children, who could also rely on the amendment to argue against the exclusion of students with disabilities from a public-school education (Yell et al., 1998).

There were also two important cases for legislation that protected students with disabilities. In the *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Pennsylvania* (1972), the judge ordered the school districts in Pennsylvania to offer accessible and appropriate education to students with all disabilities, not just those who have attained a mental age of 5 years old. This class action lawsuit brought about many other suits, which led to further legislation to be passed that protected students with disabilities (Yell et al., 1998). Not long after the case in Pennsylvania, a class action suit was brought before the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia on behalf of all students previously denied access to public education based solely on a disability or impairment. In the court case *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972), the court mandated the District of Columbia had to provide all students with disabilities a public education with

adequate support (Johns, 2016). The court specifically outlined the process through which students with disabilities would be assessed and serviced in the public schools.

In the case of *Board of Education v. Rowley* (1982), the standard for a free and appropriate education (FAPE) was established. FAPE requires a school to provide special education services to meet the unique needs of the individual child (Couvillon et al., 2018; Marsico, 2018; Zirkel, 2020). This court case also concluded that schools must provide educational benefit for students, but the school does not have to guarantee the student reaches their full potential (Johns, 2016). In 2017, *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* was the second case brought to the U.S. Supreme Court regarding a school district's responsibility to provide FAPE (Couvillon et al., 2018; Marsico, 2018). FAPE also requires schools to provide related services to help students benefit from special education (Couvillon et al., 2018; Zirkel, 2020). Under FAPE, an IEP plan is written for students in special education, which includes accommodations and modifications and allows students to be instructed in the LRE (Zirkel, 2020). FAPE also requires a student's special education program to be reasonably calculated to enable the student with a disability to make appropriate progress considering the student's circumstances (Couvillon et al., 2018). Under FAPE, services are provided to students in special education, free of charge to the family. Even with FAPE in place, in the case of *Honig v. Doe* (1988), the court decided that students with disabilities could be suspended for up to 10 school days in a school year (Johns, 2016).

Various court cases have also determined reimbursement to families when FAPE is not or cannot be met in the public-school setting. In *Burlington School Community v.*

Massachusetts Department of Education (1985), the court decided that if the proposed

education plan is deemed to not meet the child's specific needs, then schools may have to

reimburse a parent for private school tuition, even if the parent makes the choice to place

the child in a private school (Johns, 2016). In the case of *Florence County School District*

Four v. Shannon Carter (1993), the parents withdrew their child from a public school and

enrolled their child in a private school because the school was not providing FAPE, and

the family was entitled to reimbursement if the student received FAPE in a private school

(Johns, 2016).

Federal Legislation Protecting Students with Disabilities

In 1973, Congress passed the first crucial piece of federal legislation protecting

the rights of students with disabilities. This legislation is known as Section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act. This law also provides accommodations for students with disabilities,

including those who are not eligible for special education services or an IEP (Johns,

2016). In 1977, Congress finalized the language of Section 504 to state "no otherwise

qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall solely, by reason of his

handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to

discrimination under any activity receiving federal financial assistance" (Yell et al.,

1998). Section 504 defines disability as a

>   physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life

>   activities, which include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing

>   manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting,

bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking,

communicating, and working. (Johns, 2016, p. 26).

Under Section 504, FAPE refers to an education that is comparable with the education of other students (Johns, 2016). Further steps were taken to protect the rights of students with disabilities with the passing of Public Law 93-380 (Yell et al., 1998).

Public Law 93-380 provided funding for programs, instructions for due process procedures, and addressed the idea of educating students with disabilities in the LRE (Yell et al., 1998). In 1975, the United States Congress passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), also known as Public Law 94-142 (Couvillon et al., 2018). This law mandated all public schools provide a FAPE to students with disabilities, which included students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Brock, 2018). In fact, to receive federal funding, state education officials had to submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education which assured the specific state would provide students with disabilities the basic rights granted by the law (Couvillon et al., 2018). Students were made eligible for a disability through a meeting of a team of professionals and were able to receive services from the ages of 3-21. The EAHCA provided a detailed, inclusive piece of legislation to fight for equal protection for students with all disabilities. This legislation mandated students with disabilities had the right to nondiscriminatory testing, evaluations, placement procedures, to be educated in the LRE, to a procedural due process, include parent involvement, and a FAPE (Yell et al., 1998; Couvillon et al., 2018). The EACHDA also recognized each student in special education is different and a yearly educational plan should be developed by a team of individuals (Johns, 2016).

The EAHCA was reauthorized in 1990 and renamed the IDEA. IDEA served as a platform to protect the educational rights of students with disabilities (Brock, 2018). Under IDEA, the most important right extended to students with disabilities is the right to FAPE (Couvillon et al., 2018). The main thresholds under IDEA are child find and eligibility. Child find refers to when a school district has reason to suspect that the child may meet the criteria of eligibility for special education and obtains consent for the evaluation of the child within a reasonable period (Johns, 2016; Zirkel, 2020). For a child to be eligible under IDEA, the child needs to meet the criteria of one or more of the identified classifications under IDEA and must have a resulting need for special education services (Zirkel, 2020). Eligibility overlaps with but is separable from child find. IDEA changed to emphasize the person first, changed the terms handicapped student, and required a transition plan to be included in every student's IEP who was over 16 years of age (Yell et al., 1998).

President Clinton first reauthorized IDEA in 1997. This reauthorization called for special classes, separate schooling, or the removal of students with disabilities from the general educational environment only when academic success can't be achieved in that environment, even with the use of supplemental aides (Brock, 2018). Congress also mandated students with disabilities be included in state and district wide assessments (Yell et al., 1998). There were also significant changes made to the IEP writing process. These changes included measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, be included in the IEP for parents and educators to determine student progress (Yell et al., 1998). This amendment also included how to address students with

disabilities display behaviors. The 1997 amendment required that if a student with disabilities displays behavior issues, the IEP team shall consider positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports, to address the behavior problems (Yell et al., 1998). Now, an IEP team could meet to conduct a functional behavior assessment and write a behavior intervention plan to address the behaviors that are impeding the student's learning in the classroom. The 1997 amendment also addressed the way a school can discipline a student with a disability. Discipline for students with and without disabilities is the same, except students with disabilities have some legal protections. First, students with disabilities are not allowed to be suspended for more than 10 school days (Yell et al., 1998). Second, school officials can place a student with a disability in an alternative placement for 45 days if the student brings a weapon to school, has drugs on their person, or causes bodily harm to an individual (Yell et al., 1998). The placement of the student with a disability in an alternative school must be the decision of the IEP team.

On December 3rd, 2004, President Bush signed the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) which was a reauthorization to the 1997 IDEA. This law governs how schools provide services to children with disabilities from birth through the day before their 22nd birthday (O'Connor et al., 2016). There are 13 different types of disabilities specified under IDEA 2004. The 13 different disabilities are: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, and visual impairment. For a student to be classified with one of these disabilities, the disability

must have an adverse impact on educational performance for the student which would require special education and/or related services (Johns, 2016). This reauthorization confirmed students with disabilities should receive FAPE in the LRE (Lim, 2020). LRE allows students with disabilities the right to be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate (Lim, 2020). LRE also requires that IEP teams make a conscious effort to place and maintain students with disabilities in LRE when possible (Couvillon et al., 2018). This reauthorization emphasized students with disabilities be placed in general education classrooms to achieve success by having high expectations set for them and ensuring interaction with their general education peers (Brock, 2018). IDEA of 2004 also required schools to use research-based interventions when determining eligibility for students with specific learning disabilities (Brock, 2018). Many schools have implemented response-to-intervention as a method of meeting the new requirements set by IDEA 2004 to assess students with specific learning disabilities (Maki et al., 2020).

IDEA 2004 should be updated again within the next five years, continuing to improve the education of over six million children with disabilities (Rossetti et al., 2020). The last act which went into effect that assisted students with disabilities was generated under President Obama. President Obama signed an act called Every Student Succeeds Act into law on December 10, 2015, which took effect during the 2017-2018 school year (Adler-Greene, 2019). It reauthorized and revised No Child Left Behind. The main areas of the act revised protocols dealing with standardized testing, the requirements for highly qualified teachers, evaluating low performing schools, and ensuring schools are held

accountable for students in need (Adler-Greene, 2019). This act also allowed the individual states to make decisions regarding education, which included how to allow students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be placed in the general education environment.

Inclusion

With the passing of special education laws and the requirement of students with disabilities to be educated in the LRE, inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom has taken place. Students with disabilities who are educated in inclusive classrooms spend more time on academic standards and have increased engagement on academics (Taub & Foster, 2020). In addition, research indicates students with disabilities in inclusive settings have access to higher quality teaching practices, increased rigor, and advanced academic and behavior expectations (Mortier, 2020; Taub & Foster, 2020). Students with disabilities who are taught in an inclusive setting are also known to have increased attendance and overall better health (Mortier, 2020; Taub & Foster, 2020). When students with disabilities are taught in the general education classroom with their general education peers, they are provided positive academic, social, and behavioral role models. They also can be taught by teachers with content expertise. Students with disabilities who are educated in the inclusive classroom setting are also more likely to obtain employment or continue their education after high school (Taub & Foster, 2020).

Inclusion is about increasing the academic and social participation for all students and adults in the LRE. Inclusion allows supporting schools to become more responsive to

the diversity of all student's backgrounds, interests, experiences, knowledge, and skills (Strogilos, 2016). Physically placing a student with a disability into a general education classroom does not guarantee true inclusion. True inclusion involves acceptance, belonging, and an active and equitable role in the school community for students with disabilities (Taub & Foster, 2020). It is therefore necessary to develop an IEP to determine how a student with a disability can be included in a general education classroom (Chen, 2017). The IEP is an agreement between school district personnel, the parents, and the student about what the student needs, how the services will be delivered, and by whom (Johns, 2016). IDEA requires that an IEP team include the student's parents, a general education teacher, a special education teacher, a representative of the local educational agency, any appropriate related service providers, and the student. This team must consider the unique educational needs of the student with a disability and consider the degree in which their needs can be met in the general education classroom (Brock, 2018). The IEP should also outline the specially designed instruction that is needed to ensure a student makes meaningful progress toward his or her educational goals (Johns, 2016). This specifically designed instruction should include data-based interventions, individual to each student. If the student's needs cannot be met in the LRE, then the IEP team must identify an alternative education plan for the student (Brock, 2018).

Inclusion of Students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities

With the passing of EAHCA in 1975, categories of disabilities were created including mental retardation, which would later be referred to as intellectual disability.

Throughout history, students with moderate intellectual disabilities were known to have been institutionalized or placed in separate schools, which meant being excluded from the public-school setting and their general education peers (Hanreddy & Östlund, 2020). In fact, people still believe that students with moderate intellectual disabilities are better off being educated in separate schools (Mortier, 2020). In the United States, students with moderate intellectual disabilities have worse economic, social, and quality of life outcomes (Taub & Foster, 2020). Students with moderate intellectual disabilities require supports in their everyday environments, such as school and home (Selanikyo et al., 2017). These specific students are also categorized as having deficits in intellectual and adaptive functioning which limits their performance in daily activities (Selanikyo et al., 2017; Taub & Foster, 2020).

Inclusion varies greatly by level of disability and location (Cosier et al., 2020). The passing of IDEA in 2004 allowed students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be educated with their general education peers to the maximum extent appropriate for each individual student (Cosier et al, 2020; Hanreddy & Östlund, 2020). IDEA also mandated schools to provide students with moderate intellectual disabilities a variety of educational placement options, which ranged from least restrictive to most restrictive (Hanreddy & Östlund, 2020). The least restrictive placement allows students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be educated with their general education peers in the general education classroom setting, to the most restrictive placement mandating them to be educated in a separate facility. Even with the laws currently in place to educate students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the LRE, these students are still not

being educated with their general education peers at a high percentage rate (Cosier et al., 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

According to the most recent data, 425,000 students in the United States receive special education services under the label of moderate intellectual disability (Hanreddy & Östlund, 2020; National Center for Education and Statistics, 2019). Also, in the United States, approximately 76% of school-age students with moderate intellectual disabilities are educated in self-contained, special education classrooms in the public-school setting for most of their school day (National Center for Education and Statistics, 2019). In some states, as few as 3.9% of students with moderate intellectual disabilities are included in general education classrooms for most of their school day (Mortier, 2020). Researchers have argued despite the individualization instruction and support that occurs in special education settings, these self-contained settings offer a high level of distraction, fewer opportunities to respond to instructional cues, and a lack of individualized instruction (Hanreddy & Östlund, 2020).

Researchers have suggested general education settings benefit students with moderate intellectual disabilities by allowing them increased opportunities to learn, increased access to the general education curriculum, and increased interactions with their non-disabled peers (Hanreddy & Östlund, 2020; Hehir et al., 2016; Taub et al., 2017). The specific benefits of inclusive education for students with moderate intellectual disabilities can include improved literacy skills, language development, math skills, (Hehir et al., 2016; Taub & Foster, 2020) and communication skills (Hanreddy & Östlund, 2020). Interactions with their non-disabled peers can afford opportunities for

students with and without moderate intellectual disabilities to build relationships and social skills (Chen, 2017; Hanreddy & Östlund, 2020). Research has shown when students with disabilities are included in general education classrooms, with the appropriate supports, it leads to better postsecondary outcome versus when they are educated in separate schools (Taub & Foster, 2020). The academic and social benefits of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the inclusive classroom setting can enhance their quality of life by giving them the knowledge and skills to increase their postsecondary employment and education outcomes (Chen, 2017; Chung et al., 2019). Inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in general education setting remains one of the most difficult challenges in school systems around the world (Mortier, 2020).

Teachers' Perceptions of Students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities in an Inclusive Setting

When asked about students with moderate intellectual disabilities being included in a general education classroom, some teachers saw this inclusion as a privilege for the students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Kirby, 2017). These same teachers noted students with moderate intellectual disabilities are better served in a self-contained or resource room setting (Kirby, 2017). Another argument against inclusion encourages an idea of protectiveness and shelter for students with disabilities and stresses the need for delivering supports in a single location within the school (Choi et al., 2017). Some teachers have also argued the quality of instruction is reduced to students without moderate intellectual disabilities in a classroom setting when students with moderate

intellectual disabilities are present (Choi et al., 2017). It is common for educators to be convinced they have little to offer students with moderate intellectual disabilities and this affects their justification to provide them an education in the inclusive classroom setting (Mortier, 2020). Educators also feel the change needed to be able to include students with moderate intellectual disabilities is overwhelming and may require additional time and training on top of their already overwhelming workload (Mortier, 2020). If students with moderate intellectual disabilities enter classrooms in which teachers have these specific beliefs, they are entering an environment where they are potentially not welcome from the start.

Special education teachers and general education teachers in both inclusive and special education settings report high levels of stress. The number of stress-inducing factors adversely affect their wellness and job performance (Weiss et et al., 2018; Mortier, 2020). These factors ultimately influence their day-to-day teaching, which influences how students with moderate intellectual disabilities perform in the classroom. General education teachers report they are not informed about the needs of their students with disabilities in their classroom and do not receive necessary support to address those needs (Faraclas, 2018). General education teachers also report they do not have the skills they need to effectively instruct diverse learners, especially students with moderate intellectual disabilities (O'Connor et al., 2016). Successful differentiation can also be especially difficult in an inclusive classroom. General education teachers do not feel they have received the appropriate training to differentiate the material appropriately (Faraclas, 2018; Weiss et al., 2018). General education teachers also complain of lacking

the expertise in teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities in an inclusive

classroom setting, especially if the students display behaviors out of their control

(O'Connor et al., 2016; Kirby, 2017; Faraclas, 2018; Weiss et al., 2018). Students with

moderate intellectual disabilities have been known to show aggressive behaviors in the

classroom, such as throwing, biting, and kicking.

To teach students with disabilities, it is important to know the background and the

laws surrounding special education. Even though special education only makes up about

10% of the entire student population in the United States, special education counts for

most of the litigation related to education (Couvillon et al., 2018). It is important this

legal information be available to all teachers who are working with students with

disabilities. Research has shown most of the legal information teachers obtain about

special education comes from other teachers and principals, as they did not take a law

class in their undergraduate degree (O'Connor et al., 2016). Special education teachers,

on the other hand, do take a law class when receiving their undergraduate degree. It is

important general education teachers are informed about special education law, so that

they do not inadvertently violate students with disabilities legal rights (O'Connor et al.,

2016).

Special education teachers feel they are better qualified than general education

teachers to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education

setting, but they still report problems. In general, special education teachers stated their

concerns toward inclusive education varies depending on the severity of the disability of

the students (Weiss et al., 2018). Special education teachers argue there are limits to a

general education teacher's ability to differentiate instruction, and students with more severe disabilities might not be well served in an inclusive classroom setting (Brock, 2018). Questions have been raised by special education teachers about whether instruction in the core curriculum is appropriate for students with moderate intellectual disabilities. It is difficult because special education teachers also believe in a self-contained classroom setting students with moderate intellectual disabilities are less likely to have access to a teacher who is a content area expert and less likely to have any interaction with their non-disabled peers (Bowman et al., 2020).

Teachers' attitudes differ significantly according to the severity of the disability in the student they are teaching (Weiss et al., 2018). Positive attitudes toward inclusion and high-level beliefs about knowledge and learning (Silverman, 2007) are two specific belief sets that play an important role in successful teaching. General education teachers and special education teachers need to believe students with disabilities can learn and achieve to the best of their abilities in an inclusive classroom setting (Silverman, 2007). This belief can lead to teachers including students with moderate intellectual disabilities into all classroom activities. If the teacher includes students with disabilities, general education students in the class are more likely to follow (Silverman, 2007). Students with moderate intellectual disabilities whose teachers view them positively are far more likely to thrive in the regular classroom, both academically and socially (Silverman, 2007).

Supports Used to Teach Students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities

Researchers have established students with moderate intellectual disabilities can learn complex academic skills needed to be successful in an inclusive classroom setting

(Bowman et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2018). Unfortunately, most of this research has been conducted on how to teach these complex academic skills in a self-contained environment and not in an inclusive classroom environment (Bowman et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2018). Providing true access to the inclusive classroom requires teachers to collaborate and support students with moderate intellectual disabilities to engage in all classroom activities. This includes differentiating the instruction to meet the needs of students with moderate intellectual disabilities. Differentiating instruction requires educators to present material to reach all the various learning styles in the classroom and allows all students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the content in a variety of forms (Strogilos et al., 2016; Bowman et al., 2020). The adaptations made to the general education curriculum are considered an essential inclusive strategy for the academic success of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Strogilos et al., 2016). The learning materials and teaching activities used in the inclusive classroom setting, must match each individual student's needs (Weiss et al., 2018).

There has been specific research conducted on instructional strategies that have been successful when teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Bowman et al., 2020; Chapman et al., 2019; Shepley et al., 2019). Four systematic instructional strategies used for teaching skills to students with moderate intellectual disabilities include embedded instruction, the system of least prompts, time delay, and simultaneous prompting (Chapman et al., 2019). Researchers have studied how teachers use these specific strategies to teach a variety of academic, functional, and vocational skills to

students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Chapman et al., 2019). The system of

least prompts instruction has a strong research base and a history of success in teaching

individuals with moderate intellectual disabilities an assortment of necessary skills

needed for everyday life (Chapman et al., 2019; Shepley et al., 2019). When taught

correctly, the system of least prompts can assist students with moderate intellectual

disabilities in the inclusive classroom setting (Chapman et al., 2019; Shepley et al.,

2019).

Embedded instruction is defined as systematic instructional trials that are

distributed across opportunities throughout a school day (Bowman et al., 2020).

Embedded instruction has shown to be effective when implemented by a variety of

school personnel, such as paraprofessionals, special education teachers, general education

teachers, and peers (Bowman et al., 2020). Embedded instruction has been used to

instruct students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the areas of math. Many

students with moderate intellectual disabilities struggle with basic numerical operations

and arithmetic functions (Sermier Dessemontet, et al., 2020). Basic math skills are

necessary for students with moderate intellectual disabilities, as they are required for

them to perform tasks such as cooking, purchasing items from a store, managing finances,

taking medicines, and using public transportation.

Collaborative teaching can also be used as a strategy to increase students' learning

opportunities, reduce stress on the individual teacher, and impact teachers' self-efficacy

and attitudes (Weiss et al., 2018). Several collaborative models have been attempted to

meet the instructional needs of educating students with disabilities in the regular

education classroom, which include teacher collaboration, consultation, peer coaching, collaborative learning communities, and co-teaching (Faraclas, 2018). Of the several collaborative models, co-teaching has been the collaborative approach of choice for providing instruction to students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom setting (Faraclas, 2018).

Co-teaching allows regular and special education teachers with different backgrounds, training, and experiences to collaborate on strategies to use to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Faraclas, 2018; Strogilos et al., 2016). In co-teaching, each teacher brings a different skill set to the classroom. The general education teacher specializes in delivering content, while the special education teacher specializes in individualizing instruction for the students with disabilities (Faraclas, 2018). Co-teaching is defined as a model that involves pairing a regular education teacher and a special education teacher together to plan, instruct, and monitor the progress of all the students (with and without disabilities) in the general education classroom (Faraclas, 2018; Pratt et al., 2017; Rexroat & Chamberlin, 2019). Co-teaching is also an instructional teaching model that provides an opportunity for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to receive instruction in the LRE, address standards for achievement, and ensure access to highly qualified teachers (Pratt et al., 2017; Rexroat & Chamberlin, 2019).

Co-teaching can be beneficial to both students and teachers in the general education classroom. Teachers can learn from each other while teaching to a variety of students with various learning styles (Pratt et al., 2017). It is important both teachers take

an active role in the classroom, instead of one teacher consistently instructing the students, while the other teacher is consistently assisting the students (Strogilos et al., 2016; Pratt et al., 2017). Research has also shown there can be both academic and social benefits to both the students with and without disabilities in the co-taught setting (Pratt et al., 2017). Many times, in a co-taught classroom, general education students are educated besides students with disabilities which they would not normally be exposed to.

Teachers have reported various barriers to co-teaching, such as lack of training, confusion about individual roles, lack of common plan time, lack of administrative support, and lack of resources (Pratt et al., 2017; Faraclas, 2018; Weiss et al., 2020). Another barrier is when general education or special education teachers do not want to volunteer to be a co-teacher. When planning, co-teachers need to use their planning time to determine the make-up of students with disabilities in the room and determine the specific role each teacher will take in the co-teaching model. Collaborative planning can be successful when both teachers share their expertise and come to a shared agreement about how the instruction will occur in the classroom (Strogilos et al., 2016; Pratt et al., 2017). Co-teaching has the potential to not be successful with just the teachers involved; the support of district and school level administration is imperative. School administration needs to show support for the inclusion of students with disabilities in the LRE and district administration needs to provide the necessary resources needed to allow co-teaching to be successful (Rexroat & Chamberlin, 2019).

For co-teaching to be successful, it is crucial the teachers are willing participants (Rexroat & Chamberlin, 2019). When asked by the district or school, teachers should

agree to willingly participate in the co-teaching model. Each teacher should also complete an inventory to identify their philosophy of teaching to place them with a partner with the same teaching philosophy (Rexroat & Chamberlin, 2019). Teachers' willingness to participate to co-teach can make them a more active participant in the co-teaching model used in the classroom.

Implications

In recent years, the idea of students with disabilities receiving FAPE in the LRE has received a lot of attention (Couvillon et al, 2018; Marsico, 2018; Zirkel, 2020). Although policy makers, educators, and researchers welcome this trend, students with moderate intellectual disabilities are still being educated in self-contained classroom settings or separate schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Due to the continued need for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be educated alongside their general education peers in the general education environment, it is important school districts and individual schools implement policies and procedures to build inclusion into part of their school culture (Thompson et al., 2018).

Policy makers require that students with moderate intellectual disabilities receive FAPE in the LRE. School districts have started to implement strategies to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education environment. Even with these strategies in place, data shows there has not been an increase in the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education environment (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The results of this investigation into what strategies general education and special education teachers

use in the co-taught setting could result in school districts preparing more meaningful professional development for co-teachers. If teachers feel more readily prepared to co-teach, more special education and general education teachers may be willing to volunteer to be a co-teacher. By looking at the self-efficacy of the teachers, the results of this study could also allow school districts to understand what teachers are feeling when they are teaching students with moderate disabilities in a general education classroom. This could lead to the administration team in a school knowing where they need to offer the most support to their teachers who teach in inclusive setting. The results of this study could also lead to universities looking at how they prepare general education teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom.

The findings of this study could promote positive social change by providing districts with the necessary tools to increase the number of teachers who volunteer to co-teach. In turn, this could allow more students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be taught in the co-taught setting alongside their general education peers. This also allows students with and without disabilities to interact, allows teachers to teach to a multitude of learning styles, and allows everyone to feel accepted. If students start to feel accepted because of their disability this can lead to further inclusive activities in a school district. Students could have the opportunity to feel more comfortable with their race, gender, sexuality, body image, and personality. The idea of inclusion throughout a school allows everyone to feel like they are accepted and respected members of the school community.

Summary

The project study was organized into four sections, including (a) the problem, (b) the definition of the problem, (c) the significance of the problem, and (d) the review of literature. The first section focused on introducing the research by describing the overall problem and identifying a rationale for the problem based on evidence at the local level and from professional literature. The section then posed a relevant research question to explore and examine the best possible solution to the problem. Finally, the section identified the literature review, significance of the study, implications of the study, and provided the definition of terms associated with the problem.

Section 2 provides a description and rationale of the research methodology selected for this project study. This section began by providing a detailed explanation of the research design, a description of the participants, and a description of the instruments used for data collection. Furthermore, this section identified the steps involved in the analysis of data collection to determine any patterns found in the self-efficacy and strategies used in the classroom by general education and special education teachers of students with moderate intellectual disabilities. This section provides the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the special education and general education teachers.

Section 2: The Methodology

The state of Illinois offers a continuum of services for students with disabilities, especially those with moderate intellectual disabilities, with the hope to increase the amount of time they spend in a LRE (Illinois Department of Education, 2019). Allowing students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be educated in the LRE with an educational service, such as co-teaching, allows them to be educated among their general education peers. This project study examined teachers' self-efficacy and the effect it had on their willingness to volunteer to co-teach in an inclusive classroom setting that includes students with moderate intellectual disabilities. This chapter includes the research questions used to guide this study and a detailed description of the research design and rationale. The research methods, including data collection and data analysis, are also explained in this section.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The research design chosen for this study is a basic qualitative design that aligned with the research question by generating data through an interview process. Qualitative research is important in educational research, as it addresses specific research questions and enables a deeper understanding of experiences, events, and circumstances (Cleland, 2017). Qualitative research allows the researcher to ask questions that cannot easily be put into numbers to understand human experience (Cleland, 2017). The main purpose of qualitative research is to gain a deeper understanding of human behavior (Constantinou et al., 2017). Using a basic qualitative research approach allowed me to obtain information through semistructured interviews of general and special education teachers to discover

their understanding and perceptions of teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education environment.

In addition to a basic qualitative design approach, I also looked at a quantitative approach and a mixed methods approach for this study. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods designs can all be used to answer research questions. A quantitative research design looks at relationships between specific variables (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). In a quantitative study, the researcher investigates the relationship between an independent variable and at least one dependent variable within a specific population (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Researchers using the quantitative method collect data from participants and analyze the data to test a hypothesis (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The quantitative research design was not appropriate for this study because I chose to investigate an overall phenomenon and was not looking to test a hypothesis. Unlike a quantitative research design, a qualitative research design allowed me to represent the expertise, perspectives, and experiences of the general education teachers and special education teachers interviewed in this study. A mixed methods study includes both a qualitative and quantitative research design approach. Because I already rejected a quantitative approach, I also rejected the mixed methods study approach.

Additional qualitative methods such as case study, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, and grounded theory were considered but were rejected for my study. Case studies are used to seek how to paint a complete picture around a specific phenomenon gathering data from at least two different sources (Burkholder et al., 2016). I rejected the case study design because I only used interviews as my method of collecting data. I

rejected the ethnography design for this study because this design focuses on a specific

cultural group, which was not my intent (Burkholder et al., 2016). Phenomenological

studies are used to understand how a set group of individuals who share a common

experience have lived those experiences (Burkholder et al., 2016). Since this study

required a larger population and a longer study time, I rejected this design study. A

narrative research design tells a story of an individual's life and tries to connect their life

experiences to the phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2016), but I did not seek to interview

the participants about their life experiences outside of the school day. I focused on the

experience of general and special education teachers with students who have moderate

intellectual disabilities during the school day. Finally, grounded theory explains an

interaction or a process among a variety of people (Burkholder et al., 2016). I rejected

this design because I did not wish to explain an interaction or process among various

people in the field of special education. Instead, I chose to only focus on general

education and special education teachers.

Participants

For this study, I recruited special education and general education co-teachers

from a high school in the southwest suburb of Chicago, Illinois. I interviewed eight

special education teachers and 11 general education teachers. Choosing approximately

the same amount of special education teachers and regular education teachers to

participate allowed for balance within the study. Participants for this study met three

main criteria. First, all teachers held a valid Illinois State Board of Education teaching

license. Second, the teachers had experience in the co-taught high school educational

setting. Third, the teachers were currently teaching with students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught setting. Other demographic data were collected in the interview process before the interview questions were asked.

Before conducting my research, I sought approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process began by sending a letter to the director of pupil and personal services of the school district in which I conducted my study. The letter described the purpose of the study and a description of the teachers I was seeking to volunteer for the study. Once the study was approved (approval no. 2019.03.1411:18:15-0511 00), I received a current list of teachers who met the qualifications to participate in the study. I sent the teachers an introductory email, which included an introduction of myself, the purpose of my study, and the requirement process of the teachers for the study. I also provided my email and phone number if they had any questions.

Prior to being interviewed, the participants were asked to read the informed consent form that detailed their participation in the study and provided assurances of their confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participating in the study. They were assured that all responses to the interview questions would be confidential and that no individual or the school district would be identifiable in the final project study. The participants were asked to send a return email simply stating "I consent" if they were willing to consent to participate in the project study. They were given a copy of the informed consent form for their records.

Data Collection

Interviews provide researchers with detailed qualitative data for understanding participants' experiences, how they describe those experiences, and the meaning they make of those experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Semistructured interviews were used for this project study. In a semistructured interview, the researcher has a specific topic they want to learn about, prepares the questions before the interview, and can ask follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2016). The crucial element of this study contained an interview protocol, which I created and aligned to the research questions in the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; see Appendix B).

After approval from the Walden University IRB and the director of pupil personnel services where the data were collected, I received a list of teachers who met the requirements for this study. This list included the teacher's name and email address. I contacted the teachers and provided an explanation of the purpose of the study and how the teacher would be involved in the research via their email address provided. If teachers were interested in participating, they were asked to reply to the simply stating "I consent." A virtual interview utilizing the Google Meet application was scheduled. Each interviewee received a subsequent internet link to participate in the interview via email. Interviews varied in duration; however, most interviews lasted approximately 1 hour. No interview lasted longer than 1 hour.

Prior to the interview process, I restated the purpose of the interview, what I am planning to do with their responses, and reminded them of confidentiality. I explained to them that confidentiality will occur by not placing their names on any documents, placing

my notes in a locked cabinet, and destroying the tapes and notes after the study is complete. Each participant's identity was masked by creating a pseudonym (a number) for each individual participant. I also allowed time at the end of the interview for the participants to have a chance to ask questions and debrief. Once the interview was completed, I followed up with clarifying questions when needed.

Verbal and non-verbal interaction between interviewees and researchers shape the data collected, which affects the results of the study (Bengtsson, 2016). Therefore, it was important to video/audio tape record all interviews that were conducted. All the interviews were recorded using the Google recording extension on Google Meets. To keep all the information organized, I created a table in a Google document. This table included the role of the interviewee (general education or special education teacher), the answers given by the participant, and the notes I transcribed. After each interview I listened to the recording to make sure that all the correct notes had been transcribed in the table. Once I completed my data analysis, I provided the interviewees with a summary of my findings through the email that was given to me.

Role of the Researcher

I have been a special educator for 20 years and am currently hold a position as the special education department chair. As the department chair, I am responsible for conducting IEP meetings, eligibility meetings, evaluating paraprofessionals, developing new curriculum, and maintaining accurate special education records. My role as the department chair is to be accountable for all aspects of the special education department in the building.

As the researcher, I conducted interviews with the selected participants. Through interviews, I examined teachers' self-efficacy and the effect it has on their willingness to volunteer to co-teach in an inclusive classroom setting that includes students with moderate intellectual disabilities. As I interviewed the participants for this case study, I made sure not to display any bias. I also refrained from injecting my opinions or thoughts during the interview and data analysis process. It was my role to remain objective while I asked questions, listened to their answers, and recorded the information during the interview. I made sure to only record what the interviewees said and what I heard. I used the recording mechanism on Google Meets, which allowed me to make sure all the information was accurate. I did not do anything that could cause harm or distress to the participants during my research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a way to process the data that were collected in the interviews to find an answer to the research question in this project study (Rubin & Rubin, 2016). There are multiple methods of data analysis, such as typological, inductive, interpretive, political, and polyvocal (Hatch, 2002). Typological data analysis was used for this study. In typological analysis, data analysis starts by dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on theories, common sense, and/or research objectives (Hatch, 2002). In the typological analysis, there are multiple steps that were taken to analyze the data. Typologies were selected that were used to frame the rest of the data analysis. The data were then marked related to each typology. Patterns, relationships, and themes were analyzed in each typology. The data were also coded to the patterns that were identified

and a record was kept of which data supported which theme. Understanding Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and the lack of teachers' willingness to co-teach before the study helped interpret the teachers' self-efficacy and training when working with students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting.

Once all the interviews took place, I familiarized myself with the data that were collected (Bengtsson, 2016). The data analysis started with continuously reading the transcripts, with a focus on the interview questions. I began by familiarizing myself with this data by using a coding process. To analyze the data, NVivo software was used to create a visual representation to demonstrate the themes identified in the research (see Saldaña, 2016). Once the data from the interviews were coded, the data were analyzed for patterns or themes. After looking at the themes, I attempted to find the essence of the studied phenomenon (Bengtsson, 2016). I also reviewed how the data I found in the study correlates to the data in the literature review that was conducted. After the data analysis was completed, I wrote detailed description of my findings. It was important that I remained neutral and objective in the data collection process. It was also important during the data analysis that I did not insert any biases of my own and did not sway the data anyway because of such biases.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are both factors that a qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results, and judging the quality of the research (Cypress, 2017). Reliability is a measure of how accurate a test is when used over time (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016). Validity is a measure of how well the test

measures what it is supposed to measure (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016). I took specific measures to ensure reliability and validity were contributing factors in my qualitative study. When clarity was needed, I asked additional information from the participants in the study. I assured reliability in the study by asking all the participants the same questions. I sought to assure validity in this qualitative study by attempting to gain knowledge and understanding of the purpose of my study.

Ethical Considerations

Before starting the study, approval to conduct the study was obtained from the IRB at Walden University. I asked teachers to volunteer for the study if they met the inclusion criteria via email. The participants knew they could refuse to answer any question that they did not feel comfortable responding to. They also were told that they could stop answering questions at any time without prejudice. Pseudonyms were used when transcribing the interviews by assigning each participant a number. To further assure the confidentiality of the participants was maintained, I did not share the transcripts with anyone. However, if asked, my chair and committee, as well as the IRB at Walden University, can access the interview transcripts upon their request. The consent emails, Google document of the interview transcripts, and the Google Meets recordings will be saved for 5 years. At the end of 5 years, all information will be destroyed, eliminating the possible retrieval of any interview data.

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Limitations

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The following limitations are acknowledged for this study. The study used a small sample size (19 teachers including 11 general education teachers and eight special

education teachers). The sample size is appropriate in a project study but may not reflect

the perceptions of teachers from school districts in all areas. The study was also limited to

one school district in one state, which was Illinois. Though, the findings could be relevant

for school districts in other states by introducing ways to increase the amount of time

students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education classroom.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the instructional

strategies special education and general education teachers use in the co-taught classroom

to support students with moderate intellectual disabilities. The research question was used

to explore the experiences and understand the strategies special education teachers and

general education teachers use when teaching students with moderate intellectual

disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting. Nineteen teachers agreed to be interviewed

on their experiences and perceptions of teaching students with moderate intellectual

disabilities in the co-taught classroom (See Table 1). Of this number, 11 of the teachers

were general education teachers and eight of the teachers were special education teachers.

Of the 19 teachers, five had 1-5 years of teaching experience, one had 6-10 years of

teaching experience, five had 11-15 years of teaching experience, five had 15 -20 years of

teaching experience, one had 21-25 years of teaching experience, and one teacher had

been teaching for more than 25 years. All 19 teachers had co-teaching experience

teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities. Eight of the teachers had 1-5

years of co-teaching experience, seven of the teachers had 6-10 years of co-teaching

experience, and four teachers had been co-teaching for over 10 years. Seventeen of the 19

teachers responded they had an opportunity to volunteer to co-teach in their school, while two of the 19 teachers stated they did not volunteer to co-teach but were still given that specific teaching assignment.

The conceptual framework for this basic qualitative study was Bandura's theory of self-efficacy to evaluate teachers' preparation confidence, or willingness to volunteer to work in an inclusive setting for students with moderate intellectual disabilities. Bandura (1977) described people who are persistent and continue to put forth effort, even when obstacles occur, as having high self-efficacy. Multiple researchers have suggested that teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy make efforts to involve all students in a meaningful way in their classroom (Alnahdi, 2020; Shaukat et al., 2019; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy tend to create a learning environment in their classroom which is warm and helpful to students with all disabilities (Shaukat & Al Bustani, 2019). Interpreting the strategies special education teachers and general education teachers use in the co-taught classroom were gained appropriate using a basic qualitative study. I have provided the findings, patterns, relationships, and themes based on the data analysis of this basic qualitative study. The basic qualitative study results helped to apprise the instructional strategies used by special education teachers and general education teachers in the co-taught setting when teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities.

Table 1

Teacher Demographic Information

Participant	General Ed or Special Ed	Number of Years Teacher	Number of Years Co-teaching	Opportunity to Volunteer to Co-teach
1	SE	11-15	1-5	Yes
2	SE	6-10	1-5	Yes
3	SE	16-20	1-5	Yes
4	GE	11-15	6-10	Yes
5	GE	25+	10+	Yes
6	SE	16-20	6-10	Yes
7	SE	25+	6-10	Yes
8	GE	16-20	6-10	Yes
9	GE	21-25	10+	Yes
10	SE	11-15	6-10	Yes
11	GE	11-15	6-10	Yes
12	GE	25+	10+	Yes
13	SE	11-15	10+	Yes
14	SE	16-20	1-5	Yes
15	GE	1-5	1-5	Yes
16	GE	25+	6-10	No
17	GE	25+	1-5	Yes
18	GE	1-5	1-5	Yes
19	GE	16-20	1-5	No

Process for When Data Were Generated, Gathered, and Recorded

The original goal was to complete in person interviews at the participating school. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place, all interviews had to take place using a virtual platform. An interview protocol was created to ensure consistency across all the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were done using the google meets platform. Each interview was recorded through my computer using the google meets platform. There was a total of 19 interviews that took place. Each interview lasted no longer than one hour in length. All teachers who participated in the study were given a

pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Special education teachers were labeled as SET1, SET2, etc. General education teachers were labeled as GET1, GET2, etc.

After all the 19 interviews were completed, the notes from the interviews were transcribed (see Appendix D). All notes were uploaded onto my computer, which is password protected. The notes were placed into an excel document for easier organization of the content. I listened to each interview and read my notes several times to understand the data collected. I also re-read all the notes to begin to look for emerging themes before using the NVivo software (see Appendix C). The interview data were then imported into NVivo software data to assist in coding the data and discovering emerging themes.

Findings

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine what instructional strategies special education teachers and general education teachers use in the co-taught setting when teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities. For this study, the special education and general education teachers' responses are coded SET1 though SET8 and GET1 through GET11. The interview responses were analyzed considering Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and the previous knowledge and experiences the special education teachers and general education teachers had in delivering instructional strategies to students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting. Awareness of their self-efficacy in their willingness to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities was apparent in the interviews. Lack of previous knowledge on how to deliver specific instructional strategies in the co-taught classroom

setting was also found in the interview process. Four themes emerged from the data:

accommodations and modifications, professional development, personal experiences, and

inclusion (see Table 2). The themes aligned with the research question for this study:

How do high school general education teachers and special education teachers support

students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting?

Table 2

Themes and Descriptions

Theme	Description
Accommodations and Modifications	Students with moderate intellectual disabilities require additional modification and accommodations
Professional Development	The professional development that is offered is good, but more is needed
Personal Experiences	Personal experiences have shaped the way teachers feel about volunteering to co-teach
Inclusion	Teachers are in favor of students with moderate intellectual disabilities being included with their general education peers

Research Question and Theme 1: Accommodations and Modifications

When asked about the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities

in the co-taught classroom, it was highly evident the teachers found students with

moderate intellectual disabilities require additional modifications and accommodations in

the classroom to be successful. Teachers responded the need for modifications and

accommodations is higher for students with moderate intellectual disabilities, than for the

other students in the co-taught classroom setting. Teachers gave examples of providing

specific modifications and accommodations, such as more time to complete tasks, use of

resource room, extra support, one on one guidance, time to process materials, and

checking for understanding. Sixteen of the 19 teachers indicated that even with the modifications and accommodations in place, the students with moderate intellectual disabilities still struggled. For example, SET4 stated, "I clearly remember a student who was struggling to write a junior persuasive essay. He was frustrated because writing a thesis was very difficult even with examples and specific directions. Prompting was necessary every step of the way even after several accommodations had been made."

Six of the 11 general education teachers and two of the eight special education teachers discussed their need to be made more aware of what specific accommodations and modifications are needed for the students to be successful. The district provides them with copies of the accommodations and modifications needed for each student, but assistance on how to provide those specific accommodations and modifications is not given. The 11 general education teachers also expressed their lack of knowledge on how to read an IEP. For example, GET1 expressed "I only had one class in special education, so I am not even sure where to find the specific accommodations or modifications listed on a student's IEP". GET8 followed with "I know what modification and accommodations are, but I am not exactly sure of the difference between the two." One of the special education teachers shared that she was able to seek assistance from her mentor when she first started co-teaching to understand how to deliver specific modification and accommodations in the co-taught classroom setting. Another special education teacher expressed sometimes it is difficult to determine who should be providing the modifications/accommodations in the co-taught setting, the special education teacher, or the general education teacher, or both. Overall, the teachers knew

the students with moderate intellectual disabilities needed modifications and accommodations in the co-taught setting but were unaware of how to deliver those and who exactly should be delivering them.

Research Question and Theme 2: Professional Development

Eighteen of the 19 teachers expressed the professional development in their school was adequate when providing them with information on the co-teaching models to use in the classroom. The district currently provides training on the specific co-teaching models and allows the co-teaching partners to attend this training together. Currently, the training is voluntary, but all 19 teachers stated they have attended the training in the past. GE9 stated "the professional development offered in my district on co-teaching helped prepare me to use the co-teaching models in my classroom." GET12 expressed how the numerous co-teaching trainings that they attended in the district has helped them use the various co-teaching models in the classroom. Six teachers expressed besides the professional development offered on the specific co-teaching models, being able to attend demonstration classrooms on the co-teaching models has been of assistance. In a demonstration classroom, the teachers can observe co-teachers using a specific co-teaching model while delivering a lesson. Three teachers also expressed the assistance they were able to get from their mentor helped them understand the co-teaching models.

Thirteen of the nineteen teachers expressed they were pleased with the professional development offered on the co-teaching models, but they felt the need for additional training on how to teach the students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the classroom. For example, GET5 stated, "I feel most of these trainings are on how to

co-teach with your teaching partner and not how to address the needs of the students with disabilities in the general education classroom". SET6 followed up with, "I feel my previous experience and PD's have prepared me to use the co-teaching models to assist students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education, but I would like to learn additional training on instructional strategies to help students increase their comprehension of new skills or difficult concepts taught." Eleven other teachers expressed the need for training on how to deliver specific lessons that would be beneficial to meet the needs of students with moderate intellectual disabilities. Overall, the teachers expressed the district does a great job providing professional development on the various co-teaching strategies and how to implement those in the co-taught classroom setting. They felt the co-teaching professional development mainly addressed how the special education teachers and general education teachers use various methods to work together in the classroom. The teachers expressed how the co-teaching professional development did not provide specific training on how to deliver specific instructional strategies to meet the needs of the students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the classroom. In fact, 17 of the teachers stated additional professional development was needed not just on teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities, but teaching all students with various learning styles, needs, and disabilities.

Research Question and Theme 3: Personal Experiences

The teachers expressed how their personal experiences in the co-taught setting have determined their willingness to co-teach year after year. Seven out of the nineteen teachers discussed that having a consistent co-teaching partner year after year makes

them want to volunteer to co-teach. GET4 expressed "Since I have been co-teaching, I have built strong relationships with specific teachers, allowing me to keep that co-teacher year after year has helped with student success." SET10 further went on to say, "Overall, I know how effective and successful a good co-teaching pair can be, so I would be willing to volunteer to co-teach if it was with the right general education teacher and I could be paired with that general education teacher year after year". GET11 expressed, "My biggest problem with co-teaching is the switching of teachers most years and mixing up the pairs of co-teachers that were very successful."

Besides their willingness to volunteer to co-teach based on the co-teachers they were paired with, the teachers also discussed how their personal experiences with the students have shaped their decision to also volunteer to co-teach. All the teachers that participated in the study expressed their willingness to volunteer to co-teach again based on their personal experiences with the students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the classroom. SET2 stated, "The students with moderate intellectual disabilities are a joy to have in class. I have had such a positive experience teaching them over the years. I volunteer to co-teach based on how rewarding it is to see the students be successful in the general education classroom." GET8 added, "I feel that the cotaught environment allows for all learners to have an opportunity to learn and be challenged regardless of disability. This makes me want to volunteer to co-teach year after year". SET14 also added, "I also enjoy the variety of learning styles that a co-taught classroom brings."

Research Question and Theme 4: Inclusion

The participants were asked to discuss their personal feeling on students with moderate intellectual disabilities being educated in the general education classroom. All 19 of the teachers expressed they were in favor of students with moderate intellectual disabilities being placed in the general education classroom. GET4 stated, "Students with moderate intellectual disabilities should receive as much independent treatment as possible to allow them to grow." SET7 expressed, "I feel that all students have a right to be in the general education setting with their typical peers. Providing opportunities for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be a part of the general education environment with modifications will challenge the students and provide them with educational opportunities." GET11 added, "I feel that the student should be placed in the least restrictive environment."

Even though all 19 teachers were in favor of inclusion, they were specific about the resources that needed to be put in place for an inclusive classroom to be successful. GET4 stated, "Consideration has to be taken regarding the type of accommodations and equipment that may be required to assist the students and the time required to complete an activity." GET5 expressed, "A problem is sometimes the general education teacher does not like having a co-teacher and their students in their room and this makes a long school year." SET6 also added, "With the willingness of the student, proper technology, accommodations, and the right teaching pair inclusion could be achieved successfully but that's a lot of variables." GET15 also stated, "I think inclusion can be beneficial, if the

special education teachers are truly given the time to plan with the content teacher and implement their ideas for modifications to the general education curriculum."

Summary

State and federal legislation has led to students with moderate intellectual disabilities being placed in the LRE. Majority of the time, this LRE is a co-taught classroom with a general education teacher and a special education teacher. This project study was conducted to examine the instructional strategies general education teachers and special education teachers use in the co-taught classroom setting to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities. Based on the semi-structured interviews conducted with the general education teachers and special education teachers, both parties are in favor of students with moderate intellectual disabilities being included in the co-taught classroom setting if the right supports are put in place.

The co-teachers that were interviewed for this project study were pleased with the professional development which was offered by the district on the co-teaching models, but they felt like more training is needed. As a group, the special education teachers and general education teachers felt the need for more professional development on how to provide the necessary supports in the classroom for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be successful. They added that professional development on teaching to various learning styles and how to provide appropriate accommodations and modifications would not just be beneficial to the students with moderate intellectual disabilities, but to the all the students in the class. Besides the academic benefits of inclusion, many teachers expressed how there is also a social benefit for all the students.

In addition to further training, the special education teachers and general education teachers interviewed for this project study also expressed the importance of having the appropriate resources available for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be included in the general education classroom. Some of these resources include technology, supplementary aides, and keeping co-teaching pairs together year after year.

Section 3 provides a detailed description of the three-day professional development workshop. This section includes an introduction to the project, a rationale for the project, a review of literature pertaining to the project, and a description of the project. Section 3 also provides an evaluation plan and any limitation of the project.

Section 3: The Project

Based on the findings of this project study, both general and special education teachers indicated professional development training was needed to provide the appropriate accommodations and modifications necessary to educate all students with disabilities, especially students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught setting. The findings suggested a professional development on differentiated instruction was necessary to help teachers address the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This professional development program will allow the general education teachers and special education teachers the opportunity to increase their self-efficacy when teaching these students.

This project study is a professional development program developed to increase teachers' self-efficacy to teach all students with various learning styles, disabilities, and needs by providing them with the tools to incorporate differentiated instruction in their classroom. The talking points included in the professional development program will also address the concerns raised by the participants who were interviewed in this study. The topics address the use of differentiated instruction in the general education classroom to provide the necessary modifications and accommodations to educate students with all disabilities, including moderate intellectual disabilities. The learning activities included in this professional development program will provide general education teachers and special education teachers the knowledge and skills needed to maximize the learning experiences for students with disabilities in the general education setting.

The professional development will be presented in a 3-day optional workshop in the summer. The training will take place at the high school where the study was conducted. The professional development workshop will be open to all teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff. The building/district administration teams will also be invited to attend the training.

During the 3-day professional development, the teachers will have opportunities to share their previous experiences of how they have used differentiation instruction in their classroom. More specifically, teachers will be able to share the accommodations and modifications they have provided to students with disabilities in the classroom. The teachers will be asked to fill out a survey at the end of the 3-day professional development workshop rating the training and asking for suggestions for future trainings. The general education and special education teacher's perceptions of the training and their suggestions for the future will also be shared with the district administration.

This section addresses the rationale and review of literature. Section 3 also includes a project description, project evaluation plan, and project implications. The purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and target audience are included in the rationale for the professional development.

Rationale

After analyzing the data collected for this project study, the specific professional development was selected. The participants in the study indicated no concerns about needing additional co-teaching training, but they expressed a need for specific strategies to use in the classroom to address the learning needs of students with moderate

intellectual disabilities. Specifically, professional development on differentiated instruction is needed to establish inclusive classrooms by training teachers to create effective learning environments that provide equal learning opportunities for all students (Esther Gheyssens et al., 2020). The professional development on differentiated instruction was developed with the goal to provide teachers with various strategies to meet the diverse learning styles and needs of all students in the classroom but geared to meet the needs of co-teachers with moderate intellectual disabilities in their classroom. Important aspects of an effective professional development were considered: (a) the starting point addresses the needs and questions of teachers; (b) the content is scientific-based and connected to the teachers' questions; (c) the content is related to the goals of the teachers, the school, and the school district; (d) the knowledge learned in the professional development translates into daily educational practice in the classroom; (e) the training takes place in an educational setting; (f) colleagues are given time for collaboration; (g) the program that is intensive and spread out over a substantial period of time with continued support throughout; and (h) the trainer is highly qualified in the material being presented and can handle receiving constructive feedback (see Merchie et al., 2018).

Review of the Literature

Professional development was selected to provide administrators, teachers, related service providers, and paraprofessionals background information on differentiated instruction and how to make appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with diverse learning styles and needs in the general education classroom. Based on the

results of this study, participants agreed that professional development was needed to not just meet the needs of moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom but also all students with various learning styles. Therefore, I developed a 3-day professional development workshop to address how to make the necessary accommodations and modifications for diverse learners in the classroom using differentiated instruction. The intention for this professional development workshop is to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education classroom by increasing the self-efficacy of teachers through training on differentiated instruction. The literature search for this project thus involved peer-reviewed articles on differentiated instruction through the Walden Library, ProQuest, ERIC, Education Source, and Google Scholar. The search terms used included *professional development*, *learning styles*, *differentiated instruction*, *modification and accommodations for diverse learners*, *co-teaching*, and *inclusive practices*.

Professional Development

As funding continues to limit the offering of professional development, it is important that school districts offer professional development that is research-based and meaningful to all participants (Simos & Smith, 2017). Educators need to be involved in continuous professional development to become more knowledgeable professionals than they were the previous year (Tyagi & Misra, 2021). Professional development is a continuous process that empowers teachers to diagnose problems in their classroom and solve those problems (Saleen et al., 2021). The professional development offered must focus on content and pedagogical knowledge, provide opportunities for real-time

implementation, and develop important collaboration and reflection that lead to improved teacher practice and student achievement (Simos & Smith, 2017). Teacher professional development must provide teachers the knowledge to make changes in their practices that can lead to students' success and the transformation of teachers' beliefs and instructional practices over time (Martin et al., 2019). Professional development should also provide teachers with ample time to learn how to integrate the content and strategies from the professional development into their classroom instruction (Lauterbach et al., 2020).

Further, effective professional development must be well organized, structured carefully, engaging, and provide participants with the knowledge and skills to use the research-based practices presented in their classroom (Martin et al., 2019). Effective professional development should also include multiple components to facilitate the teachers' learning (Lauterbach et al., 2020). Professional development should also be data driven, allowing the participants to see why the professional development is important and can guide them after on the evaluation of its effectiveness for both the educator and the students (Simos & Smith, 2017). Planning for professional development activities, in a school, should be partially influenced by the type of challenges teacher educators encounter in their classroom (Tyagi & Misra, 2021).

According to the results in this study, teachers stated a need for professional development on differentiated instruction to meet the needs of not only students with moderate disabilities in the co-taught setting but all students with various learning styles and needs. Based on the data collected in this study, a professional development workshop was created to increase the number of teachers who are willing to co-teach

each year and the number of students with moderate intellectual disabilities who are included in the general education environment. This professional development will also increase the teacher's self-efficacy to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught setting by providing them training on how to deliver instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students with various learning styles, needs, and disabilities.

Inclusive Classroom

An inclusive classroom requires students to coexist in the same classroom setting, meaning the educational response must be personalized based on individual student characteristics, needs, and learning styles (Nieto & Moriña, 2019). Differentiated instruction allows for teachers to create an inclusive classroom setting to meet the needs of the various learning styles present (Esther Gheyssens et al., 2020). But research has suggested general education teachers have had inadequate coursework in special education or practicum experiences in inclusive settings and differentiated instruction (Lauterbach et al., 2020). Many teachers also find it hard to adapt current practices based on the diverse learning needs of the students (Smets et al., 2020). Although teachers recognize the need to differentiate, many believe it is difficult and time consuming and admit they really do not know how to translate the theory of differentiated instruction into practice in their classroom (Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). Thus, professional development is one potential way for teachers to learn how to acknowledge and address the various learning styles and needs of students in their existing classrooms (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019). Professional development is needed for teachers to implement

differentiated instruction effectively in their classrooms to create an inclusive classroom setting (Esther Gheyssens et al., 2020).

To meet the diverse learning styles and needs of students in the classroom, teachers must first be aware of what those learning needs are. Many teachers do not know how to identify the diverse learning needs of the students in their classroom and are unsure of how to adapt their teaching habits those students' needs (Smets, 2017). Professional development on differentiated instruction must include how to first identify the diverse learning characteristics and needs of the students in an inclusive classroom setting (Smets et al., 2020). It is also important for educators to be provided professional development on how assessment can be used to evaluate students' learning needs and styles (Smets et al., 2020). Besides professional development, schools must also have the necessary resources available to educators to create an inclusive classroom setting (Nieto & Moriña, 2019). The resources needed will vary depending on the specific needs of the students in the classroom.

Determining the Needs of Students with Disabilities in the Classroom

As stated, teachers struggle with identifying the various learning styles and needs of the students in their classrooms. It is important to educate teachers, through professional development, on how to identify the various learning needs and styles of the students in their classrooms. As noted in the results of this study, students with disabilities are placed in a teacher's classroom without the teacher have specific knowledge on each disability. Research has shown teachers find it easier to teach students with disabilities when they are given clear and precise information about the students that

are being placed into their classroom (Elder, 2020). Once teachers are aware of the students in their classroom, professional development is needed on how to teach to the varying disabilities. Supports are important for understanding the complexities and challenges of including students with disabilities, especially students with moderate intellectual disabilities, which can be provided through a professional development workshop (Jimenez & Barron, 2019).

Additionally, since students with disabilities are going to be placed in the general education setting, it is imperative that general and special education teachers be allowed to collaborate during the professional development workshop (Kaczorowski & Kline, 2021). Teachers play a critical role in implementing differentiated instructional activities for students with disabilities, and it is important the activities match both the content and students' learning needs (Basckin et al., 2021). Therefore, the professional development workshop should allow special education teachers and general education teachers time to collaborate and learn about the different categories of students with disabilities. More specifically, the learning, social/emotional, and communication needs of students in each disability category.

Determining Various Learning Style of Students

Besides the needs of students with disabilities in the classroom, it is important teachers also learn about the various learning styles of all the students in their classroom. The concept of learning style describes differences in how a student learns. Knowing about how a student prefers to learn is important in all subject areas of education (Deale, 2019). Students have different preferred learning styles, which can be defined as different

approaches or ways they choose to learn (Khan & Ibrahim, 2017). Students' preferred learning styles are used as a way for them to extract, process, and memorize information (Khan & Ibrahim, 2017). According to Deale (2019), visual, writing, auditory, and kinesthetic are the four learning modalities in which a student learns.

A visual learner prefers to understand the information in pictures, maps, or diagrams (Deale, 2019; Kamal et al., 2021). For example, a visual learner may use a graphic organizer to arrange information in a text. An auditory learner understands information best through listening (Deale, 2019; Kamal et al., 2021). When reading a text, an auditory learner may prefer to have the text read to them on tape. A read/write learner prefers to learn material by reading and writing (Deale, 2019; Kamal et al., 2021). For example, when reading a text, a read/write learner may choose to take notes and then re-read the text to gather more information. Lastly, kinesthetic learners process information through hands-on experiences (Deale, 2019; Kamal et al., 2021). For example, when reading a text, a kinesthetic learner may choose to illustrate the information learned in the text through a visual story book. For teachers to understand how to differentiate the material to meet the different learning styles of students, the professional development needs to include information for the participants to understand the various learning styles of students.

Differentiated Instructional Strategies

Students need to receive instruction suited to their varied readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences, for them to maximize their opportunity for educational growth (Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). Teachers need to receive

professional development on how to effectively instruct students with various learning styles and abilities in their classroom. For this to occur, the facilitators of the professional development need to not only acknowledge the teachers' knowledge and skills on differentiated instructional strategies, but, most importantly, their beliefs and attitudes about differentiation (Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). Many times, teachers feel a lack of support and find it hard to imagine how differentiated instructional strategies can work in their classroom (Smets, 2017). The use of differentiated instructional strategies in the classroom thrives upon teachers' believing in all their students' ability to achieve noticeable progress (Smets et al., 2020).

The concept of differentiated instruction should include a framework that includes a variety of teaching strategies and methods aiming at maximizing the education potential for all learners in the classroom (Smets, 2017). Providing a professional development on differentiated instructional strategies should include a philosophy and practice of teaching strategies that responds to a comprehensive range of learning styles and needs (Smets et al., 2020). According to Esther Gheyssens et al. (2020) an effective professional development on differentiated instructional strategies should include three phases. The first phase should paint a clear picture of what exactly teachers wanted to achieve to make their classroom more inclusive using differentiated instructional strategies (Esther Gheyssens et al., 2020). The second phase should include specific examples of researched-based instructional strategies to assist the teachers in creating a more inclusive classroom setting (Esther Gheyssens et al., 2020). Lastly, the teachers should be given

time to share the knowledge and skills they learned in the professional development with other educators (Esther Gheyssens et al., 2020).

Project Description

The project that is the focus of this study is a three-day professional development program that can prepare general and special education teachers to educate students with various learning styles, needs, and disabilities to create an inclusive classroom. Understanding how to differentiate instruction and create an inclusive classroom is important to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education classroom setting. A three-day professional development session will be held to discuss aspects of creating an inclusive classroom, including differentiated instruction, special education categories, LRE, educational environment code, accommodations/modifications, co-teaching, and instructional strategies.

Resources and Existing Supports

The professional development program will be conducted for the entire district where the study took place. Teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and related service providers will be invited to sign up for the three-day program. Each day will have a maximum of 60 participants. If more than 60 participants sign-up, then another three-day session will take place. The co-chairs of the professional development committee will be welcoming everyone to the workshop. The co-chairs are currently assigned by the district to schedule and organize all professional development. There will be three main facilitators for the workshop to present the content, interact with the participants, observe, and answer questions. All three facilitators currently teach students with moderate

intellectual disabilities and use differentiated instruction in their classroom. The professional development training sessions will occur over the summer in 2022 and on three Saturdays during the 2021-2022 school year and will be voluntary. The workshop will take place over three consecutive days in the summer or three consecutive Saturdays during the school year. The professional development session will take place in the large meeting room available in the district. Internet access and other technology needed is available in the room. A video projector and speakers will be available so the facilitators can present their information.

Each participant can bring an electronic device to take notes on during the professional development. There are enough charging stations to accommodate all devices. Each participant will be given a name tag at the beginning of each of the three-day sessions. Each participant will also be emailed the Power Point presentation ahead of time, in case they want to take notes right on the slides. All participants will also be given a folder with important handouts. The participants will be asked to bring this folder each day. Each round table will be equipped with pens, paper, markers, and sticky notes. A continental breakfast will be provided for the participants each day of the professional development training. Light refreshments will be available through the day for each of the three days. Lunch will be provided on the third day to all participants. All food will be paid for by the district professional development committee. Each participant will also fill out an evaluation at the end of each day and be given a professional development completion certificate. Each participant will also be compensated the workshop rate according to the employee contract.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

The professional development will be offered in the summer and on Saturdays during the school year and will be voluntary. This has the potential to limit the amount of people who sign up for the training. Since the training is not a mandated three-day training, some participants may choose not to attend all three days. The ideal solution for this barrier would be to make this a mandated training offered during institute days at the beginning of the school year. It is difficult for this to occur because there are only two institute days at the beginning of the school year. One institute day is district based and one institute day is individual school based.

Another potential barrier is the technology not working appropriately. To limit this barrier, all participants will receive a copy of the presentation ahead of time, which they will be encouraged to print out. There will also be packets of the presentation available in case the technology is not working. The facilitators will also get there early each morning to make sure all technology is working correctly and efficiently. If the WIFI is not working, the facilitators will also have hot spots available for the participants to connect to WIFI.

Proposal for Implementation and Timeline

This school district is still working remotely until the fall of 2021. The proposed plan will be presented to the professional development committee virtually in July 2021. Since the professional development is interactive and needs to be presented in-person, due to COVID 19, I will seek permission to present the project on three Saturdays once we return to in-person learning. I will also seek permission to run the three-day session in

the summer of 2022. The professional development committee will receive a copy of the three-day agenda and the Power Point presentation. All professional development presented in the district needs to be approved by the district professional development committee. Any recommendations for changes made by the professional development committee will be adjusted as needed.

The projected timeline for the professional development presentation includes the three-day training sessions designed to introduce differentiated instruction in order to create an inclusive classroom. The sessions will include an introduction to inclusion on Day 1, which will include the benefits of inclusion, introduction to special education categories, and educational environment codes (See Appendix A). Day 2 will be an overview of what an inclusive classroom looks like, which will include co-teaching, ways to differentiate instruction, and various instructional strategies that can be used in the classroom (See Appendix A). Day 3 will completely interactive and allow participants to present a differentiated lesson and have plan to lesson plan for the school year. (See Appendix A). Each of the three days includes a mixture of Power Point presentations, group activities, and video clips.

Roles and Responsibilities

My role as the facilitator of this professional development is to organize the three-day professional development session. This will include securing the location, making sure all necessary technology is secured and working, ordering the continental breakfast for all three days, and ordering lunch for the last day. I will also send out the email securing the sign-up of the participants. Two other facilitators will be recruited by me to

help facilitate the workshop. I will also secure a member of the professional development committee to welcome the participants each day. Professional development certificates will be printed and handed out by me. I will also be responsible for turning in the attendance sheets each day to the secretary over professional development, so each member can receive the appropriate professional development hours needed in the district. I will also collect timesheets each day and turn them in to the payroll department to secure the participants receive appropriate compensation.

As far as actually presenting the content during the professional development, that will be divided up equally between the three facilitators. Each facilitator will be required to present the specific content related to the Power Point they are assigned. When a facilitator is not presenting, they will be responsible for walking around the room, engaging the participants, and answering questions. Each facilitator will also be responsible for facilitating specific groups activities that will be assigned to them. The facilitators will also be responsible for gathering all questions that were asked in the parking lot and creating a document with the answers to those questions to be sent to all the participants. The parking lot will be an area in the room where a large piece of paper is placed on the wall and participants can write questions on post-it notes and stick them on the piece of paper.

<div align="center">**Project Evaluation Plan**</div>

Evaluation of a professional development workshop plays a critical role in measuring the outcomes of the training (Alsalamah, & Callinan, 2021). The Kirkpatrick four-level of evaluation training will be used for this three-day professional development

workshop. The Kirkpatrick model proposes four levels of evaluation training, which are reaction, learning, behavior, and results (Alsalamah, & Callinan, 2021). The reaction level describes the trainees' feelings and impressions regarding the professional development (Alsalamah, & Callinan, 2021). Each participant will be given a pre-assessment form rating their level of self-efficacy when it comes to teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities. The reaction level will be evaluated at the end of each day when the participants fill out their individual questionnaires. The learning level is the extent to which participants change their attitudes, improve their knowledge, and/or increase their skills because of attending the professional development workshop (Alsalamah, & Callinan, 2021). The learning level will be assessed at the end of the three-day workshop when the participants fill out a post-assessment form about what they learned during the professional development sessions. This post self-evaluation form will be compared to their pre-assessment form. The behavior level evaluates how participants transfer the knowledge and skills their learned into their classroom (Alsalamah, & Callinan, 2021). This last evaluation process will take place over time. An additional questionnaire will be sent to all participants via email four weeks after the professional development workshop to ask them if they are using the knowledge and skills from the professional development in their classroom. The participants will also be asked to volunteer for administrators to come in and observe the strategies from the professional development workshop being put into practice in the classroom. The results level looks at the effects the professional development had on the school (Alsalamah, & Callinan, 2021). This will be evaluated through sitting down with the professional development

committee and administrators to discuss the three-day training that took place and the results from the surveys.

The plan for this three-day professional development is to offer it every year, until everyone in the district has had an opportunity to attend. Once everyone has had an opportunity to attend the initial three-day workshop, the goal is to develop more intense one-day workshops which expand on the information given in this professional development. The evaluations will be used to add or delete aspects of the three-day professional development program that participants found not relevant or interesting. The evaluations will also be used to create some more intense one-day workshops based on the future needs expressed by the participants. The evaluations can also be used at the district level to evaluate if such programs, such as co-teaching are efficient and effective when including students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting.

<div align="center">

Project Implications

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Social Change Implications

The project was created to facilitate positive social change for all students in the general education classroom. By providing educators with the appropriate resources to create an inclusive classroom, more students with moderate intellectual disabilities will be able to attend class with their general education peers. By providing regular education teachers the tools to teach to various learning styles, needs, and disabilities, more general education teachers may be willing to volunteer to co-teach in the school. Creating an inclusive classroom will also allow students with and without moderate intellectual

disabilities to interact. It could also create an environment of acceptance in the school. If

students begin to feel accepted because of their disability, this can possibly lead to

students feeling accepted regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, body image, and

personality.

Local Stakeholder Implications

As inclusion becomes an important topic to students, parents, the community, and

all other stakeholders, providing an education for students with disabilities in only a

special education setting with be something of the past. Students with disabilities being

educated in the general education classroom alongside their general education peers will

be standard. By participating in professional development that provides information on

how to create an inclusive classroom, general education teachers and special education

teachers will be given the information needed to teach to a classroom of diverse learners.

General education teachers and special education teachers will also be given

opportunities to share their experiences and knowledge with one another during the

professional development. School and district administrators need to understand the

importance in providing continuing professional development to allow for inclusion to be

possible for students with moderate intellectual disabilities.

Summary

In Section 3, I described the project created to address the needs determined by

this study. I specifically discussed the rationale for the project, provided professional

literature to support the project, gave a detailed description of the project, provided the

evaluation plan for the project, and described the social implications of the project. In

Section 4, I will discuss the projects strengths and limitations, reflections on the project,

how the project can bring about change, the importance of the project, and

recommendations for future studies.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

To increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education classroom environment, a shift in perspective is needed at the local school and district levels on teacher training on differentiating instruction to create an inclusive classroom setting. Teachers need to receive additional training to instruct students according to their varied readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences (Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). Currently, co-teaching is used to increase the amount of time students with disabilities spend in the classroom. Even though general and special education teachers receive specific training on the co-teaching models and how to effectively implement co-teaching, it is also necessary to provide training on differentiated instruction for the co-teaching pairs to teach to a variety of diverse learners. This training needs to include how to identify the different learning styles and needs of the students in the classroom and what strategies are effective with each specific group of students (see Smets, 2017). The use of differentiated instruction in a classroom allows for an inclusive classroom to be created.

In this final section of the project, the project strengths and limitations are discussed. Alternate methods to address the problems associated with increasing the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities are also introduced. Alao included is a discussion of scholarship, project development, self-analysis, leadership, and change. The project's potential for social change, implications for practice, and future research recommendations complete the project study.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

The use of a qualitative approach to obtain significant information from the participants provided an underlying strength to this project study. The general and special education teachers were able to express their concerns about the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom. This led to findings indicating that additional professional development was necessary in differentiated instruction. Therefore, a professional development program on creating an inclusive classroom setting was developed to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education classroom environment.

This professional development program will educate general education and special education teachers, related service providers, and paraprofessionals on various strategies to meet the needs of all the learners in their classrooms. Besides the increase in the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education classroom, this project can increase the amount of time all students with disabilities spend in the LRE. This project can also increase teachers' self-efficacy by providing them the tools to create an inclusive classroom setting to feel comfortable teaching students with various learning styles and needs. Providing instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners could cultivate teachers' excitement to teach and students excitement to learn.

Limitations

Several limitations of the study and project need to be acknowledged. The study was limited to a one high school district that includes three high schools in a southwest suburb of Chicago. Conducting this study using multiple school districts across multiple states may address this limitation. Another limitation of the study was restricting the sample to just high school teachers. A study including general education and special education teachers across grade levels may also address this limitation. The study also included only a sample size of 19 teachers. Including a larger number of special education and general education teachers may provide additional information on resources that are needed to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education classroom environment.

One limitation of the project is funding. To complete the training in the summer and not during the school year, teachers would need to be paid their contractual hourly workshop amount. There would also need to be additional money for resources such as supplies and food. Conducting the workshop during the school year would not cut down on costs because substitute teachers would need to be secured for every teacher attending the professional development workshop. If the institute days offered by the district throughout the school year were used for this professional development workshop, this would cut down on cost, but it would not be as effective because the 3-day workshop would be spread out throughout the school year. Another limitation to this project is offering it during the summer months. Any professional development offered during the summer is completely voluntary and cannot be mandated for any teacher. Many teachers

may not attend because they do not want to give up their summer to attend a professional development workshop. Making this a mandatory training during the school year may gain attendance to the workshop.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The lack of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education environment was the focus of this project study. The purpose was to gain an understanding of how teachers perceive the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom setting based on their training, resources, self-efficacy, and perceptions. The project study also looked at the instructional strategies teachers use to teacher students with moderate intellectual disabilities such as co-teaching, though general and special education co-teachers sometimes do not feel they can support students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Hetzroni & Shalev, 2017). An alternative approach for this study would have been to look at the inclusion of all students with disabilities. This would allow for general education teachers and special education teachers to discuss their perception of students with all disabilities being included in a general education classroom setting.

A 3-day professional development workshop was presented as the project for this study. A 3-day workshop is intense, requires many resources, and takes a strong commitment from staff. Due to COVID 19, many schools have begun using an online platform. To decrease the intensity, resources required, and in-person attendance of teachers, the professional development workshop could be offered virtually. For the workshop to be offered virtually, voice-overs would have to be dubbed in, the activities

would have to be adjusted to be interactive online, and the evaluations would have to be

filled out using a Google document. A way to track attendance to the workshop and

distribute professional development certificates accurately would also have to be created.

Any staff in the district would then be able to complete the training on their own time and

at their own pace to ensure they understand the concepts being presented on creating an

inclusive classroom. Staff would also be able to watch the presentation multiple times, if

needed, to make sure they did not miss any important information or reference when

needed.

Scholarship, Project Development, Leadership and Change

An extensive amount of research has been conducted on the inclusion of students

with specific learning disabilities in the general education classroom but not for students

with moderate intellectual disabilities (Gifford et al., 2018; Kirby, 2017). After

establishing the need for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be educated in

the LRE, the literature review concentrated on the inclusion of students with moderate

intellectual disabilities in the general education environment. The study's focus was on

what supports high school general education teachers and special education teachers use

in their co-taught classroom to support students with moderate intellectual disabilities.

The study's results are important to schools and districts to provide the necessary

resources to increase the time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the

general education environment. Even though schools are offering co-teaching as a

resource, the results from this study indicated that teachers need additional training to

meet the needs of all students in the co-taught classroom setting, especially the students

with moderate intellectual disabilities. Presenting the results of this study to other

educators, administrators, and school personal can allow them to understand that even

with co-teaching as a resource in the classroom, additional training is required to provide

teachers the instructional strategies needed to meet the needs of the students in the co-

taught classroom.

The literature review, interviews of general education and special education

teachers, and the analyzing of the results, determined the need for teacher training on

creating an inclusive classroom. Through this, the three-day professional development

workshop on creating an inclusive classroom was developed for the project of this study.

The professional development workshop gives teachers information on students with

disabilities and various learning styles. Teachers are also taught about differentiated

instruction and given various instructional strategies to use to create a more inclusive

classroom. The participants in the training will also be shown videos on teachers using

the strategies in their high school classroom. Throughout the three-day professional

development workshop, teachers are allowed to collaborate and put some of the practices

that were taught to use. An evaluation will be given at the end of the three-say workshop,

but the evaluation process needs to also continue through the school year to evaluate the

strategies being used in the classroom.

School administrators need to look at the results of the study, attend the

professional development, and read the evaluations. As school administrators, they form

the foundation for creating not only an inclusive classroom setting, but also an inclusive

school. Administrators need to review the results of the study to learn teachers are open

to having students with varying disabilities in their co-taught classroom, but they need additional training provided on how to incorporate instructional strategies in their classrooms to meet the needs of the students with disabilities. School administrators should attend the three-day professional development workshop to familiarize themselves with the deafferented instructional materials being presented to the teachers. Reading the evaluations is crucial so administrators can make the necessary adjustments needed to the professional development workshop. Lastly, administrators need to go into the classrooms and evaluate the teachers using the instructional strategies that were presented to them at the professional development workshop.

Self-Analysis of Scholarship

This project study revealed a determination in me that I did not even know existed. This determination was displayed in the timely manner I choose to conduct my literature review, complete the study, analyze the data, and create the project. This study challenged me as a researcher. I became aware of the importance of scholarly research. Not only did I have to learn how to effectively conduct a qualitative study, but I also had to learn how to use a new coding program to analyze the results and find themes. I also became aware of how to ask interview questions that would allow for responses to provide additional data needed to answer my research question.

Self-Analysis of Project Development

The final step in this project study was developing a professional development program. This allowed me to understand the crucial components of an effective professional development program. I am hopeful the professional development workshop

I created will be presented to the teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers during a three-day program in the summer. My goal through this professional development is to provide educators with the tools to create an inclusive classroom setting for all students, regardless of disability, learning style, or need. My long-term goal is for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to increase the time they spend in the LRE.

Self-Analysis of Leadership and Change

I began this doctoral process because of my lifelong goal to get my doctoral degree and my passion for special education. Through this process, I have learned, with the appropriate training and resources, teachers are willing to teach students with various disabilities. Based on the data presented in this study, there is a need for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be included in the LRE. This project has given me the hope that I can be part of the process to create a change where students with moderate intellectual disabilities can be educated among their general education peers. I am excited about the opportunities ahead of me and look forward to continuing this path of creating opportunities for students with disabilities. I also look forward to incorporating the idea of inclusion not just in the classroom, but also to activities/athletics that occur outside of the classroom.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The Illinois Department of Education calls for students with moderate intellectual disabilities to be placed in the LRE. Schools have adopted strategies, such as co-teaching to try to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend

in the general education environment. However, many teachers do not volunteer to be a co-teacher. Their unwillingness to volunteer is not because they do not want to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities, it is because they feel they need additional training to meet their learning needs. This study is important because it provides teachers perspectives on the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education environment. The study is also important because it provides teachers recommendations on what is needed to create a truly inclusive classroom. The study findings indicated that general education and special education teachers continue to need training on co-teaching, but also need additional training on how to meet the learning needs of all the various students in the co-taught classroom. By providing teachers additional training on how to diversify the instructional strategies used in a co-taught classroom, students with moderate intellectual disabilities may be able to increase the amount of time they spend in the general education setting.

Implications, Applications, and Reflections for Future Research

This project study's findings support teachers are willing to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting. The findings also support teachers receive training in co-teaching but need additional training on delivering instruction to meet the needs of a diverse learning group. School administrators need to continue to offer co-teacher training, but also need to provide training on instructional strategies to use in the co-taught classroom. Most co-teaching training provides information to general education teachers and special education teachers on how to effectively work together as equals in the classroom. Administrators need to expand on

co-teaching training by providing teachers additional training on how to differentiate the instruction delivered in the co-taught classroom to meet all the student's needs.

Based on the findings of this study, future research is needed on how to increase the amount of time students with disabilities spend in the general education classroom. This study should be replicated at another school district that utilizes co-teaching as a strategy to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education environment to determine if the findings are consistent. Another recommendation for a future project is to create a professional development that incorporates co-teaching training and differentiated instruction in to one training and determine if that increase the number of teachers that are willing to volunteer to co-teach.

Further research needs to be done on the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities and their participation in after school sports/activities. Data needs to be collected on the number of students with moderate intellectual disabilities that participate in after school activities/sports. Activity sponsors/coaches should be interviewed to determine their perception on the inclusion of students with moderate intellectual disabilities. Since the current study did not include students, students could also be interviewed to determine their perspective on participating in after school activities/sports.

Conclusion

Changes in policies and laws are increasing the amount of time students with disabilities are spending in the LRE. For all students to be successful in this environment, teachers need to be provided the appropriate training and resources to create an inclusive

classroom environment. Co-teacher training is important and co-teachers appreciate the strategies given to them to learn how to work together in the classroom. It is equally important that co-teachers receive the training on how to instruct the students in the class by providing them with examples on differentiated instructional strategies. Professional development on differentiated instruction should not just be offered to co-teachers, but to anyone working with students. Students walk into a classroom with their own needs, learning styles, and disabilities. It is up to the teachers to be able to teach them. For this to happen, school administrators need to provide the professional development to increase the teacher's skill set in differentiating instruction. School districts need to make sure that the resources are available for training to take place.

Changing the school environment by providing inclusive opportunities for all students, can reduce the stigma students face when they are different than their peers. This can extend beyond just students with disabilities, to gender, race, sexual identification, personality, and body image. If students can begin to feel more comfortable and confident in who are there while there are in school, they can take this confidence into the real world. Hopefully, this can increase society's experience for people who are different than them. Creating an inclusive classroom is the beginning step to creating a more inclusive society.

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Appendix A: Final Project

Purpose: Based on the findings of this study, it was determined co-teachers do receive the appropriate training on the co-teaching models, but more training is needed in differentiating instruction to increase the number of teachers who are willing to volunteer to co-teach. Providing the appropriate training teachers need can increase the amount of student with moderate intellectual disabilities that are included in the general education classroom setting

Professional Development Workshop Goals: The primary goal of this three-day professional development workshop is to provide educators the appropriate training necessary to create an inclusive classroom setting. Giving educators specific examples on how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students in their classroom, can increase their self-efficacy when teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities. A variety of activities will be used during the professional development workshop to promote participants engagement. All participants will also leave the workshop with a lesson plan that incorporates differentiated instruction. This will allow the teachers to go back into their classroom and immediately incorporate what they learned from the professional development workshop.

Learning Outcomes: The learning outcomes of this professional development may include but are not limited to the following:

1. Increased knowledge of the benefits of inclusion of students with moderate

   intellectual disabilities.

2. Increased knowledge of the various learning styles of students.

3. Collaboration of special education teachers, general education teacher, and related

   service providers.

4. Continued professional development growth.

Target Audience:
- Special education teachers

- General education teachers

- Paraprofessionals

- Related Service Providers

- Administrators

Introduction to the Project: The study took place at a local high school in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. The results of the study indicated the need to provide professional development workshops to increase teacher's knowledge in differentiated instruction to increase the amount of time students with moderate intellectual disabilities spend in the general education environment. The results of the study indicated teachers receive training on co-teaching models but need additional training on how to provide instructional strategies in the classroom to meet the needs of all students. The three-day professional development workshop is designed to increase the self-efficacy of teachers who teach not only students with moderate intellectual disabilities, but all students with various learning styles and needs. All participants in the professional development workshop will be able to collaborate and leave the workshop with a complete lesson plan that incorporates differentiated instruction.

Professional Development Workshop: Creating an Inclusive Classroom Through the Use of Differentiated Instruction
Day 1

8:30 – 8:45 – Registration

- Teachers will check in for the professional development workshop and pick up their name tags. Special education teachers will be given blue name tags. General education teachers will be given yellow name tags. Related service providers will be given green name tags. Paraprofessionals will be given red name tags. Each name tag will also contain a number and a letter.

- Professional Development administrator will welcome everyone and give a brief introduction about the professional development activities that will be taking place over the next three days. The various presenters and facilitators will also be introduced.

8:45 – 9:00 – Activity - Inclusion

- A facilitator will call certain colors and letters of name tags to join groups. Everyone in the room must find the people who are in their group based on the letter and color of their name tag.

- Participants will then move to groups. The facilitator will purposely leave out a letter of the colored name tags.

- The groups will gather at tables and then the facilitator will explain that those still standing were excluded from the group. Those participants will then form their own group.

- The participants will have three minutes to write down a time when they felt excluded from an activity or group.

- Each person will then turn to a partner and share their story.

9:00 – 9:45 – PowerPoint on Inclusion
- This power point will include:

    o What is an Inclusive Classroom?

    o Benefits to inclusion.

    o Various Learning Styles in a Classroom.

9:45 – 10:00 – Activity Reflection
- Groups will have five minutes to write if they feel inclusion is taking place

    within the school/school district. Each person will then turn to a different

    partner then last time and share their thoughts with them.

10:00- 10:15 – Break
10:15 – 11:15 – PowerPoint on Special Education
- This power point will include:

    o Various disabilities categorized under Individual with Disabilities

    Education Act (IDEA).

    o What is an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

    o Accommodations vs. Modifications.

11:15 – 11:30 – Activity
- Each participant will be asked to think of three accommodations and three

    modifications they have provided to students in their classroom.

11:30 – 12:30 – Lunch Break
12:30 – 1:30 – PowerPoint on Educational Environment (EE) Code Percentages for the School District
- This power point will explain EE Codes and show the participants the

    percentage of time students with various disabilities spend in each EE Code in

    the school compared to the state average.

1:30 – 1:45 – Break
1:45 – 2:30 – Group Activity

- Participants will be given an IEP of a student (all confidential information will

  be whited out) and highlight the areas of what is expected as a teacher if that

  student was placed in a general education classroom. They will also write

  what EE Code the student is placed in. One copy per group will be completed

  and the facilitator will come around and collect those.

2:30 – 2:45 – Exit/Evaluation

- When the facilitator collects the IEP, everyone in the group will be given an

  evaluation survey to fill out about the professional development for that day.

  They will also be given their professional development certificate for the

  completion of Day 1. Once the evaluation is completed by each participant,

  they can turn it in on their way out and they are finished for the day.

Day 2

8:30 – 8:45 – Check-In

- Participants will check in and pick up their new name tags for the day.

- Participants will be given a continental breakfast.

8:45 – 9:00 – Welcome to Day 2

- Professional development administrator will welcome everyone to day two

  and give a brief re-cap of key concepts from day one.

- The participants will also be introduced to the "parking lot". The sticky notes

  and markers on the tables can be used to place questions on the "parking lot"

  papers that will be answered by the facilitators later.

9:00 – 9:30 – Activity – Human Billboards

- Each table will have large pieces of paper folded in half and markers. Each

  participant will be instructed to take a piece of paper and write words that

  describe to them an inclusive classroom. Participants will have 15 minutes to

  complete this part of the activity. A timer will be placed on the display at the

  front of the room, so everyone can be aware of the time.

- At the end of 15 minutes, participants will be asked to cut a hole in the paper

  where it is folded, so that is drapes in front of them.

- Participant will have 15 minutes to walk around the room and ask questions

  about the words on other participants' billboards. This will allow the

  participants to understand what an inclusive classroom looks like to others.

9:45 – 10:45 – PowerPoint on Effective Co-teaching

- This power point will discuss the roles and responsibilities of each

  collaborative teacher in the co-taught classroom. There will also be an

introduction to the various co-teaching models. (Further co-teaching training

will be offered by the district later).

10:45 – 11:00 – Break
11:00 – 12:00 – PowerPoint on Differentiated Instruction
- This power point will discuss what differentiated instruction is, the benefits to

  differentiated instruction, and ways to differentiate instruction.

12:00 – 1:00 – Lunch
1:00 – 1:15 – Activity – Journaling
- Each participant will be asked to journal about ways that they have used

  differentiated instruction in their classroom based on the information provided

  in the power point before lunch.

1:15 – 2:15 – Power Point on Differentiated Instructional Strategies and Resources
- This power point will provide specific strategies teachers and staff can use in

  the classroom with students. The participants will also be provided with

  resources that will be helpful when using differentiated instruction in the

  classroom.

2:15 – 2:45 – Activity – Jot and Chat
- Participants will be asked to jot down one differentiated instructional strategy

  they learned about today that they would like to use in their classroom. They

  will then share that with a partner at their table.

- They will also be asked to jot down one instructional activity that they would

  like to learn more about and turn that in as their exit slip on their way out.

- Participants will receive their Day 2 professional development certificate

  when they turn in their exit slip.

Day 3

8:30 – 8:45 – Check-In

- Participants will check in and receive their name tags. Name tags for day three were strategically put together so co-teaching pairs are in groups together that work together. For those who do not co-teach during the school year, special education teachers and general education teachers were grouped together. Related service providers and paraprofessionals were equally distributed amongst the groups.

- Participants will receive a continental breakfast.

8:45 – 9:00 – Welcome to Day 3

- The professional development administrator will welcome everyone to day three and make sure participants are sitting with their appropriate groups. All participants will be informed this is an interactive day, so active participation is strongly encouraged.

9:00 – 9:45 – Videos of Differentiation

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC-lCxcXfiI

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwDbA1Dyyro

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfB6SSfCmWc

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cq_to2zDnoY

9:45 – 10:00 - Break
10:00 – 11:00 – Activity – Create a Lesson

- Participants will remain in their groups that they were assigned in the morning. Each group will create a 5 – 7 minutes lesson that includes a differentiated instructional activity.

11:00 – 12:00 – Activity - Presentations

- Small groups will each take their turn presenting their lesson to the large

  group.

12:00 – 1:00 – Lunch
1:00 – 2:30 – Activity - Planning for School Year

- Participants will be given this time to lesson plan for the upcoming school

  year. They can choose to do this in groups, pairs, co-teaching pairs, or

  individually. The facilitators will be walking around the room to answer any

  questions and assist when needed.

2:30 – 2:45 – Closing

- Professional development administrator will thank everyone for attending the

  professional development.

- Questions from the parking lot will be answered at this time.

- Each participant will fill out a survey and turn it in on their way out and pick

  up their professional development certificate for Day 3.

Power Point Presentation

Creating an Inclusive Classroom Through the Use of Differentiated Instruction

Welcome to Day 1

Norms

⏱ BEGIN AND END ON TIME	👤 BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT	📋 KEEP TO THE AGENDA
📎 USE NOTES FOR SIDE BAR CONVERSTIONS	💻 BE RESPECTFUL WITH USE OF ELECTRONICS	👂 BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER

## Activity - Inclusion

What is an Inclusive Classroom?

○ An inclusive classroom is a general education classroom where students with and without disabilities learn together. Inclusive classrooms are welcoming to all student regardless of their differences. Inclusive classrooms support the diverse academic, social/emotional, and communication needs of all students (Nieto & Moriña, 2019).

Benefits of Inclusion

- All students are part of their school community. They develop a sense of belonging and become prepared for post-secondary life.

- It provides better opportunities for all students to learn. Students with varying ability levels are often more motivated when they learn in classes surrounded by their general education peers.

- The expectations of all the students are higher. Successful inclusion attempts to develop and capitalize on an individual's strengths.

- It allows students to work on their individual deficit areas, while being with general education peers their own age.

- It fosters a culture of respect and belonging in the school. It also provides students the opportunity to learn about and accept individual differences that extend beyond their academic abilities.

- It provides students with opportunities to develop friendships that can extend beyond the classroom.

Four Learning Styles

1. Visual Learning
2. Auditory Learning
3. Reading/Writing Learning
4. Kinesthetic Learning
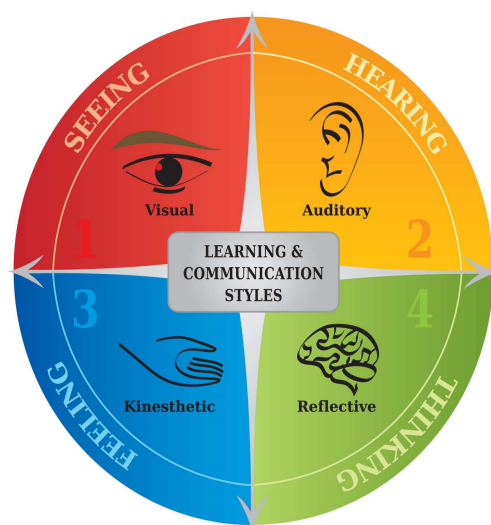
Activity - Reflection

Special Education Categories

- **Autism**
- **Deaf-blindness**
- **Deafness**
- **Developmental delay**
- **Emotional disturbance**
- **Hearing impairment**
- **Intellectual disability**
- **Multiple disabilities**
- **Orthopedic impairment**
- **Other health impairment**
- **Specific learning disability**
- **Speech or language impairment**
- **Traumatic brain injury**
- **Visual impairment, including blindness**

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)-

1 **GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSES** ← GOAL!
NO SUPPORTS

2 **INCLUSION**
SPECIAL ED TEACHER SUPPORTS WITHIN THE GENERAL ED CLASSROOM

3 **RESOURCE ROOM**
STUDENTS ARE PULLED OUT OF THEIR REGULAR CLASSES TO MEET WITH RESOURCE TEACHER.

4 **SELF-CONTAINED**
STUDENTS ARE TAUGHT BY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS WITH OTHER SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS ONLY.

5 **SEPERATE SCHOOLS**
STUDENTS ATTEND SCHOOLS SPECIFICALLY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

6 **RESIDENTIAL**
STUDENTS PERMENANTLY RESIDE AT THEIR SCHOOL FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

Accommodations vs. Modifications

- Accommodation – changes how a student learns the material being presented (Illinois State Board of Education, 2020).

- Modification – changes what a student is taught or expected to learn (Illinois State Board of Education, 2020).

Educational Environment (EE) Codes

EE Code 1 – student with a disability spends 80% or more of their day in the general education environment.

EE Code 2 –student with a disability spends 40%-79% of their school day in the general education environment.

EE Code 3 –student with a disability spends less than 40% of their school day in the general education environment.

District Percentages vs. State Percentages-EE Code
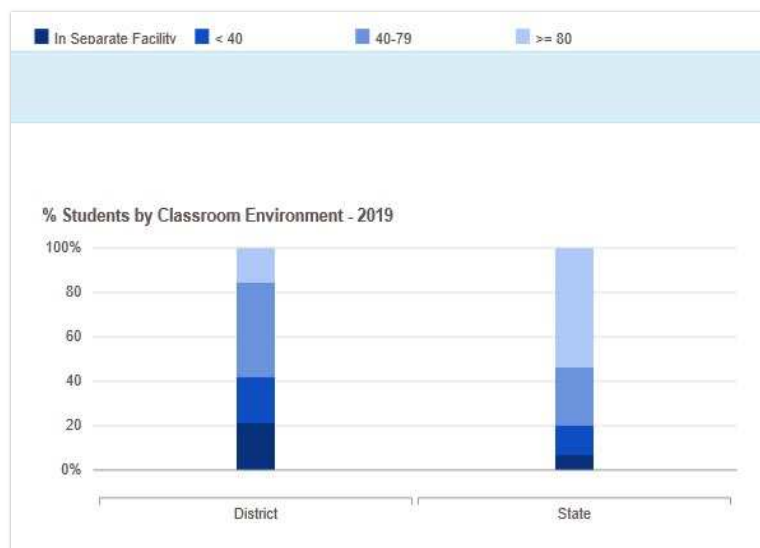
Creating an Inclusive Classroom Through the Use of Differentiated Instruction

Welcome to Day 2

What is Co-teaching?

○ Co-teaching allows regular and special education teachers with different backgrounds, training, and experiences to collaborate to teach students with disabilities (Pratt et al., 2017).

Co-teaching Models

- *One Teach/One Observe* - one teacher does the primary instruction while the second teacher observes.
- *One Teach/One Assist* - one teacher leads the instruction while the other teacher circulates among the students offering individual assistance.
- *Alternative Teaching* - one teacher works with most students in the class, while the other works with a small group for remediation, enrichment, assessment, pre-teaching, or another purpose.
- *Parallel Teaching* - the students are divided into two equal groups, one with the general education teacher and the other with the special education teacher.
- *Station Teaching* – the students are divided into three groups and move between the groups. One group has them working independently and each of the other groups is working with a teacher.
- *Team Teaching* - students remain in one group, while the teachers co-instruct throughout the lesson.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is "adapting content, process, or product" according to a specific student's "readiness, interest, and learning profile" (Smets, 2017).

Ways to Differentiate Instruction

- Content - fundamental lesson content should cover the standards of learning set by the school district or state educational standards.
- Process - teachers can enhance student learning by offering support based on individual needs and learning styles.
- Product - what the student creates at the end of the lesson to demonstrate the mastery of the content.
- Learning environment - the conditions for optimal learning include both physical and psychological elements.

How to Differentiate the Content

- Match vocabulary words to definitions.
- Read a passage and answer related questions.
- Think of a situation that happened to a character in the story and produce an alternative outcome.
- Differentiate fact from opinion in the text.
- Identify an author's position and provide evidence to support this viewpoint.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the content.

How to Differentiate the Process

- Allow visual learners to read the textbook.
- Allow auditory learners to listen to audio books.
- Allow kinesthetic learners to complete an interactive assignment online.

How to Differentiate the Product

- Allow visual learners to create a graphic organizer of the text read.
- Allow read/write learners to take notes and re-read material as needed.
- Allow auditory learners to give an oral report to the class.
- Allow kinesthetic learners to create a story book illustrating the story.

How to Differentiate the Learning Environment

- Break students into various groups to discuss the assignment.
- Allow students to read individually.
- Create quiet spaces in the classroom where there are no distractions.
- Allow students to stand or sit in a "non-traditional" chair if preferred.
- Place tennis balls on chairs in order to allow for the student to move in chair without distractions.

Resources

- https://www.thoughtco.com/differentiation-instruction-in-special-education-3111026
- https://sites.google.com/site/lrtsas/differentiation/differentiation-techniques-for-special-education
- https://www.solutiontree.com/blog/differentiated-reading-instruction/
- https://www.readingrockets.org/article/differentiated-instruction-reading
- https://www.sadlier.com/school/ela-blog/13-ideas-for-differentiated-reading-instruction-in-the-elementary-classroom
- https://inservice.ascd.org/seven-strategies-for-differentiating-instruction-for-english-learners/
- https://www.cambridge.org/us/education/blog/2019/11/13/three-approaches-differentiation-primary-science/
- https://www.brevardschools.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=6174&dataid=8255&FileName=Differentiated_Instruction_in_Secondary_Mathematics.pdf

Creating an Inclusive Classroom Through the Use of Differentiated Instruction

Welcome to Day 3

Videos on Differentiation

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC-ICxcXfiI
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwDbA1Dyyro
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfB6SSfCmWc
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cq_to2zDnoY

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○ Nieto, C., & Moriña, A. (2019). The dream school: Mind-changing perspectives of people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 32*(6), 1549–1557. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1111/jar.12650

○ Pratt, S. M., Imbody, S. M., Wolf, L. D., & Patterson, A. L. (2017). Co-planning in co-teaching: A practical solution. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 52*(4), 243–249. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451216659474

○ Smets, W. (2017). High Quality Differentiated Instruction—A Checklist for Teacher Professional Development on Handling Differences in the General Education Classroom. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 5*(11), 2074–2080.

Pre-Assessment
Please complete this survey to assess your knowledge on the professional development training Are you willing to volunteer to co-teach?

On a scale from 1- 5 how comfortable are you teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities in your class?

On a scale from 1-5 how comfortable are you teaching students with any disability in your class?

Name two benefits of inclusion.

On a scale from 1 -5 how comfortable are you with:
1. Differentiating the learning content in your classroom?

2. Differentiating the learning process in your classroom?

3. Differentiating the learning product in your classroom?

4. Differentiating the learning environment in your classroom?

Post-Assessment
Please complete this survey to assess your knowledge after the professional development training you just participated in.
Would you now be willing to volunteer to co-teach?

On a scale from 1- 5 how comfortable are you teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities in your class?

On a scale from 1-5 how comfortable are you teaching students with any disability in your class?

Name two benefits of inclusion.

On a scale from 1 -5 how comfortable are you with:
5. Differentiating the learning content in your classroom?

6. Differentiating the learning process in your classroom?

7. Differentiating the learning product in your classroom?

8. Differentiating the learning environment in your classroom?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions

Research Question: How do general education teachers and special education teachers support students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught classroom setting?

Interview Protocol:

- Thank you for consenting to participate in my study. I know this is taking time out of your day and I appreciate you volunteering for this. I will be using recording the interview via the google meets platform and I will be journaling all responses when we begin the interview process.

- Let me start by briefly sharing my own personal and professional background, along with my research. You can ask questions at any time.

- After the interview concludes, there are stages of the research process that will follow. I would like to share them with you so that you understand the process.

- Each interview will follow the same format. I will conduct the interview, share the results with you from the interview and obtain your approval that the data I collected from the interview is accurate. I will then proceed to code, categorize, find themes, and identify data from all participants that will become part of the results in my project study. You can contact me any time after the interview with questions or concerns.

- Do you have any questions, concerns, or thoughts before we begin the interview?

- The interview will consist of various questions. The first questions are just to gain some background information and then there are specific five research questions. Just share your perceptions, experiences, and any pertinent information that will support the question.

- Are you ready to begin?

Interview Questions:

1. What is your current title?

2. How many years have you been working in education?

3. Do you have experience in the co-taught setting? If yes, how many years?

4. Can you describe your experience with moderate intellectual disabilities in the co-taught setting?

5. Can volunteer in your school to co-teach?

6. What do you feel is most challenging when teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom?

7. How do you feel your previous experiences (education and professional development) have prepared you to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education setting?

8. What specific instructional strategies have you received training on to use when educating students with moderate intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

9. Can you explain how your personal experiences and previous knowledge effect your willingness to volunteer to co-teach?

10. What are your personal feelings on educating students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom setting?

11. Can you explain how your own self-efficacy impacts your willingness to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom?

Appendix C: Code Book

Codes	Categories	Themes Emerging
Students can learn with support	Assistance	Accommodations/Modifications
Materials need to be adjusted		
One one one assistance needed		
Extra time needed		
Frustration without support	No support	Supports needed
Social support needed		
Getting along with co-teacher	Relationships	Personal Experiences
Love the students		
Made me a better teacher	Working conditions	Professional Gains
Got to meet other students in the building		
Bad experience co-teaching	Negative	Negative experiences
Not able to keep same co-teacher year to year		
Don't have the same planning periods		
Students should be included with their peers	Positive gains	Inclusion
Build social relationships		
Allows teachers to work together		
Students may not fit in	Negative gain	
Can't keep students engaged		
Enough training on co-teaching	No training needed	Professional Development
Very familiar with the co-teaching models		

Co-teaching training is adequate		
Only took one class on how to deliver instruction	Training needed	
Not familiar with differentiated instruction		

Appendix D: Sample Transcript

Interviewer: How do you feel your previous experiences, which can include your education and any professional development that you have attended have prepared you to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities in the general education setting?

Participant SE1: I think our professional development is good. We often use demonstrations classrooms so teachers can see live how co-teaching models work to support student growth.

Interviewer: What professional development do you think is good?

Participant SE1: Our co-teaching training that allows up to learn about the various co-teaching models. I do believe that this training is more centered on how to make sure the two adults in the room interact with each other and is not geared towards teaching students with moderate intellectual disabilities, or any students with a disability for that matter.

Notes: Co-teaching training offered by the district is ok, but more training is needed on how to teach the students with moderate intellectual disabilities.

Interviewer: What is a demonstration classroom?

Participant SE1: It is when we are allowed to sign up for a specific classroom to observe a teacher or co-teachers using a specific educational practice. The co-teaching demonstration classrooms that we can sign up for allow us to observe co-teachers using one or more of the co-teaching strategies.

Notes: Professional development is being provided again to the teachers to observe a specific co-teaching strategy, but not a strategy related to how to teach students with moderate intellectual disabilities.