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Teachers' Perceptions of Their Roles and Challenges with Inclusion

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Walden University

College of Education

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Nini A. Greenidge

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Teachers' Perceptions of Their Roles and Challenges with Inclusion

by

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MA, New Jersey City University, 2010

BS, New Jersey City University, 2008

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

Many schools have employed inclusion practices as an instructional framework, meaning general and special educators are expected to coteach students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The research problem at the local study district was that inclusion as an instructional framework challenged the roles of general and special education coteachers as well as the students they were intended to benefit. The conceptual framework for this project study was the social constructivist theory. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain an understanding about inclusion as an instructional framework. The research questions addressed how the experiences of the participants in this study shaped their thinking about successful inclusive practices. Semistructured interviews focused on the perception and experiences of the 10 teachers from four different elementary schools. Interview responses were analyzed on a continuous basis during data analysis, and themes through a coding process were identified. The key findings were that participants at the local study district site believed that they were unprepared to teach students within the inclusion framework. Some key elements were highlighted for professional learning that would support inclusion as an instructional framework. This research can foster social change for coteachers through ongoing professional learning that is sustainable, which could improve the working relationship between coteachers that would benefit the social and academic outcome of the students they teach.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my son Jada and my daughter Kaocia, for they are the reason why I continue to set personal and professional goals. It is my desire that they would see that the time commitment and hard work that I have put into this has paid off and that they can do anything with the right focus and commitment. I hope that I represent a living example of that reality. This study is also dedicated to my mom, Marilyn. I thank you for your love, support, encouragement and believing in me always. None of what I can do today would be possible without the role you have played in my life. Thank you.

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I would like to acknowledge and extend my thank you to the school district for allowing me access to the specific schools, resources and teachers that were needed to conduct this study. Thanks to all those behind-the-scenes individuals who made themselves available to answer my questions or assisted my efforts in some shape or form.

Finally, I would like to thank the teacher participants who assisted me with this study. Their willingness and professionalism have made this journey possible. Thank you.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Research suggests that the inclusion model of instruction is an effective instructional approach (Kauffman & Badar, 2017). With the inclusion model, general and special education teachers are tasked with educating students with special needs in the same classrooms along with their general education peers (Graves, 2018; Lamport et al., 2012). The research problem at the local study district was that inclusion as an instructional framework challenged the roles of general and special education coteachers as well as the students it was intended to benefit. The special education teachers were challenged with coplanning and coteaching with the general education teachers, which is something that they were not typically trained to do (see Kauffman & Badar, 2017). The responsibilities associated with such a task presented a challenge for some of the special education and general education teachers alike (lead teacher, personal communication, June 16, 2019). According to the district's annual performance review, the teachers at the local district under study were accountable for ensuring that inclusion works for their students while trying to embrace the benefits associated with it, and it was unclear if the teachers were implementing these instructional strategies appropriately. Thus, the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of inclusion as an instructional framework.

The local district under study is a public school district in a southwestern state that provided educational services to an estimated 46,000 students at 42 different campuses: six comprehensive high schools, nine middle schools, 22 elementary schools and five

specialty campuses. This district's teaching staff included 2,500 teachers and 527 professional support staff. The local study district provided special education services to 3,624 of its student population. An inclusion setting was made up of a class size of no more than 30 students, and of those 30 students, an inclusion class had no more than eight special education students. The local study district's student population was 97% Hispanic students, 4.3% Caucasian students, and 2.3% Black students.

According to Texas Education Agency (2019), with a graduation rate of 99.1% in the 2019–2020 school year for general education students and 88.6% for students with special needs, the local study district had many successes regarding its academic achievement. For the district's accountability rating, all campuses met state standards. Nevertheless, there were challenges at the local study site with its special education population. Based on the 2019 Texas Education Agency annual performance review, these special education students were behind their general education peers in reading, writing, and math at the district level and when compared to their general education peers at the state level. In the review, 45% of special education students met satisfactory standards or above passed the reading state standardized exam compared to the district 79% and statewide 75% passing rate. In writing, 39% of special education students met satisfactory standards or above when compared to the district's 77% and the state's 68%. In math, 67% of special education students met satisfactory standards or above. The district rate was 88% alongside the state 82% passing.

Before inclusion, many of these students received their education in a self-contained classroom with modified instruction that included slow pacing that targeted

specific goals and objectives on their individualized education plan (IEP). The self-contained classroom represented a smaller class with a special education teacher and a minimum of one paraprofessional dependent on the size of the class and their disabilities. With the push for inclusion, a protocol was established for deciding which students would be transferred out of the self-contained classroom and into the general education classroom. But based on the annual performance review, the district improvement plan for 2020–2021 identified that students receiving special education services performed behind district average on its 2020 benchmark assessment. After conducting classroom observations throughout the district, students with special needs were assigned the same assignments as their general education peers. For the 2019–2020, the local study site improvement plan stated for its performance objective that 100% of the special and subpopulation would be placed in the proper learning environment and proper grade levels to ensure they reach their potential (Texas Education Agency, 2019). The district's plan suggested a need for professional development in that area for teachers and administrators along with a need to provide intervention materials to supplement the core curriculum in reading, writing and math. It was also noted that many times, it is difficult for special education teachers to know how to create and support lessons that touch upon the standards for students that are more involved.

On a national level, inclusion is a growing trend with its attempt to put an end to the segregation of students with special needs from their general education peers when appropriate, but it is also a controversial concept for several reasons (Lama, 2017). Some of the concerns about the challenges with inclusive educational practices are not only

coming from teachers but from parents too. Parents are concerned that services will be impaired, programming watered down, and that in some cases a general education classroom may be inappropriate for some individuals with an IEP (Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2018). They also have concerns about teachers' abilities and attitudes toward accommodating students with IEPs into their general education classrooms. Further, though schools have made significant progress, the intensity and the degree of how schools implement and practice inclusion varies from district to district and even from one school to another school in the very same district (Lama, 2017). The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) continues to have a powerful influence on school reform, but findings at the district and school levels are complicated and inconsistent (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). This basic qualitative research design is intended to gain an understanding about inclusion as an instructional framework so that desired outcomes for students can be achieved at the local study site. At the local study site, inclusion as an instructional framework challenged the roles of general and special education coteachers as well as the students it was intended to benefit.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

For the 2018–2019 school year, the local study site performed above the state average in 17 out of the 17 indicators used to evaluate student academic success in its city region according to Texas Education Agency (2019). Despite the district's great reputation and success, the Texas academic performance report and adequate yearly progress review showed that special education continued to be a struggling population.

The support provided to the special education department involved collaboration with other academic departments. But according to the Texas Education Agency annual performance review of 2018 and 2019, data revealed a need to manage placement of special education students in the least restrictive environment. At the local study site, the State Assessment of Academic Readiness scores were not favorable for the special education students who were now a part of their classroom rosters.

General education teachers have felt underprepared to teach students with disabilities and believe that teaching students with disabilities involved additional time and resources forcing them to focus more on curriculum and not on pedagogy (Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2018). However, based on the overarching goal of inclusion, there are benefits for all students whether they are students with an IEP or general education students. Some of the benefits are academic and social peer models for students with IEPs increased social skills for both general and special education students and increased achievement of IEP goals (McMurray & Thompson, 2016). With that understanding, many challenges limited or hindered success with the daily implementation of inclusion as an instructional framework. It could be that some teachers at the local study site faced challenges that tend to limit their ability to assist their students with maximizing the benefits associated with inclusion. Further study was needed to identify and examine factors associated with the challenges of inclusion as an instructional framework at the local study site.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

There has been a push for inclusive practices in many school districts; however, inclusion as instructional framework has challenged the desired outcomes of the students it was intended to benefit. In fall 2018, 95% of 6- to 21-year-old students with disabilities were served in regular schools, 3% were served in a separate school for students with disabilities, and 1% were placed in regular private schools by their parents (The National Center of Statistics, 2019). But many general and special education teachers are challenged to support their students with or without special needs in an inclusion setting (Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2018). Two factors can either promote or obstruct inclusion: the attitude of the individuals involved and the need for an encompassing policy (Avissar et al., 2016). There is a strong relationship between teacher attitude and student's types of disability, with teachers being more willing to include students with physical disabilities than students with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral problems (Odongo & Davidson, 2016). Advocates for educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment argue that what matters most is the quality of instruction provided for students with disabilities and not where their instruction is provided (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014). This argument supports what general and special educators are finding to be one of the challenges for educating students with special needs in the general education classroom: not feeling confident in the strategies related to delivery of instruction and support that allow access and success for students with special needs.

Educators working from a social constructivist perspective advocate for inclusion of all students with disabilities in the regular classroom and share a radical approach to inclusion that assumes that it is the structure of schooling, not the students that needs to change (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014). There is a strong need to institute and strengthen the special education component in professional development in schools. When teachers do not receive formal training in schools on how to manage inclusive classrooms, they can still become productive if given the chance to improve their knowledge and skills through short in-service training programs (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Teachers have been supportive of inclusion but preferred to have students with special needs in a separate classroom due to not feeling they had the ability to teach students with disabilities (Mngo & Mngo, 2018).

Definition of Terms

Accommodation: Changes how a student learns the material (Understood Team, 2021).

Coteaching: A practice that is rooted in the philosophy of inclusive education, and it involves two teachers collaborating in delivering instruction to a group of students with diverse learning needs, including those with disabilities, in a single classroom (Chitiyo, 2017).

Differentiation: A collection of best practices strategically employed to maximize students' learning at every turn, including giving them the tools to handle anything that is undifferentiated (Turner et al., 2017).

Individualized educational plan (IEP): A written educational plan guiding the delivery of special education supports and services for the student with a disability (U.S. Department of Education and Urban Development, 2021, p. 1).

Inclusive practice: An approach to teaching that considers that differences exist amongst all students and provides access to educational content allowing side by side learning of diverse learners including those with special needs/IEP in the general education setting (Krischler et al., 2019).

Least restrictive environment: The part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that mandates that children who receive special education in public or private school should be educated in the least restrictive environment with proper supports with their nondisabled peers. The mandate also considers special situation in which a student with a severe disability may need special classes or a different setting with more appropriate supports and supplementary aids that a regular classroom cannot provide. (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Modifications: Change what a student is taught or expected to learn (Understood Team, 2021).

Significance of the Study

This study is relevant because the teachers at the local study site were challenged with their roles and responsibilities regarding inclusion practices as an instructional framework. Teachers may be challenged between the social and the academic implications of inclusive practices and the challenges of having students with special needs in their classroom with their general education peers (Mackey, 2014, p. 15). This

research was conducted to examine the challenges for general and special educators at the local study site related to inclusion as an instructional framework. But the findings can also add understanding to other educational institutional settings that struggle with being able to adequately serve the educational needs of special education students in the general education classroom like the local study site. This understanding could lead to changes in how teachers are prepared to go into the classroom to serve all students and their varying needs. Understanding and identifying the components that are necessary for a successful inclusion could also lead to restructuring of inclusion protocols that maximizes academic progress for all, allowing teachers to feel more supported, prepared, and effective in their roles and responsibilities.

Research Questions

This basic qualitative research design was designed to answer the essential questions pertaining to the challenges associated with inclusive practices for general and special education teachers at the local study site. In a successful classroom, there are processes, methods, and materials that are necessary to effectively educate a child. These aspects are not typically similar in regular and special classrooms where the zone of proximal development is organized differently (Vygotsky, 1978). The combining of the two teachers' expertise is what makes an inclusion classroom successful. This interest in learning more about the teachers' perceptions of their challenges with implementation of inclusive strategies for students with IEPs and their general education peers, and their roles and responsibilities as general and special education coteachers led to the research questions:

- Research Question 1: What is it about the inclusion model that is the most challenging for the coteachers at the local study site?
- Research Question 2: What are the components for a successful inclusion classroom as understood by both general education and special education teachers?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory was the framework for this study. This theory focuses on the importance of social interaction and the use of language for the development of knowledge. Vygotsky explained that the learner must be engaged in the learning process and that learning happens with the assistance of others such as adults or skilled peers. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development emphasizes that students can receive help from adults and other children to learn concepts and ideas that they are less able to learn on their own. In an inclusion classroom, when students are grouped together with the guidance of one or more teachers, they are interacting with and given the opportunity to learn academically and socially co-constructing knowledge. According to Vygotsky, students are then able to co-construct knowledge, which is an example of social constructivism. This framework thus supports the benefits of inclusion.

Coteachers' roles and responsibilities are important to the success of inclusion in their classrooms (Conderman & Hedin, 2017). The social constructivist theory supports the learner-centered model where students learn more through social interactions with their peers and teachers (Kumar & Sharma, 2017). An important part of Vygotsky's theory that

relates to special education focuses on inclusion based on positive differentiation (Gindis, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky emphasized that the child must be within the mainstream social and cultural environment as much as possible and that it is the methods of teaching that should be changed with a focus on the student's strengths and individual needs. Vygotsky added that teaching and learning should be differentiated so that children in inclusive classrooms can be successful.

I studied teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities and their ability to work with students with special needs in an inclusion setting based on the social constructivist framework. Both teachers and students are active agents in children's learning. How a teacher intervenes in a child's learning is necessary just as much as the quality of the teacher and the learning interaction that is crucial to the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978).

Review of the Broader Problem

In my study of the broader problem, I researched specific keywords through the internet and electronic databases in Walden University. Some of the important keywords that I searched were *teacher attitudes*, *inclusion education*, *co-teaching/collaboration*, *special education*, and *teacher preparation*. I used databases such as Proquest, ERIC, Google Scholar, EBSCOHOST, and Education Research Complete. These resources were used to identify the latest findings of the focus of my project study. These findings have helped me to design my study.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is the process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach all learners and be a key strategy for providing education for all (Suleymanov, 2015). More time spent in regular classrooms has been correlated with higher test scores, fewer absences, and referrals for disruptive behavior (National Center on Inclusive Education, 2011). In the United States, students with disabilities in inclusive classes were more likely to pass state exams, complete high school, attend college, obtain a job, earn a higher salary and live independently (Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2018).

According to the 2018 report to the U.S. Congress on the implementation of IDEA, 61.1% of students with varying disabilities spent 80–100% of the school day in a general education classroom, and the remaining 39.9% spent 40–80% of their school day in a general education classroom and the other half in self-contained classroom. A majority of students with disabilities spend a large amount of time in the general education classroom and require accommodations and modification that are individualized and supported by a special education teacher to some degree. General education teachers are finding that they are expected to provide instruction to students with individualized needs with support from a special education teacher that can be throughout the entire day or part of the day or week. The high level of individualized needs in the absence of a coteacher could be a part of the challenge for general education teachers who may feel that there are many needs that need to be serviced but limited time

and resources. Thus, for some school districts and teachers, they have not been seeing the benefits of inclusion for their students.

Coteaching and Collaboration

Teacher collaboration is a strategy that is highly effective in inclusive settings. It capitalizes on the talents and skills of participating teachers. But it requires a belief that all students can learn with the ability to communicate and problem solve and a flexible approach to lesson planning and implementation of instructional strategies (BuliHolmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016). General and special education teachers are also expected to not only work collaboratively together but deliver instruction and support the various individual needs of the special education students using an inclusive model, which some are finding to be challenging. They are also expected to participate in IEP meetings.

For learning to happen for students with special needs, there are important elements that are needed. Some elements are teacher collaboration, student collaboration, varying supports for students, variety and flexibility in delivery of instruction that includes modification of assignments and accommodations (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016). Communication, time management, and content knowledge are three necessary components for coteaching in an inclusion classroom (Dafonte & BartonArwood, 2017). But the struggle to respond to the individual requirements of each student continues to be a challenge for both general and special educators in the general education classroom as they are expected to work together to fill gaps in learning for students with and without IEPs. They face these challenges daily while trying to meet

accountability for the district and at the same time worry about their own annual evaluations (Jiang et al., 2015). These daily challenges also include classroom management, curricular demands regarding pacing while expected to consider and meet the individual needs of all learners, those with IEPs and those without IEPs as they are all included in the outcome of high stakes testing (Barnes & Gaines, 2017). These challenges could contribute to teachers' perceptions of their roles and challenges with regards to inclusion despite the many claims of its benefits to education.

Professional teaching standards have emphasized collaboration as a vital skill and knowledge domain for teachers. Collaboration as a practice is a standalone domain area in which special education should show competence prior to entering the teaching field (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Collaboration is not only expected between general and special education teachers, but it also includes parents, related service personnel, and members of outside agencies to include advocates as well. Understanding the importance that collaboration plays in a co-teaching relationship could help teachers in inclusion settings to face work through their challenges using a collaborative approach.

Teacher Perception and Attitude

Zagona et al. (2017) found in their survey and interview of general and special education teachers that there was a relationship between educators' preparedness for inclusive education and whether they have taken university courses or special training on inclusive education. Some research has revealed that not all teachers are prepared and have negative attitudes about their practice. Teachers' negative attitudes may affect their job performance and pose some level of stress while trying to educate students with

disabilities in their classroom (Barnes & Gaines, 2017). Professional learning that includes job embedded opportunities is an option to help support teachers on an ongoing basis to develop professionally.

Mngo and Mngo (2018) concluded in their study of teacher perception of inclusion that of their 346 teacher participants, most teachers showed negative attitudes about the success or outcome of inclusive education. Those participants indicated that the training they received in special education and inclusive education was not enough for successfully integrating students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. Feeling knowledgeable and competent are important in shifting some of the negative attitudes expressed by some teachers about inclusion as instructional framework. Limited training in special education presents an issue that leads to lack of readiness to manage and support the needs of students with disabilities and just the same for those students without a disability.

According to Arishi et al. (2017), inclusive and special education requires that teachers enter professional relationships by finding ways to connect with children irrespective of their unique differences. However, when teachers focus on labels, they can impose a hierarchical structuring of what and who is valued by teachers and what is worth paying attention to in school. Gebhardt et al. (2015) shared that general education teachers were more resistant to the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities and behavioral disorders, more so than students with physical disabilities. General education teacher participants expressed having anxiety towards the inclusion of students with intellectual and physical disabilities in their classes. According to Sagner-Tapia (2017),

teacher interactions with students with disabilities open doors to practice and participation in inclusion, but it requires a change in what they are used to, and some teachers are not prepared to make such changes.

In their examination of the barriers that teachers perceive that hinder inclusion, Amr et al. (2016) stated that developing a positive attitude towards inclusion requires that teachers acquire sufficient knowledge about inclusive education and suggests that a learning environment that lacks the required resources and support often leads to teachers becoming less accepting of inclusion. Odongo and Davidson (2016) identified seven variables that may influence teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards inclusion. They are the type of severity of the disability, prior contact with students with disabilities, teacher experience with students with disabilities, teacher's perception of administrative support, training in special education or inclusive education, the role of ongoing/in-service teacher training, and teacher support for inclusive practice.

Monsen et al. (2014) found that teacher attitudes towards including students with disabilities in general education settings were found to have a significant impact on how they managed their classroom learning environments and how adequately they perceived available support. In addition, Vaz et al. (2015) found practical concerns of teachers included accommodating the individualized time demands of students with a disability without disadvantaging other students, apprehension of the quality and quantity of work of children with disabilities, lacking adequate support, and limited training supporting inclusive practice.

Teacher Preparation

Srivastava et al. (2017) shared that previous research studies implied that knowledge about disabilities is important in making decisions about appropriate teaching methods that may be very specific and effective to the group. Teacher preparation programs are often faulted for providing insufficient training in collaboration skills and fail to equip special educators with the skills necessary for co-teaching (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014). Some districts use in-service professional development to address challenges within the district as well as a means for keeping teachers up to date and current on researched based best practices in education (Demonte, 2016).

Mngo and Mngo (2018) shared that 58.12% of teacher participants in their study had the belief that they did not have the ability to teach students with disabilities. They determined that this is an indication that there is a need for teachers and a lack of resources to support special education and teaching of students with varying disabilities. Gebhardt et al. (2015) suggested that all prospective teachers should learn more about inclusive practices and the purpose of individual educational planning in their studies. Learning about inclusion practices and the purpose of IEPs would allow teachers to be more prepared to confront their roles and responsibilities in the inclusion classroom.

There is a need to bridge the gap between research and practice by investigating the extent to which practitioners view strategies supported by research as useful and relevant classroom practices (Farley-Ripple et al., 2018; Yang & Li, 2012). Strogilos and

Avramidis (2016) suggested that future research should focus on the impact of training of the roles and responsibilities of co-teachers. Future research should also focus on teaching of students with various disabilities in the co-taught classes.

Alquraini and Gut (2012) pointed out that stakeholders should have specific knowledge and understanding about the needs of different learning, teaching techniques and curriculum strategies, and other components that prepare them to enter a profession which accepts individual and collective responsibilities. Their research identifies the conflicts or challenges general and special education teachers face with inclusion and their roles and responsibilities. It brings to question how prepared teachers in their roles and responsibilities for the reality are that they face as they encounter the diverse learning needs of the students they teach. According to Hergott (2020), to improve the educational experience of special needs students in the inclusion classroom, teachers must be knowledgeable about IDEA, curriculum differentiation, and appropriate instructional practices for working with disabled students. Zagona et al. (2017) found in their survey of teachers that there was no significant relationship between educators who completed university training on inclusive education and how prepared they felt regarding collaboration. However, they did find a relationship between teachers who received special training and their preparedness in planning for the implementation of IEP goals and communication with individual learners and their families. Pedagogies that combine formal training and planned hands-on experience with people with disabilities have been shown to improve preparedness and positive attitudes towards inclusion (Vaz et al., 2015).

Acceptance of individual and collective responsibilities may be one step in the right direction. However, the challenges associated with those responsibilities are a reality for general and special education teachers working to support inclusive practices (Alquraini & Gut, 2012) Schwab et al. (2019) found that to reach successful inclusion practices, school policies, curricula, and teacher preparation must be in place to change teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. In addition, according to Anderson and Boyle (2015), most researchers found in favor of inclusive education both in terms of academic and social outcomes.

It appears that based on the research, the benefits far outweigh the challenges associated with inclusive education. Nevertheless, some general and special educators struggle to overcome those challenges. Those challenges will be examined in this study.

Implications

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, the framework for this study, suggested that social interaction is important as is the use of language for the development of knowledge. Within the framework, the learner must be engaged in the learning process and that learning happens with the assistance of others. Further, the literature researching inclusion as an instructional framework found that along with the many benefits of inclusion come challenges for general and special education teachers and the students its intended to benefit. Further research about the challenges of inclusion as an instructional framework for teachers should explore the contributing factors to those challenges. The review of the literature on inclusion as an instructional framework included relative themes such as inclusive education, co-teaching and collaboration,

teacher perception and attitude, and teacher preparation. These themes could provide some indications for further research and project study.

Considering the conceptual framework of Vygotsky's social constructivist theory and the different themes from the review of the literature, showed implications for a professional learning project. Based on the literature review, inclusion as an instructional framework comes with many benefits. However, the research suggests that some teachers of inclusion classrooms are challenged in their roles and responsibilities and need ongoing professional learning to maximize on the benefits of inclusion for the students.

The data from the teacher participants from this research study could show a need for improved professional development that would address the challenges of inclusion as an instructional framework. The participant size for this study is ten. The findings from this study would not allow for generalization to a larger population. In addition, the findings from this study and the literature review could help to inform and direct educational leadership in the local study district and similar districts to consider making some modifications to the professional development and supports that are available to educators. Such action could allow for teachers to feel more prepared and confident in their roles and responsibilities of educating students within the inclusion framework. The data from this study along with the themes from the literature review and conceptual framework informed the decision for this project.

Summary

The literature review suggested that inclusion allows for positive academic outcomes and social acceptance that promote the understanding of diversity for students with special needs and their non-disabled peers. However, at the local study site, general education and special education teachers were challenged with inclusion as an instructional framework. For general and special education co-teachers at the local study site, this challenge impeded on the desired academic outcomes for their students despite what some researchers have stated regarding its benefits associated with inclusion.

Some teachers at the local study site may attributed their obstacles to not being supporters of inclusion. Their own beliefs and attitudes could be a contributing factor to some of the challenges they are experiencing. Some of those obstacles pertained to not being able to adequately support the individualized needs of the special needs student in the general education setting (Moreno-Rodriguez et al., 2017). These teachers wavered between the social and the academic implications of inclusive practices and the challenges of having students with special needs in their classrooms with their general education peers (Mackey, 2014, p. 14). Mackey also noted that teachers might feel not equipped with the proper training or support necessary to carry out the task for which they are unprepared (Mackey, 2014, p. 15). This feeling of unpreparedness was a major factor in the lack of student achievement that general and special educators contended with despite the claim that inclusive practices come with great benefits. This interest in learning more about the academic benefits and the limitations associated with inclusive

practices as perceived by general and special educators has led to a basic qualitative research design approach that could add understanding to this phenomenon.

In Section 2, an overview of the research methodology and design for this study and a rationale for the basic qualitative research design that is chosen for its design is discussed. In addition, I am also providing an overview of the participants for this study and how they were recruited, along with a justification for the total number of participants I am going to use for this study.

In this section, I am going to identify each data collection tool that was used within this study along with a brief description of how the data was captured to address the research questions. The data collection process for conducting the semistructured interviews is described. I discussed the methods of data analysis and considerations for external and internal validity using member/respondent check or feedback. In addition to this, I included an explanation on how I debriefed and followed-up with participants once the study is complete. I addressed considerations for honoring trustworthiness and ethical procedures that would ensure that participants are being treated fairly. In Section 3, the project study informed by findings is described. The development of the project study happened after the research and analysis of the data were complete. Lastly, in Section 4, the strengths and weaknesses of the study using a reflective model are presented.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The research design for this project was a multi-site basic qualitative research design, which allowed for teacher participants from four different elementary schools in

one district. A multi-site basic qualitative research design is an approach to research that describes an in-depth experience that is common to two or more real world or naturalistic settings where the same analysis or phenomenon is studied about a research question (Audet & d'Amboise, 2001). A basic qualitative research design is used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident (Yin, 2013). An explanatory basic qualitative research design was used to explore the challenges associated with inclusive practices for general and special education teachers at the local study site. Other choices of research designs such as narrative analysis, historical or document analysis could not adequately address the research questions. Likewise, research designs such as phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory approaches are designed to approach research projects in different ways resulting in data that could not answer the research questions. A basic qualitative research design allowed for an examination of the problem at the local study district with inclusion as an instructional framework. As a framework for this study, the social constructivist theory relates to special education with a focus on inclusion and positive differentiation (Gindis, 1999). Social constructivist theory supports the learner centered model where students learn more through social interaction with their peers and teachers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Participants

Purposive sampling was used for the selection of participants within one school district in the southwest United States via recruitment email. Teacher participants were selected because they were currently teaching in an inclusion setting as a general

education or special education teacher, with a minimum of 2 years of service, and access to general education students and students with IEPs. Purposive sampling was the most appropriate for conducting this study because it allows for the collection of rich qualitative responses from the perspective of the participants. The 10 participants selected presented an opportunity to obtain rich data for this study based on their personal experience and knowledge as teachers of inclusion as an instructional framework.

The decision for using 10 participants was supported by Creswell's (2012) suggestion that using a large number of participants in this qualitative study should decrease the depth of the exploration of the participants. Using 10 teacher participants allowed for a more in-depth exploration of each of the individuals within the context of their roles and responsibilities to the school to which they are assigned.

Participants Represented in the Data

Half of the participants were general education teachers, and half were special education teachers. Of the 10 teachers who participated in the semistructured interview, 70% had advanced degrees. A total of 30% taught in their discipline for less than 5 years, and 40% were veteran teachers with 10 years of teaching experience or more. A total of 20% have taught as a general education teacher and switched their job title/responsibilities to a special education teacher. All participants completed student teaching and were certified with the state for which they were employed. Table 1 presents data about teacher participants' backgrounds, including the number of years of teaching, highest degree earned, whether they received training in special education, general education or student teaching.

Table 1*Teacher Backgrounds*

Participant	Years teaching	Highest degree	SPED training	GENED training	Student teaching
S1	17	M	No	Yes	Yes
S2	15	D	Yes	Yes	Yes
S3	7	M	No	Yes	Yes
S4	12	D	Yes	Yes	Yes
S5	6	M	Yes	No	Yes
S6	3	B	No	Yes	Yes
S7	2	B	No	Yes	Yes
S8	8	M	Yes	No	Yes
S9	11	M	No	Yes	Yes
S10	3	B	Yes	No	Yes

Note. M = master's, B = bachelor's, D = doctoral

Protection of Participant Rights

Some potential risks associated with participation were psychological or social. For participants, the psychological risk could be related to anxiety or stress around the subject matter, whereas social risk could be related to embarrassment or loss of respect of others. Another potential risk was breach of confidentiality.

Participants were informed about the procedures for ensuring that confidentiality was honored such as the removal of any identifiers. Participants were also made aware that manual coding for data collection and analysis was the chosen method for honoring their contribution to the study and their confidentiality. I also informed the participants that there were no incentives offered or made available for their participation. Finally, participants were informed of the use of a respondent validation system to gather feedback from them after they are all sent a summary of the findings. As the researcher, I also provided contact information to the participants if they may have questions or concerns before, during, and after the study.

Establishing a Researcher Participant Working Relationship

My initial contact with participants was via email once I was given permission by school administrators allowing access to the participants. I did not establish a working relationship with participants prior to this study. During the study, I scheduled phone and Zoom sessions were used to conduct a semistructured interview. The consent forms that were sent via email outlined the purpose of the study, their rights, and potential risk.

Data Collection

Data Collection Sources

The semistructured interviews focused on 10 teachers' perceptions and experiences. An introduction to the semistructured interview was used to provide participants information of the structure of the interview (see Appendix B), and participants were given the opportunity to respond to interview questions (see Appendix C). The low number of participants in this study allowed for refocusing of questions and prompting during the interview process if further inquiry or elaboration was necessary. Identified themes from the transcripts were noted based on the participants' responses to the interview questions. The semistructured interview questions were designed to allow for an examination of the experiences of the participants in this study, in their roles and responsibilities with inclusion as an instructional framework.

Process for Data Collection

Data collection began promptly after the consent forms were received. For this research, five general education and five special education teachers from four different elementary schools agreed to participate. Teacher participants were selected based on

their current teaching responsibility in the general education inclusion setting. I followed up with all volunteers to let them know whether they were selected for the study. I informed participants of their option to print a copy of the consent form.

I used a semistructured interview to focus on the perceptions and experiences of the 10 teacher participants from four different elementary schools. I conducted the interviews via phone and Zoom. Participants were interviewed individually on an agreed upon day and time. Each interview lasted no longer than 1 hour. During the interview, each participant responded to the same questions. The questions were created to obtain responses to the research questions of this study. Responses to interview questions were transcribed and accurate documentation was maintained. After the conclusions of all interviews, the data were reviewed and patterns and themes were identified and organized using a graphic organizer.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Access to the participants was obtained by submitting a request to the Walden University Institutional Review Board. School administrators also provided permission to use the participants in this study. General and special education teacher participants received an invitation flyer via email with contact details. Participants were sent consent forms via email. In the consent form, an explanation and purpose of the study was included that addressed the procedures, estimated duration, and their rights to decline or withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were also made aware of the potential risk associated with their participation this study.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to study the thoughts and feelings of the participants. I had no direct connection to the participants in this study professionally or personally. After determining which participants would work best for this study, I distributed the necessary information and consent forms to those who were willing to participate in the study. I explained how confidentiality would be honored and maintained throughout the study. I collected consent forms and scheduled appointments for the semistructured interviews. I collected and analyzed the data from the semistructured interviews to address teachers' perceptions of their roles and challenges with the inclusion as an instructional framework. There are no concerns for ethical conflict since I have no professional or personal connections to the participants or the local study site.

Data Analysis

Inductive coding, specifically open coding, was used to create codes based on the data I collected from the semistructured interviews. This type of coding is used for finding new theories, ideas, or concepts directly from the interview responses (Nowell et al., 2017). Open coding is an inductive, analytical procedure that consists of two tasks: it makes comparisons and asks questions (Blair, 2015). This process of coding required the data to be analyzed line by line looking at each sentence that was transcribed from the interview and applying a code. I read and reviewed each transcript several times. Second, third, and fourth reviews resulted in me identifying patterns and themes. I labeled all transcripts with an associating theme. I created a graphic organizer and used it to organize identified themes. Maintaining accuracy during coding was important to me, so I logged

all codes, reviewed them, and included evidence as to why it was an appropriate choice. From there, I was able to create a cluster of categories. The purpose of creating a cluster of categories was to discover as many relevant categories and their relationships as possible.

Evidence of Quality

For organization, I kept notes of responses to analyze and track important details and identify codes existing patterns and themes. The data revealed some similarities across the transcribed responses from the semistructured interviews. To address validity, transcribed responses were shared with participants via email so that participants could confirm my interpretation of their responses during the semistructured interview. This process is called transcript review (Hagen et al., 2009). Transcript review is a common approach for ensuring internal validity or credibility. By allowing the interviewees to compare and review their transcripts, I had the opportunity to correct errors with clarifications ensured data quality of the study. Participants were given 7 days to review and return any clarifications. Responses were received from all participants. They compared and accepted interpretations of their interview responses.

Procedure for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

Discrepant or unique data or responses were analyzed and compared to all the themes within the study. A determination was made about responses that were noticeably different from the patterns that emerged and what the response would mean within the context of the school setting specifically with inclusion as an instructional framework. Two discrepant cases emerged from within the study. Two of the teacher participants had

experience with teaching both general and special education throughout their teaching career. Those two teachers taught for more than 12 years and had advanced degrees. The two teachers' responses were different from the other participants and spoke to their experience with inclusion based on their current teaching situation but would often reference their past experience in which taught in their other role whether it was teacher as a general or special education teacher in the past. Thus, they shared a unique perspective.

Limitations

It is important to point out that this basic qualitative design focused on a small sample and should not be generalized to a larger population. The small number of participants limits generalizability. There are themes and trends present that may not exist at other school districts and schools. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes may be different and warrant a different approach to the problem of study. It can also be difficult to measure accuracy based on perceptions and attitudes. Additional qualitative research should be conducted and may produce different findings and generate a need for a different approach to the problem.

Data Analysis Results

In this section, the results of the data analysis are described in detail. Patterns and relationships and their alignment to the problem and research questions will be discussed. An analysis of the results is presented in relation to the teacher participants' responses based on the perceptions and experiences at the local study site. The 10 participants selected presented an opportunity to obtain rich data for this study based on their personal

experience and knowledge as teachers of inclusion as an instructional framework. All participants worked at an elementary school within the local study district site during the time of my study either as a general education or special education teacher, with at least 3 years of professional teaching in the elementary public-school setting. Participants have all received their teacher preparation through traditional teaching programs from a four-year university. Special education participants have taught in cotaught classrooms, resource settings, and self-contained classrooms. General education teacher participants have worked in the general education setting and cotaught classes with inclusion makeup.

Problem and Research Questions

I investigated the challenges associated with the inclusion as an instructional framework for general and special education teachers at the local study site. The research questions that guided this study are:

- What is it about the inclusion model that is the most challenging for the coteachers at the local study site?
- What are the components for a successful inclusion classroom as understood by both general education and special education teachers?

Patterns, Relationship and Themes Aligned with Research Questions

To review the data, I printed copies of what was transcribed for the purpose of conducting a thematic analysis. This process allows for the deconstructing of sentences and phrases from the transcribed data to identify themes and determine what they represent. While conducting the analysis, it is imperative to consider three important questions:

1. What were the data used in the study?
2. What part of the emerging theory does the category?
3. What is happening in the data? (Qureshi & Unlu, 2020)

Keeping these three questions in mind allowed me to identify 23 codes that pertained to themes addressed during the literature review. At the first stage, open codes included teacher preparation, administrative support, coteaching support, shared responsibility, time, feeling overwhelmed, collaboration, student needs, class makeup, access to resources/material, strategies, concerns for disabled students, training, education, beliefs, attitudes, strategies, students learning outcomes, students with disability, teacher expectations, student expectation, planning, professional development, concern for nondisabled students, classroom management, lack of knowledge for special education, and differentiation. Table 2 shows the codes mapped to different themes as well as the theme alignments to the research questions of this study.

Table 2

Codes Mapped to Themes and Research Questions

Codes	Themes	Research Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training • education • teacher expectation • lack of knowledge • teacher attitude • professional development 	Lack of preparation	Research Question 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • class makeup • student with disability • nondisabled students • classroom management • student expectations 	Student needs	Research Question 1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • curriculum • instruction • access • material 	Modification/Accommodations	Research Question 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coteachers • planning • administrators 	Collaborations	Research Question 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling overwhelmed • collaboration • teacher expectation • professional development 	Administrative support	Research Question 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • materials • time • access to strategies • access to resources 	Access to resources	Research Question 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classroom management • planning time • teacher belief 	Shared responsibility	Research Question 2

Findings in Relation to Research Questions

There were two research questions that guided this research. They were designed to examine teachers' perceptions of their roles and challenges with inclusion as an instructional framework. The interview questions (Appendix C) created were meant to capture detailed open-ended responses of teacher participants describing their perceived challenges based on their experiences with inclusion at the local study site.

RQ1: What is it About the Inclusion Model That Is the Most Challenging for the CoTeachers at the Local Study Site?

Level of Student Needs. The findings of the results from respondents revealed some common themes to the research questions #1. They included a need for ongoing professional learning, time, and support, and concern for level of student need. The finding of the results from respondents also revealed some common themes to Research

Question 1 including collaboration, planning time, support, access to resources, shared responsibility, and shared belief. The results revealed that the general and special educator respondents want to be able to produce positive outcomes for all students. General education teacher participants express concern for their non-disabled students and how they are concerned with them falling behind. The special education teacher participants expressed concerns for the disabled students having the same access and opportunities as their non-disabled peers. In their perception, the challenges they face are working against them being able to see the true benefits of inclusion. Both general and special education teachers shared concerns for the high level of students' needs when addressing students with. T1 expressed, "I wish that they were more deliberate when grouping and placing students in inclusion classes. Sometimes the level of needs can be just too much for a specific class or teacher." Students with IEPs in an inclusion classroom can have a mixed of disabilities. According to General Education Teacher Participant 6, in one inclusion classroom with a total of 27 students, six of those students could all have different disabilities (i.e., other health impaired/attention deficit disorder, autism, specific learning disabled, emotional disturbance). General education Teacher Participant 6 shared, "I honestly do not feel that it's fair to have a class with three students with autism with 27 other students with different levels of needs." Level of needs seem to include classroom management as a challenge. Disabilities in an inclusion classroom can present high levels of academic, social/emotional, behavioral, and physical needs. Based on the responses from the semistructured interviews, even supporters of inclusion expressed concerns of the high level of student needs. Disabilities such like

autism, emotional disturbance, behavioral disorders, and intellectual disabilities were mentioned more so than any other disabilities. For general education teachers, they had limited knowledge of strategies on how to support these disabilities in their inclusion classroom. According to Teacher Participant 1, “when I am left alone without my coteacher, it’s sad to say I am unable to support my two students with autism and the other two with emotional disturbance adequately.” General and special education teachers responded with similar concerns about the high level of needs of the students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom.

For the general education teacher participants, concerns about the high level of student needs also included concerns for nondisabled students. When the appropriate support and training are not in place, nondisabled students in the inclusive classroom are also affected academically. General education teacher participants T1, T6 and T9 shared similar concerns that instructional time and support are taken away from the nondisabled students because teachers have to deal with accommodating the learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities in their inclusion classroom. Special education teacher participants agree that the level of needs is increased when students with certain disabilities such as autism, intellectual disabilities, and behavior disorders are part of an inclusion class make-up. Like the general education participants, special education teachers agree that more training of different strategies on best practices for supporting students with different disabilities and high level of needs in the inclusion classroom is needed. Special education teacher participant 5, 8 and 10 shared during their interview that they would like more uninterrupted time in the inclusion to support their students.

More time in the inclusion classroom would mean more support not only for the students with disabilities but for the general education teachers and nondisabled students as well.

Lack of Preparation. General education teacher shared in their responses that in their educational training that they received was not effective in preparing them to teach students with disabilities. Special education participants also shared that their educational training did not prepare them for the real challenges of servicing the needs of the students on their caseload within the general education setting. Teacher participants expressed that regular onsite and district based professional development trainings are offered regularly; however, they cover topics that are unrelated to the very pressing needs that they have. The data from the semistructured interview shows that general and special education teachers relied heavily on their colleagues to fill the gaps in their knowledge and skills. Of the 10 participants, they mentioned their colleagues in their responses very frequently. In most cases, this occurred while seeking strategies, help, understanding relating to behavior, curriculum or work expectations. Teacher Participant 1 a general education teacher of more than 15 years, shared in her response that supporting her colleagues has been an extra responsibility for her. She explained,

With the demands of my job and teaching in an inclusion classroom, I find that I am asked to share strategies about classroom management and curriculum with my colleagues. For the most part, I don't mind my colleagues asking for support. I do have a problem with administrators constantly asking me to support my colleagues though. I am thinking, this is not my job. It's your job to provide training and support. I don't get paid for it. It becomes too much.

Research on teacher professional learning highlights the pivotal role of leadership in developing and sustaining changes to practice by fostering collaboration between teachers (King, 2014). Teacher Participant 7, a special education teacher, shared I wish we had more time to meet with our colleagues. We learn so much from each other when we meet. I know I am always stopped in the hallway to answer questions about strategies for teaching and working with specific students, and I have my own questions as well. I am usually looking for those answers from my colleagues.

General education teachers express concerns for their general education students. With their efforts of trying to educate both general education and special education students in their classrooms, they expressed concerns for causing their general education students to fall behind academically. These concerns were expressed as challenges even though all the teacher participants in this study reported that they are in full support of inclusion. General education teacher participant T5 shared

I love my job, and who can doubt the mission of inclusion? It sounds great on paper; however, I question my own ability to deliver as a teacher to my class, my special education students and my general education students. I feel inadequate. So, it is in those instances where I want to see if we are not going to do this the right way, it's best not to do it all.

This is a response to level of preparedness and readiness to teach the varying needs of students in the general education classroom. The responses of the participants as they reference lack of preparation has to do with addressing strategies for teaching and learning and supporting their students. There is a general acknowledgment amongst the

participants that general and special education teachers rely on their colleagues to support them in areas of the job that they struggle with addressing independently.

Administrative Support. General education and special education teachers did share common concerns regarding support from their school administrators. They shared in their responses that school systems such as schedules, class make-up, planning time, and unrealistic expectations play a significant part in the limited success that they feel that they are experiencing with inclusion. Regarding scheduling, participants expressed displeasure with the fact that even though they do have co-teaching partners, special education teachers' schedules are set up in a manner that does not allow for them to provide the appropriate level of support to the students on their caseload, regularly leaving the weight of the responsibility of servicing students with disabilities for the general education teachers. Special education teacher participants did share the same concerns and believe that they need more time with their students with disabilities in order to appropriately service them in the general education inclusion setting. Teacher participants 1, 3, 7 and 9 shared in their interview response that their school is understaffed, with not enough special education teachers. Three of the five special education did include in their responses concerns about their school being understaffed. Teacher 7 admitted,

I have been so turned off and annoyed with the less than mediocre support that I have been receiving from my so-called co-teacher. She is barely in my class.

There is always somewhere else she must be (meetings, covering other classes during teacher absences, and she's assigned to support other classes. However, I

know that the issue is not her fault really, and I try to remind myself of that fact.

The problem is that administrators need to see about hiring more special education teachers. That is one way they could support us. It would help significantly. Then maybe we can celebrate all the benefits of inclusion, but in my opinion, this is a joke and far from what my understanding of what inclusion should look and feel like for teachers and students.

A special education teacher participant, T3, shared that there are struggles to honor the service hours for students receiving special education services. T3 also shared, Other responsibilities such as participating in IEP meetings, attending to essential paperwork, and finding planning time are all responsibilities that are necessary but takes away from instructional time. It keeps me up at night because I know that I am not able to provide the level of support that I know is needed to my students with disabilities. When asked, what would be a solution to this problem, the special education teacher participant T3 responded that:

Administrators need to stop making their decisions only from a general education lens. Most of what is decided is based on the general education population, and the special education population is oftentimes an afterthought. They tend to squeeze us in wherever they can, and we just hope that we can fit in somewhere.

Based on the perception of both general and special education teachers, administrative supports are not realistic in terms of their expectations. Schedules are spreading teachers too thinly, and for this, general education students and their special

education teachers struggle. As a result, the achievement gap widens for students within the inclusion classroom.

Limited Resources. In response to what is the most challenging about the inclusion model at their school, general and special education teacher participants responded that resources are very limited for teaching and learning. General education teacher participants T5 and T6 shared that if it is expected of them to educate and service the individual needs of the special education student in the absence of the special education teacher, “having limited resources really makes that responsibility a difficult one.” Special education teacher participant T7 shared,

I usually have to be creative in making materials or left with spending my own money to purchase materials and teaching resources (it can be books that provide tips for me on how to reach my students, graphic organizers, manipulatives), that I find online or in the stores that I hope will help me with providing access for my special education students.

General Education teacher participant T6 added,

If I had to depend on the limited resources that the school district provides me as a teacher, I would probably have quit. My first few years of teaching was horrible because I did not realize that I would have to go beyond to make gains with my students and that meant spending a lot of my own money.

General education participants also included not having their special education co-teachers as a full-time support as a limited resource. General education teachers and special education teachers rely on each other. The expertise within the context of their job

titles is where they depend on each other as a resource. General education teachers rely on the special education teachers as specialists in addressing concerns relating to students with disabilities, and providing strategies, ideas, useful tools, and materials for teaching students with different learning styles and learning needs. Special education teachers rely on general education teachers as a resource for curriculum related matters understanding of pacing and what should be taught. Special education teacher participants T2 and T8 shared that to support their students with disabilities with contents at times can be a challenge for them depending on their area of strengths. Teacher Participant T2 shared, I have always struggled with math, so it is oftentimes very challenging for me to support students with math. I am sometimes learning it all over again with the class when I am there. My co-teacher is always so willing to help me with what I don't understand. That is sometimes a challenge. If she does not have the time, I must figure it out on my own. Teacher Participant T8, a special education teacher, also shared, my co-teacher would work with me over the phone at home during free time. She helps me to understand the math concepts so that I can help to modify lessons and support the students. She is very willing. I make myself as available to her when she needs help with. We help each other.

The findings from the interview responses from the participants showed that because of the limited amount of time for planning, and limited access that they have to the coteachers because of scheduling needs, limited resources also included lack of time and access to their coteaching partners.

Accommodations and Modifications. Some studies provide evidence that students with severe disabilities benefit academically from the general curriculum when they receive adequate and appropriate modifications that meet their unique needs (Hayes & Bulat, 2017; Joyce et al., 2020). Accommodations are supports and services that are provided to help a student access the general education curriculum. Some examples may be time, setting, and level of support. Modifications are individualized changes made to the content and certain expectations that help to promote learning of concepts taught. General education and special education teachers in this study shared some concerns around accommodations and modifications. General education teacher participant T1 made the point that providing accommodations and modification tend to be challenging for her especially when factoring time and the absence of their special education teacher: It takes a lot to plan a regular lesson for a class of 27 students. I feel like the quality of my work is diminished when I am flying solo. Oftentimes, I am not able to plan or collaborate with my co teacher. With having 6 special education students with different levels of needs, I have to be honest. There are many days when I am unable to modify their work or provide the accommodations that they need, and I feel bad about it.

Teacher participants in their roles and responsibilities in the context of the inclusion setting expressed that to be effective in providing accommodations and modifications, they need their co-teachers' support. They need time, and they need the resources. Special education teacher participants expressed being spread too thinly. If they are unable to collaborate and plan with their general education coteaching partners, they know that their special education students are probably not having their assignments

modified, and they are probably not receiving accommodations when they are not present in the classroom. With their concerns, both special and general education teachers appear sympathetic to the challenges their co-teaching partners face in their roles and responsibilities. General education teacher participants rate their ability to modify lessons as average or above average. Special education teacher participants responded in the average or above range. Both general and special education teacher participants would welcome ongoing training and support with providing modifications and accommodations.

RQ2: What are the Components for a Successful Inclusion Classroom as Understood by Both General Education and Special Education Teachers?

Shared Responsibility. Shared responsibility is a major theme in this study as teacher participants responded to the semistructured interview questions. Many referred to their co-teaching partners when referencing their work as co-teachers in an inclusion setting. General and special education teachers rely heavily on each other. Teacher participants in this study shared that shared responsibility is one of the great benefits of inclusion when correctly done such as given time to collaborate, plan and be present in the classroom. Teacher Participant 6, a general education teacher, added in her interview response that shared responsibility has its pros and its cons. Teacher Participant 6 shared, “I love having a partner, working together with a common goal. I appreciate her expertise and input. In a perfect world, I wish I could have more time with her.” With the responsibilities associated with teaching for any teacher, support and help is appreciated

and welcomed. The teacher participants in this study were challenged with maximizing the benefits of sharing the responsibility of the learning experience with their co-teachers. Responsibilities include planning collaboratively, discussing students' needs, lesson planning, parent-teacher communication, classroom management, and behavioral concerns. For general education teachers, this responsibility is for all the students in the classroom (general education and students with IEP). The special education teacher is assigned a caseload that is a small fraction of students. The special education teacher's caseload is made up of students with IEP's. The data from the semistructured interview shows that it really depends on the teachers on how they attend to the idea of shared responsibility.

Some special education teachers, even with an assigned caseload in the inclusion classroom, consider all students in their collaboration and planning with their general education co-teacher. While for others, their sole focus is only the students with IEP on their caseload. Teacher participants 8 and 10 were both special education teachers and shared in their responses that because they are so overwhelmed by having to cover more than two different classes which means that they are responsible for coteaching and coplanning with multiple teachers, they prioritize their responsibilities in a way that they support only the students on their caseloads. While Teacher Participants 2, 4 and 5 approach inclusion and their roles and responsibilities within its framework to include all students in an inclusion classroom as their students and make consideration for them while collaborating and coplanning with coteachers, when possible. Teacher 8 explained,

“If I am going to be spread so thin, I have no choice but to focus on the students with IEP’s on my caseload.” According to Teacher 10,

IEP’s are legal documents, and for that reason in all the madness, my students with IEP’s will always be my only focus. I recognize that there are legal ramifications if I don’t provide them with the services they need as per their IEP’s.

Teacher participants shared that it is the mindset and approach of their co teaching partners and working with children with disabilities that plays an intricate part in how many gains they can make as co teachers of their inclusion class despite some of the limitations and challenges that exist. There are several factors that contribute to educators’ positive attitudes toward inclusion of children with disabilities. Educators must think that children with disabilities can achieve their very best and that they can learn (Jess, 2018).

Collaboration. Responses and comments from participants included that collaboration was necessary and welcomed. Rich discussion about students' needs and how to plan and address those needs were often the topics. Comments also included those other expectations often limited time and opportunities for collaboration. When opportunities were presented, teacher participants shared that collaboration required that both general and special education teachers shared their knowledge and expertise. General education teachers brought their knowledge about the curriculum content and their understanding of the students’ academic strengths and challenges. On the other hand, the special education teachers shared their knowledge of the students on their caseloads, based on their IEPs, which also address academic, social, and emotional

strengths and challenges, goals, objective, accommodations, and modifications. Special education teachers are tasked with determining, using, and sharing effective tools and strategies that will address goals and objectives for the students on their caseloads.

Special education teacher respondents also shared similar responses. Teacher participant 12 shared cotaught with different teachers who approached their roles and responsibilities differently. Some general education teachers only concerned themselves with their general education students in terms of working through day-to-day responsibilities for teaching and learning. Even with consideration to these case-by-case differences, collaboration was something that teacher participants welcomed and wanted to see happen uninterrupted and regularly.

Summary of Outcomes

The problem of focus addressed in this study is to examine the challenges for general and special education teachers and their roles and responsibilities with inclusion as an instructional framework. The local study site was a district in southwest Texas. It included a total of 10 general and special education teachers from four elementary schools within the district. Participants responded to semistructured interview questions that provided their perspectives based on their experiences in their roles and responsibilities. General and special education teachers struggle with their roles and responsibilities for several reasons. These reasons included lack of preparation, minimal administrative support, limited time for collaboration and planning, high level of students' needs, and limited resources.

Research Question 2 focused on identifying what it is about inclusion that is most challenging for the coteachers at the local study site. One major theme in this study is the

indication that general and special education teachers expressed a lack of preparation for their roles and responsibilities as inclusion teachers during their interview. The quality of educational training they received was not favorable according to general and special education teachers. General education teachers express that their educational training did not prepare them for educating students with disabilities. Lack of knowledge about disabilities and strategies for supporting students were presented as a major challenge for general education teachers. Special education teachers shared an unfavorable opinion towards their educational training they received as well. Special education teachers expressed that nothing prepared them for servicing students with disabilities within the general education setting. Both general and special education teachers shared unfavorable opinions about the lack of educational training they received; however, their reasons are different. General education teachers did not have a depth of understanding of the different disabilities enough to support students with IEPs. They had very little knowledge or understanding of best practices for supporting students with disabilities amongst their non-disabled peers. On the other hand, special education teachers struggled with how to service students with IEPs amongst their nondisabled peers within the general education setting. They struggled with content and pacing of the curriculum. Of the five special education teachers interviewed, four of them expressed the pacing of the curriculum as an issue for not only them but for their students as well. Of the ten participants interviewed, 50% received training in special education. A total 100% were special education teachers. Of the five special education teacher participants, 4 out of 5 expressed that their training in special education did not prepare them for supporting

students with disabilities in the general education inclusion setting amongst their nondisabled peers. Student teaching were completed by 100% of the participants, with 60% expressing that their student teaching experience provided the best part of their educational training for their roles and responsibilities as teachers. A total of 80% reported that their student teaching assignments were different than their current teaching assignment. Through the interview, participants provided a general agreement about not being adequately prepared to teach in an inclusion classroom.

Administrative support was also highlighted as a theme based on responses from general and special education teachers about their challenges with inclusion as an instructional framework. Administrative support as defined by the participants included considerations and support with planning time, scheduling, class make-up, resources, and professional development from their school principal. Of the ten participants, 80% expressed that administrative support is available daily; however, general and special education teacher participants shared very specific areas of need for administrative support. A total of 90% of the teachers interviewed shared that they need more time to collaborate and plan with their coteachers. Four of the five general education teachers interviewed, shared that they value planning time with their special education coteachers. Three of the five shared that most of what they do not understand about special education or their students they are able to learn during planning and collaboration with their special education coteachers. Special education teachers shared a similar perspective. All five special education teachers interviewed shared that they value planning time with their general education coteachers. For special education teachers, this time is very important

since they are assigned to more than one class. They serviced different teachers and different subjects across grade levels. For the special education teachers, 100% of them expressed a feeling of being overwhelmed. Administrative support is needed to address planning, collaboration, and resources. General education teacher participants included special education teachers in their talk about limited resources. All five general education participants considered their special education coteachers as a needed resource that is limited. There was a consensus amongst the general education participants, 100% agreed that administrative support is needed to support their time and access to their special education coteachers.

Research Question 2 targeted components for a successful inclusion classroom as perceived by general and special education teachers. Themes highlighted from participants' responses were shared responsibility and collaboration. Shared responsibility between general and special education teacher was a major theme. Healthy coteaching relationships presented as a valued and necessary component for a successful inclusion classroom. There was a general agreement that shared responsibilities amongst coteachers were affected by several factors such as not enough time for planning and collaboration, also special education teachers' presence was limited. Also, special education teachers were spread too thinly as a result of heavy caseloads across classroom. The literature shares that a fully inclusive classroom can have students across the educational and developmental spectrum, ranging from typically developing students to severe and profoundly disabled students (Cologon, 2020; Kauffman & Hornby, 2020).

This concern was expressed the most from respondents when explaining their challenges with inclusion.

Of the five special education participants, 100% would like to have more time to plan with their coteachers. A total of 80% would like to have more of a presence in the classroom to work with the students on their caseloads. Special education teachers were responsible for coteaching with a minimum of two general education teachers, which contributed to the limited time they have for planning and servicing their students. Most of the students with disabilities are allotted support for English language arts and math from the special education teacher. A student with disability can have a minimum of 30 minutes to 4 hours divided between English language arts and math. Some students get more or less hours of support, and special education teachers and general education teacher participants in this study share that the high level of needs requires more time than these students are receiving. Class sizes and high levels of student needs are not treated with the level of care necessary to promote successful inclusion.

Of the five general education teachers interviewed, four out of the five wanted more planning time with their special education teacher and more coteaching opportunities. Four out of 5 general education teachers felt that with their limited knowledge on special education, their special education coteachers helped to fill the gap in knowledge and experience for them. Of the 10 participants, 80% would like more training on how to maximize planning time where there is shared responsibility and effective collaboration. In that shared responsibility and collaboration, teachers are

hoping to problem solve students' needs, discuss and explore resources, discuss accommodations and modification, and strategic planning.

In those instances where topics are relatable to the challenges within their roles and responsibilities as inclusion teachers, there is not enough support from the district or administrators or follow through to sustain or build upon the new knowledge gained. For co-teaching in an inclusion setting to be successful, there must be administrative support, and teachers need to receive appropriate training on the purposes and functions of coteaching as well as have time and space to communicate and collaborate (Meadows & Caniglia, 2018). General and special education teachers rely heavily on each other to manage the teaching and learning of their students but do so in different ways based on their job titles. General education teachers struggle with providing instruction and staying up to date and current with the scope and sequence of their curriculum in a class with varying needs and abilities, while the special education teachers seem to have a different responsibility.

With their differences in their roles and responsibilities, general education teachers and special education teachers find it difficult to work in a manner that could produce better outcomes for their students and effective working relationships with their co-teaching partners. Both general and special education teachers feel inadequate in their roles and responsibilities because they have very limited time to work collaboratively to discuss and plan for the different levels of needs in their inclusion classroom in a manageable way. General and special education teachers appreciate having a co-teacher; however, more time to plan and collaborate were deemed necessary. They believe that

this will benefit the students and address the high level of student needs that increases within an inclusive classroom because the students' needs are greater; classroom management becomes a challenge for any one teacher to handle especially when there is minimal administrative support, lack of training, and opportunities for professional developments specific to teaching in an inclusion classroom that does not have a full time coteacher.

An important finding from the study is that all the teacher participants were in support of inclusive practices. Despite their support of inclusive practice, all the participants did state that they have day to day challenges with roles and responsibilities as teachers who teach in an inclusion classroom. The literature does show that challenges with inclusion are not so much because educators are against it but more so that they struggle with its daily for various reasons.

The challenges of inclusion as an instructional framework for some general and special education teachers include administrative support, teacher preparedness, level of student's needs, collaboration, and resources. For the future of inclusion as an instructional framework to be successful, these challenges must be considered and be addressed by school districts, their administrators, and teachers. School districts and their administrators can support their teachers by providing ongoing opportunities and resources that would promote continuous growth in their understanding and skillset of inclusion. These opportunities should be evident in their daily practice in the inclusion classroom as teachers grow in their understanding of what strategies, approaches, and resources would best support the needs of their students.

Project Based Outcomes

The themes within this study highlighted components that teacher participants felt were necessary for successful inclusion. These components are teacher training on special education, uninterrupted time for collaboration and planning, access to resources to support learning for all students, appropriate scheduling, and placement of special education co-teachers and administrative support. The findings from this project study presented rich data that would support planning for a project.

The goal of inclusion education is to ensure that students with disabilities have the opportunities to achieve the goals outlined in their IEP within the general education setting alongside their general education nondisabled peers with the support of a general and special education teacher. To support that goal and maximize the benefits of inclusion, teachers assigned to an inclusive classroom should be supported with ongoing sustainable professional learning opportunities on how to support and manage a classroom with varying disabilities that usually presents with a high level of needs. Most would agree that teachers during their educational training should be provided with a curriculum and training that prepares them to teach and manage all students. However, according to the findings in this study teachers are in need of ongoing sustainable professional learning to support them in their roles and responsibilities. Bhroin and King (2020) and Kennedy (2014) deemed accredited programs within teacher education programs to be in the malleable category, meaning they may or may not lead to transformative practices. My study showed that even teachers who support inclusive education could benefit from sustainable training through ongoing professional learning.

This could give them the skills set and knowledge that would improve the quality of the teaching and learning experiences of all students in their inclusion classroom. It could also maximize the benefits of their working relationship with their co teachers while providing support and services to students. Section 3 will describe a professional learning plan that is intended to support the findings of the study

Section 3: The Project

This document was designed for the district and educators at the local study site. A lack of broad access to effective training and professional development hurts teachers' effectiveness, sense of purpose, and career advancement opportunities (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Thus, this professional learning plan was designed to facilitate the professional growth and learning of teachers and allow the district to support its teachers with necessary and appropriate training that produces positive outcomes with inclusive education for its students. The purpose of this district professional learning plan is to support general and special education inclusion teachers at the local study site in their efforts to maximize the benefits of inclusion as an instructional framework. The training includes a content focus with skill sets, active learning and collaboration, job embedded practice with opportunities for feedback (see Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Kraft et al., 2018). Having a well-structured professional learning in place will ensure that teachers have the resources needed to be effective in their roles and responsibilities with inclusive practices at the local study site.

Rationale

Findings from this study revealed that teacher participants support inclusive education but are struggling with seeing its true benefit. Furthermore, they feel like their level of knowledge and expertise could be improved with appropriate training, support, and resources. Some of the themes were relative to level of student needs, lack of training, administrative support, limited resources, collaboration, accommodations/modifications, and shared responsibilities. These themes were areas of challenge with inclusive education. Teacher participants expressed wanting to be more effective and to measure their effectiveness by their students' outcomes.

This current study findings suggested that inclusion teachers at the local study site could benefit from ongoing professional learning. Professional learning is designed with the purpose of improving teaching so that students' outcomes are improved. It also improves teachers' perceptions and attitude about the work that they do. Professional learning, when designed well, is typically interactive, sustained, and customized to teachers' needs, and it encourages teachers to take responsibility for their own learning and to practice what they are learning in their own teaching contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The design of this professional learning plan addressed the challenges of the roles and responsibilities as perceived by the general and special education teachers at the local study site with inclusion as an instructional framework. High quality professional learning should include:

- related to specific content and standards
- include active learning

- job embedded
- is collaborative
- provides models and coaching
- aligned with schools' goals, standards and assessment, and other professional learning activities. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017)

Professional learning content also needs to develop teachers' efficacy, knowledge, and practices to support students' efficacy, engagement, learning, and equity of outcomes (Campbell et al., 2017).

Review of the Literature

This literature review includes professional learning plans for inclusion teachers. It explores different components of a professional learning plan that will support this project study. A search of ERIC, Proquest, EBCO, SAGE databases and other related professional journals was conducted. Key terms were searched, such as *professional development in education*, *professional learning*, *professional learning communities*, and *adult learning*.

Professional Development

School leaders are continuously charged with adhering to federal and state mandates to lead district and school improvement initiatives in effort to improve teaching and learning (McBrayer et al., 2018). As education continues to evolve, it is necessary for teachers to continuously develop their professional skills. The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 made professional development fundamental to school improvement plans (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2020). It is based on the belief that

early career support and ongoing training can strengthen teachers' practices and effectiveness resulting in improved student outcomes (Zhang et al., 2020).

School districts and schools use professional development as an instrument to offer structured additional training for educators to meet the needs of today's learners (Wright, 2019). Professional development may take on different forms. In a metaanalysis of 35 studies, there was a link between changes in teachers practices and positive student learning outcomes (Bates & Morgan, 2018). There was a focus on content, active learning, support for collaboration, models of effective practice, coaching and expert support, feedback and reflection, and sustained duration.

Professional Learning

Professional learning in education is built on an inclusive community of educators, motivated by a shared learning vision. They work together to support each other in a collaborative fashion to find and learn new and better ways to improve their practice and educate their students (Antinlouma et al., 2018). Effective professional learning programs are a key factor to support teachers to continually improve their teaching practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Professional learning has taken the place of one-time professional development. Professional learning is characterized as ongoing and collaborative in nature and allows teachers to take ownership of their own development by applying new learning in their roles and responsibilities. Professional learning is a critical factor in enhancing teacher quality by enhancing the quality of teaching in classrooms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Kennedy 2014). In their report on professional learning in Canada, Campbell et al. (2017) found that, as in most educational

jurisdictions, the appropriate balance of system-directed and self-directed professional learning for teachers is complex and contested.

Carpenter (2015) explained that with professional learning, there is shared leadership, decision making in an intellectual and physical shared workspace that fosters teaching and learning practices and accountability measures. Effective professional learning programs are conducted by individuals or groups who have a long history of working with teachers, usually teacher leaders and who can base the programs on their experience and expertise. The main goal of professional learning in school communities is teacher professional development as participants in such communities can strengthen their pedagogical and content knowledge design and professional skills (Valcx et al., 2018). This is especially due to the ongoing policy changes, as well as shifts that are social in nature and associated with technological development. Campbell et al. (2017) in their study of professional learning found that there are key components necessary for effective professional learning. These key components are quality content, learning design and implementation, and support and sustainability. Quality content is informed by evidence and focuses on a specific subject and pedagogy which includes teacher voice and corresponds to the systems within the school and is student centered. A professional learning design and implementation should be active, collaborative and include job embedded learning. Job embedded learning can take the form of co-teaching, lesson reflection, mentoring and tutoring practices, instructional teams and designing and implementing curriculum or a school's annual plans (Ilomäki et al., 2017). Professional

learning should offer access to resources, must be ongoing, supported by leadership and sustainable.

Quality Content in Professional Learning

There is a direct relationship between students' academic progress and teachers' professional learning (Quality Professional Learning Standards, 2021). It is imperative that teachers continue to develop their knowledge and skills in order to promote positive student outcomes. Ongoing professional learning not only improves student outcomes but also improves teachers' attitudes towards their roles and responsibilities (Prenger et al., 2018). Teacher-led professional learning has contributed to the quality content in professional learning. It also has the power to increase professional capital according to Osmond-Johnson (2017). Professional learning should focus on content and pedagogy with opportunities to develop a deep understanding of the content they teach and a deep understanding of how students learn and what strategies work best for promoting learning (Rivero, 2020). Professional learning should require educators to build their toolbox of instructional strategies that are research-based and consider new technologies and formative assessments that can support the learning of a diverse population.

Learning Design and Implementation

Professional learning should be informed by data about student learning needs which reveal adult learning needs and what the data reveals as areas in need of support. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2020), effective professional learning plans should be:

Focused and aligned with student learning outcomes and improvement in teacher practice. It should also include learning outcomes, benchmarks, and observable/measurable evidence of change in teacher practice and student learning. Specify the learning opportunities, differentiated and ongoing follow up plan to support implementation. Identify necessary resources and how it will be evaluated. (p. 80)

Brodie and Chimhande (2020) shared in their study of teacher talk in professional learning that a range of activities is necessary for opportunities for teacher learning to be available in different areas of important content for teachers. They highlighted the importance of professional inquiry from teachers talking about the learners and how they think along with their own knowledge and understanding of what they teach. Teacher talk during professional learning sets a platform for professional inquiry in which teachers discussed success and challenges relative to their practice. Professional learning led by teachers' colleagues can be impactful to the ongoing learning of teachers. Vangrieken et al. (2017) in their discussion about professional learning found that when teacher colleagues are used as a resource for conducting professional learning to teachers in their district or school, rich context to the learning of teachers improves the competence for learning which impacts teaching practice and student achievement (p.48).

Effective professional learning focuses on the impact of students' outcomes, implements new practices, gains organizational support and change, develops skills and knowledge, and plans targeted professional learning experiences (Guskey, 2017). This is an example of backward planning. Collaboration and professional inquiry informed by

the analysis of data involves backward planning which is an essential step in designing and implementing professional learning opportunities.

Support and Sustainability

Teacher led professional learning is credited for enhancing the quality of professional learning for teachers. In addition, having an administrative presence during professional learning also helps to improve the overall quality and sustainability of professional learning. The presence of an administrator is valued and increases teacher buy-in when there is a trusting relationship between administrators and teachers. It helps to support and sustain the collaborative efforts of teachers engaged in professional inquiry that is informed by data (Willis & Templeton, 2017). Choi and Kang (2019) shared in their study of teacher efficacy and collaborative professional development that school leaders should provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to reflect as well as give and receive feedback about their practice regarding student outcomes. When school administrators support teachers by providing a collaborative culture that is ongoing, they promote sustainability in professional learning.

Challenges with Professional Learning

Professional learning in education is necessary as education continues to evolve. With its benefits to the teaching profession and student outcomes, professional learning does have challenges. Chuckry (2019) identified the presence of a fixed mindset, lack of time and the devaluing of praxis as 3 barriers with professional learning. Teachers' negative dispositions can minimize the benefits of professional learning and grow to a conscious level that presents moments of disconnection (Nolan & Molla, 2019). The

negative disposition of teachers devalues praxis which is the linking of theory to practice in education. Yoo and Carter (2017) found that teachers expressed feelings of frustration, vulnerability, and lack of empowerment when they were unable to apply their beliefs into practice. Chua et al. (2020) discovered that misconceptions about professional learning and lack of supervision from administrators negatively affected the outcome of professional learning from the perspective of the teachers.

Harrison et. al (2020) found that administrators need to be more mindful of how they offer support to professional learning. Supporting professional learning is beyond arranging time and allocating resources. Even though professional learning is teacher-led, administrators should remain at the forefront of the shared vision and instructional initiatives that evolve through professional learning. An imbalance of teachers' freedom and responsibilities and accountable leadership presents challenges for administrators when they fail to communicate their vision and collaboratively participate in the development of strategies during professional learning. When such imbalance exists, it negatively impacts student outcomes which is one of the most significant goals of professional learning for teachers.

Project Description

Based on the analysis of the data collected from the semistructured interviews, the inclusion teachers at the local study site could benefit from additional time to collaborate and engage in professional inquiry through professional learning time that would improve the quality of their collaborative relationship and improve instruction as well as student outcomes. I am proposing 3 full professional learning days that are structured to address

the roles and responsibilities of general and special education collaborative teachers of inclusion classrooms. Participants in this study indicated that there is a need for uninterrupted time to collaborate with their co-teaching partners. They also expressed feelings of not being totally prepared to address the varying level of needs specific to the students' individualized educational plans that are now a part of their class make-up. More training on special education was highlighted as a need as teacher participants identified struggles with providing accommodations and modification to students with IEPs. In addition, they highlighted a need for administrative support with scheduling, placement, and access to resources.

The themes that evolved from this study will inform the learning opportunities for 3 full days of professional learning. These 3 full days of professional learning would be titled, "Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education" with 3 different parts. Part 1 will be offered on the first day of professional learning and will focus on defining inclusion education and what is the goal of inclusive education. I will also give participants an opportunity to explore special education laws in an attempt to understand the laws governing and supporting inclusive education. Based on the responses of the participants, the findings revealed that general and special education teachers could benefit in some training on special education. Day 1 will include opportunities for participants to gain an overview of basic knowledge of special education and its relationship to inclusive education to include an understanding of the least restrictive environment and understanding of the continuum of services. These training materials will be linked to the PPT presentation. Each participant will be given access to the PPT

presentation with materials that are linked to it. Finally, teachers will be given an opportunity to reflect and evaluate on their day of learning. Figure 1 outlines the professional learning agenda for the first day of professional learning for teachers including different activities that are intended to support the work they do within the inclusion framework.

Figure 1

Day 1

8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Introduce Your Partner)
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Small Group: Inclusion: Defining Inclusive Education and Its Goals: Restrictive Environment Continuum of Services
9:45-10:30	Special Education Laws Governing Inclusion (Individual then small group)
10:30-10:45	Qualifying for Special Education (Whole Group)
10:45-11:00	BREAK
11:00-12:00	The Disability: (Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Strategy)
12:00-12:45	LUNCH BREAK
12:45-2:00	5 Station Rotation: The Individualized Education Plan
2:00-3:00	Three Level Protocol: Procedural Safeguard
3:00-3:10	Teacher Reflection: Table Talk
3:10-3:15	Evaluation

Day 2 and Day 3 of professional learning will include opportunities for teachers to review data of the school related to the school, students with disabilities, and students' academic achievements. Teacher participants will explore the data and discuss notices, wonderings, and implications. The school vision for inclusive education will be shared with teachers and opportunities for professional inquiry will be provided between teacher participants, administrators, and the special education directors. Teacher participants will have a combination of self-paced learning opportunities and teacher-led presentations on topics that will support their work with the diverse level of need that they would

encounter and service as an inclusion teacher. Topics will include collaborative teaching, universal design for learning, accommodations/modifications, and differentiation. Finally, teachers will be given an opportunity to reflect and evaluate on their day of learning.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 outline the agenda with different activities for the second and third day of professional learning for teachers.

Figure 2

Day 2

8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Six Degrees of Separation)
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Our students: The Atlas Looking at Data Protocol
9:45-10:30	Our students: The Atlas Looking at Data Protocol
10:30-10:45	TED Talk: Every Kid Needs a Champion by Rita Pierson
10:45-11:00	BREAK
11:00-12:00	Co-Teaching and Methods of Coteaching
12:00-12:45	LUNCH
12:45-1:45	Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Universal Design for Learning
1:45-2:00	BREAK
2:00-3:00	Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Accommodation and Modifications
3:00-3:10	Teacher Reflection: Table Talk
3:10-3:15	Evaluation

Figure 3

Day 3

8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt)
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Differentiating Instruction
9:45-10:30	Planning for Inclusion: Scheduling Support
10:30-10:45	BREAK
10:45-12:00	Copanning for Inclusion
12:00-12:45	LUNCH
12:45-1:45	Copanning: Lesson Planning
1:45-2:00	BREAK
2:00-3:00	Teacher Reflection: Table Talk
3:00-3:10	Evaluation

Project Evaluation Plan

According to Guskey (2017), high-quality professional learning is the foundation on which any improvement effort in education must build. Effectiveness of professional learning should not only be considered at the end but should start at the beginning using backward planning, which is during the planning phase. The goal of my project is to gain understanding about inclusion as an instructional framework by sharing collaborative strategies, resources, and support through professional learning opportunities to teachers of inclusion. The design of the 3-day professional learning is a response to teachers' perceptions of the roles and challenges with inclusion. I will be using Guskey's (2017) theory of change model to inform my evaluation plan for my project. Guskey (2017) shows five key components:

1. participant's reaction
2. participant's learning
3. organization support and change
4. participant's use of new knowledge
5. student learning outcomes

Once teachers can see the power of a new strategy or teaching model, they become more likely to accept buy-in of that strategy or model and apply it. Organization support and change is also helping to sustain the process. This in return produces a continuous cycle where one can observe effective implementation of new strategies, models and practices in their classroom that can be evaluated by student learning outcomes. I will use a summative evaluation to collect feedback data. Statements will be

given to the participants in which a Likert scale with a range of 1-5 (1-strongly agree/5strongly disagree at the end of each professional learning day. Questions 7 would allow for participants to elaborate on what could be improved. Participants will respond to the following statements and question:

1. Today's professional learning is relevant to your work.
2. Today's professional learning is a good use of your time.
3. The presenter encourages active participation.
4. I learned new information.
5. I feel confident in applying my new learning to my work.
6. I would recommend this training to others.
7. What could be improved?

The feedback from this evaluation will be useful for the planning of other professional learning that is geared toward support and sustainability. A summary of the feedback from the evaluation would be shared with stakeholders (administrators, instructional coaches, department heads, and teachers).

Project Implications

Inclusive education has many great benefits to students with disabilities as well as those without disabilities. As inclusive education continues to grow in popularity, resources and support for successful implementation in many school districts is important to its success. Teachers of students in inclusive classrooms have a major and significant impact on the success of inclusion. It is very important that teachers receive ongoing training and support of different strategies and best practices for supporting the diverse needs of students in their classroom.

The three day long professional learning project will help to support both general and special education teachers in the inclusion classroom. Professional learning should be ongoing and supported with formative assessments throughout the year. Feedback data from the evaluation of teacher participants of the 3-day professional learning will be used to inform planning and structure of future professional learning for teachers (Adie, 2018).

The 3-day professional learning for the project study could be used as a model for planning future professional learning opportunities in education. The focus should ultimately improve student learning outcomes by providing teachers with time, training, resources and ongoing support through professional learning opportunities. Ongoing professional learning opportunities could help to keep teachers current on best practices and strategies for supporting the demands of teaching, which is constantly changing.

Conclusion

Ongoing professional learning when planned and structured correctly can be impactful to the professional growth of teachers and improving student learning outcomes. Inclusive education has become very popular in many school districts, so general and special education teachers must be able to meet the demands of supporting a wide range of abilities and disabilities in the general education classroom. Ongoing training and support will give co-teachers of inclusive classrooms more opportunities for success in improving their student learning outcomes. It is important that professional learning opportunities are focused and addresses the day-to-day challenges of teaching and learning.

The 3-day professional learning in this project study addresses the teaching and learning challenges of teachers in the inclusive classroom. The structure includes components that would help participants to understand and support their roles and responsibilities as inclusion teachers. There will be opportunities for teachers to learn some of the laws that drive inclusive education, the different disabilities that they may encounter in their classrooms, opportunities for teachers to review data and engage in professional inquiry and collaboration guided by different protocols, independent work time, and opportunities for co-planning. Participants will also be given the opportunity to take time out for reflection on the learning and how it may impact their practice.

In summary, this 3-day professional learning will support both general and special education teachers in their day-to-day responsibilities in the inclusion classroom. It should improve their level of efficacy, their working relationships as co-teachers and the learning outcomes of all their students whether they are general education students or students with IEPs. It is important to point out that to improve the chances of a positive outcome from this 3 day of professional learning agenda, ongoing support is necessary.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In this section, I will describe the project's limitations, strengths, project development, leadership, and change reflection. I will include a reflection of my learning throughout the process of working through completion of this study. More importantly, I will include a reflection of the importance of the work and implications, application, and direction for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The 3-day professional learning plan responds to an area of need for general and special education teachers of inclusion classrooms. The content and structure of the 3-day professional learning plan was informed by the responses to semistructured interviews with teacher participants. A thorough analysis of the responses presented themes associated to the needs of the teachers based on their perception of their roles and challenges with inclusion. Without the data from the teachers' responses to the interview questions, the 3-day professional learning plan would not be relevant to their practice and their needs.

The project limitations are that it is a 3-day professional learning plan. Teachers who participate would need ongoing support and check-ins so that questions and challenges with implementation of their new learning could be addressed. Another limitation is that it is designed for teachers of inclusion classrooms. However, all teachers could benefit from participating because within the field of education, as a teacher's classroom assignments could change at any time depending on the needs of the school.

Another limitation would be timing. It would be best for the 3 days of professional learning to take place at the beginning of the school year or during the first month of school. But district mandated professional developments may present scheduling conflicts for teachers of inclusion to be able to participate. This would be an area for which administrative support could be impactful. If they see the need, they could make adjustments to help address the needs of the inclusion teachers in their building.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I conducted this study to gain an understanding about inclusion as an instructional framework so that desired outcomes for students can be achieved. At the cornerstone of this study are the general and special education teachers and their students. Findings in this study showed that teachers need ongoing professional learning to support the work they do with the students they teach and support. However, even though teachers expressed a need for more professional learning supports and wanting more strategies that would help them and their students to reap the benefits of inclusion, there might be some other approach for addressing the challenges and their needs for being more confident with their roles as teachers within the inclusion framework. It must be considered that the challenges that some of the teachers are experiencing with inclusion as an instructional framework may have to do with other factors such as personal beliefs and values about inclusion that may require a different approach, one that provides teachers with regular exposure to personal development that focuses on curricula and training on acceptance, equity, and diversity.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

I have developed new skills because of my journey with researching the topics and different themes of my study. I have learned a lot about the history of inclusion, special education laws, and important components for creating professional learning plans. I have also learned some key contributors to research. It was also helpful to review the many different studies relating to my topic focus. Reviewing the many different studies has helped me to understand the language of research more than I expected. My biggest take away is the deliberateness that is necessary when planning professional learning aside from identifying the needs of the participants but also how to engage them and have them access their leadership abilities while engaging in professional learning.

Project Development and Evaluation

This study allowed me to analyze in great depth teachers' perceptions about their roles and challenges with inclusion. As a result, this project study resulted in a 3-day professional learning plan that is intended to address the needs of the local problem. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Guskey (2017) are two of the sources that played a significant role in my understanding of what is needed for professional learning to be effective from the planning to its evaluation for its teacher participants. Darling-Hammond et al.'s research (2017) focused on the elements necessary for professional learning to be effective. The participants in the study expressed a need for relevant training that would support the challenges of educating a wide range of student needs within their inclusion classrooms. I learned that planning professional learning must be deliberate and should be responsive to the needs of its participants. I also learned that

professional learning should be ongoing, and the use of formative assessment and evaluations should be used to reflect and improve professional learning along the way. Guskey's (2017) five levels of evaluation helped to outline the questions for the evaluation of each of the 3-days of professional learning which each participant should complete. Evaluations will be completed anonymously and placed in an envelope for review by researcher.

For this project, identifying a local problem and working through the process of collecting and analyzing data to identify themes led to the review of literature. New learning from the review of various studies led to the project study of a 3-day professional learning plan. The 3-day professional learning plan was designed for general and special education teachers of inclusion. The 3-day professional learning is intended to be sustained through the school year with support and opportunities for follow up sessions.

Leadership and Change

Several sources helped me in my new learning and understanding of the important components for improving student learning outcomes. Ensuring that teachers receive effective professional learning opportunities that are ongoing and sustainable is one of those essential components. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Guskey (2017) are two of the sources that played a significant role in my understanding of what is needed for professional learning to be effective for its teacher participants. The process of this research and the collection of data from the semistructured interviews placed me in a position to identify and contribute a possible approach for improving the roles and

responsibilities of special and general education teachers of inclusion classrooms. Braunsteiner and Mariano-Lapidus (2018) and Bettini et al. (2017) are two of several sources that guided my research about inclusive education. Connecting the sources for professional learning as well as those for inclusive education, emphasized the role of teachers as leaders in their profession and leaders in their own learning.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The professional learning plan that was developed for this project study was informed by a substantial amount of research starting with collection of data, findings of research and an exhaustive literature review about various topics that fell under the umbrella topic of this study. I have facilitated several professional development trainings for teachers and now wish I had conducted this research before doing so. I learned about the components necessary for developing professional learning, and that in order for it to produce the best results, it should be responsive to the needs of the teachers participating. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Guskey (2017) informed the decisions I made about the structure and organization of the 3-day professional learning plan I created. The responses from the semistructured interviews significantly played a role on what contents would be offered for each day of professional learning. Learning that professional learning should be ongoing and sustainable also forced me to keep in mind that I really want teacher participants to walk away feeling encouraged about their participation in the 3 days of professional learning. I would like for them to feel charged and ready to apply their new learning and be excited about doing so. The value of formative evaluation would provide great feedback and data for next steps that would support ongoing

learning. One of my biggest take-aways is the value of that formative evaluation. I will continue to do more research on the different ways for which I could use ongoing formative evaluation for supporting any professional learning plan that I develop or facilitate in the future.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

After a thorough examination of the research and professional learning plan, it was revealed that there is a great need in education for more appropriate teacher preparation programs as well as ongoing professional learning support. The potential impact on social change is that the social climate of the educational environment could be improved which could ultimately produce positive social changes in their connected communities.

Incorporating ongoing professional learning that encourages professional inquiry and collaboration supports teachers as professionals in the work that they do. More importantly, it promotes positive learning outcomes for the students they educate. The roles and responsibilities of teachers are supported helping to make them feel competent in approaching the day-to-day challenges of the work they do. Through professional learning opportunities that are relevant and purposeful, collaboration of teachers builds a sense of community as they tackle the challenges and new learning necessary for them to be productive in supporting the learning outcomes of their students in a positive way.

Implications for research refers to the conclusions from the findings and results of the research and how it is important for policy, practice, or theory. This study could be used by states, schools, and districts. states, schools, and districts can use data to

determine the needs of its teachers and students, then design professional learning to address those areas of needs. The design and evaluations could be adopted while addressing the ongoing professional learning needs of its teachers and learning outcomes of its students.

Future research could involve differentiating professional learning based on the school grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school). Consideration of whether the school is an elementary, middle, or high school should be made when planning and organizing professional learning. Since different grade levels are impacted by different factors such as availability of teachers, scheduling, resources and school structures, future research could focus specifically on the different needs for when supporting inclusive education at the different school levels.

Conclusion

Inclusion as an instructional framework has become more popular over the years. With its popularity throughout many districts across the United States, many teachers struggle to see the benefits of inclusion for their students. The challenges resulting from having inclusion as in instructional framework calls for teacher to participate in ongoing, sustainable professional learning that addresses the professional needs as teachers of inclusion. Professional learning opportunities have at the forefront strategies for supporting the diverse level of needs of the student within the inclusion framework with the ultimate goal, which is to produce positive student outcomes. Professional learning opportunities should be job embedded and structured in a way that considers teachers ability to problem solving the issues amongst their colleagues but also considers its

teachers participants as learners as well. Properly structured professional learning opportunities addresses the need of the school, its students, and the individual learning needs of teacher participants. Professional learning opportunities that are supported by administrators in an ongoing and sustainable manner would help to develop teachers in their roles in a positive way that would produce teachers that are confident in the work that they do and at the same time maximize on the benefits of inclusion for their students. This project study was the result of responses to semistructured interviews from general and special education teachers of an inclusion classroom. I have learned a lot from this process as a teacher, a professional, and a researcher. Going through the stages of research has brought some new insight into how I approach my own learning and the work that I do in education. The professional learning that resulted in this study is intended to help improve the quality of education for those who provide it and the students who receive it by increasing the knowledge and awareness of best strategies and practices that are discovered through collaboration and professional inquiry.

In sum, this study allowed for respectful dialogue and insights on the perspectives of the participants. The process of this research study brought about an understanding of the perceptions of general educators regarding their roles in providing services to special education students in the general education setting with inclusion as an instructional framework. Furthermore, the study brought some awareness of how the benefits of inclusion could be maximized with ongoing professional learning opportunities.

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Appendix A: The Project

DAY 1: Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education	
8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Introduce Your Partner)
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Small Group: Inclusion: Defining Inclusive Education and Its Goals: Least Restrictive Environment Continuum of Services
9:45-10:30	Special Education Laws Governing Inclusion (Individual then small group)
10:30-10:45	Qualifying for Special Education (Whole Group)
10:45-11:00	BREAK
11:00-12:00	The Disability: (Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Strategy)
12:00-12:45	LUNCH BREAK
12:45-2:00	5 Station Rotation: The Individualized Education Plan
2:00-3:00	Three Level Protocol: Procedural Safeguard
3:00-3:10	Teacher Reflection: Table Talk
3:10-3:15	Evaluation

Time	Day 1 Activity
8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Introduce Your Partner) Notes: Participant will pair up with someone they do not know very well. In no more than two minutes they will take turns talking about themselves. Each person will introduce their partner to the group highlighting only important and interesting details (Kelly, 2018).
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview Notes: Review agenda and goals briefly.
8:45-9:45	INCLUSION: (Small group discussion): Defining Inclusion Education and its Goals * “Least Restrictive Environment” and “Continuum of Services” Notes: At their table group, participants will answer and discuss two questions at: 1. What is the definition of inclusion? 2. What is the goal of inclusion and how does least restrictive environment and continuum of services factor in? Table groups members are asked to select a reporter to share with the whole group their response. Each group can be creative in how they present this information.
9:45-10:30	Special Education Laws Governing Inclusion (Individual then small group) Notes: Each participant at their table group will be given one of 5 different laws governing special education and inclusion. Each participant will share and discuss understanding of their assign law at their table group and address questions as a small group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 • Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) • Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) • Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

10:30-10:45	<p>Qualifying for Special Education (Whole Group) Notes: Facilitator will do a quick assessment (thumbs up thumbs down) of how everyone is feelings about the content so far. Then will share with group what’s next on the agenda after break. Facilitator will discuss briefly “qualifying for special education and provide some statistics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA covers 14 types of disabilities <p>In 2019–20, the number of students ages 3–21 who received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was 7.3 million, or 14 percent of all public-school students (Students with Disabilities, 2021).</p>
10:45-11:00	BREAK
11:00-12:00	<p>The Disability: (Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Strategy) Notes: Participants will use Jigsaw strategy to learn new information about one of the thirteen disability categories and supporting students diagnosed with that disability. They would either learn new information, add more to existing knowledge or clarify information pertaining to one of the assigned 13 types of disabilities covered by IDEA to develop community and disseminate new and interesting knowledge amongst their colleagues.</p>
12:00-12:45	LUNCH BREAK
12:45-2:00	<p>5 Station Rotation: The Individualized Education Plan Notes: Small Group 5 Station Rotation: Participant will learn the different parts of the (IEP). Presenters at each station will be a part of the support team to include (SPECIAL EDUCATION teacher, Related Service Personnel: Social Worker, Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapist, Speech Language Pathologist, School Psychologist). During the 15 minutes rotation, participants will learn the different parts of the IEP and how each member of the special education department informs the IEP as it is being developed. This rotation will include fifteen minutes of independent learning time where each participant will get to learn the purpose of the IEP and examine an exemplary sample of a completed IEP.</p>
2:00-3:00	<p>Three Level Protocol: Procedural Safeguard Notes: The purpose of “Three Level Protocol” is to construct meaning collaboratively, clarify, and expand thinking about “Procedural Safeguard Notice: Required under IDEA Part B”.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sentences (10 minutes)- Each person shares a sentence from the text that was significant to you. Others listen and take notes. No discussion. 2. Phrases (10 minutes)-Each person share a phrase from the text or from notes written about the text on something that struck them as significant. Others listen and/or take notes. No discussion. 3. Words (about 10 minutes). Each person shares a word from the text or from written notes about the text on something that struck that person as significant. No discussion. 4. Discussion (about 10 minutes). Group members discuss what they heard and what they’ve learned about the text being “Procedural Safeguard Notice.”. The group discusses which word emerged and new insights about the document. 5. Debriefing (about 5 minutes). The group debriefs the process.
3:00-3:10	<p>Teacher Reflection: Table Talk Notes: Teacher participants will discuss at their table the following question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What goals did I have for attending this session? 2. What is one or two key points did I take away from this session?
3:10-3:15	Evaluation

DAY 2: Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education	
8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Six Degrees of Separation)
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Our students: The Atlas Looking at Data Protocol
9:45-10:30	Our students: The Atlas Looking at Data Protocol
10:30-10:45	Ted Talk: Every Kid Needs a Champion by Rita Pierson
10:45-11:00	BREAK
11:00-12:00	Co-Teaching and Methods of Coteaching
12:00-12:45	LUNCH BREAK
12:45-1:45	Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Universal Design for Learning
1:45-2:00	Break
2:00-3:00	Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Accommodation and Modification
3:00-3:10	Teacher Reflection: Table Talk
3:10-3:15	Evaluation

Time	Day 2-Activity
8:00-8:30	<p>Team Building Activity: (Six Degree of Separation)</p> <p>Notes: Participants will pair up and make a list of five things they have in common with one another. Once the list is completed, they will find a new partner who share at least one of the items on their list. This continues until all the teachers' participants have at least one thing in common with everyone in the room. (David, 2021)</p>
8:30-8:45	<p>Welcome: Overview</p> <p>Notes: Review agenda and goals briefly.</p>
8:45-9:45	<p>Our students: The Atlas Protocol” Notes:</p> <p>STEP 1: Getting Started</p> <p>The facilitator providing will provide the group with a set of data about “Our Students” and give a very brief statement of the data and avoids explaining or drawing any conclusion about the data.</p> <p>STEP 2: Describing the Data (10 Minutes)</p> <p>The facilitator asks: “What do you see?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this period the group gathers as much information as possible from the data. • Group members describe what they see in data, avoiding judgments about quality or interpretations. It is helpful to identify where the observation is being made—e.g., “On page one in the second column, third row . . . “ • If judgments or interpretations do arise, you would be asked to describe the evidence on which they are based. • Facilitator will list the groups observation on chart paper. If interpretations come up, they can be listed in another column for later discussion during Step 3. (Leahy, 2021)

9:45-10:30	<p>Our students: The Atlas Protocol</p> <p>Notes:</p> <p>STEP 3: Interpreting the Data (10 Minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitator asks: “What does the data suggest?” Second question: “What are the assumptions we make about students and their learning?” • During this period, the group tries to make sense of what the data says and why. The group should try to find as many different interpretations as possible and evaluate them against the kind and quality of evidence. • From the evidence gathered in the preceding section, try to infer: what is being worked on and why? • Think broadly and creatively. Assume that the data, no matter how confusing, makes sense to some people; your job is to see what they may see. • The Atlas Looking at Data Protocols you listen to each other’s interpretations, ask questions that help you better understand each other’s perspectives. <p>STEP 4: Implications for Classroom Practice (10 Minutes)</p> <p>The facilitator asks: “What are the implications of this work for teaching and assessment?” This question may be modified, depending on the data.</p> <p>Based on the group’s observations and interpretations, discuss any implications this work might have for teaching and assessment in the classroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — What steps could be taken next? — What strategies might be most effective? — What else would you like to see happen? — What kinds of assignments or assessments could provide this information? <p>— What does this conversation make you think about in terms of your own practice? About teaching and learning in general? — What are the implications for equity? (Leahy, 2021)</p>
10:30-10:45	<p>Ted Talk: Rita Pierson. Every Kid Needs a Champion</p> <p>Notes: Facilitator will do a quick assessment (thumbs up thumbs down) of how everyone is feeling about the content so far. Then will share with group what’s next on the agenda after break.</p>
10:45-11:00	<p>BREAK</p>
11:00-12:00	<p>Co-Teaching and Methods of Coteaching</p> <p>Notes: Co-Teaching and Methods of Coteaching using Notice and Wonder Protocol</p> <p>Independent Research using University of Minnesota College of Human Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is coteaching 2. Research Results 3. Co-Teaching Strategies 4. Roles and Responsibilities

12:00-12:45	<p>LUNCH BREAK</p> <p>Notes: Computer Station, Collaborative Station and Facilitator Station</p> <p>Computer Station-20 minutes Participants will independently conduct research on the topic. At this time teachers can work from their present knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>Collaborative Station-20 minutes Participants will work in groups to conduct a case study and adapt a lesson plan using Universal Design for Learning</p> <p>Facilitator Station-20 minutes Facilitator will provide direct instruction and facilitate discussion to deepen understanding of Universal Design for Learning using CAST: The UDL Guidelines (CAST, 2018)</p>
1:45-2:00	BREAK
2:00-3:00	<p>Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Accommodation and Modification</p> <p>Notes: Computer Station, Collaborative Station and Facilitator Station</p> <p>Computer Station-20 minutes Participants will independently conduct research on the topic. At this time teachers can work from their present knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>Collaborative Station-20 minutes Participants will work in groups to conduct a case study of an inclusion classroom and adapt a lesson plan considering the overall needs of the class.</p> <p>Facilitator Station-20 minutes Facilitator will provide direct instruction and facilitate discussion to deepen understanding of Accommodation and Modifications</p>
3:00-3:10	<p>Teacher reflection: Table talk</p> <p>Notes: Teacher participants will discuss at their table the following question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What goals did I have for attending this session? 2. What is one or two key points did I take away from this session?
3:10-3:15	Evaluation

DAY 3: Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education	
8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt)
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Differentiating Instruction
9:45-10:30	Planning for Inclusion: Scheduling Support
10:30-10:45	BREAK
10:45-12:00	Copanning for Inclusion
12:00-12:45	LUNCH BREAK
12:45-1:45	Copanning: Lesson Planning
1:45-2:00	BREAK
2:00-3:00	Teacher Reflection: Table Talk
3:00-3:10	Evaluation

DAY 3: Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education
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8:00-8:30	<p>Team Building Activity: (Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt)</p> <p>Notes: Group participants into teams by grade levels or subject areas and have them do a scavenger hunt from a student’s perspective, taking pictures along the way. They can find silly things like, “best hiding place from teachers” or “door that no one knows where it goes” to sweet things like, “something a student might find encouraging” or “a great view to see the sky.” Come back together and share the finds. This is a great activity for collaborating and evaluating spaces and messages your school is sending to its students.</p>
8:30-8:45	<p>Welcome: Overview</p>
8:45-9:45	<p>Differentiating Instruction</p> <p>Notes: Participants will explore resources on “Differentiated Instruction” and reflect on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are the ideas and information presented connected with what you already knew? 2. What new ideas did you get that extended or broadened your thinking in new directions? 3. What challenges or puzzles have come up in your mind from the ideas and information presented? 4. As you read, individually record personal connections, extensions, and challenges for applying “Differentiated Instruction” in your everyday practice.
	<p>5. Share and discuss your findings with a colleague. Exchange an idea for implementation for your inclusion classroom.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p>What is Differentiated Instruction? Examples of How to Differentiate Instruction in the Classroom. https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/examples-of-differentiated-instruction/</p> <p>20 Differentiated Instruction Strategies and Examples. https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/differentiated-instruction-strategiesexamples-download</p> <p>7 Reasons Why Differentiated Instruction Works. https://inservice.ascd.org/7-reasons-why-differentiated-instruction-works/</p> <p>How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classroom. http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/117032/chapters/What-DifferentiatedInstruction-Is%E2%80%94and-Isn't.aspx</p> <p>Assessment and Student Success. http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108028/chapters/Differentiation@-AnOverview.aspx</p>
9:45-10:30	<p>Planning for Inclusion: Scheduling Support</p> <p>Notes: Administrators, coaches, and teachers will engage in professional inquiry to explore options for scheduling students and support staff.</p>
10:30-10:45	<p>BREAK</p>
10:45-12:00	<p>Copanning for Inclusion</p> <p>Notes: Collaborative teachers will examine student's IEP, CUM folders, benchmark scores, standardized result and other records to create student profiles.</p>
12:00-12:45	<p>LUNCH BREAK</p>

12:45-1:45	<p>Coplanning: Shared Responsibility and Parity</p> <p>Notes: Teacher partners will collaborate and discuss options for sharing responsibility, taking into consideration lesson planning, class support, behavior, parent communication and grading. Teacher pair will also brainstorm options for parity. Share out to large group.</p>
1:45-2:00	BREAK
2:00-3:00	<p>Teacher Reflection: Table Talk</p> <p>Teach will discuss at their tables the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What new skills, information or understanding have I taken away from this session? 2. How will I use what I learned in my own teaching? How will my students be affected by these changes? What ideas can I use <u>immediately</u>, and which are more useful for future application? 3. Will what I learned in this session change my teaching practices or philosophy? If so, in what way(s)?
3:00-3:10	Evaluation

Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education

Day 1

Teambuilding Activity: Introduce Your Partner

Pair with someone you do not know very well. In no more than two minutes take turns talking about yourselves. Each of you will introduce your partner to the group highlighting only important and interesting details (Kelly, 2018).

Welcome and Overview

DAY 1: Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education	
8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Introduce Your Partner)
8:30:8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Small Group: Inclusion: Defining Inclusive Education and It's Goals: Least Restrictive Environment Continuum of Services
9:45-10:30	Special Education Laws Governing Inclusion (Individual then small group)
10:30-10:45	Qualifying for Special Education (Whole Group)
10:45-11:00	BREAK
11:00-12:00	The Disability: (Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Strategy)
12:00-12:45	LUNCH BREAK
12:45-2:00	5 Station Rotation: The Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
2:00-3:00	Three Level Protocol: Procedural Safeguard
3:00-3:10	Teacher Reflection: Table Talk
3:10-3:15	Evaluation (See Appendix E)

Defining Inclusion Education and its Goals:

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Continuum of Services

Small Group

At their table group, answer and discuss:

1. What is the definition of inclusion?
2. What is the goal of inclusion and how does least restrictive environment and continuum of services factor in?
 - Select a recorder to capture responses.
 - Select a reporter to share responses to the whole group.
 - Each group can be creative in how they present this information.

Special Education Laws Governing Inclusion

(Individual then small group)

At your table group read one of 5 different laws governing special education and inclusion. Then share and discuss your understanding of your assigned law at your table group. Address questions as a small group.

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Thumbs up Thumbs down: How is everyone feeling about the content so far?

Qualifying for Special Education

Whole Group Presentation

- “Qualifying for special education”
- IDEA covers 14 types of disabilities
- In 2019–20, the number of students ages 3–21 who received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was 7.3 million, or 14 percent of all public-school students (Students with Disabilities, 2021).

The Disability: (Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Strategy)

Use Jigsaw strategy to learn new information about one of the thirteen disability categories and supporting students diagnosed with that disability. You will:

- Learn new information,
- Add more to existing knowledge
- Clarify information pertaining to one of the assigned 13 types of disabilities covered by IDEA to develop community and disseminate new and interesting knowledge amongst their colleagues.

5 Station Rotation: The Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Independent: Computer Station-20 minutes

- Independently conduct research on the different parts of IEP. Work from their present knowledge of the topic.

Collaborative Station-20 minutes

- Work in small group with related service personnel to discuss how to collaborate with

Facilitator Station-20 minutes

- Presenters at each station will be a part of the support team to include (SPED teacher, Related Service

Personnel: Social Worker, Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapist, Speech Language Pathologist, School Psychologist).

Three Level Protocol: Procedural Safeguard

Construct meaning collaboratively, clarify, and expand thinking about “Procedural Safeguard Notice: Required under IDEA Part B”.

1. Sentences (10 minutes)- Each person shares a sentence from the text that was significant to you. Others listen and take notes. No discussion.
2. Phrases (10 minutes)-Each person share a phrase from the text or from notes written about the text on something that struck them as significant. Others listen and/or take notes. No discussion.
3. Words (about 10 minutes). Each person shares a word from the text or from written notes about the text on something that struck that person as significant. No discussion.
4. Discussion (about 10 minutes). Group members discuss what they heard and what they’ve learned about the text being “Procedural Safeguard Notice.”. The group discusses which word emerged and new insights about the document.
5. Debriefing (about 5 minutes). The group debriefs the process.

Teacher Reflection: Table Talk

Small Group

Discuss at your table the following questions.

- 1. What goals did you have for attending this session?
- 2. What is one or two take away from this session?

Evaluation

1. Directions for completing evaluation

Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education

Day 2

Teambuilding Activity: (Six Degrees of Separation)

Pair up with someone and make a list of five things you have in common with one another. When your list is completed, find a new partner who shares at least one of the items on your list. Continue until you are signaled to stop (David, 2021).

Welcome and Overview

DAY 2: Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education	
8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Six Degrees of Separation)
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Our students: The Atlas Looking at Data Protocol
9:45-10:30	Our students: The Atlas Looking at Data Protocol
10:30-10:45	Ted Talk: Every Kid Needs a Champion by Rita Pierson
10:45-11:00	BREAK
11:00-12:00	Co-Teaching and Methods of Coteaching
12:00-12:45	LUNCH BREAK
12:45-1:45	Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Universal Design for Learning
1:45-2:00	Break
2:00-3:00	Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Accommodation and Modification
3:00-3:10	Teacher Reflection: Table Talk
3:10-3:15	Evaluation (See Appendix E)

Our students: The Atlas Protocol

STEP 1: Whole Group

Taking a look at “**Our Students**” data presentation

STEP 2: Describing the Data (10 Minutes)

Small Group

- “What do you see?”
- In your group gathers as much information as possible from the data.
- Group members describe what they see in data.
- Identify where the observation is being made—e.g., “On page one in the second column, third row . . . “
- Facilitator will list the groups observation on chart paper. If interpretations come up, they can be listed in another column for later discussion during Step 3 (Leahy, 2021).

Small Group

- “What does the data suggest?” “What are some assumptions we make about our students and their learning.”
- As a group try to make sense of what the data says and why.
- Try to find as many different interpretations as possible and evaluate them with evidence.
- Try to infer: what is being worked on and why?
- Think broadly and creatively: Try to see what other people may see (Leahy, 2021).

STEP 4: Implications for Classroom Practice (10 Minutes)

“What are the implications of this work for teaching and assessment?”

- **Small Group**

- Based on your group’s observations and interpretations, discuss any implications this work might have for teaching and assessment in the classroom.
 - 1. What steps could be taken next?
 - 2. What strategies might be most effective?
 - 3. What else would you like to see happen?
 - 4. What kinds of assignments or assessments could provide this information?
 - 5. What does this conversation make you think about in terms of your own practice?
 - 6. About teaching and learning in general?
 - 7. What are the implications for equity? (Leahy, 2021)

Whole Group: Atlas Protocol: “Our Student” Share Out

Thumbs up Thumbs down: How is everyone feeling about the content so far?

Ted Talk: Rita Pierson:

Every Child Needs a Champion Video

Coteaching and the Methods of Coteaching

Independent Research: Coteaching and Methods of Coteaching using Notices and Wonders using University of Minnesota College of Human Development.

1. What is coteaching?
2. Research Results
3. Co-Teaching Strategies
4. Roles and Responsibilities

Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Universal Design for Learning

Computer Station, Collaborative Station and Facilitator Station

Station 1: Computer Station-20 minutes

- Independently conduct research on the topic. At this time teachers can work from their present knowledge of the topic.

Station 2: Collaborative Station-20 minutes

- Work in groups to conduct a case study and adapt a lesson plan using Universal Design for Learning

Station 3: Facilitator Station-20 minutes

- Direct instruction with facilitator to deepen understanding of Universal Design for Learning using CAST: The UDL Guidelines (CAST, 2018)

Teacher Reflection: Table Talk

Small Group

Discuss at your table the following questions.

1. What goals did you have for attending this session?
2. What is one or two take away from this session?

Teacher Learning Station Rotation: Accommodations and Modifications

1. Computer Station-20 minutes

- Independently conduct research on the topic. You can work from their present knowledge of the topic.

2. Collaborative Station-20 minutes

- Pair up with another teacher and conduct a case study of an inclusion classroom and adapt a lesson plan considering the overall needs of the class.

3. Facilitator Station-20 minutes

- Direct instruction with facilitator to deepen understanding of accommodation and modifications.

Evaluation

Directions for completing evaluation

Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education

Day 3

Team Building Activity: (Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt)

Whole Group

Grade level teams engage in a scavenger hunt from a student’s perspective, taking pictures along the way. You can find silly things like, “best hiding place from teachers” or “door that no one knows where it goes” to sweet things like, “something a student might find encouraging” or “a great view to see the sky.” Come back together and share the finds.

Welcome and Overview

DAY 3: Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education	
8:00-8:30	Team Building Activity: (Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt)
8:30-8:45	Welcome: Overview
8:45-9:45	Differentiating Instruction
9:45-10:30	Planning for Inclusion: Scheduling Support
10:30-10:45	BREAK
10:45-12:00	Coplaning for Inclusion
12:00-12:45	LUNCH BREAK
12:45-1:45	Coplaning: Lesson Planning
1:45-2:00	BREAK
2:00-3:00	Tescher Reflection: Table Talk
3:00-3:10	Evaluation (See Appendix E)

Differentiating Instruction

Independent

Explore resources provided to you about “Differentiated Instruction” and reflect on the following:

1. How are the ideas and information presented connected with what you already knew?
2. What new ideas did you get that extended or broadened your thinking in new directions?
3. What challenges or puzzles have come up in your mind from the ideas and information presented?
4. As you read, individually record personal connections, extensions, and challenges for applying “Differentiated Instruction” in your everyday practice.

Partner Share

5. Exchange an idea for implementation for your inclusion classroom.

Planning for Inclusion: Scheduling Support

Administrators, coaches, and teachers will engage in professional inquiry to explore options for scheduling students and support staff.

Collaborative Planning for Inclusion

Partner Pair

1. Collaborative teachers will examine student s IEP, CUM folders, benchmark scores, standardized result and other records to create student profiles.

Co lannin : Shared Res onsi ilit and Parit

Partner Pair

1. Collaborate and discuss options for sharing responsibility, taking into consideration lesson planning, class support, behavior, parent communication and grading.
2. Brainstorm options for parity. **hole Grou** : Share out to large group.

Teacher Reflection: Table Talk

Small Groups

Discuss at their tables the following questions:

1. What new skills, information or understanding have I taken away from this session?
2. How will I use what I learned in my own teaching?
3. How will my students be affected by these changes?
4. What ideas can I use immediately, and which are more useful for future application?
5. Will what I learned in this session change my teaching practices or philosophy? If so, in what way(s)?

Evaluation

1. Directions for completing evaluation

Additional Resources

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- Conderman, G., Johnston-Rodriguez, S., & Hartman, P. (2009). Communicating and collaborating in co-taught classrooms. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus*, 5(5) 1-17. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ967751.pdf>
- Nolan, A., & Molla, T. (2019). Supporting teacher professionalism through tailored professional learning. *London Review of Education*, 17(2), 126–140. doi: 10.18546/LRE.17.2.03

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- David, J. (2021, September 26). *25 Team building activities for teachers*. Signup Genius. <https://www.signupgenius.com/school/team-building-activities-teachers.cfm>
- Differentiated instruction: Examples & classroom strategies: Resilient educator. ResilientEducator.com. (2021, April 29). <https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/examples-ofdifferentiateinstruction/>
- Educational Resources for Special Needs*. Do2Learn. (n.d.). <https://do2learn.com/disabilities/Overview.html>

Leahy, D. (2021, February 10). *Original Protocols*. National School Reform Faculty.

<http://www.nsrffharmony.org/>.

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Love. Wereteachers.com. <http://www.wereteachers.com/team-building-activities>

Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (2017). Making inclusion work with co-teaching.

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<https://doi:10.1177/0040059916685065>

Students With Disabilities: Condition of Education. (2021).

<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg>

BOOKS

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coteaching Implementing the models. (3rd ed) Cogent Catalyst Publication

Friend, M., & Barron, T. (2020). *Specially Designed Instruction in Co-Teaching:*

Maximizing Student Outcomes by Intensifying Teaching and Learning Including

Students with Special Needs: A Practical Guide for Classroom Teachers (8th ed)

Pearson, 2019

Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Introduction

My name is Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Your time is very much appreciated. This interview involves two parts. The first part is a survey about your background (education level, years of service, among others). The second part you will be asked questions about your perception of your experience as an inclusion teacher at the local study site.

The purpose of this interview is to better understand the teachers' perceptions of their experiences in and out of the inclusion classroom. I am interested in your opinions and your reactions. This interview is not evaluative and is in no way intended to critique your abilities. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel comfortable responding honestly about what you think and how you feel. Our interview today will last approximately one hour.

The results of this research will be useful information to stakeholders in education. It is intended to help structure educational programs that are most effective to teachers of students in the inclusion classroom and the students they are responsible for educating.

AUDIO RECORDER INSTRUCTIONS

If it is okay with you, I will be audio-recording our conversation. The purpose is to allow me to capture all the details of our conversation. All comments will remain confidential. I will be completing a summary report for your review. This would allow you to check for accuracy of the data I collected.

You will be kept anonymous during all phases of this study. Procedures for maintaining confidentiality are as follows:

1. Identifiers, such as name, address, student names and telephone numbers will not be placed on any documents by participants or the researcher of this research.

On the day of the interview, you will be asked if there are questions or concerns that need to be addressed prior to the start of the interview. Finally, you are able to withdraw without penalty from taking part in this study at any time.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

A.

1. How long have you been working with the current school/institute?
 - a. 1 year or less
 - b. 1-2 years
 - c. 3-5 years
 - d. 6-10 years
 - e. 11-15 years
 - f. 15+ years

2. Please state your highest academic qualification?
 - a. Associate degree
 - b. Bachelor's degree

- c. Master's degree
 - d. Doctorate
 - e. Others (Please specify)
3. What is your job title?
- a. General Education Teacher
 - b. Special Education Teacher

B. Interview Guiding Questions

1. How long have you been teaching at the local study site?
2. What grade level and content areas have you taught?
3. How do you feel about the level of preparation you have received in education and your readiness to teach the varying needs of students in your classroom?
4. Do you enjoy sharing your classroom with another teacher? Please explain why or why not?
5. As a co-teacher at the local study site, what are your feelings regarding your role and responsibilities in providing instructional support for special education students in an inclusion classroom?
6. What is it about the inclusion model that is the most effective/challenging for the co-teachers at the local study site?
7. From your own personal experience, what are the components for a successful inclusion classroom?
8. What strategies do you employ in your inclusion classroom to ensure success for students with disabilities?
9. What are your thoughts about the collaborative practices utilized between you and your co-teaching partner?
10. What supports are in place at the local study site to support you in your work as a teacher of an inclusion classroom?
11. Explain your understanding of the goal of inclusive practices? Do you support it? Why or why not?
12. What strategies do you and your co-teacher employ that ensures that you are reaching all of your students' needs (Gen.ed and Spec. Ed)?
13. How confident are you in your ability to teach students with IEP amongst general education students in an inclusion classroom?

Appendix D: Evaluation Form

Understanding and Supporting Inclusive Education

Day 1, 2 and 3

Session Titled

Short answer text

Presenter:

Short answer text

Date:

Month, day, year



What is your position?

General Education Teacher

Special Education Teacher

Today's professional learning relevant to your work?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

Today's professional learning a good use of your time.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

...

The presenter encouraged active participation.



Linear scale

1 to 5

1 Strongly Disagree

5 Strongly Agree

I learned new information.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I would recommend this training to others.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I feel confident in applying my new learning to my work.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

What could be improved?