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# Administrative Leadership to Build Capacity for Inclusion of Students With Emotional Disabilities

Nicole Corbett  
*Walden University*

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Nicole Corbett

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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Administrative Leadership to Build Capacity for Inclusion of Students With Emotional  
Disabilities

by

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MEd, Johnson State College, 1996

MSA, St. Michael's College, 1994

BS, Trinity College of Vermont, 1989

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Education

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## Abstract

In a New England school district, students with emotional disabilities (SWED) were educated in the most restrictive educational placement outside the general education classroom at higher rates than any other disability group. The purpose of this qualitative, instrumental case study was to explore administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding campus and district level systems and structures, professional development (PD) available, and the role of administrators in building capacity for the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. Vygotsky's theory of social development, Knowles's theory of andragogy, and Knoster's model for leading and managing complex change provided the theoretical framework for this study. A district-wide anonymous questionnaire was followed up by semistructured interviews with 4 special educators, 4 general educators, and 4 administrators. Criteria for the purposeful selection of interview participants included graduation from a 4-year university teacher education program and a minimum of 4 years teaching or administrative experience in an inclusive environment. Data were coded and investigated for themes and patterns. Three primary themes emerged: the need to adequately staff and improve fidelity to existing systems and structures, creation and implementation of practical and theoretical PD regarding SWED, and development of cohesive systems embedded in a culture that supports a sense of belonging for all students. This study will provide district administrators with resources to construct differentiated PD to build capacity for inclusion of SWED, creating positive social change by providing equitable access to instruction for all students.

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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother and father who helped me plant strong roots while encouraging me to dream, my brother who has always been my best friend, the sisters I am blessed to have in my life, Lisa, Cynthia, Carole, Tina, Tracey, and Sue, and most importantly, to Brett and Meghan for keeping my heart happy and filled with love.

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## Section 1: The Problem

Title 1 of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was constructed with a purpose to provide equal access to high-quality education and to ensure that all students attained proficiency on state assessments (U. S. Department of Education, 2014). NCLB's requirement for 95% participation in statewide assessments signified the first time that the federal government held schools accountable for the progress and proficiency of all students, even those with disabilities (Roach & Elliott, 2009). Title 1 of the Every Student Succeeds Act noted the purpose as providing equitable access for all children to high-quality education and decreasing the educational achievement gap between different groups of students (Congress.gov, 2015). While this reauthorization allows each state the opportunity to develop state-level plans to monitor student progress, the expectation remained that the same standards apply to all students. Earlier legislation for students with disabilities, the Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act (2004), required that schools provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to these students in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with their peers, noting that special education is not a location, it is a set of services designed to meet individualized needs of a student (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). School districts must be structured to ensure that students with all types of disabilities have opportunity to access education in LRE; this includes students with emotional disabilities (SWED).

Using a qualitative case study in a school district in Vermont, I examined the systems and structures in place, the professional development (PD) available, and the role

of administrators in building capacity for the inclusion of SWED in the general education classrooms. The study was built on the framework of Knowles's andragogy theory for adult learners and Knoster's model for leading and managing complex change. These theories align with the district use of the Vermont multitiered system of supports response to intervention and instruction model as a resource in the development of local school improvement plans. Key components of this model include a systems approach, collaboration, a well-organized assessment system, high-quality instruction, and well-designed professional development (Vermont Department of Education, 2013). Through a qualitative case study method using questionnaires and interviews, I examined how teachers and administrators perceive the administrative role in building capacity in the district to support the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom.

### **Background of the Problem**

Green Mountain School District (GMSD), a pseudonym for the research site, serves 2,000 students in 12 different schools over 520 square miles. There are 29 administrators in the district and nearly 300 teachers. The district administrators struggle with providing support for SWED within the general education classroom. An email distributed by district administrators referenced "the need to accommodate and program for students with intense behavioral needs and past trauma [while] our capacity...continues to be a challenge" (personal communication, June 1, 2015). Vermont's rate of nearly 16% of SWED is the highest in the country and is over twice the national rate of 6.3% (Weiss-Tisman, 2015). This Vermont district has over 600 students identified with disabilities; 11% of these students have a primary diagnosis of emotional

disturbance (ED). Twenty-three percent of the students identified with ED were placed at therapeutic day treatment facilities during the 2013-2014 school year (district administrator, personal communication, May 11, 2015). This percentage of SWED at an alternative placement significantly exceeds the 2% rate of alternative placements for students with learning disabilities (LD) (district administrator, personal communication, May 11, 2015). The director of a local day treatment facility reported that “the number of kids with emotional and behavioral challenges we serve are increasing while resources are decreasing” (personal communication, May 31, 2015). The director of special education in one of the district schools noted that educators in general education classrooms do not have a large repertoire of strategies and techniques to use with the ED population and many believe “students with emotional disabilities belong somewhere else” (personal communication, May 30, 2015). Researchers have suggested that teachers do not feel they have adequate training to properly include SWED in the general education classroom (Hoge & Rubinstein-Avila, 2014; Kindzierski, O’Dell, Marable, & Raimondi, 2013; Sawka, McCurdy, & Mannella, 2002; Wagner et al., 2006; Wehby, Lane, & Falk, 2003).

Meyer (2012) noted the significant changes made in the area of exclusion from the general education classroom and equity of access over the last 40 years; she challenged that continued work is essential to meet the needs of SWED. The data regarding placement of SWED in GMSD does not reflect movement away from old understandings of mental health concerns. It does not demonstrate that SWED are becoming more successful at accessing instruction in the general education classroom.

Vermont's definition of emotional disturbance is an exact match to the definition used in New Hampshire and Massachusetts; it is also the same as the federal definition (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2006; New Hampshire Department of Education, 2014; U. S. Department of Education, 2017; Vermont Agency of Education, 2013):

The definition focuses on the inability to learn, to develop relationships with adults and children in the school setting, unexpected responses to typical situations, overwhelming feelings of unhappiness, and unexpected fears and physical illness associated with school. (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013)

The definition also references the length of time the characteristics have an impact on the student's ability to access education. While the definition includes students with schizophrenia, it excludes students who are socially maladjusted (Wery & Cullinan, 2015). Clear understanding of the components of this definition are essential to building a systemic program that best supports these students and their disability; without proper preparation, teachers are not ready to meet the academic needs of SWED (Wehby et al., 2003). The district leadership team must better strategize and plan for the administrative role in building capacity to support the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. By working in a systemic manner, the district will be able to improve the learning environment for this specific group of students. Understanding the definition allows staff members to realize how a student qualifies for special education services under this category; this will help to build an understanding of the behaviors that are



related to the emotional disability and help general education teachers better program for the needs of SWED (Goodman & Burton, 2010). This can reinforce that the behavior is tied to the disability and a need for specialized instruction (Broomhead, 2013b; Lund, 2014).

## **Rationale**

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

GMSD administrators have demonstrated the desire to address district problems and other perceived gaps in practice (personal communication, June 1, 2015). Examples include improvement in the areas of math instruction, writing across the content areas, integration of multitiered systems of support, and inclusion of students with LD; positive results occur when there are systemic efforts made that include both school and district administrators and teaching staff. Prior to the 2015-2016 school year, district administrators had not started to investigate or develop systems in the area of increased inclusion of SWED. District- and school-level planning efforts have not included this as a priority (personal communication, June 1, 2015). In the 2013-14 school year, 23% of the students identified with ED in the school district were placed in alternative settings while only 2% of students with LD were placed in alternative placement settings (personal communication, May 11, 2015). The percentage of out-of-district or alternative placement settings shows a gap in programming options on the continuum of services and systemic capacity building that would afford SWED a variety of placement options (personal communication, May 11, 2015).

Although individual school educators are working to make improvements serving the needs of SWED in the general education classroom, there is not an orchestrated plan to provide for improvements in the area of integrating SWED into the general education classroom (personal communication, June 1, 2015). Teachers who will be working with SWED in the general educational classroom will need specialized training to make this successful (Hoge & Rubinstein-Avila, 2014; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013; Scott, Hirn, & Alter, 2014). Askill-Williams and Murray-Harvey (2013) noted the use of single-session PD opportunities to initiate this type of change as ineffective: These type of sessions can provide a boost to starting an initiative, however, there must be continued opportunities to gain knowledge and put that knowledge into practice. A coordinated effort is needed in the district and in individual schools if there is going to be improved access for all SWED to be educated in the general education classroom.

Professional development can be used not only to provide new strategies but also to challenge attitudes and perceptions about SWED. These learning opportunities will allow administrators and general education classroom teachers time to reflect on current practices that lead to exclusion; school staff members will need to investigate attitudes and practices and develop new skills that will be more effective for this population of students (Francis, 2011; Rojewski, Lee, & Gregg, 2015; Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013; Scott et al., 2014). The negative impact of untrained staff members working with SWED extends beyond the classroom.

The consequences of limiting SWED to alternative classrooms or off-campus programs have long-term ramifications. The director of a local day treatment facility noted that all students who struggle with ED

are at risk if they don't receive adequate support(s) and are more likely to abuse substances, to attempt suicide, to be truant, to experience physical or psychosomatic ailments, to drop out of school, to get into fights at school, [and] to have poor academic engagement. (personal communication, May 31, 2015)

Rojewski et al. (2015) noted that high levels of inclusion indicate a commitment to equity for all students. Results from the 2011 and 2013 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated GMSD high school students exceed the state average in a number of areas.

Table 1 shows the comparison between the GMSD and the state of Vermont for five key indicators.

Table 1

*Comparison of Green Mountain School District (GMSD) and State of Vermont (VT) Youth Risk Behavior Percentages for High School Students 2011 and 2013*

Indicator	2011			2013		
	GMSD	VT	Net difference	GMSD	VT	Net difference
In a fight in the last year	28%	9%	19%	24%	20%	4%
Drank alcohol in the last 30 days	45%	35%	10%	42%	33%	9%
Smoked in the last 30 days	24%	13%	11%	24%	13%	11%
Have smoked marijuana	41%	39%	2%	44%	39%	5%
Offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school grounds	24%	18%	6%	28%	18%	10%

*Note.* Vermont Department of Health, 2011 and 2013

Data from Table 1 revealed a pattern of GMSD high school students engaging in risk behaviors in these areas at a higher rate than the high school population in the state of Vermont. Access and exposure to these activities is of concern for all students but especially for SWED who are more susceptible to these types of risky behaviors (Hoge & Rubinstein-Avila, 2014; Johnson & Taliaferro, 2011; McLeod, Uemura, & Rohrman, 2012; Sawka et al., 2002).

When a student has behavioral challenges, one of the first suggestions made by staff members is an alternative placement (personal communication, May 30, 2015). Not all staff members have a clear understanding of what other strategies exist on the continuum of services to be able to support this student. It is not a question of staff members wanting the child to leave the classroom; it is often frustration at not meeting the needs of this individual child and the impact the child is having on the learning environment of the other students (personal communication, May 30, 2015). This study may provide a greater understanding of the needs of teachers and the role of administrators to build capacity to support the inclusion of SWED.

### **Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature**

Inclusion of students with disabilities has been a concern for all schools since the passage of PL-94-142 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In the late 1990s, the shift to inclusion in the general education classroom became more predominant for students with LD (Skerbetz & Kostewicz, 2013). Roden, Borgemenke, and Holt (2013) noted that when higher percentages of Texas students on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were receiving over 80% of their instruction in the general education classroom, there

were higher percentages of students meeting the standards in reading. While inclusion did not close the gap, it did offer students with LD the opportunity to access their education in the LRE and decrease that gap.

The shift toward inclusion has not been reflected in the education of SWED (Skarbetz & Kostewicz, 2013). National data for 2013 revealed that only 43% of SWED were in the regular general education classroom for more than 80% of the day (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). SWED noted that their education has been a disjointed and inconsistent experience (Mowat, 2015). There were fewer opportunities for learning as the focus became fixed on behavior (Wehby et al., 2003). Teachers and SWED can become enmeshed in repeated negative interactions (Skarbetz & Kostewicz, 2013) or repeated avoidance of interaction (Razer et al., 2013) resulting in a nonacademic curriculum. Students with less access to the academic curriculum will have a lower opportunity for academic achievement (Skarbetz & Kostewicz, 2013). Staff often perceives behavior as a problem attributed to the student as opposed to the behavior being a reaction to a specific situation (Lund, 2014). Lund (2014) further noted that while the student misbehavior causes other school members to assume the desired outcome is to create distance, SWED continue to desire and need social and behavioral support.

When general education staff members do not understand the needs of SWED, the results can be emotional distance and strained relationships between teachers and SWED (Francis, 2011; Stefan, Rebege, & Cosma, 2015). Until a stronger understanding is developed, teachers may remain part of a broken cycle where their behavior and reactions can reinforce the negative relationships (Razer et al., 2013). In extreme situations, this

can lead to a hostile environment and a form of bullying (Lund, 2014). Academic mistakes and failures should be expected and accommodated in a learning environment (Hayes, Kornell, & Bjork, 2013). Teachers have a larger repertoire of strategies when it comes to supporting students with academic struggles; when SWED fall short in their areas of disability such as self-regulation and self-monitoring, there is far less support or tolerance in schools (Evans, Weiss, & Cullinan, 2012). These failures are often met with consequences and changes in placement; many general education schools do not have remediation and intervention in place for behavior (Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013)

This trend for exclusion not only impacts student achievement; it also extends to graduation rates and life beyond high school. In North Carolina in 2010, high school graduation rates for SWED were noted at 42% while the rate for their nondisabled peers was at 76%, impacting earning power, employability, and the likelihood of incarcerated (Strompolis et al., 2012). Johnson and Taliaferro (2011) noted increased levels of behaviors that impact long-term health. When SWED are clustered in alternative programs, there is evidence of increased use of drugs and alcohol, risky sexual behavior, and delinquency (McLeod et al., 2012). The solution of exclusion from the general education classroom comes with many negative aspects for this group of students.

Exclusion, or not being included in the general education setting, can also impact self-image and self-worth for SWED (Razer & Friedman, 2013). Orsati and Causton-Theoharis (2013) studied the discourse between adults in school settings. Introducing labels based on disabilities creates a sense of exclusion. SWED struggle with the expected social norms and the level of conformity expected in schools. When seeking a

reason for the behaviors of a SWED, there are educators who look at it as something lacking in the child or with the parenting skills (Mowat, 2015). This type of judgment does not lead to healthy relationships between teachers and students (Razer et al., 2013); it also can lead to stigmatization. Broomhead (2013b) noted a systemic exclusion of SWED that suggested they were not wanted in the general education classroom. This systemic failure creates negative and exclusionary treatment of students who are labeled as ED.

### **Definitions**

*Ambiguous belonging:* Describes the perception that students with disabilities are not full-fledged members of a school community (Scorgie, 2015).

*Capacity building:* A school-wide, proactive set of strategies put in place to impact skills, beliefs, and priorities of the organization as a whole through the change process (Bain, Walker, & Chan, 2011) or the mobilization of a school's resources to support and sustain the change process (Crowther, 2011).

*Emotional disability/disturbance (ED):* A condition including schizophrenia, exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Vermont Agency of Education, 2013).

*Free appropriate public education (FAPE):* The child with disabilities will receive the same education as a child without disability or handicap. FAPE can be achieved by giving the child special services, usually written in an IEP. These services may include accommodations for children who use adaptive equipment, services for academic needs, speech and language services, and modifications to make a learning environment more comfortable for disabled children (“FAPE,” 2015).

*Inclusion:* The theory that students with disabilities should have access to educational opportunities in the same manner as their nondisabled peers (Taylor, 2010).

*Least restrictive environment (LRE):* The child with special needs should be grouped in a classroom with peers where they will achieve the highest academic and social progress (“LRE,” 2015)

*Multitiered systems of supports (MTSS):* A systems approach to teaching and learning that incorporates effective universal instruction and tiered levels of intervention that become increasingly differentiated and individualized (Vermont Department of Education, 2013).

*Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS):* Behavior systems created to provide instruction using consistent language and norms for all students to increase positive behavior in schools. This is a multitiered system that includes universal instruction as well as targeted and even individualized behavioral instruction. PBIS is a



systemic approach (Farmer, 2013) developed to build a school's capacity to promote positive behavior.

*Practical professional development:* This type of PD is focused on evidence-based effective instructional strategies (Professional Learning Association, 2015). It could include specialized teaching techniques and skills focused on teaching and supporting specific groups of students (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

*Professional development (PD):* Describes training developed for the primary purpose of improving the skills and effectiveness of educators (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

*Theoretical professional development:* This type of PD is focused on teachers' understanding of the learning process (Professional Learning Association, 2015). It could include understanding theories or expanding knowledge of specific learning profiles (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

### **Significance**

This study impacted the GMSD by investigating the structures and systems in place, the PD available, and the role of administrative leadership necessary to building capacity for SWED. While many of the initiatives such as PBIS, Universal Design for Learning, and MTSS provide new learning for general educators, a district special education coach indicated that they do not create a greater understanding of SWED (personal communication, May 31, 2015). In the first year of the PBIS program in one school in the district, external suspensions were reduced by 23% (personal communication, October 19, 2015). Development of the MTSS program provided a

better understanding of the expectations of universal instruction versus intervention. The MTSS program guidelines included a component for teacher accountability, ensuring that 80% of students were proficient on learning intentions prior to removing a student from class for intervention instruction. The prioritized initiatives were aimed at increased time in the general education classroom for all students.

Misbehavior and emotional outbursts in the classroom can create an increased sense of stress and frustration for a general education teacher. The types of behaviors that indicate that a student may need more support to be successful in the classroom

elicit a feeling in the teacher that he/she is losing control of the classroom and may result in punitive, rigid, limit-setting that not only precludes emotional accessibility for learning but also reinforces for the child with challenges his/her perception that he/she is rejected or uneducable. (personal communication, May 31, 2015)

Razer and Friedman (2013) noted that the types of behaviors and emotions those SWED express are disconcerting to teachers. The way teachers respond can lead to students feeling an emotional gulf, supporting the feeling that they do not belong.

A greater understanding of the needs of SWED by general education teachers will improve the experience of SWED in the general education classroom. Teachers are responsible for the management and functionality of their classroom (Razer & Friedman, 2013). When student behaviors relating to emotional disabilities occur in the classroom, teachers need to have tools available to respond effectively and to be able to set boundaries while still maintaining a close relationship (Gruman, Marston, & Koon,

2013). Teachers who understand the underlying struggles associated with ED can act proactively and help establish a positive learning experience for all students (Shah & Kumar, 2012).

Comprehensive and proactive planning for PD regarding SWED will provide a greater level of inclusion and access for SWED (personal communication, May 30, 2015). Administrators have often scheduled district teaching staff to be present at PD sessions pertaining to their content area. Oftentimes, the requirement to attend content PD by district and campus administrators has excluded general education teachers from attending PD that was available to them regarding SWED (personal communication, May 31, 2015). The district and campus administrators that schedule and design PD face limits of time, available resources, and multiple priorities. It is critical that general education teachers attend PD regarding SWED. Johnson, Eva, Johnson, and Walker (2011) claimed teachers play a critical role in a system of identification and support for students who grapple with ED. Wagner (2014) noted that the only path to improved student achievement is through coaching as a means to refine and strengthen the skills of teachers. This study provided a greater understanding of the needs of teachers as a first step to build capacity to ensure inclusion for SWED.

### **Guiding/Research Question**

1. Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do administrators and teachers perceive the structures and systems currently used in schools supporting the inclusion of SWED?

2. Research Question 2 (RQ2): How do administrators and teachers perceive district PD has prepared them to support the inclusion of SWED for inclusion in the general education classroom?
3. Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do teachers perceive administrators can support the inclusion of SWED in the general classroom setting?

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Conceptual Framework**

In this study, I used Knoster's theory (1991) for managing complex change as well as Knowles's andragogy theory regarding adult learners. Understanding of these two theories was essential in creating sustainable change while working with new learning for adults. Additionally, Vygotsky's theory of social development was considered when considering inclusion for SWED. Consideration of these three theories created the conceptual framework foundation for this study. Understanding the needs of SWED, the components of complex change, and how adults learn were all key to the study.

**Theory of managing complex change.** Knoster (1991) noted six key components to managing complex change. He also clearly documented what would result if any of the components were missing.

1. The first step is to develop a vision to provide focus; without a vision, the attempt to change will result in confusion.
2. Leading a group to consensus is the next component. If the group does not arrive at consensus, the change process is likely to be sabotaged.

3. The key players must also have the necessary skills to bring about the projected change. Stakeholders without training will add high levels of anxiety to the change process.
4. Furthermore, the change needs to benefit the team. Incentives must be incorporated into the change process. Without something to look forward to, the team will add resistance to the process.
5. Additionally, all necessary resources must be available to support the change. Without the proper tools and personnel, the change will become frustrating for all involved.
6. Finally, an action plan must be created to show the road map necessary to arrive at the change. Without a plan to guide the way, Knoster equated the change process to running on a treadmill; everyone is busy, but no one is going anywhere. Confusion, sabotage, anxiety, resistance, frustration, and the treadmill effect are detrimental to a positive work environment (Knoster, 1991). Creating a system that has higher levels of inclusion of SWED will be a challenging proposal to many teachers. It is critical that the process devised to create the change includes all necessary components to ensure that the change process creates no new negative feelings.

To bring about sustained change in how SWED are integrated and included in the general education classroom, Knoster's six components all must be considered. Confusion, sabotage, frustration, and anxiety will all delay any change in current practice, additionally, resistance and the treadmill effect will also have a negative impact on staff by creating discord and a loss of energy (Knoster, 1991). The development of a shared

mission and access to the necessary skills and resources will allow all staff to be working toward the same goal and have the necessary skills in place to make the goal a reality for these SWED.

**Andragogy theory.** While pedagogy is used in the education of children, andragogy supports those who are self-directed learners responsible for their own development (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). When ensuring that stakeholders in the midst of a complex change have all the skills and resources necessary (Knoster, 1991), the PD design must consider the needs of adult learners. Training is a key component of creating a successful learning environment for SWED (Broomhead, 2013b; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Trudgen & Lawn, 2011). Knowles et al. (2011) suggested six ideas that must be considered when training or teaching adults:

- The learner must understand the importance or reasoning behind the new learning.
- These learners must be embraced in a collaborative manner. They must be active participants in the process.
- The prior experiences of the learner must be considered when developing the program.
- Differentiation is key to respecting the self-identity of each of these adult learners.
- If, in the change process, the team has arrived at a consensus (Knoster, 1991), these learners will arrive ready to learn and to implement the new information into their professional practices. The shared vision of the team will help them

to arrive with an orientation for learning. They will appreciate skills and strategies being taught in a real-life context.

- Finally, adults are motivated to learn. While they may have to work hard to create the time and accessibility to join in trainings, when they are presented with new learning that is relevant and necessary to creating a more inclusive environment for all students, they will be motivated to take away all that they can.

For staff members to become actively engaged in learning about and understanding ED, these strategies must be incorporated into the district system. If staff members do not have these pieces in place, they will not have the best chance of developing new learning and sustaining change, thereby leaving SWED in their current placement.

**Theory of social development.** Inclusion allows all students to have a rich, diverse experience in school. Vygotsky's theory (1978) of social development supports inclusion of students in the LRE based on the understanding that knowledge grows as students work in a social setting. This theory (Vygotsky, 1978) stressed the importance of the social interactions and culture experienced by a learner as a part of the learning process; this interaction, with the teacher, provides access for attainment of knowledge and cognitive growth.

When students can develop a sense of belonging (Hill & Brown, 2013), they are able to build trust and develop relationships with teachers. These student-teacher relationships are at the core of successful inclusion because the stronger the student-

teacher relationship, the better the teacher understands the zone of proximal development and can strategize to scaffold student learning most effectively (Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; Razer & Friedman, 2013; Razer et al., 2013). Students who are educated in an inclusive environment have stronger academic achievement (O'Rourke, 2014; Roden et al., 2013; Rojewski et al., 2015; Scanlon & Baker, 2012).

### **Inclusion and Equal Access for SWED**

In 1975, Public Law 94-142 was enacted to provide a free appropriate public education, in the LRE, to all children (Braaten & Gable, 1995). The practice of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom plays an important role in this policy. There have been great strides made in the inclusion of students with LD, but this growth has not extended to SWED (Meyer, 2012). SWED continue to be placed in alternative placements, resulting in lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates (Hoge & Rubinstein-Avila, 2014; Wagner et al., 2006). There are many components to be considered when working with SWED. Educators must understand the differences between LD and ED before they can hope to successfully include SWED.

### **Understanding Emotional Disabilities**

**Unique challenges in building capacity for ED.** The initial challenge posed by the quest for increased capacity to support SWED in the general education classroom is the gap in preparation for general education teachers, administrators, and support staff in understanding the needs of SWED. These students have needs in areas including academics, behavior, and social skills. Each of these areas requires specialized instruction for these students to successfully access their education. The transferable



strategies and skills used must ensure that the student will then develop long-term internalized skills and strategies. These techniques cannot be makeshift to correct things in the moment.

**Academic issues.** SWED are noted to have lower levels of academic growth and engagement than their nondisabled peers (Al-Hendawi, 2012; Skerbetz & Kostewicz, 2013). Wehby et al. (2003) indicated that many teachers do not move ahead with academic instruction with SWED because they feel they must deal with the behavioral concerns first. Al-Hendawi (2012) also noted that many educators define academic engagement using a focus on the behavioral dimension of engagement; this limited definition puts SWED at a disadvantage. On-task behavior may indicate compliance versus academic engagement. Engagement must be defined using behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components.

SWED routinely score substantially below their nondisabled peers in the basic skill areas of reading and math (Al-Hendawi, 2012; Alter, 2012; Hauth, Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Regan, 2013; Rafferty & Raimondi, 2009). When working with this population, teachers are faced with students lacking skills to complete a task and students who are unwilling to complete a task. The perceived unwillingness may be rooted in lack of skill, lack of confidence, or both. Teachers must focus on skill and performance deficits (Alter, 2012). Vostal and Lee (2015) noted the importance of incorporating strategies based on the theory of behavioral momentum. Creating tasks that incorporate variation between instructional- and independent-level work integrates positive reinforcement throughout the task leading to a higher level of active engagement (Vostal

& Lee, 2015). Rafferty and Raimondi (2009) studied the impact of self-monitoring attentive behaviors and self-monitoring academic performance and noted that self-monitoring academic performance was more effective in increasing both social and academic engagement in the classroom. Regardless of the content area, general education classroom teachers must have a well-stocked tool kit to best serve this population, as well as learners at large.

Another important academic focus for SWED is in developing writing skills. Results from the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that fewer than 6% of SWED in middle and high school are proficient in the area of writing (as cited in Institute of Educational Services, 2007). While writing is an area of deficit for SWED, many employers consider this a gateway skill to employment and promotions; therefore, it is important that it be considered a priority for these students (Gage, Wilson, & MacSuga-Gage, 2014). The therapeutic nature of the writing process allows a SWED an alternative method to express his or her thoughts and feelings (Casey, Williamson, Black, & Casey, 2014). Persuasive writing offers a means of self-advocacy; SWED may find that by taking time to organize their thoughts and put their request into writing, they may receive a more positive response to a request (Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013).

Developing self-regulation strategies that can integrate into the writing instruction can support a SWED in each step of the writing process (Bak & Asaro-Saddler, 2013; Cramer & Mason, 2014; Little et al., 2010; Mason & Shriner, 2008). The self-regulation skills allow a SWED the opportunity to navigate through a complex task more

successfully (Ennis & Jolivette, 2014). Written communication skills offer SWED a proactive method of communication.

**Behavioral issues.** The type of behaviors displayed by SWED often result in reprimands and consequences. The response to the behavior often happens in the moment, in a reactive manner, and does not improve the situation (Francis, 2011). The focus becomes the gaining of conformity and compliance from students as opposed to increasing their skills in self-regulation to improve their access to learning (Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013). There are seldom learning components as a follow-up after a behavioral issue; this does not lead to students developing social and behavioral intelligences (Mowat, 2015). If systems are not put in place to help students grow in this area and to build a sense of belonging, SWED will continue to feel isolated in general education classrooms (Hansen, 2012; Hill & Brown, 2013).

If a student has a deficit in the area of behavior, there should be specialized instruction in the area of the disability as a component of the IEP (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). In addition, any SWED is required to have a behavior support plan in place; in reality, only about half of SWED have a behavior plan as part of their IEP (Wagner et al., 2006). Without specialized instruction and a behavior plan, a SWED will continue to respond using the same inappropriate words and actions that they have always used. Evans et al. (2012) have noted that teachers have fewer strategies to handle behavioral problems, and Francis (2011) noted that many teachers use the same consequence for any behavior issue; it is only logical that SWED would also have a deficit of skills to manage their own behavior. If the goal

is to change the behavior, teachers and students both need to have new skills and strategies to consider (Hill & Brown, 2013).

**Social skill issues.** Hoge and Rubinstein-Avila (2014) noted that students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom are often from minority populations where social interactions differ from the expectations in school. SWED who are placed in alternative settings may not have consistent opportunities to develop and practice social skills due to the homogeneous population of students in the setting. This student population must be included in learning environments where they will be able to develop these skills (Darrow, 2014); without these skills, they will continue to experience a sense of rejection from teachers and peers, decreased self-confidence in the area of academics, and a negative perception of the classroom environment (Krull, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014).

Teachers must be able to integrate social skills instruction as a layer of their daily content. George and Varvara (2014) noted that the use of social stories as an intervention could support SWED. Brigg, Schuitema, and Vorhaus (2015) discussed the impact of the use of humor with students with disabilities. Humor, when used in a genuine humorous exchange, supports healthy relationships; serves as a method for quick, informal, give-and-take communication; and fosters a positive school environment, all of which are especially important to this population of students (Fovet, 2009). Burgess (2012) favored the integration of habits of mind to support SWED in the social aspects of school; his research findings included data from SWED, which indicated that use of habits of mind skills resulted in them forming positive relationships with peers and decreasing negative

interactions with adults. Teachers who have a rich toolbox of strategies to integrate social skills into the general education classroom offer a larger chance for success to the SWED.

**Implications for teachers' and administrators' knowledge, skills and attitudes.** When planning for inclusion of a SWED in a general education classroom, teachers must be prepared to meet a blend of academic, behavioral, and social needs. Most general education teachers have more academic interventions and strategies; they bring fewer strategies to the classroom for externalized and internalized behavioral concerns (Evan, Weiss, & Cullinan, 2012). Kindzierski et al. (2013) noted that even a special education teaching credential does not guarantee the necessary training in the areas necessary for this population of students: Over half of EBD teachers felt inadequately prepared, in the area of behavior management, based on the courses in their college program. Without the skills in place, the inclusion process is more likely to fail (Askill-Williams & Murray-Harvey, 2013). Barnes and Gaines (2015) noted that not only do general education teachers need to have the skills in place; they also need to engage in ongoing training to continue to develop new skills to meet the needs of SWED.

Administrators must understand that any practical training that is developed for general education teachers must be accompanied by increased supports for the emotional well-being of the staff working with SWED. Teachers who do not have strong personal skills and strategies in the emotional domain are unlikely to be successful in the inclusion process (Salter-Jones, 2012). When teachers experience repeated failure with a student, it can have an impact on their self-confidence and how they view themselves as

professionals (Razer et al., 2013). When stress levels are high and teachers feel burned out, this is likely to lead to higher levels of turnover in staff (Bettini, Kimerling, Park, & Murphy, 2015; Kiel, Heimlich, Markowitz, Braun, & Weib, 2016; Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001; Sutton, Bausmith, O'Connor, Pae, & Payne, 2014).

Administrative support is a key component in the support of general education teachers working to include SWED (O'Rourke, 2014).

### **Building Capacity for Change**

The six key components to managing complex change noted by Knoster (1991) are an essential part of building capacity for change. Building a culture for change includes building an understanding of the challenges and creating a mission statement that clearly explains the need for change. All stakeholders must understand that their actions will either reinforce or sabotage the change (Razer et al., 2013). Askill-Williams and Murray-Harvey (2013) noted that there is a need to generate intellectual disequilibrium to ensure that the status quo is no longer considered acceptable. Teachers who have always believed that SWED must be orderly before they can be educated will need to challenge that belief (Mowat, 2015). Additionally, teachers who believe that learning only happens in a calm and peaceful setting may need to accept that learning can happen in a variety of settings (Hansen, 2012). Increasing capacity to include SWED in the general education classroom may not happen quickly; this is a change that may challenge a number of assumptions and current practices. The process must include time for learning, application, and reflection, and then begin the cycle again.

### **The Administrative/Leadership Role in the Change Process**

The language a leader uses, the initiatives they select as priorities, and the way they allocate resources can help determine which initiatives will be successful in a school. The administrator is responsible to ensure that the expected values and practices are fostered by the expectations that are set for staff members (McMaster, 2015). The practices in place must ensure that the actual culture and climate in the building matches the expected culture and climate (Gillen, Wright, & Spink, 2011). An effective leader will be sure that his or her actions and the verbal and nonverbal messages they project are consistent and aligned with the desired change. One important way for this to happen is for the administration to stay current as to the status of the change throughout the process. If the leadership is unaware of barriers and challenges, they will leave teachers feeling stranded. When teachers feel that there is discord between their work in the classroom and the outcomes of the class, self-efficacy will decrease; this can have an impact on their investment in the change process (Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013). For the change process to have the highest chance for success, the administration must be an active participant in each stage of the new initiative.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study will be to assist district leadership in developing a system to support the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. The research included in the literature review highlights the number of variables to be considered when working with SWED. Teachers must be aware of not only the academic needs but also the behavioral and social gaps that must be addressed (Al-Hendawi, 2012;

Alter, 2012; Burgess, 2012; Casey et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2012; Francis, 2011; Green, Malsch, Kothari, Busse, & Brennan, 2012). Administrators must be aware of teacher skills, preconceptions, and attitudes when faced with this population (Barnes & Gaines, 2015; Scanlon & Baker, 2012; Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013). The administration must also become aware of the role they will need to play to make this change happen (McMaster, 2015). For change to happen, systematic and ongoing training should be made available (Broomhead, 2013a; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Mowat, 2015; Sawka et al., 2002).

Professional development is mentioned throughout the literature review as a means to improve skills for general educators working with SWED (Askeil-Williams & Murray-Harvey, 2013; Barnes & Gaines, 2015; Broomhead, 2013b). Before a PD program could be considered, an assessment of the status quo must be considered to determine a baseline of the current skills, preconceptions, and attitudes in place for inclusion of SWED (Mowat, 2015; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; Sawka et al., 2002). If PD is tailored to meet the specific needs of the district, the results could have a direct impact on the inclusion of SWED (Potmesilova, Potmesil, & Roubalova, 2013; Razer & Friedman, 2013; Razer et al., 2013). This type of project could be meaningful in this school district and could promote positive social change for an underserved population of students.

### **Summary**

SWED are disproportionately served in alternative and off-campus settings. These students have higher levels of dropout rates and lower academic achievement than



their nondisabled peers (Scanlon & Baker, 2012; Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013; Thompson, Connelly, Thomas-Jones, & Eggert, 2013; Wilkins & Bost, 2014). There is a stigma that is attached to the ED label based on key behaviors that are generalized to this group of students (Broomhead, 2013a, 2013b; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013). Teacher and student relationships, while critical to the success of SWED, are often strained and underdeveloped (Mowat, 2015; Wang & Peck, 2013; Wehby et al., 2003), and general education classroom teachers often are unprepared to serve this population of students (Barnes & Gaines, 2015; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Mowat, 2015; O'Rourke, 2014). In the 2013-14 school year, in the GMSD, nearly a quarter of the students identified with ED were receiving their education in alternative settings while 98% of students with LD were placed in the general education classroom (personal communication, May 11, 2015). Systems must be put in place to insure that SWED have more equal access to the general education classroom.

In Section 2 of the project study, I describe the methodology used to answer the research questions posed in Section 1. A justification as to the methodology is also included. Section 2 also contains information about the ethical aspects related to this study. Data collection and anticipated methods of data analysis are described and discrepant cases and limitations to the study are also explained.

## Section 2: The Methodology

Section 2 of this project study contains a description and justification of the research methodology used to investigate and answer the research questions included in Section 1. A qualitative case study provided the structure for the investigation. Questionnaires and interviews served as the methods for data collection. The participants included teachers and building- and district-level administrators from the GMSD. I conducted data analysis to provide a rich, comprehensive description of the perceptions of the structures and systems in place, the district PD, and the role of the administrators in the GMSD in the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom.

### **Research Design and Approach**

I constructed the study using a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative method aligned with the constructivist view that individuals must interact with the environment to develop a great understanding of the beliefs and understandings of others (Merriam, 1998). Prior to selecting the case study design, I also gave consideration to phenomenology and ethnography designs due to the emotional aspect of the SWED and the cultural implications of transitioning SWED back into a general education classroom. The phenomenological design is used in studies of “affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). While this method might be suited if the study were focused on the experiences of the SWED, it would not meet the needs of this study as the focus is on teachers’ and administrators’ experiences with the structures, systems, PD, and capacity building in the district. The other method considered and rejected was ethnography, a method more focused on the

development of an understanding of a specific culture and the expected responses in the particular situation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). If I had been focused on the SWED and their individual understandings of the culture of a school setting and developing the appropriate responses in that setting, this method would have been a consideration. Following the review of case study, ethnography, and phenomenological designs, I selected the case study design.

The case study methodology provided a structure to better understand what teachers in the general education classroom need and expect of administration to better accommodate SWED in their classrooms. This method allowed for an interpretation of the data at this point in time based on the understanding the teachers have generated about their own classrooms and their own professional skills (Merriam, 2002). The case study is an instrumental case, as it is concentrated on one specific issue, the inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom (Creswell, 2012). The instrumental case study design provided a focus on one school district, allowed for a broad topic to be channeled to meet the needs of the specific setting, and was a method appropriate for a new researcher.

### **Qualitative Approach**

The qualitative approach allowed me to act as the gatekeeper for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002). One benefit to this characteristic of the approach was that the research collection could be adapted based on my interaction with the data during data collection and analysis. I was not limited to the actual text of the data but could also process the nonverbal communication shared in the data collection process (Merriam,

1998). There was a level of give and take that could occur during an interview that could not be present when simply reading through numerical data or typed transcripts (Merriam, 2002). It was essential that I was able to be objective about the study: Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted the importance of using data to reflect upon personal beliefs and biases. I could not allow my familiarity with GMSD to create any type of bias or predisposition; having chosen the topic of study, it was evident that I already had formed some opinions about gaps in the continuum of services for SWED. The time for reflection was an important component to include in the qualitative process.

The qualitative focus allowed the needs and expectations of the teachers in the general education classroom to be examined in a deeper and richer manner (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Meaning making was at the center of the qualitative process (Merriam, 1998). My job was to tell the story of the participants' perspective using rich and descriptive narratives (Merriam, 2002). A qualitative focus for this project allowed participants to describe their needs and understandings as to the administrator's role in creating an inclusive environment for SWED.

### **Case Study Design**

GMSD is a bounded system that lent itself to a case study; this design allowed for the investigation of the role of administrators in building a more inclusive culture for SWED. Yin (2014) noted the case study method as useful when studying the how or why of a topic. Creswell (2012) noted that a case study with a specific focus on one topic is referred to as an instrumental case study. When trying to understand why there is a gap in the services offered to SWED, a case study allowed me to focus on a specific concern

and develop a practical solution (Merriam, 2009). Beginning researchers also favored the case study method, as the study could be limited to a single setting or topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The case study design also offered an opportunity for the analysis of the data to provide the basis for change in the local community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A case study served the purpose of this study and provided the rich, descriptive narrative necessary to help stakeholders better understand the problem faced in the GMSD.

## **Participants**

### **Population and Sampling**

The setting of this study was a rural public school district, GMSD, in the state of Vermont. The school district serves nearly 2,000 students in 12 different schools over 520 square miles. There are five elementary schools, another five elementary/middle schools, a junior high school, and a high school/career center facility. There is also a privately operated day treatment facility that offers an alternative setting for SWED. During the 2015-16 school year, there were 337.51 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers and 19.8 FTE administrators employed within the school district. Additionally, there were 6.85 FTE administrators employed in the central office. The target population included all district teachers and administrators.

**Criteria for selecting participants.** In order to better understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators in the area of inclusion of SWED in the school district, the sample included staff members who worked with students throughout the K-12 continuum over a variety of content areas. It was also important to have a sampling that gathered data from educators with different backgrounds and years of experience.

Inviting all district teachers and administrators to participate in the questionnaire allowed data to be gathered from a variety of school settings, with a range from small local elementary schools with fewer than 40 students to a larger unionized high school serving over 700 students. As the district is responsible for meeting the needs of SWED in a variety of settings, participants had to be representative of all of the differing types of educational settings. The data in Tables 2 and 3 give an overview of the demographics of the respondents to the anonymous questionnaire and the participants included in the semistructured interviews.

Table 2

## Summary of Questionnaire Participants' Demographic Information

Current assignment		Years in district		Educational background*		Highest level of education*	
PK - 04	13%	0-2	6%	Early Childhood	0%	Bachelors	25%
05-08	69%	3-5	25%	Elementary Ed.	31%	Masters	44%
09-12	6%	6-10	6%	Middle Level Ed.	25%	Post Masters	38%
N/A	12%	11-15	19%	Secondary Education	19%	N/A	6%
		16-20	13%	Special Education	19%		
		20+	25%	Administration	13%		
		N/A	6%	N/A	6%		

*Note.*  $N = 16$

\*Participants could meet requirements for multiple categories.

Table 3

*Summary of Interview Participants' Demographic Information*

Category*		Gender		Current assignment*	
Administrator	42%	Female	100%	PK – 04	58%
Gen Ed Teacher	33%	Male	0%	05 – 08	50%
Special Educator	33%			09-12	25%

*Note.* N = 12

\* Participants could meet requirements for multiple categories.

**Access to participants.** Following communication with me, the superintendent of the GMSD approved access to invite this participant group to engage in this project study. I obtained a letter of cooperation from the site, verifying the permissions given by the district to support this project study. I created an invitation email to participate in the questionnaire for all district teachers and administrators. The data review of information collected in the questionnaire provided a means to make decisions about identifying which staff positions would offer the best opportunity to clarify and delve deeper into critical areas. It helped me in the purposeful district-wide selection of interviewees so that any gaps of information could be filled and further investigation occurred in developing emerging themes. This purposeful sampling allowed for the gathering of rich, informative data to help develop next steps for increasing the inclusion of SWED in the general education setting. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix F. Prior to gathering any data from participants, I received Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (04-14-16-0355408), valid through April 13, 2017. The administrative assistant to the superintendent sent out a mass email invitation and a follow up email invitation on my behalf to all certified staff members with information

about the anonymous questionnaire. The email introduced me as the researcher in my role as a doctoral student and also as a staff member in the district. It included information about the degree program and Walden University. It included the purpose of the study, a description of the procedures to be used in the study, the topic of focus, and the time commitment for the questionnaire. It also included any part of the research that might cause risk or inconveniences to participants. This section of the email closed with an explanation of how the study will benefit students and teachers in our school district. The email included the steps taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity during the questionnaire, a reminder that participation is voluntary, and information about how to reach my advisor or Walden University's IRB if there were questions about their rights as a participant of the study.

Informed consent protocols were attached, indicating that completion of the anonymous questionnaire was indicative of understanding regarding informed consent. These emails and letters are included in Appendices B and C. At each phase of the data collection, participants were reminded that they are not obligated to participate in this study. Rubin and Babbie (2014) suggested a minimum response rate of 50% as adequate for analysis. As there are over 357 FTE certified staff in the district, I hoped at least 50% would complete the questionnaires to minimize response bias. Participants completed the questionnaires using the SurveyMonkey website; the data collected were anonymous. At no time were participants identified or asked to provide personally identifying data. Both the invitation emails as well as the questionnaire included a reminder that, due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, once the survey was submitted, there would be



no way to remove the data from the questionnaire results.

Following receipt of the questionnaire data, I sent emails to eight district teachers and to four district administrators, inviting them to participate in interviews. While the data from the questionnaire were anonymous, they provided overall themes and direction, allowing the scheduling of purposeful interviews to delve deeper and gather clarifying information. Invitations were sent to a purposeful district-wide sample of district teachers and administrators to gather additional descriptive data to provide a rich, detailed description of the perceptions of the role of administrators in increasing access to the general education classroom for SWED. Review of district directory information was one means to begin to build the purposeful sample. I also incorporated the snowball method, as some interview participants suggested other potential participants when they thought the person would have background and experience to add to the overall information representative of the district. As I work in one of the local schools as an administrator, no staff members from the school where I work were invited to participate in these interviews. Exclusion of this group of educators did not impact the diversity of the interview participant sample; there were other middle-level district educators available to participate.

Each interview opened with a review of the invitation letter noting the purpose and nature of the study. I provided informed consent protocols and collected a signed consent form from each interview participant. Prior to the session, I sent participants a list of anticipated interview questions. An example is included in Appendix E.

**Researcher-participant relationship.** At each stage of data collection, I used

strategies that are designed to promote a safe environment where participants felt respected and valued for the information they brought to the study. The letter of invitation was clear about the purpose and nature of the study, why they had been invited to participate, and how the data analysis results would be shared back with all participants. The letter of invitation also provided a rationale for the use of the qualitative research method to highlight its collaborative nature and the importance of the participant voice (Lau & Stille, 2014). The protocols put in place for the interviews were respectful of the time and expertise of each participant. The nature of purposeful district-wide sampling was to gather the richest collection of data using a sample that provided key data for the project study (Merriam, 2009); this ensured that participants understood their knowledge and background was relevant and important to the topic being studied. I used protocols to ensure anonymity to all participants who completed the questionnaire and to ensure confidentiality for all questionnaire and interview participants.

**Methods for ethical protection of participants.** As a prerequisite to beginning the research process, I completed the National Institute of Health Office of Extramural Research training course “Protecting Human Research Participants” in January of 2015. Additionally, I completed the application for the Walden University’s IRB for Ethical Standards in Research as another step toward ensuring the ethical protection of the participants of this study. While working through the steps of the IRB application, I confirmed that my study was of low risk to participants. As I did want to be able to include participants from my own campus in the online anonymous questionnaire, I spent time reviewing frequently asked questions for conducting research in one’s own work

setting and in educational settings (Walden University, 2015). This study did not require work with students or interference with academic time in any manner. I was attentive to impartial responses and individual agendas (Walden University, 2015, IRB Guidance for Conducting Doctoral Research in Your Own Professional Setting section), as inclusion of SWED is a topic that is being discussed and also a topic that triggers personal concerns and issues (Francis, 2011; Goodman & Burton, 2010; Mowat, 2015; Naraian, Ferguson, & Thomas, 2012; Nelson et al., 2001; Rojewski et al., 2015; Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013; Scott et al., 2014). The data collection needed to be rich enough to ensure that all perspectives were acknowledged.

I developed the informed consent forms to clearly describe the nature and purpose of the study and to allow participants to make an informed decision regarding participation. This form outlined the measures that were taken to assure confidentiality. I stored electronic data on my personal computer in a password-protected file. Data included in the files does not include identifiable material. Coding systems ensured that any third party would not be able to identify participants. All hard copies of interview notes were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. I will destroy the nonelectronic data after 5 years. I followed the Walden University protocols for storage and the eventual destruction of all the data.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The methods selected for data collection were tailored to meet the needs of the case study to provide the best opportunity for rich, descriptive information about the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the administrative role in building

capacity in the district to support the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. Creswell (2009) noted that researchers must consider a variety of methods and sources to gather in-depth, comprehensive information for a case study. My job was to decide where, when, and how the information would be gathered so that a clear understanding could be developed as to the knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions of the teachers and administrators in GMSD regarding the role of the administrator to develop and build capacity to support SWED in the general education classroom (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) noted that data collection is not a passive task; data collection is an active cycle that includes action and reflection.

The data for the project study were collected via questionnaires and 12 semistructured interviews. The invitation for the questionnaire contained an informed consent page providing information regarding the purpose and benefits of the study and background of the researcher. The invitation and consent form ended noting that, if the participant felt they understood the study well enough to make a decision about it, to please indicate his or her consent by clicking a link at the bottom of the page to complete the questionnaire. I provided a reminder in the questionnaire noting that, due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, once a participant clicked the done button there would be no way to remove data from the survey. I conducted a similar informed consent process at the beginning of each interview.

### **Questionnaires**

The study began with a questionnaire to quickly gather a large amount of data from a diverse population. This method provided a means of anonymity that allowed all

teachers and administrators in the school district to be invited to participate. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) noted the purpose of a survey or questionnaire is to gather a wide-range of information from a large number of participants regarding a current issue. Bradburn, Sudman, and Wansink (2004) provided clear guidelines as to the development of a questionnaire. It was essential to have a clear understanding as to the research question while formulating each specific item of the questionnaire. The process included time for reflection and to repeatedly question the inclusion of each item. I vetted items for ambiguous wording, questions that might cause participants to feel threatened, clear vocabulary, and anything that would make the task more difficult for the participant. When the instrument was complete, I reviewed the sequence of the questions. Bradburn et al. (2004) compared the order of a questionnaire to the “flow” of an interview or the purposeful transitioning in a paper. The order of the items can have an impact on the participants’ responses. Prior to IRB approval, I collaborated with one local education expert and three counseling professionals to peer check the questionnaire. The education expert has a background in literacy instruction and has strengths in the area of questioning. The three counseling professionals have worked with SWED for over 20 years each. All four have worked for, or in collaboration with, the district for over 15 years each. I used their feedback to verify the alignment of the questionnaire and the research questions; their feedback was incorporated into the final questionnaire. I asked these experts to respond to the questionnaire in terms of clarity, leading and/or biased questions, and focus to the research questions. I refined questions and follow-up probes based on feedback from the expert panel to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in

gathering the widest range of information possible. None of these professionals were involved as participants in the research project.

I designed the questionnaire to gather demographic information about the participants and data about teachers' perceptions about students with academic disabilities versus emotional disabilities in their general education classroom. While the majority of the questions were closed-ended, a few open-ended questions were included to gather more in-depth information regarding how participants define key terms and what role they feel administrators should play in the inclusion of SWED (Bradburn et al., 2004). When reviewing the literature, the majority of general education teachers reported having more academic interventions and strategies and fewer strategies for behavioral concerns (Evans et al., 2012). Using the questionnaire to gather data for students with both academic (LD) and emotional disabilities (ED) allowed teachers to distinguish their perceptions in both academic and emotional/behavioral areas. These data allowed me to create a baseline understanding of teachers' perceptions about the academic, behavioral, and social success of SWED, versus academic disabilities, in their classroom. Additionally, I collected information about their PD and prior training, their knowledge of the structures in the school and district that support or hinder inclusion of SWED, and their administrative needs. I developed the questionnaire based on the three research questions.

While the questionnaire allowed for the collection of a large amount of data in a short amount of time, it did not allow for the opportunity to interact with participants during the data collection. The final method of data collection was semistructured

interviews with four special education teachers, four general education teachers, and four administrators. These interviews offered an opportunity to interact with participants during the data collection process. The data did not have to be limited to typed-in responses, but could be gathered in a collaborative, interactive setting.

### **Interviews**

Yin (2014) and Creswell (2012) noted interviews as a valuable source of data collection. Interview strengths include a direct focus on the research topic and providing a venue for the voice of the participants; weaknesses come from poorly worded questions and inaccuracies due to bias, memory, and attempts to please the interviewer (Yin, 2014). The strength of semistructured interviews lies in the flexibility of the flow of the interview and the wording of questions; the interviewer can respond in the moment (Merriam, 2009).

The final data collection method was semistructured interviews with equal representation of elementary, middle-level, and high school-level educators and administrators. The interviews allowed me to gather a second set of data to validate information from the initial questionnaires (Lodico, et al. 2010). By understanding some of the perceptions and patterns that developed from the questionnaire, I was able enter the interviews with focused questions but also include follow-up probes to be sure that participants were not limited by my questions. The interviews allowed a purposeful sample of participants to extend upon themes I noted from the questionnaire data. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted the importance of developing rapport with the interviewee in the early stages of the interview so that the participant feels comfortable

and at ease to share information. They also noted the importance of working with the participant in a flexible manner so that they are able to tell their story and explain their point of view.

I developed an interview protocol to ensure that consistent procedures were used in each interview (Creswell, 2009). I developed an interview guide with a list of the questions I intended to ask and a rough timeline of the interview (Merriam, 2009). I scheduled each interview for about 45 minutes. The guided portion of the interview was about 30 minutes. The last 15 minutes of each interview were reserved for clarification and follow-up. The interview opened with a review of the informed consent. The review of informed consent was followed by a question to gather general information regarding the role of administrators in building capacity to support SWED. After gathering the general background, the interview shifted to more specific questions geared to better understand the participant's perception of the current state of the district and what is needed to create the necessary change. I used the closing questions in the more structured part of the interview to prompt the participant to share relevant information that may not have come out earlier in the interview. I recorded and transcribed each interview. I used the interview transcripts to build an electronic database. I transcribed the first two interviews as I listened to the interview and typed the information into a Microsoft Word document. The following 10 interviews were entered into the computer using the Read Write Gold program. I used a microphone to enter the interview into the Word document. I made edits to that document. In addition to the use of an audio recording as a method to minimize ethical issues, I asked each participant to review the



transcript to his or her interview to ensure accuracy. No participant responded with any changes for the transcripts.

I took notes during each interview. These field notes collected during the interviews were reflective in nature; allowing inclusion of any thoughts or feelings that may have occurred during the interviews (Lodico et al., 2010). This activity heightened awareness of how any personal biases may have been impacting collection of data in the interview. I also used this strategy to jot down thoughts for follow-up that occurred during the interview. The use of field notes allowed me to take a quick note and then get back into my role as an active listener. Trying to hold on to ideas during the interview would have distracted me from my interviewer role.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I have been employed in this district for 19 years, the first 7 years as the assistant principal of the district junior high school. I am currently in my 12<sup>th</sup> year as the principal of that school. While my administrative role is limited to my own school campus, a number of district teachers did have children attend junior high in my building. As I had a past professional relationship with those teachers, they were not invited to participate in the interview process. Additionally, I had a child complete a K-12 education in this district. I have interacted with approximately twenty-five current district educators as a parent. These employees were not invited to participate in the interviews. Due to the large geographic nature of the district, I am unfamiliar with many teachers in the district due to lack of interaction. While all educators were invited to participate in the questionnaire, the anonymous nature of the data collection will negate prior roles and

relationships with district employees. Invitations to participate in the interview process were limited to educators with limited prior relationships and connection with the researcher in an effort to reduce impact on the data.

While I have established protocols to limit the impact of previous professional relationships, there are biases and personal and professional experiences that I bring to this research. Lodico et al. (2010) noted the importance of examining your own belief system and understanding how this will impact the research study. While I do not hold endorsements in special education nor do I act as a case manager to special education students, in my role of administrator, I have come to develop an understanding of the obstacles that SWED face. Merriam (2009) noted the process of epoche: an awareness of your values, opinions, and biases, and the ability to put these personal aspects aside before beginning the research process. As a new researcher, I felt it was important to revisit this process after each interview to confirm that the collected information was not influenced by my own thoughts or feelings. I included these reflections in my field notes.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis starts as soon as data collection begins as immediate impressions and ideas become an interactive part of the process (Merriam, 2009). Gläser and Laudel (2013) noted the importance of defining research goals and then designing the analysis methodology that will help to reach those goals. The goals of this research were to understand perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding district structures, PD, and the role of the administrator in supporting SWED in the general education classroom. While it is essential to collect enough data to provide a clear understanding of the

participants' perceptions, it is as important to have a system in place to focus understanding and to be able to communicate an explanation of the patterns and themes in the found in the data (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). The system included reflection opportunities for the researcher to ensure that the data being analyzed were focused on the district's systems and structures that help or hinder inclusion of SWED, PD that supports this same effort, and administrators in the successful inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom; to lose focus would have resulted in including extraneous data, diluting the data pool, and potentially skewing the direction of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The analysis and interpretation process delineates the difference between interpretation and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). There must be opportunities to sort, code, and search the data for similarities, differences, and patterns. Additionally, the research needs to include the ideas that are developed and extrapolated from the data. These two steps do not happen in isolation of each other. The process is not linear. However, at the end of the process the interpretation step allows a researcher to tie in their understanding and report out on how this relates to the larger world (Creswell, 2012).

### **Data Analysis Methods**

I reviewed the data from the questionnaire and interviews within 24 hours of closing the questionnaire and completion of interviews. Merriam (2009) cautioned that to leave analysis until all the data are collected would create an overwhelming task for a new researcher. I anticipated that demographic data would be transferred into a file that

could be uploaded in the IBM SPSS program. I used this information to describe the similarities, differences, and patterns found among the anonymous participants. Due to the low number of responses collected, I entered the information into a spreadsheet and analyzed it in that form.

I entered the data from the short answers on the questionnaires and the interview transcripts into a spreadsheet to allow for coding based on systems and structures, PD, and administrative role. The coding process allowed an opportunity for data interpretation (Saldana, 2016); it was cyclical in nature and included reflective steps. Saldana (2016) suggested including analytic memos, or notes to yourself, as a means of allowing additional time to interact, think about, and reflect on the collected data. In the first round of coding I used In Vivo Codes in an effort to reflect the language used by the participants. Saldana (2016) noted In Vivo Codes are especially appropriate for new researchers. Additional rounds of coding took place to continue to move from codes to themes.

It was important that the steps of the analysis and interpretation process were a priority while completing this section of the study. The list of tasks helped to create a routine where each step was included and nothing was omitted. Reviewing Bogdan and Biklen's strategies (2007) lead to the following guide:

1. Transcribe and save all data into Word documents or spreadsheets.
2. Review the data with the goal to develop coding categories.
3. Define each coding category.
4. Develop a Word document or spreadsheet to organize each code.

5. Go back to the data and assign codes to specific pieces of data.
6. Copy the data for each code into the document or spreadsheet assigned to that code.
7. Reorganize as necessary.
8. Write up the finding for each code. Provide support for each code using quotes from the participants.
9. Using member checking and peer debriefing to provide feedback.

Inclusion of this process provided a structure and limited haphazard review of data.

**Questionnaire.** I entered the data from the questionnaire into the spreadsheet in the following manner. Initially, I created a list of the questions; the list included the data type expected from each question or set of questions. Based on this list I determined that there were five sets of findings available. The first five questions would provide demographic information related to experience, years in the district, professional training background, and current assignment. Questions 6 through 9 provided information about participants' past experience in working with LD and ED students as well as their current definition of LD and ED. Questions 10 through 19 allowed participants to differentiate between the success rate of LD and ED students in the areas of academic, behavioral, and social success. Additionally, participants provided their definition of academic, behavioral, and social success. Questions 20 through 30 gathered data about the structures, programs, resources, role of the administrator, and PD offered, with focus on the needs of SWED, in individual buildings as well as the district. Finally, questions 31

through 40 collected self-assessment (Stetson & Associates, 2007) data on a variety of tools and strategies that would impact the inclusion of SWED.

**Interviews.** Each interview was recorded using the Recorder application on my computer and then transcribed into a Word document. I reviewed and color-coded each transcript: yellow highlights indicated a response referring to structures and systems, green indicated PD information, and blue designated references to ways to increase capacity. All highlighted comments were copied and pasted to three different spreadsheets, allowing me to group all information about each of the three research questions together. The code assigned to each participant was also attached to each comment entered into the spreadsheet to allow me to maintain context for each comment. I reviewed each spreadsheet multiple times to determine themes and common threads through the data. I sorted and resorted data according to themes, by individual participants, and again by role of participants to better understand the developing patterns.

### **Accuracy and Credibility of Findings**

Steps to ensure accuracy and credibility of the findings were included in the study. I utilized member checking for review of data collected in each interview to provide an opportunity for internal validity (Merriam, 2009). Participants received a transcript of their interview data and were notified that this was an opportunity for them to review the data and notify me of any changes that should be made to more accurately represent their response. This provided assurance as to the accuracy of the data collected in the interviews. I used triangulation when coding data from the questionnaires and

interviews based on recommendations from Creswell (2012) and Merriam (2009). I scrutinized information that showed up in limited responses to determine how the information impacted the study. Peer debriefing was included in the coding and reviewing process. Three retired special educators collaborated in the peer debriefing process. They were not participants in the study and had no current connection to the district. Time with these professionals allowed an opportunity for me to review and time for conversation about my biases and assumptions (Lodico et al., 2010). I included time for reflection throughout the process. Creating time to journal about personal biases and assumptions prior to, as well as during, the interview process provided an opportunity to recognize and limit the impact of these beliefs during the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). These last two strategies provided ongoing opportunity for reviewing and limiting the impact of researcher bias.

### **Discrepant Cases**

When working with data that is connected to the interactions and relationships of teachers and students, there was the possibility of unique situations that may have existed with individual participants in the study. While these cases could have suggested inconsistencies in the data, outlier responses also reminded me that when studying the perceptions and beliefs of participants, there are bound to be situations that do stand out of the ordinary or expected behaviors; researchers are responsible to account for all the data (Yin, 2014). While these outliers did not shift the focus of the study, I documented and reviewed them for reanalysis. All discrepant cases were referenced in the findings section of the completed project study.

### **Data Analysis Results**

The purpose of this qualitative, instrumental case study was to build a rich, detailed understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of how to build capacity of SWED in inclusive settings. I used data from the online questionnaire to build an understanding of existing beliefs and understanding in the GMSD regarding the difference between the experience of a student with LD and a SWED in the general education classroom. Participants were asked to define academic and emotional disabilities. Both sets of data referenced "discrepancy between achievement and ability, not working at grade level, the need for assistance, and challenges that required additional support, differentiated instruction, and adapted content" (survey responses, 2016). Definitions for emotional disabilities included many of the parts and pieces included in the United States and Vermont legal definitions with the exceptions of noting the length of time and pervasiveness of the impact of an emotional disability. I asked participants to define academic, behavioral, and social success in their school or classroom. Academic success was defined using two different standards: personal growth or meeting grade-level standards. The definitions for behavioral success included the ability to adhere to accepted norms, self-regulation skills, and social acceptance. Finally, social success was described as the ability to create positive working relationships and friendships and the ability to create a safe place in the school. Table 4 provides a comparison of perceived rates of success between the two groups of students. Teacher and administrator perception indicates a significant gap in the success rate of SWED in all three indicated areas.



Table 4

*Comparison of Green Mountain School District (GMSD) Teacher and Administrators Perceptions of Success for Students With Disabilities*

Indicator	Students with academic disabilities	Students with emotional/behavioral disabilities	Net difference
Academic success	68.5%	56.1%	-12.4%
Behavioral success	81.4%	47.3%	-24.1%
Social success	73.9%	53.0%	-20.9%

These data provided an anchor for the semistructured interviews. I was able to use probes to see if these differences were influenced by the structures and systems in the district, the PD program offered, or administrative supports. After collecting data from an anonymous questionnaire and through twelve semistructured interviews, my data were organized to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of the structures and systems in the school district on the inclusion of SWED, the relevance and/or gaps found in the PD offered in the district, and the manner in which administration can build capacity in this area. This system of organization allowed for a focus on the research questions developed in the proposal stage.

### **Findings**

This section contains a summary of findings for each of the three central research questions. Themes emerging from the findings are noted in Table 5. Overall, I found six major themes and five minor themes in the data analysis process. There were overlapping ideas threaded throughout the themes from the three research questions. Stronger systems, collaboration, PD, and cohesion were noted as ideas that needed

continued work and development. Detailed information for each research question is included following Table 5.

Table 5

*Major and Minor Themes by Research Question*

Research question	Major (M) and minor (m) themes
Structures and systems	Existing systems and structures must be implemented with fidelity (M) Effective collaboration between schools and community agencies must be in place for current systems and structures to function properly (m) Effective collaboration between schools and families must be in place for current systems and structures to function properly (m) Existing systems and structures must have adequate staffing and resources (M)
Professional development	Practical PD sessions are needed to build strategies (M) Verbal de-escalation PD should be offered for all staff members (m) Theoretical PD sessions are needed to build understanding of ED definition and learning profile (M) PD should include instruction in understanding the definition of the ED disability (m) PD should include instruction in understanding the learning profile of the ED learner (m)
Administrative support	Administrators must create systems that support a sense of belonging for all students (M) Administrators must create systems that integrate initiatives in a cohesive manner; new initiatives cannot be tacked on in a stand-alone manner (M)

**Central Research Question 1 – Structures and Systems**

The central research question was as follows: How do administrators and teachers perceive the structures and systems currently used in our schools supporting the inclusion of SWED? Findings indicated that there are both strengths and challenges presented by the systems and structures in place in the GMSD regarding the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. Findings suggested that while the structures

and systems support several helpful resources and strategies, these supports are not distributed equitably throughout the district. Findings also indicated that a few traditional systems and supports remain in place in spite of the fact that they may actually hinder the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom.

### **Central Research Question 2 – Professional Development**

The next central research question was as follows: How do administrators and teachers perceive district PD has prepared them to support the inclusion of SWED for inclusion in the general education classroom? Findings from some teachers and administrators indicated there have been limited district PD offerings that have been relevant to growing skills of specific groups of teachers to help include SWED in the general education classroom. Findings also indicated that some relevant offerings are available to specific populations of staff, although there are not consistent systems in place throughout the district to establish a “train the trainers” culture. New learning is not always shared with other staff members in order to extend the benefit to the larger community.

### **Central Research Question 3 – Building Capacity**

The final research question was as follows: How do teachers perceive administrators can support the inclusion of SWED in the general classroom setting? Findings indicated that there are multiple areas where administrators can take action to build capacity throughout the district. Efforts to build capacity must be initiated and implemented in a manner that builds cohesiveness with established systems and supports.

## Themes From the Findings

Upon review of the analyzed data, I found that two major themes and two minor themes emerged from central research question 1, two major themes and three minor themes emerged from central research question 2 and two major themes emerged from central research question 3. The themes are organized based on the three central research questions.

**Central Research Question 1 - systems and structures.** I asked interview participants if there were structures or systems in the GMSD that either help or hinder the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. All participants spoke about the various resources and levels of collaboration in the district. While there are a number of resources referenced by participants, distribution of resources differs in the schools in the district. District accountability systems were not noted in the interview data. No consistent district-wide evaluation systems were noted as a means to coordinate systems of service.

***Major Theme 1: Current systems and structures must be implemented with fidelity.*** The first major theme identified from the first central research question regarding the structures and systems in the GMSD highlighted the variety of systems and structures currently in place in the district. There are building-based alternative programs in the high school and in one of the elementary schools; the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program is in place at the high school and at some elementary schools; the Responsive Classroom program is in place at some elementary schools; many schools use coteaching models; there are district mentors and coaches

available; there is a school resource office in place at the high school level; and school-based clinicians and home-school coordinators provide services at most schools. Teacher 1 indicated, “I don’t think that PBIS at our level, in the manner that it was implemented, worked for kids” (personal communication, 2016). Administrator 2 noted that there is a mentor who supports new teachers but they “come in for a half an hour every once in a while” (personal communication, 2016). The programs noted in the paragraph above are only as successful as the level of fidelity with which they are implemented. When speaking about coteaching, Special Educator 1 noted, “One person might have the idea and another one might have the resources; I can only get resources for special education” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 2 noted the importance of creating a sense of community, especially in school-based alternative programs: “If you have a teacher who comes in and teaches a class and then leaves, they are not part of the team.” (personal communication, 2016). No participants indicated that there were district-wide level systems to ensure that there is fidelity for proper implementation of initiatives.

***Minor Theme 1: Effective collaboration between schools and community agencies must be in place for current systems and structures to function properly.***

Participants at all school levels, PK – 12, noted the importance of working with local agencies and with families. Many schools had access to school-based clinicians and home-school coordinators. When there are a number of people at the table and different agencies represented it can add resources for the student but can create issues if there is not effective collaboration. Administrator 2 noted the importance of a “good fit” when personnel from outside agencies join the student team. Administrator 3 noted that there

is still not the “level of cohesiveness that could be in place” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 1 noted that there are times when the outside agency is “not at the table when they should be there and that sometimes they are there with the wrong information” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 3 noted that there is room to improve the level of communication: “I felt like I was always laying out information that was pertinent to everybody on the team, but oftentimes I didn’t get that back from the other players” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 4 also noted the importance of the “wrap-around components of support” offered by local agencies. Teachers 2 and 3 noted the importance of transition meetings and, then ongoing meetings. Teacher 2 added, “If I don’t feel like I know enough about the kid then I am not going to feel confident and competent in my ability to manage with the child” (personal communication, 2016) and Teacher 3 noted the need for persistence from team members: “We have met with guidance, he [the student] sees a mental health counselor, we have checked in with a behavioral specialist and he's been observed several times, they've given us lots of strategies, they have gone over strategies with him, and he is still not accessing material” (personal communication, 2016). Schools and local teams need to establish strong working relationships so that they can work in a collaborative manner to best serve students.

***Minor Theme 2: Effective collaboration between schools and families must be in place for current systems and structures to function properly.*** For the systems and structures in GMSD to be implemented with fidelity and most effectively, it follows that there must be open and ongoing communication between schools and families.

Conversations about students cannot be most effective when parents and families are not included in a consistent manner. Administrator 3 noted the importance of “families being as much a part of a team as school personnel” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 1 noted, “When a parent comes in like that, I always think of my role as more like a host, to let them know that they are part of this team and the we don’t always steer it...they have a voice and the student has a voice” (personal communication, 2016). This sets the stage to ensure that all stakeholders are at the table, have a voice, and are active members of the team.

***Major Theme 2: Current systems and structures must have adequate staffing and resources.*** Seventy-five percent of participants indicated that at least one of the initiatives noted above could better serve students with additional staffing or additional resources. Therapeutic services were noted as essential to the support of SWED. Administrator 4 noted, “If the therapeutic services are not available it limits success” (personal communication, 2016). If a student who demonstrates behaviors indicative of ED but does not meet the threshold for special education services, there is not necessarily funding available to include counseling beyond the traditional guidance counselor. This participant noted that this creates inequity of services available to regular education SWED symptoms. Tight budgets were also referenced as a factor in supporting current programs. Administrator 4 noted, “It is all about decreasing budgets and cutting, cutting, cutting, and that is not helpful” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 4 noted that the check-in, check-out (CICO) systems in the PBIS program require a large commitment to data collection: “When I have a whole class, I can’t be consistent enough” (personal

communication, 2016); having behavioral interventionists available to collect that data would make a difference. Teacher 1 noted class size as having an impact on inclusion of SWED: “If a kid is put in a room where there are five other behaviorally challenged kids and they all are going to trigger each other, we have to consider that” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 3 also noted, “The lack of personnel [is an issue], it is not a reality for me to check in with him as much as he needs” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 2 followed up on this topic noting that there are limits based on the “master schedule...there are lots of situations where a group of really high-tech kids are in the same classroom and it is difficult to deal with that...it would be better to sprinkle them out if you could so that they could be with some peers that don’t have behavior issues and so they have a positive role model to follow” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 2 noted that a planning room supervisor position was lost in the school: “When we lost that position at our school, it really impacted staff and students in a way that was not great” (personal communication, 2016). Resources and personnel must be in place and must be integrated into the program effectively to have a positive impact for students.

**Central Research Question 2 - professional development.** Interview participants were asked if the PD offered in the GMSD supported the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. Based on the analyzed data, two major themes and three minor themes were noted. Table 6 contains the major themes as well as other significant perceptions of the participants for the second central research question; it also



breaks each theme down by participant group of general education teachers, special education teachers, and building administrators

Table 6

*Professional Development Themes by Participant Group*

Major and minor themes noted	Overall participant response	% general education teachers	% special education teachers	% building administrators
Practical PD to build strategies (M) Verbal de-escalation training for all (m)	75%	50%	100%	75%
Theoretical PD for deeper understanding (M) Defining ED (m) Understanding the ED learning profile (m)	58%	50%	75%	50%

**Major Theme 1: Practical PD sessions are needed to build strategies.** The first major theme to emerge from the second central research question was that all staff could benefit from PD that helps to build and strengthen current and new strategies to support inclusion of SWED. This theme was noted by 75% of the participants interviewed. Administrator 3 noted that in most PD, “I feel like a lot of this is still theory and not application ... you have to figure out what you have to do and learn the strategies” (personal communication, 2016). Administrator 2 added that many teachers lack confidence “because they just don’t have the tricks” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 4 explained that better understanding of the developmental considerations for students “helps build a really safe environment for kids” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 2 noted, “You have all these kids that are clinically diagnosed with an emotional disability so in the same way that we teach math and literacy, you have to be able to teach social skills to kids” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 3 referenced past

trainings where “I felt like I walked out with statistics ... I didn’t feel like I walked out with tools that I could apply tomorrow” (personal communication, 2016). Participants noted specific strategies and programs throughout the interviews.

***Minor Theme 1: Verbal de-escalation PD should be offered for all staff members.*** While some participants noted that a small percentage of their colleagues had received training in this area, they also noted the importance of this training for all school staff members. Administrator 1 noted that de-escalation training given to staff in the building had been beneficial and indicated a plan to continue building that type of training in to building-level PD. Teacher 2 noted that there were times when staff members unknowingly escalated students through sarcasm or letting their own emotions enter the equation, following up with, “Those are all things that definitely hinder progress with those kids” (personal communication, 2016). GMSD has a policy requiring each school to have a crisis response team in place. District staff members trained and certified by the Crisis Prevention Institute provide annual training to be considered certified to be on a school crisis response team. Initial training consists of an 8-hour session; recertification is obtained by completing a 4-hour refresher course each year.

***Major Theme 2: Theoretical PD sessions are needed to build understanding.*** The second major theme that emerged from the second central research question indicated that there must be a focus on PD that helps educators better understand the definition of the ED disability and also the learning profile of a SWED. A survey respondent noted, “If a student is dealing with a true emotional/behavioral disability, they can't deal with anything else until it's being addressed properly” (survey

response, 2016). Seven of the 12 participants noted this area of PD as lacking. Teacher 1 noted, “Oftentimes professional development in the core academics is redundant...not all of it invites people to change practice” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 2 commented,

We don’t understand emotionally needy kids and kids in trauma ... and how that affects behavior and how it manifests. When someone sees emotional disturbance ... almost every teacher is going to say ‘behavior problem’ but that is not necessarily true.” (personal communication, 2016)

Teachers must be able to relate the behavior to the disability and know that they need to locate the triggering act to change this pattern in the future.

***Minor Theme 1: PD should include instruction in understanding the definition of the ED disability.*** Thirty-three percent of interview participants noted the importance of all staff understanding the ED diagnosis. Teacher 2 noted, “Part of it is the defining of things and educating people...what does it mean to have an emotional disability?” (personal communication, 2016). Administrator 1 added, “Everyone has to have a sound understanding of what ED is ... this is part of the norm now, this is going to be part of [all] classrooms” (personal communication, 2016). Special educator 2 shared, “Staff feel they are not trained within their degree program to understand this type of individual or how to respond to them ... they feel they don’t have the skills and they feel that if this population is going to be integrated into the general population that their degree should include training on that” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 1 noted, “We have a group of students with the ED profile that have internalized behavior”

(personal communication, 2016); staff needs to understand all the facets of the ED definition.

***Minor Theme 2: PD should include instruction in understanding the learning profile of the ED learner.*** Thirty-three percent of interview respondents indicated a need for PD to include helping staff understand the learning profile of SWED. Teacher 1 noted,

In our area ... a lot of kids are in care and separated from their families or having such family dynamics that they are having some attachment issues. We are also learning a lot about how that impacts the brain and the ability to learn and what the classroom should look like for kids who need different environments.

(personal communication, 2016)

Teacher 2 added that staffs “don’t understand the small components of it ... how it manifests itself ... when someone sees emotional disturbance, I can almost promise that almost every teacher is going to say behavior problem ... but not necessarily” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 1 referenced a previous trainer who spoke with that staff about meeting the needs of SWED: “I think when teachers are given the information about really understanding what a child like this is like and they can have the understanding that if they provide the food, the shelter, the safety, that they can begin to function” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 4 noted, “I think understanding the brain and how the brain works in relationship to emotion and learning would be in the [PD]” (personal communication, 2016). These data suggest that given

the proper training about the needs of the ED learner, staff could begin to shift practice to create learning environments that would meet the needs of these learners.

**Central Research Question 3 – building capacity.** Interview participants were asked about how administrators could build capacity that would support the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. Based on analysis of the collected data, three major themes emerged.

***Major Theme 1: Administrators must create systems that support a sense of belonging for all students.*** Questionnaire respondents noted a follow-up theme of being aware of the importance of relationships for SWED. One anonymous respondent noticed, “The EBD [sic] students have more difficulty with friendships, they need to know they are accepted, cared about and safe with someone before they are ready to learn and this can take years of nurturing” (survey response, 2016). Sixty-six percent of interview respondents discussed creating an environment that includes all students. Administrator 1 noted the importance of setting up systems that develop a strong relationship between SWED and general education teachers: “I want the carrot and the relationship to be in the regular ed classroom with their peers, their general ed teacher” (personal communication, 2016). Administrator 4 added that one shift that will help in this endeavor is project-based learning. Students are more likely to feel a sense of belonging when working with “proficiencies and not having everybody on the same timeframe” (personal communication, 2016). This sense of personalization does create an environment geared toward belonging. Administrator 2 followed up on personalization, observing, “I really feel like there isn’t enough room for personalization

for these students in the general ed curriculum” (personal communication, 2016). That administrator also noted the importance of creating a “real feeling of safety for those students” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 1 noted the importance of “getting them engaged and learning, these are kids that never learned before” (personal communication, 2016).

Administrator 3 added that sometimes staff members do not create a sense of belonging when “there is a mentality to fix a child, not fix the instruction” (personal communication, 2016). Special Educator 3 noticed, “From time to time, there was a lot of pushback from the general education teachers because ... well I didn't have this child or this child wasn't in my class before and now you're telling me they're in my class ...” (personal communication, 2016); students sense that resentment and do not feel accepted into the classroom. Special Educator 2 noticed the importance of the administration in setting clear expectations in this area: “It is a school expectation that you provide instruction for this student, end of conversation. It is not a gray area. It is black and white” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 4 noted the importance of knowing and understanding the needs of each student:

I think that we also need to be really flexible with kids. I think that's something that we really do well at our school ... I feel like our teachers really do give kids the benefit of the doubt and they spend that extra time, they have those conversations (personal communication, 2016)

School systems must include multiple strategies to build a sense of belonging for all students.

***Major Theme 2: Administrators must create systems that integrate initiatives in a cohesive manner; new initiatives cannot be tacked on in a stand-alone manner.***

Forty-two percent of interview participants indicated that cohesion of strategies and programs must be a priority. Stand-alone programs or services do not have a long-lasting impact. Administrator 3 noted the importance of understanding your school as a whole, then deciding, “What are you going to do, how are you going to adjust your school?” (personal communication, 2016). Administrator 1 shared that bringing in resources or outside agencies has a limited impact if “we weren't part of the making of the plan” (personal communication, 2016). That administrator also discussed “improving our relationship and the support we get from [outside agencies] because I feel very isolated out there, I know I am, and I don't get a lot of support, not from anyone” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 4 added that teachers have to be “part of making the plan” (personal communication, 2016); the plan cannot be delivered to a teacher, and there must be a sense of ownership from the teacher. Special Educator 4 noted that full inclusion needs “all hands on deck, we are all responsible for these kids” (personal communication, 2016). Teacher 2 added, “The administrator must bridge the gap between the previous school placement and the current placement” (personal communication, 2016) and that communication must be build into the system.

**Summary of the Findings**

This qualitative, instrumental case study focused on a single issue, increasing inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom, in the GMSD. I collected data using a survey sent out to all teachers and administrators in the GMSD. Additional data

were collected through 12 semistructured interviews with administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers. These two sources of data, in addition to the initial literature review, provided rich, detailed information from the GMSD and the larger educational setting. I used an inductive approach to conduct the data analysis.

The findings from this study could lead to a multiyear PD plan in the following areas:

- Understanding ED and the implications of the ED diagnosis for the general education classroom (RQ2: Major Theme 2, Minor Themes 1 and 2)
- Planning and integrating instructional and behavioral strategies to support SWED (RQ2: Major Theme 1, Minor Theme 1)
- Diffusing behavior (RQ2: All major and minor themes)
- Understanding defensive reactions and substituting effective strategies
- Understanding the IEP components (RQ2: All major and minor themes)
- Understanding components of effective collaboration (RQ1: Major Theme 1, Minor Themes 1 and 2)
- Understanding components of effective communication (RQ1: Major Theme 1, Minor Themes 1 and 2)
- Understanding local- and district-level resources (RQ1: Major Theme 1, Minor Themes 1 and 2)
- Using the PBIS continuum (RQ1: Major Theme 1)



- Understanding the definition of inclusion and being able to integrate that set of beliefs and values in to the school climate and culture (RQ3: Major Themes 1 and 2)
- Understanding the systemic change process (RQ3: Major Themes 1 and 2)

Professional development is a critical component if the experience of SWED is to improve in the general education classroom (Askill-Williams & Murray-Harvey, 2013; Barnes & Gaines, 2015; Broomhead, 2013b). Using baseline data derived from the CBAM stages of concern questionnaire, a PD program could be constructed based on understanding of the current skills, preconceptions, and attitudes of teachers in regards to inclusion of SWED (Mowat, 2015; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; Sawka, et al., 2002). Toom (2016) noted professional learning is not something that happens in isolation, opportunities must be cultivated and nurtured. Creating PD programs tailored to meet the needs of each school in the district could have a direct impact on the inclusion of SWED (Potmesilova et al., 2013; Razer & Friedman, 2013; Razer et al., 2013). This type of PD could be meaningful in this school district and could promote positive social change for an underserved population of students.

### **Conclusion**

Section 2 contained detailed information about the methodology of my project study. I used a qualitative, case study design to determine the perceptions of teachers and administrators in the GMSD regarding the systems and structures in place, the district-offered PD, and the role of administration in supporting the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. Using anonymous sampling in the questionnaires and

purposeful sampling for interviews allowed inclusion of data from many, with clarity provided from district educators. Information regarding access to participants, as well as any prior relationship between participants and the researcher, was included. The data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods were included. I also noted limitations of the study.

Using the data analysis, I will develop the next phase of the project based on the research questions included in Section 1. Detailed information will include the description, goals, and rationale of the project. I will include a literature review to show where this project fits within the current research. I will identify potential resources and supports available to the district, as well as potential barriers. I will identify and include a timeline of the implementation and application and the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders. I will highlight the potential for social change within the school district and draw attention to the next steps in the direction of future studies in this area.

For the purposes of this project study, I have recommended designing an administrator PD to build strength in the areas of systems change and building capacity within the context of individual campuses, understanding ED, and developing effective PD for teachers. Isolated initiatives will not have the same impact as weaving new initiatives into the systems in place and building in collaboration with outside agencies and with parents, strategies for implementation with fidelity and methods for accountability, and an understanding of SWED in a way to enhance the systems in place.

Section 3 will include detailed information regarding the PD. The section will also include a project description, goals, and evaluation plans, as well as a rationale. The

literature review will include a background of the three key theories, as well as supporting information from current research. The section will close with the implications of this PD on social change in our local district, as well as on a larger scale.

### Section 3: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to build a rich, detailed understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of how to build capacity for the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. A 3-day administrative PD workshop entitled *Building Capacity – From Definition to Delivery: Including SWED in the General Education Classroom*, included in Appendix A, was developed based on major and minor themes culled from the data analysis phase of Section 2 as well as the review of the literature completed in Section 1. Section 3 of this project study includes a project description, goals, and evaluation plans as well as a rationale and a review of literature. I close this section with the implications of this strategy on social change in our local district as well as on a larger scale.

#### **Description and Program Goals**

The project created as a result of the findings of this study is a PD program for district administrators and instructional teacher leaders that will focus on the components necessary to build capacity for the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. The purpose of the PD is to build on the strengths currently present in the district while creating a learning opportunity for administrators and teams of teachers regarding long-term change and the ED disability. By growing in these areas, administrators and their teams will be better prepared to build capacity in the district regarding inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. These teams will be provided with 3 days of PD over a 4-week period. The training will provide a refresher on the change process and the key components to building long-term change

opportunities, theoretical information about the definition of the ED disability, and clarity as to the learning profile of the ED student. Finally, a variety of practical strategies for inclusion of SWED will be highlighted. The 3 days of PD will be scheduled with 2-week breaks between each session. These breaks will allow each team an opportunity for reflection on campus needs prior to building on new information. As a result, each team will have an opportunity to increase their own understanding of individual building needs and an opportunity to develop personalized PD for their school staff. Goals for the PD are noted below:

- Goal 1: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop a working definition for capacity building.
- Goal 2: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of their campus context in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom using data collected by the Concerns-Based Adoption Model Stages of Concern questionnaire.
- Goal 3: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will determine the appropriate stage of concern in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom; they will use this information to develop an action plan for building campus-level professional development to build capacity in this area.
- Goal 4: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner.

- Goal 5: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition.
- Goal 6: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support SWED, including action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff is aware of these resources.
- Goal 7: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including SWED in the general education classroom and include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.
- Goal 8: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will understand the components to the PD evaluation process.

### **Rationale**

The findings noted in Section 2 of this study indicate a need for continued PD both at the administrative and teacher level. In this study, I revealed gaps in the continuum of services available to SWED in the school district. Preliminary data initially revealed a disproportionate number of SWED placed in alternative education settings. Study findings highlighted gaps in teacher preparation in this disability area. One specific gap was a general theoretical understanding of the ED disability and practical strategies to support inclusion of this student population. Findings indicated that, in order to build capacity, the structures and systems in the district must be implemented with

fidelity and with adequate staffing and resources. Effective collaboration must be built between school and community agencies as well as between schools and families. In addition, administrators must build systems that both support a sense of belonging for all students and that are integrated into current systems and structures in a cohesive manner. The need for PD was noted in both individual interviews and through collective data included in survey responses. This PD incorporates components regarding the change process, building change that endures, and both theoretical and practical information about SWED.

Increasing capacity to meet the needs of SWED in the general education classroom will not happen while maintaining the status quo. Harsh and Mallory (2013) identified learning as the basis of successful improvement endeavors. Building PD for administrators provides an opportunity to build capacity and impact current systems and strategies. PD for administrators must include components related to the change process, deeper understanding of the administrative role in building capacity, and building meaningful PD sessions for their own staff members.

### **Review of the Literature**

Findings from this study indicated that participants felt a need for PD opportunities due to a gap in teacher preparation programs to support working with SWED in the general education classroom. There were suggestions to create PD to help teachers better understand the definition of the ED diagnosis as well as the learning profile of the ED learner. Participants also noted a need for PD that included practical strategies for working with SWED. Findings also highlighted gaps in this area in the

current systems and structures of the GMSD. This suggests a need to include training for capacity building for district- and campus-level administrators. It is critical that the systems and structures of the school district support change to increase inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom.

Below is a scholarly review of the literature related to the change process, PD, capacity building, and distributed leadership. Book references were gathered based on recommendations made by district administrators. Current, peer-reviewed research studies were gathered by conducting searches in the Walden University Library. Research databases used included Education Source, Thoreau, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. Search terms included professional *development, teacher professional development, professional learning, effective professional development, organizational learning, capacity building, organizational capacity, emotional disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders/disabilities/difficulties, inclusion, teacher trainers and classroom dynamics, alternative schools, school culture, and school climate,*

### **Theoretical Framework**

A common focus in the study findings was the gap in teacher training regarding general education teachers and SWED. Participants noted a lack of understanding of the definition of the ED disability and the learning profile of the ED learner. Participants also noted a need for increased strategies and tools for working in the general education classroom with SWED. To support growth in these areas, teachers must have ongoing PD opportunities. Administrators must be able to develop campus PD sessions that are geared toward the needs and concerns of staff.



The professional learning project design is based on a theoretical framework based on beliefs from Hall and Hord's work (2015) on concerns-based adoption model (CBAM) and beliefs noted by the Learning Forward (2015) Professional Learning Association. Additionally, components from Heath and Heath's works (2007, 2010) on creating change that will thrive have been incorporated into the project. Finally, Fullan's work (2008) on capacity building is included. Creating individualized PD that is based on the needs and concerns of staff, while integrating components that are built using successful strategies to support change that lasts, provides an opportunity for the inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom to become a reality within the culture and systems of the GMSD.

**Concerns-based adoption model.** Hall and Hord (2015) used their opening chapter to share what they consider the nonnegotiable principles of change. These ideals are the foundation of the concerns-based adoption model. Leaders need to begin any change process with these ideas in mind:

- Change is learning,
- Change is a process, not an event,
- The school is the primary organizational unit for change,
- Organizations adopt change – individuals implement change,
- Interventions are key to the success of the change process,
- Appropriate interventions reduce resistance to change,
- District- and school-based leadership is essential to long-term change success,
- Facilitating change is a team effort,

- Mandates can work,
- Both internal and external factors greatly influence implementation success,
- Adopting, implementing, and sustaining are different phases of the change process,
- Finally, focus! Focus! Focus! (pp. 9-12)

Significant change does not happen because an announcement is made, nor does it happen along the same timeline for each person involved. Leaders must understand the needs and concerns of their staff to ensure that the correct PD and interventions are built into the process. The PD must be ongoing and grow with the participants. It is also important that interventions are built into the process on a consistent basis to remind all participants of the commitment to the new innovation. While leaders can often plan for internal obstacles, they also have to be prepared to buffer staff members from external factors. Principle Number 12 offers a way to begin that buffering process: keep the core reason for the change at the center of the conversation. Remind staff often how this change will support the overall vision for the school. This intentionality helps to stop the group from losing focus and drifting away from the central mission. It also helps administrators to sort through external demands to see which support the initiative and which much must be put to the side.

CBAM also includes a data collection component based on the stages of concerns. Integrating the data revealed from the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) is one of the key ways to help campus-based administrators understand the current level of concern on their campus with regards to increasing integration of SWED into the general

education classroom. The questionnaire results can determine if the concerns are focused on the impact of the initiative, the mechanics of the task, impacts on the individual, or absence of buy-in at this time (Hall & Hord, 2015). When administrators have this information, they are better able to plan PD that will meet the current needs of the staff. Staff members need to have PD that will meet them where they are, just as teachers would differentiate any instruction for students.

Fuller originally described three levels of concerns (1969): nonconcern, concern with self, and concern with pupils. Hall and Hord (2015) adapted Fuller's work and developed the SoCQ model. Fuller's original three stages evolved to four stages "unrelated, self, task, and impact" (Hall & Hord, 2015), and now the CBAM model has broken the four stages into six categories as noted in Table 7.

Table 7

*Stages of Concerns From Fuller (1969) and Hall and Hord (2015)*

Stages of concerns (Fuller, 1969)	Stages of concerns (Hall & Hord, 2015)	Descriptors (Hall & Hord, 2015)
<u>Stage 1</u> Unrelated	<u>Stage 0</u> Unconcerned	Not my concern right now.
<u>Stage 2</u> Self	<u>Stages 1 and 2</u> Informational Personal	Can you tell me more? How will this impact me?
<u>Stage 3</u> Task	<u>Stage 3</u> Management	I need to understand this better.
<u>Stage 4</u> Impact	<u>Stages 4, 5, and 6</u> Consequence Collaboration Refocusing	How am I impacting others? How can I work with others? How can I make it work better?

Understanding where teachers' concerns exist based on this continuum can help to personalize the PD created for school campuses. If a teacher is unconcerned, they may need to have PD that is geared toward why this initiative is a priority in this school. Teachers who have concerns that are in the informational category will need to have instruction to develop a basic understanding of the initiative (Hall & Hord, 2015). Staff members in the personal category are worried about their role, their ability to implement the change, and how this change will fit in with all the other demands of their day. Management concerns normally focus on tasks, processes, and resources. Staff members who have concerns about collaboration and refocusing are ready to begin working with others and may have ideas about alternative methods that may work more effectively and efficiently for the campus. For maximum engagement, administrators must be ready to meet these adult learners where they are on this continuum of concerns.

**Riding the elephant.** Heath and Heath (2010) noted that an effective method for creating change is to target both the emotional and intellectual domains. The authors referred to these realms as the elephant, instincts and emotions, and the rider, the analytical and rational side. Both areas have strengths and weaknesses that must be addressed. The strength that the elephant brings to the team is energy; the rider brings the supervision, planning, and direction. For a rider to be most successful, the plan for change must include clarity. If there is not a clear sense of direction, people can exhaust themselves going around in circles and the rider can become stuck trying to solve extraneous problems and never get moving. The elephant has a hard time staying motivated, prefers short-term wins, and needs continual motivation built into the change

process: “The Elephant has to believe that it’s capable of conquering the change” (Heath & Heath, 2010, p. 175). Clarity, scripting, and highlighting progress can help to get the elephant and rider working together.

Heath and Heath (2010) also noted the importance of routines and habits in creating successful change. There are two key ideas to consider when investing in routines to support change. The new routine must be essential to advancing the initiative and it should be able to be incorporated into a daily routine with ease (Heath & Heath, 2010). Tasks that are routine become almost automatic for people and reduce the amount of energy expended. During times of change, there is often a need to create new routines and habits to support the change. This means that the energy that is being directed toward the change is also being diverted to support the creation of new routines and habits, leading to mental fatigue and exhaustion. It is important to remember that there may be times when it may look as though people are giving up, but it is simply that they are tired and need to rebuild their energy. Change is demanding work.

When creating PD to support increasing inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom, administrators should acknowledge and support the emotional and intellectual domains. Reflecting and building on strengths, keeping focus, and creating a culture that will support and hold people accountable for the new, expected routines will require a strong action plan based on data and information about the current context of the staff in relation to this new initiative. It is critical that the administrator arrive with a plan that will support the efforts when the staff members are weary during this time of change.

**Learning Forward.** Professional development is a critical component of the change process. Learning Forward’s mission is to “build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning” (Learning Forward, 2015, online). Their framework rests on five core beliefs about PD (Learning Forward, 2015):

- Professional learning that improves educator effectiveness is fundamental to student learning.
- All educators have an obligation to improve their practice.
- More students achieve when educators assume collective responsibility for student learning.
- Successful leaders create and sustain a culture of learning.
- Effective school systems commit to continuous improvement for all adults and students.

Professional development can be a strategy that keeps the component of learning alive and active in the life of a teacher. When teachers consider themselves to be a lead learner, it helps them to stay in tune with the needs of the learners in their classroom.

The findings in this study noted the need for additional PD so that staff members could support this initiative. Seventy-five percent of participants interviewed noted the need for PD in development of practical skills required to support SWED in the general education classroom, and 58% noted the need for additional understanding of both the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED student. Meaningful and well development PD offers a path to building capacity of teachers and administrators to support the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom.

While PD has a direct impact on teachers, the ultimate outcome is to improve the outcomes for our students. PD can offer a path to increased student achievement and engagement (Main, Pendergast, & Virtue, 2015; Owen, 2015). Teachers are more engaged and invested in PD that has a direct connection to the needs of their students (Bayar, 2014). Effective PD provides a teacher with a larger arsenal of techniques, tools, and strategies. This allows teacher greater adaptability in the classroom when working with individual students (Parsons, Ankrum, & Morewood, 2016). The work of administrators also impacts student outcomes; administrators must be offered ongoing PD opportunities to continue to grow in their role (Miller et al., 2016). Strengthening administrative and teacher skills for the work they do with students can have a direct impact on the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional growth of their students.

### **Capacity Building**

Administrators play a key role in capacity building during the change process. Capacity building can be defined as a school-wide, proactive set of strategies put in place to impact skills, beliefs, and priorities of the organization as a whole through the change process (Bain, Walker, & Chan, 2011) or the mobilization of a school's resources to support and sustain the change process (Crowther, 2011). Both parts of the definition are important as they combine to highlight the focus on influencing knowledge, skills and priorities, and the act of mobilization. The inclusion of the word *mobilization* illustrates the shared sense of purpose, the level of preparation and commitment, and the intentional collaboration that must be included in any successful action plan for change.

Capacity building must be incorporated into the change process by embedding it into the actual work that we do. Fullan (2008) noted that learning that occurs in situations such as conferences, workshops, and classes must be combined with learning opportunities in the workplace. There is a need for both routine and invention. A new technique or strategy will not create lasting change; embedding these techniques, strategies, and best practices into your organizational culture is what will make change happen.

Administrators must be able to influence the climate and culture in the school to ensure it supports the priorities of a shared vision that includes inclusion at its core. When considering inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom, McMaster (2015) noted the investment, or lack of investment, toward inclusion provides information about the beliefs and values of the people in the school system. Inclusion must be viewed in this manner for staff members to embrace it as a priority of the school culture. While individuals may grow, and increase their own capacity, to build capacity in a school system, it must be done at the macrostructure level (Harsh & Mallory, 2013; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2016). There must be a critical mass working toward change for an impact on the school system (Drago-Severson, 2012). An administrator can create these conditions through distributed leadership opportunities and ongoing PD opportunities.

### **Distributed Leadership**

A distributed leadership model allows the opportunity for the strengths of many people to come together to promote the vision of the school. Many believe that the



results derived from a team will exceed the results of the individual members, leading to the conclusion that teams have the potential for more progress than individuals working alone. Fullan (2008) noted that, to bring about change, you have to motivate and sustain action toward a common goal. Administrators who structure leadership opportunities and strong professional learning communities for teachers will increase the likelihood of school visions becoming reality (Carpenter, 2015). DiGennaro, Pace, Zollo, and Aiello (2014) noted the importance of staffs that are part of the distributive leadership process and have a commitment to the initiative. Teachers must be empowered to become active participants in the dialogue and decision-making in school change (Lukacs & Galluzzo, 2014; Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014; Thornton, 2010; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). This working partnership between administrators and teachers supports building capacity to support the needs of students.

### **Professional Learning**

Professional development is often designed to bring about change in teacher practice, with a goal of improved engagement and achievement for students. Often the new information does not make the transfer from conference room to classroom. Bain et al. (2011) noted that schools that work toward becoming self-organizing systems have a stronger chance to see sustained change due to five key elements: consistent expectations and language, structures and systems that support the change, ownership among all stakeholders, shared understanding, and a cycle of planning, assessing, and reflection. There must be alignment between the professional learning and the school's core mission

and current circumstances for results to have greatest impact on student achievement (Klingner, Boardman, & McMaster, 2013; Taylor, 2015).

While there is not a printed recipe for creating a successful PD session, there are some components that should be included. Stevenson, Hedberg, O'Sullivan, and Howe (2016) noted the importance of personalization, research-based practices, and school-based collaboration. Personalizing PD so that it is meaningful in the day-to-day life of a teacher is critical (Nishimura, 2014). Bayar (2014) noted that teachers label a PD effective if it will make a difference in their daily work and if it is sustained over time. Including follow-up components such as coaching, collaboration, or reflection is also a way to strengthen the effectiveness of the PD (Parsons et al., 2016). PD cannot be constructed in an assembly-line manner. Understanding the context and needs of the school is critical to the long-term outcome of the training's effectiveness.

Using Heath and Heath's (2007) SUCCEsS acronym provides a basis for initial PD planning: "A simple unexpected concrete credentialed emotional story" (Six Principles of Sticky Ideas) offers a roadmap. Create a PD that has a strong tie to the core belief of the school. Keep participants' attention by including some items that may challenge their beliefs or surprise them (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). Be sure that they leave with a clear picture of the new initiative in their heads – do they understand how this will impact their day tomorrow? It is critical to provide the research that supports the PD; school change must be research-based. The material must touch their emotions; the day cannot be filled with only facts and statistics. Finally, make the learning real by connecting the information to a real situation. All teachers know a student or teacher

impacted by the inclusion of a SWED in the general education classroom. Use that link to help them connect to the learning. This will help to make the PD opportunity transition from the conference center to our classrooms and, more importantly, our school culture.

### **Establishing Culture Change**

Effective PD can have an impact on changing the culture in a school. This can be difficult depending on the intensity and duration of the PD (Bartolini, Worth, & Laconte, 2014; Richardson & Janusheva, 2012). Killion (2011) noted that effective PD could be used to change and/or increase knowledge and skills, attitudes and beliefs, instruction, and student achievement. Change is difficult if staff members have not embraced the new vision and continue to base decisions and priorities on values that do not support the new work (Nishimura, 2014). Whether schools are working from an existing vision or are embracing a new plan, it is essential that it be communicated clearly to all stakeholders (Coviello & DeMatthews, 2016). If people are working toward different goals, the lack of consistency will have a negative impact on effective change as well as the culture and climate of the building (McKinney, Labat, Jr., & Labat, 2015). Effective PD that acknowledges the importance of adaptability can help teachers develop a deeper understanding of their role in the larger context, allowing them to think in an analytic way and make informed decisions consistent with the vision (Parsons et al., 2016).

One important variable in the climate and culture of a building is consistency. When there are high levels of turnover, there is a constant need to bring new staff members up to speed on school-wide initiatives and expectations. Louis and Lee (2016)

noted staff members also benefit when there is consistency provided by administrators. When administrators provide a clear vision, institute common practices, and offer opportunities to learn together, they help to grow the sense of consistency for all school community members (Sabanci, Ahmet Sahin, Sonmez, & Yilmaz, 2016). PD that provides staff with the skills and strategies necessary to meet the needs of the learners in their classroom can reduce teacher turnover and its negative impact on student achievement (Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2016).

Heath and Heath (2010), Killion (2011), Hall and Hord (2015), McCarley, Peters, and Decman (2016) have prioritized clarity of goals and focus for PD. One additional way to build the focus into the PD is to begin by planning the evaluation process (Killion, 2011). Creating the evaluation process allows time to reflect on what we expect to see and hear in the short-, medium-, and long-term, based on the opportunities offered in a PD. Participants should be able to create mental models of the outcomes expected. Our learning targets should provide learners with clear expectations of what they should know, be able to do, and ideas for next steps. Clarity and focus must be built in at each step. By providing specificity about the changes we expect of the practitioners, clear descriptors, and examples, we may improve the odds for a shift in culture.

Providing people enough data to create a mental model allows them to see the change. Without the visual, many people will not be able to complete the journey based on stand-alone PD. DuHigg (2016) noted that those who create mental models, forecast, and create narratives have an advantage, as their attention remains focused on the priorities. It is our job to create the learning opportunity, clearly communicate the focus

and expected outcomes, and then help people find the way to the future we have envisioned.

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

Change happens when there is a common goal and people can engage both intellectually and emotionally. Engaging the intellection capacity of our staff and harnessing the emotional energy that they bring can be an effective combination (Heath & Heath, 2010). Understanding the current context of the school allows everyone to understand the starting point, providing an opportunity for PD tailored to the needs of the building (Hall & Hord, 2015). Professional development is the process that allows teachers to grow and change in ways that will support the mission and priorities of the school (Learning Forward, 2015). Professional development created with a clear mission and supported through coaching and modeling can strengthen our teachers and build the capacity in our school.

Building capacity is an active and ongoing process (Bain et al., 2011; Crowther, 2011). While it is important for all staff members to have individual goals for professional growth, when we are talking about building capacity, we are focused on macrostructures and creating critical mass for change (Harsh & Mallory, 2013; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2016). Distributive leadership is one strategy used to allow teachers to become empowered as active participants in school change (Lukacs & Galluzzo, 2014; Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014; Thornton, 2010; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). This strategy leads to building momentum throughout the staff.

Professional learning can support a staff through the change process. If there is an accurate perception of the needs of the campus, PD can be tailored to best serve the staff. The PD must be focused, involve active learning, fit into the big picture, endure over time, and create collaboration (Killion, 2011). With these pieces in place, there is a possibility to change practice and to increase student achievement (Killion, 2011). An evaluation plan must be included to provide evidence as to change in practice and achievement.

These types of changes will be reflected in the culture of the building. Change in the culture in the building informs us if the staff embraced the new vision and have shifted practices to match the new priorities (Nishimura, 2014). Again, specificity will assist in this endeavor. If people can visualize the change and create narratives about what they are doing, if things falter, they will not have to fall back on old habits and outdated strategies. By keeping the goals the vision, staff can be prepared to use the new learning to support themselves in unfamiliar situations (DuHigg, 2016).

### **Project Description**

This project is a PD program for district administrators and their building-level teams that will focus on the components necessary to build capacity for the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. A recent study at a rural school district in the state of Vermont revealed that there are gaps in the continuum of services available to SWED in that school district. Preliminary data revealed that disproportionate amounts of SWED are placed in alternative education settings. Study findings highlighted gaps in teacher preparation in this disability area, specifically, in a general theoretical

understanding of the ED disability and practical strategies to support inclusion of this student population. Findings indicated that to build capacity, the structures and systems in the district must be implemented with fidelity and with adequate staffing and resources. Effective collaboration must be built between school and community agencies, as well as between schools and families. In addition, administrators must build systems that both support a sense of belonging for all students and that are integrated in current systems and structures in a cohesive manner. This PD offering incorporates components regarding the change process, building change that sticks, and both theoretical and practical information about SWED.

This 3-day workshop is designed for administrators and instructional leaders from GMSD schools. Principals are encouraged to bring a team of general and special educators who are members of the school leadership team, instructional planning team, or who exhibit strengths as a lead learner in the building. Working collaboratively, this team will create an action plan for building-level PD to increase inclusion of SWED. Teams will be provided with school data regarding teacher concerns about increasing inclusion of SWED. The workshop will include information on building capacity, concerns-based adoption model, foundation information regarding the emotional disturbance diagnosis, and access to practical resources geared toward supporting the inclusion of these students. Each team will be assigned a support person from the district special education department. These support members will be in attendance for the 3-day workshop.

## **Resources and Existing Supports**

Many of the resources used in this PD will be professionals with a variety of backgrounds and training in working with SWED. Behavior specialists, district special education coaches, and district special education administrators can support campus teams during the PD and then in a follow-ups manner throughout the school year. Local agencies have also been recruited to provide instruction and bring additional community resources during the PD sessions. These professionals will help to explain the local resources that can supplement and support the school program.

Prior to the PD and then again at the end of the school year, I will provide access to the CBAM model SoCQ for teachers and administrators in all district schools. Prior to and during the PD, I will need to have access to my laptop, the Internet, a photocopier and paper, markers, chart paper, Post-It notes, the district projector, and the district conference room. Prior to the PD, I will need to access the PD handouts, readings, and consultancy protocol.

## **Potential Barriers and Proposed Solutions**

The largest potential barrier to this PD is the process to schedule additional training for administrators and teachers over the summer. Many of the summer opportunities offered to teachers have an hourly stipend attached. While there would not be a stipend attached to this training, I would communicate with teachers that the time invested in this PD would be able to be documented and submitted toward relicensing. The State of Vermont allows teachers to document professional learning outside of college courses to apply toward their new license. Attending a local training would allow



teachers to meet some their requirement without having to pay for a college course. Having a means to communication this to teachers would help to possibly alleviate this barrier. In terms of administrative summer PD, annually the superintendent schedules summer retreats in June and August. This would add an additional summer responsibility for all administrators. One solution would be to work with district special education administrators to create a document showing how this work supports the work of our district cadres regarding the continuum of services and LRE. If this training could be embedded into the superintendent's plan for summer retreats, it would not create any added responsibility for staff.

Additional barriers to this work would become more apparent after administering the CBAM SoCQ. These data would help to identify where staff members' concerns are based. Once I understand the varying levels of concerns, I can work toward proposed solutions to those barriers. This includes the barrier presented by adding what some will see as one more initiative to an already crowded list. It will be important to communicate that this initiative is a part of the larger mission of the GMSD. If staff can see how this will support students to grow in the areas of character, competence, creativity, and community, the sense of cohesion can add a layer of motivation.

### **Implementation Timeline**

The proposed 3-day PD will be scheduled over a 4-week portion of the summer to allow time for study and reflection between sessions. The timeline for the PD is delineated in Table 8.

Table 8

*Timeline for PD*

Date	Goals
Prior to session	Administer and collect CBAM Stages of Concern Questionnaire data
July 11, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 1: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop a working definition for capacity building.</li> <li>• Goal 2: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of their campus context in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom using data collected by the Concerns-Based Adoption Model Stages of Concern questionnaire.</li> <li>• Goal 3: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will determine the appropriate stage of concern in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom; they will use this information to develop an action plan for building campus-level professional development to build capacity in this area.</li> </ul>
July 25, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 4: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner</li> <li>• Goal 5: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition.</li> <li>• Goal 6: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support SWED, including action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff is aware of these resources.</li> <li>• Goal 7: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including SWED in the general education classroom; and will include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.</li> </ul>
August 8, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 5: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition (continued).</li> <li>• Goal 6: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support SWED, including action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff is aware of these resources.</li> <li>• Goal 7: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including SWED in the general education classroom; and will include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.</li> <li>• Goal 8: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will understand the components to the PD evaluation process.</li> </ul>

**Roles and Responsibilities of the Student and Others Involved**

It is my goal that this PD will provide school campus teams an understanding of the definitions of the ED diagnosis, the learning profile of an ED learner, and practical strategies for inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. My initial

responsibility will be to meet with the superintendent to present my findings and to ask for permission to schedule and facilitate this PD. If granted permission, I will facilitate the PD, schedule the speakers, and arrange for district coaches to be available to support the PD. I will also support individual teams throughout the school year. I will also need to work with district special education administrators to ensure that the PD sessions are offered in a cohesive manner based on the work of prior cadres. PD presenters would be responsible for arriving to the sessions prepared and active engagement during their presentations. District special education coaches would be responsible for supporting school teams during the sessions and then throughout the school year.

The participants for this PD will be campus administrators in the GMSD and teacher leaders. Each administrator will be expected to bring a minimum of two classroom teachers from their building. These teachers could include leadership team members, instructional leaders, or other staff members who have strengths to support this initiative. One teacher should represent general education teachers and one should be from the special education team. These participants will be responsible for constructing an action plan to implement PD for their school campus.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

The project evaluation plan will contain components geared to gather evaluation data immediately at the end of each session, to gather data at the end of PD sessions in schools, and at the 1-year mark. Participants will complete evaluation forms at the close of each session and will have a more comprehensive evaluation form to complete after the final session. Participants will also be asked to complete the comprehensive

evaluation form after the school-based PD. This will allow comparison of the perception of effectiveness both at the end of the summer session and then again after the school-based PD. These data will help to tailor and improve future district PD opportunities.

The second layer of the evaluation plan is based on the teacher data collected from the stages of concern questionnaire. Prior to the summer PD session, I will collect the data. This will allow principals the opportunity to develop a better sense of the status of the campus in terms of inclusion of SWED. Another set of these data will be collected at the end of the school year, following the school-based PD. This will allow for comparison of the concerns of staff members prior to and then again after PD. The final set of data collected will be about inclusion rates and achievement rates for SWED. These data will be collected at the end of each trimester for the next 3 years. This will provide data to examine the patterns not only over the course of the school year but from year to year.

The overall evaluation goals for this project include increasing in the number of SWED being served in the general education classroom, increasing the skills and strategies used by teachers in terms of this population, and increasing student achievement in this population. There are a variety of stakeholders invested in the outcomes of this project. Parents, students, general and special education teachers, campus- and district-level administrators, and school board members all have differing needs and desires as to the outcomes from this project as it relates to how we serve SWED in the general education population. Serving a varied population of stakeholders helps to reduce groupthink and fosters openness to continued growth in this area.

## **Project Implications**

### **Local Impact**

Constructing a 3-day PD opportunity for administrators and school teams was presented in this study to build capacity in the school in the GMSD to increase inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. This project has the potential to impact the local community by reducing the number of students placed in alternative learning environments. Research in the first section noted the negative impact socially, behaviorally, and academically, based on alternative placements. This project offers an opportunity to increase the continuum of services provided in general education settings allowing for more students to have their needs met in the LRE with their non-disabled peers. The target population for the PD is school and district administrators as well as general and special education teachers who can serve as instruction leaders.

Based on the findings in the study, teachers and administrators noted a gap in understanding and training in the area of ED. They noted the need for PD that offers support in both the theory and definition of ED as well as the practical strategies needed to best serve these students. By providing school teams with an opportunity and data to better understand the concerns of their teachers in inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom, differentiated PD can be constructed to provide teachers with the skills and knowledge they need. When teachers have the skills and knowledge necessary and understand the priority, given ongoing support, there is potential to change practice and have a direct impact on student achievement.

**Far-Reaching**

The overarching goal of the PD is to close the gap of SWED placed in alternative settings. Developing PD that addresses gaps in teacher preparation to work with SWED in the general education classroom may be valuable to school districts throughout Vermont. As noted in my introduction, Vermont's rate of nearly 16% of SWED is the highest in the country and is over twice the national rate of 6.3% (Weiss-Tisman, 2015). Providing teachers with opportunities to better understand the ED diagnosis, to understand how it manifests in the classroom, and to help them to fill their toolboxes with proactive strategies to work with SWED will complement the academic support strategies they already know. Increasing the range of services offered in general education classrooms is a possible implication for social change and will allow SWED to receive their general education instruction in classrooms with their non-disabled peers.

**Conclusion**

Section 3 followed from the findings noted in Section 2. A 3-day PD was developed based on details from the findings. A detailed description of the PD, including a project description, goals, rationale, and evaluation plans were included in Section 3. The literature review included a background of the work by Heath and Heath (2007, 2010), Hall and Hord (2015), and Learning Forward (2015), as well as supporting information from current research. The section closed with the implications of this PD for social change in our local district, as well as on a larger scale in the State of Vermont. Section 4 will focus on project strengths and limitation, as well as alternative

considerations. Section 4 will close with reflections on scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership and change.

#### Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In this section, I address the strengths and limitations of the project study designed to increase inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom in the GMSD. I include recommendations for alternative approaches that might be considered to assist in this area as well as implications, applications, and directions for future research. I include my insights in scholarship, leadership, and change. I include reflections on my work as a scholar, researcher, and PD creator. I also reflect on the importance of this work in my local community, as well as the larger learning community, as a means to social change.

##### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

One of the strengths of this project is that it was designed based on findings noted by administrators, general educators, and special educators in the GMSD. There were two data collection methods, allowing for both anonymous data from the survey and data from purposeful interviews. Using two methods of data collection allowed for a way to check for consistency and overlap of ideas. Key components of the PD are based on the study findings. Working to create opportunities to support teachers and administrators in their areas of need will increase the continuum of services available to SWED in the general education classroom. Building capacity (Fullan, 2008) in the system allows the district to strengthen the continuum of services available on a long-term basis for SWED transitioning to the general education classroom.

Additionally, ideas and resources that are currently part of the GMSD were used to create the PD. DuHigg (2016) noted that “creative desperation” could happen when



old ideas are made new; innovation can happen when old and new ideas are blended together. Including discourse sessions and consultancy protocols as strategies and inviting instructional teacher leaders to support principals in planning and developing building-level PD while learning new skills and strategies can create a sense of disfluency. Disfluency can cause learners to think more deeply, generalize, and be forced to grapple with new material (Atler, 2013). Building PD with a focus on creating a deeper learning opportunity can help these teams incorporate similar strategies in their own PD plans.

A third strength of this project is the timeliness of the opportunity. In June 2015, an email distributed by district administrators referenced “the need to accommodate and program for students with intense behavioral needs and past trauma [while] our capacity...continues to be a challenge” (personal communication, June 1, 2015). GMSD continues to have an active cadre working on the LRE and had a continuum of services cadre compiling information and making recommendations in the 2015-16 school year. GMSD increased the number of behavioral specialist positions in the district from two FTE positions in the 2015-16 school year to 4.4 FTE in the 2016-17 school year. With inclusion high on the priority list and an increase in the number of staff resources in the district, this is the right time for principals to move forward with PD for their individual campuses.

One limitation to the project is the high reliance on internal resources. While this strategy will help principals to become more aware of the internal resources, there is also a chance that there are new ideas that could be missed by the lack of outside presenters.

Limiting the study to known resources could keep focus on what is already in the district “toolbox” and there could be missed opportunities from outside the district that could also benefit students. Activities will have to be structured to encourage all participants to use different perspectives when considering ideas. Finally, while there has been an increase in personnel to support SWED in the form of the behavioral team, it is still limited and will be taxed if all administrators try to access it at the same time.

A second limitation rests in one of the original concerns regarding the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. Teachers and SWED can become enmeshed in a repeated negative interactions (Skerbetz & Kostewicz, 2013) or repeated avoidance (Razer et al., 2013). Without specific training and coaching to help teachers recognize this issue, the cycle will continue. While school-based teams will be making the decisions about campus PD agendas, it is critical that some type of instruction about this cycle be included.

A final limitation was limited participation in the anonymous survey. These data were not as complete and did not provide as rich a description as they might have if there had been a larger participation rate. It is fortunate that the sampling method for the interviews was purposeful. This allowed me to select interviewees that are closest to the problem and would provide detailed, informative data.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

For teachers to increase the tools and strategies they have available to work with SWED, they must work in teaching situations that allow them to practice these skills. PD will not provide a complete solution. One alternative is to offer teachers the opportunity

to have coaches come in and work in their classrooms and model the strategies that have been taught. While this provides a fruitful learning experience, it may not be reasonable to expect that GMSD would have the resources to have a coach model in this way in every classroom in the district. Another limitation of this method is that it is not possible to schedule crisis in the classroom. For teachers to see modeling of appropriate intervention strategies, trainers are dependent on that occurring naturally during the observation session

Another alternative method to include would be observations in other teachers' classrooms. One or two teachers could visit a classroom where there was a higher probability of behavior concerns. Viewing this as a team would provide a professional learning community to support continued conversation and ongoing dialogue. While this would be effective for the visiting teachers, it could cause a change in the learning environment of the classroom having an impact on all students. Again, it is also hard to schedule misbehavior in a classroom, and the observers would not be guaranteed to see any misbehavior.

### **Scholarship**

Research is a process that allows researchers to synthesize information and data to answer questions about the professional environment. One of the difficult parts of research is narrowing the focus. There are many ideas that are worthy of study. It was difficult to find a focus that was meaningful to me as a learner and an administrator. I was initially interested in incorporating the impact of mental health disabilities into my work based on going through that experience with my child and noticing the increase of

students in my building with mental health disabilities. While this focus was compelling, it did not offer a link to leadership. I shifted my focus to leadership and decided to study how administrators could help students with mental health disabilities. This steered me to data that indicated that SWED were disproportionately placed in alternative settings. This topic allowed me to remain focused on leadership while studying and proposing solutions for a topic that was of great interest to me. Being thorough when defining and refining my topic was key to creating a good foundation to the project study.

This process has also reminded me of the importance of all educators becoming lead learners in their schools. Integrating into the learning process, the excitement of new information and studies, and the moment when ideas synthesize across multiple sources created an energy in me that has been missing in my craft for a number of years. This has had a positive impact on my work environment. I am eager to hear of new books and articles that may push my study forward and to discuss breakthroughs from new texts. The process also helped me to move back to a place of internal control, where I am able to resolve problems without waiting for outside support. My school is rich in problem solvers, learners, and opportunity. Claiming that privilege is very empowering. I have been an active member of the district continuum of services cadre and the LRE cadre. I was a member of the hiring committee for special educators for the district. All those roles have an impact on the experience of the students in my district.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

The literature review provided a key learning experience for me. I labored to bring the theoretical framework into a mental model. This challenge helped me to

empathize with students who struggle to achieve mastery. In reading DuHigg (2016) recently, I realized that the theoretical framework offered me an opportunity of disfluency. By having to struggle with the concept and come at it from multiple perspectives, I have a much more solid foundation and understanding of why and how it drives the study. This led me to study a few theories that did not end up in the study but provided additional information that I may access when needed.

The idea for a PD project came about early in the study. My district moved to instructional teacher leaders 2 years ago, and I have seen a marked improvement in the PD offering and the engagement level of the staff at my school-based PD. The opportunity of working with five teachers to develop a year-long PD program with a focus on writing across the contents and whole-group discourse was an empowering learning experience. The teachers were adamant that there would be accountability, the activities would model the teaching we wanted to see in classrooms, and feedback from each session would drive the following session. From that experience, I know that well planned, comprehensive, school-based PD could make a difference for these students. It could increase the skills and knowledge of the teachers, make a change to their attitudes and beliefs, transform instruction, and benefit students.

### **Leadership and Change**

Leadership can be many things. During this process, leadership became modeling the excitement of learning, using research to move ideas forward, and developing cohesiveness. The readings about distributive leadership have impacted the way I work with my school-based leadership team. We have had conversations as a leadership team

and staff about what distributed leadership means. We have developed a shared definition and have identified what it is and what it is not. Becoming that deliberate has removed some of the misconceptions from our work. We are reminded that to go fast, you must first go slowly. It is necessary to set a solid foundation and then you can build. As noted by Hall and Hord (2015), change does not happen in the moment, it is a process that must be supported over time. There are times when we may be tempted to hurry through the implementation of a new initiative due to student needs, but being mindful and developing meaningful, continuous learning opportunities in the school setting will lead to a stronger program in the long-term (Fullan, 2008).

While working through this process, I have also used my interactions with SWED to model strategies that move us forward in tense situations. During the 2015-2016 school year, we were short one special educator and we were transitioning two students back to our school from an alternative placement. This challenge provided me with the opportunity to implement evidence-based practices beneficial to SWED. I served as the check-in person for these students and greeted them each day, processed with them through time-out breaks, and helped them to integrate the self-regulation skills they had learned at the alternative program into our daily schedule. These opportunities led to healthy conversation with general education teachers and special educators about the why and the how of such interactions. Being a leader means being ready to step up and walk the walk. By demonstrating that this population was a priority and that I was working to grow, I could share that priority and expectation with all staff.

Change is a tough topic in education. Education is a slow-moving system. Therefore, many veteran teachers will try to wait change out. This too will pass. During this project, I was able to learn more about the change process and have been able to embed that learning into the continuous improvement plan for our school. Knoster's work (1991) is applicable because there are usually examples of ineffective change that can be found nearby. By reviewing the components, it becomes easier to identify the missing piece. Heath and Heath (2007, 2010) drew my focus to the intellectual needs and the emotional needs, critical to understand when so many times the appearance of refusal to change may be something different: Doing something new or different is hard work, when people appear to give up, they may just be exhausted (Heath & Heath, 2010). Hall and Hord (2015) brought me to an understanding of concerns and how to address them at multiple levels. A concern may be based on personal, mechanical, or systems-level needs, and understanding which is at work in a particular situation is essential to addressing that need. All of this information gives me an opportunity to look at change from multiple perspectives and not to make assumptions.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

Reflection on this process convinces me of the important of continued learning for all educators. I have found new energy and motivation by learning new skills and refining others. I have strengthened my ability to take from many sources and find cohesion and connection to the big picture. I am more confident about reviewing a research article and making decisions about process, findings, and recommendations. I am able to decide if the work has validity and reliability. I have also gained confidence

as a member of the district leadership team, where I am able to draw on articles or books that support or question the decisions we are making. I have always been an intuitive problem solver; this process has increased my belief that I am now a scholarly problem solver.

As a district administrator, I also feel that I have grown as a resource for the district. I have been active sharing book highlights, serving on hiring committees, and being more visible as a learner. As a former high school math teacher, this study has taken me out of my comfort zone and helped me grow in special education, emotional disabilities, inclusion, and change. This helps me to be sure that I am working for all and not just some.

This project has strengthened my understanding and use of data and evidence. Our language arts team has struggled with being data overwhelmed. We have the data, but sometimes it blinds us to action. This year, the team was able to move beyond data to intervention. While the first attempt was not as effective as we would have hoped, it gave us enough information to redefine some areas and get right back into another session of services. We can embrace the idea of “fail forward.” We know we are trying and we have action as well as data this year.

### **Implications and Applications**

This project is designed to help administrators and their instructional leader teams to build capacity in their school to increase the opportunity for inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. The goal is to educate SWED in the LRE at a rate that is proportional to students with LD. Locally, this project will provide structure and



resources for teams to create differentiated PD based on their building needs. The PD will focus on building a foundation on capacity building as well as the definition of the ED diagnosis. Teams will be introduced to local resources and will have an opportunity to build an action plan that will bring about change in knowledge and skills, beliefs and attitudes, teacher practices, and student achievement. On a larger scale, this project offers a model of opportunity to schools in the State of Vermont.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Future research could be conducted to review IEPs of SWED who are and are not successful in the general education classroom. The study could focus on the similarities and differences in accommodations, services, and behavior plans to see if there is correlation with success and lack of success in the general education classroom. A study could also focus on parental involvement of these students to see if there is a difference in success rates based on these data. In terms of this study, follow-up research is recommended to see if there are changes in the percentage of SWED placed in alternative settings in the GMSD. Finally, a study could be conducted to determine the change in concerns, based on the CBAM model, of teachers working with SWED in the general education classroom.

### **Conclusion**

This century has seen two attempts to legislate equal access to education for all children. Title 1 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) noted the purpose as providing “all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close the educational achievement gap”. While the gap

continues to close in terms of inclusion of students with LD, SWED must have that same opportunity. When SWED are placed in alternative settings, there are long-term negative ramifications in the areas of academics, health and safety, and social and emotional growth for these students. High levels of inclusion indicate a commitment to protecting the rights of all students (Rojewski et al., 2015). GMSD is committed to the development of character, competence, creativity, and community. For this commitment to become a reality, all students must have access to rich, heterogeneous programs.

While there are many reasons an IEP team may recommend a change of placement to an alternative setting, findings in this project study indicate that one of the most important factors is that general education teachers do not have the necessary background to include these students in the general education classroom. Seventy-five percent of interview participants noted the need for additional training in practical strategies for working with SWED, and 58% of interview participants noted the need for additional understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and of the learning profile of the ED student. Teachers are not unwilling to work with SWED in the general education classroom; they want to ensure that they are skillful and prepared to best serve this population. Competence can lead to confidence.

Finally, PD must be designed that will be a fitted piece in the whole picture. This sense of cohesion helps people to see the big picture and to understand where this component fits. These mental models are critical to ongoing integration of the new skills. If staff members have these strategies as part of their daily narrative, this will become part of the regular routine. The PD also needs to be supported in an ongoing manner.

There must be scheduled coaching, continued conversation, supportive PLCs, and accountability to support staff through the change.

The development of a 3-day PD entitled *Building Capacity – From Definition to Delivery: Including SWED in the General Education Classroom* could be used to help administrators work with teams of teachers to build capacity in their building to increase the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. The progression of the PD allows teams to consider capacity and better understand the unique concerns of their staff. It provides opportunity to develop an understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner. There are opportunities to meet with local support people who can explain some of the local resources. Participants would finish the PD with the start of an action plane for their own PD experience.

This process has provided an opportunity for me to better understand my professional environment and find a way to create opportunity for social change. The research process and the project development have created occasion for me to build more collaborative professional relationships with colleagues. I have transitioned from a building principal to an active lead learner. This change is notable in my practice with students, staff, and parents. I have become recharged as a believer in the learning process. This is just the beginning of my work as a social advocate for all learners.

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## Appendix A: The Project

This project is a PD program for district administrators and their building-level teams that will focus on the components necessary to build capacity for the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. A study at a rural school district in the State of Vermont, GMSD, revealed that there are gaps in the continuum of services available to SWED in that school district. Preliminary data revealed that a disproportionate number of SWED are placed in alternative education settings. Study findings highlighted gaps in teacher preparation in this disability area, specifically in a general theoretical understanding of the ED disability and practical strategies to support inclusion of this student population. Findings indicated that, to build capacity, the structures and systems in the district must be implemented with fidelity and with adequate staffing and resources. Effective collaboration must be built between school and community agencies as well as schools and families. In addition, administrators must build systems that both support a sense of belonging for all students and that are integrated in current systems and structures in a cohesive manner. This PD offering incorporates components regarding the change process, building change that endures, and both theoretical and practical information about SWED.

### **Building Capacity – From Definition to Delivery:**

#### **Including SWED in the General Education Classroom**

##### **Three-Day Workshop**

This 3-day workshop is designed for administrators and instructional leaders from GMSD schools. Principals are encouraged to bring a team of general and special

educators who are members of the school leadership team, instructional planning team, or who exhibit strengths as a lead learner in the building. Teams should be between three and five members per campus. Working collaboratively, the building team will create an action plan for building-level PD to increase inclusion of SWED. Teams will be provided with school data from the CBAM model regarding teacher concerns about increasing inclusion of SWED, specific to their campus or building. The workshop will include information on building capacity for SWED, the concerns-based adoption model, the emotional disturbance diagnosis, and access to practical resources geared toward supporting the inclusion of these students. Each team will be assigned a support person from the district special education department who will become a part of the building team. These support members will be in attendance for the 3-day workshop.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the PD is to build capacity at the team level to improve support for SWED and expand the programming options for SWED at each individual campus building. By growing in these areas, administrators and their team members will be better prepared to build capacity in the district regarding inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom. Administrators and a team of teachers will be provided with three days of PD over a 4-week period. The training will provide a refresher on the change process and the key components to building long-term change opportunities, as well as theoretical information about the definition of the ED disability and clarity as to the learning profile of the ED student. Finally, the PD will highlight a variety of practical strategies for inclusion of SWED. The three days of PD will be scheduled with 2-week

breaks between each session. These breaks will allow each team an opportunity for self-assessment of their own building needs, as well as the needs of students currently placed in alternative settings, prior to integrating new information. As a result, each team will have an opportunity to grow their own understanding of individual building needs and an opportunity to develop personalized PD for their school staff.

### **Program Goals**

The administrative goals include:

Pre-session Goals:

- The principal will identify a team of staff that will include general and special educators.

Session Goals:

- Goal 1: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop a working definition for capacity building.
- Goal 2: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of their campus context in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom using data collected by the Concerns-Based Adoption Model Stages of Concern questionnaire.
- Goal 3: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will determine the appropriate stage of concern in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom; they will use this information to develop an action plan for building campus-level professional development to build capacity in this area.

- Goal 4: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner.
- Goal 5: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition.
- Goal 6: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support SWED, including action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff is aware of these resources.
- Goal 7: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including SWED in the general education classroom; and will include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.
- Goal 8: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will understand the components to the PD evaluation process.

**Target Audience**

The target audience for this PD would be all the administrators in the GMSD. This would include building-based and central office administrators. Having all of the administrators attend the same session offers an opportunity to strengthen district-wide systems and structures. Each administrator will be expected to bring a minimum of two classroom teachers from their building. These teachers could include leadership team

members, instructional leaders, or other staff members who have strengths to support this initiative. One teacher should represent general education teachers and one should be from the special education team. Prior to this PD, data regarding the inclusion of SWED in the general education classroom based on the CBAM model would be collected from all district teachers. Building-based principals would use these data to develop an understanding of the context for growth in their building. These data, in addition to the information from the sessions, would allow building-based teams to create an action plan to address necessary PD for their individual buildings.

**Timeline**

The proposed 3-day PD will be scheduled during the summer. The timeline is included in Table 8.

Table 8

*Timeline for PD*

Date	Goals
Prior to session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer and collect CBAM Stages of Concern Questionnaire data</li> </ul>
July 11, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 1: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop a working definition for capacity building.</li> <li>• Goal 2: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of their campus context in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom using data collected by the Concerns-Based Adoption Model Stages of Concern questionnaire.</li> <li>• Goal 3: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will determine the appropriate stage of concern in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom; they will use this information to develop an action plan for building campus-level professional development to build capacity in this area.</li> </ul>
July 25, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 4: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner</li> <li>• Goal 5: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition.</li> <li>• Goal 6: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support SWED, including action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff is aware of these resources.</li> <li>• Goal 7: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including SWED in the general education classroom; and will include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.</li> </ul>
August 8, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 5: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition (continued).</li> <li>• Goal 6: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support SWED, including action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff is aware of these resources.</li> <li>• Goal 7: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including SWED in the general education classroom; and will include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.</li> <li>• Goal 8: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will understand the components to the PD evaluation process.</li> </ul>



## Materials and Equipment

- Laptop
- Internet Access
- PowerPoint
- Reading Material – Introduction and Chapter 1

Crowther, F. (2011). *From school improvement to sustained capacity: The parallel leadership pathway*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

- Planning Template
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Forms

Easton, L. B. (2009). *Protocols for professional learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD

- Consultancy Protocol

School Reform Initiative. (2017). *Consultancy protocol: Framing consultancy dilemmas*. Retrieved from

<http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/consultancy.pdf>

- Handouts for Concern-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)
- CBAM data
- Definition of ED
- Break-Out Spaces

## Session 1 Agenda

### Session 1 Goals:

- Develop a working definition for capacity building.
- Develop an understanding of their campus context in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom using data collected by the concerns-based adoption model stages of concern questionnaire.
- Determine the appropriate stage of concern in regards to inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom; use this information to develop an action plan for building campus-level professional development to build capacity in this area.

<b>Objectives</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a common language and foundation of building capacity.</li> <li>2. Understand the seven levels of the concerns-based adoption model stages of concern.</li> <li>3. Begin to construct an action plan for professional development for your individual building based on context from the school-based data from the stages of concerns questionnaire.</li> </ol>	
<b>8:00 - 8:35 am</b>	<p>Introductions – While most administrators have a number of years of experience in this district, there is always some turnover that requires time for introductions during summer sessions. Please share your name, your role, your school, and the last course you completed. (10 minutes)</p> <p>Ice-Breaker – One Word</p> <p>Have participants count off to four to create small groups.</p> <p>Each participant’s task is to consider the following question and then share with their small group. What one word comes to mind when you consider building staff capacity? After allowing time for discussion in small group move back to the</p>

	<p>larger group to finish the discussion as a large group. (20 minutes)</p> <p>Introduce the goal and objectives for today's PD session. (5 minutes)</p>
<b>8:35 – 9:00 am</b>	<p>Complete the two following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write down your definition for building capacity.</li> <li>• Describe one strategy that you have used in the past that would support building capacity.</li> </ul> <p>Complete independently. (5 minutes)</p> <p>Partner up and discuss baseline knowledge. Write out definition on flip chart paper and post around the room. (10 minutes)</p> <p>Gallery walk on baseline definitions. (10 minutes)</p>
<b>9:00 - 10:10</b>	<p>Reading: Introduction and Chapter 1 of <i>From School Improvement to Sustained Capacity</i> by Frank Crowther (30 minutes)</p> <p>Individual Reflection - SWOT (Easton, 2009, Chapter 5) Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (5 minutes)</p> <p>Pair Share (10 minutes)</p> <p>Whole-group discourse (20 minutes)</p>
<b>10:10 – 10:25 am</b>	Break
<b>10:25 – 11:15 am</b>	<p>Consultancy Protocol: See attached protocol.</p> <p>Group 1: One-third of the group will arrive with a particular dilemma regarding building capacity in their building. Small groups will be formed and will follow the step of the consultancy protocol.</p> <p><a href="http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/consultancy.pdf">http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/consultancy.pdf</a></p>
<b>11:15 - 12:15 pm</b>	Lunch

<b>12:15 - 1:00 pm</b>	Concerns-Based Adoption Model and the Seven Stages of Concern
<b>1:00 – 1:45</b>	Interpreting the CBAM data for your school  Teams will be given the downloadable manual: Measuring Implementation in School: The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (2013) by George, Hall, and Stiegelbauer.
<b>1:45 – 2:00</b>	Break
<b>2:00 - 3:30 pm</b>	Team time-Implementation (the Action Plan) –
<b>3:30 – 4:00 pm</b>	Day 2 Preview – Announce team presentations.  Independent Study – Building Resources – Investigating Research  Reflection and Evaluation

## Session 1 PowerPoint Slides

BUILDING CAPACITY FROM DEFINITION TO DELIVERY

INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES  
IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

Day 1

Nicole Corbett  
Walden University

# Welcome!

## INTRODUCTIONS

PLEASE SHARE:

Name

School

Role

Last course completed

## WARM UP ICE BREAKER

What one word or phrase comes to mind  
when considering building staff capacity?

Small Groups

Whole Group Discourse



## Goals

**Goal 1:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop a working definition for capacity building.

**Goal 2:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of their campus context in regards to inclusion of students with ED into the general education classroom using data collected by the Content-Based Adoption Model Stages of Concern questionnaire.

**Goal 3:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will determine the appropriate stage of concern in regards to inclusion of students with ED into the general education classroom; use this information to develop an action plan for building campus level professional development to build capacity in this area.

## Objectives

**Objective 1:** Create a common language and foundation of building capacity.


**Objective 2:** Understand the seven levels of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model Stages of Concern.

**Objective 3:** Begin to construct an action plan for professional development for individual buildings based on context from the school-based data from the Stages of Concerns Questionnaire.

## DEFINE CAPACITY BUILDING

- Write down your definition for capacity building.
- Describe one strategy that you have used in the past that would support building capacity.
- Complete independently. (10 minutes)
- Partner up and discuss baseline knowledge. (10 minutes)

## Read and Reflect



**THE PARALLEL LEADERSHIP PATHWAY**


Please read the introduction and Chapter 1  
30 minutes

SWOT protocol – Individual work  
5 minutes

Pair Share  
15 minutes

Whole Group Discourse  
20 minutes

FRANK CROWTHER




# Break

Please be ready to  
participate in our next  
activity at 10:25

### Consultancy Protocol

- Check the name tag for consultancy group assignments and locations.
- Use the Consultancy Protocol procedure.
- Timeline – 50 minutes



## Lunch

Please be ready to participate in our next activity at 12:15

### CONCERNS BASED ADOPTION MODEL

## Stages of Concerns

### Hall and Hord (2015)

### CONCERNS BASED ADOPTION MODEL

#### Stages of Concerns from Hall and Hord (2015)

### UNRELATED

<p>Stage 0</p>	<p>Unconcerned</p>	<p>"Not my concern right now. I have other initiatives to worry about."</p>
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### CONCERNS BASED ADOPTION MODEL

#### Stages of Concerns from Hall and Hord (2015)

### SELF

<p>Stage 1</p>	<p>Informational</p>	<p>"Can you tell me more about this initiative?"</p>
<p>Stage 2</p>	<p>Personal</p>	<p>"How will this impact me? How will I need to change what I do?"</p>

### CONCERNS BASED ADOPTION MODEL

#### Stages of Concerns from Hall and Hord (2015)

### TASK

<p>Stage 3</p>	<p>Management</p>	<p>"I need to understand this better. I am not sure I understand all of the different aspects of the program."</p>
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### CONCERNS BASED ADOPTION MODEL

#### Stages of Concerns from Hall and Hord (2015)


### IMPACT

<p>Stage 4</p>	<p>Consequence</p>	<p>"How am I impacting others?"</p>
<p>Stage 5</p>	<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>"How can I work and collaborate with other on this initiative?"</p>
<p>Stage 6</p>	<p>Refocusing</p>	<p>"How can I make it work better? With some adaptations this would also support another initiative we are working on."</p>

## CBAM

### School Level Data

School teams and Coaches  
Work session from 1:00 – 1:45



# Break

Please be ready to participate in the next activity at 2:00

## Action Planning

School Teams - Vbrk session from 2:00 – 3:30

Teams will have time to begin making notes about ideas for campus level PD.

Please use the action planning framework to help get started

Coaches are available for assistance

### Day 2 Preview

Session 2 Goals:

**Goal 4:** Develop an understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner

**Goal 5:** Include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition.

**Goal 6:** Develop an understanding of the local resources to support students with ED; include action steps in the PD action plan to insure that staff is aware of these resources.

**Goal 7:** Develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including students with ED in the general education classroom; include action steps in the PD action plan to insure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.

## Reflection and Evaluation

## Independent Study Building Resources Investigating Research

### For More Information

Nicole Corbett  
Walden University  
[nicole.corbett@waldenu.edu](mailto:nicole.corbett@waldenu.edu)

## **Session 1 Materials**

### **Pair Share Protocol**

- Partner A will share with Partner B. (One minute)
- Partner B will respond to Partner A. (One minute)
- Partner B will share with Partner A. (One minute)
- Partner A will respond to Partner B. (One minute)
- Final wrap up (One minute)

Partners are asked to refrain from using the word “but” during the exchange. If you find yourself tempted to say yes, but... please substitute yes, and...

### **Small Group Protocol**

- During small group sessions, start the sharing by going around the group and having each member share out.
- General discussion will follow the share out.



## Whole Group Discourse Protocol

### Norms:

- Contribute and listen in a manner to promote and support psychological safety for all participants.
- All participants share.

Whole group discourse will be structured using the fishbowl model due to the size of the group. Participants will divide in two groups. Group 1 will begin sitting in the chairs of the center circle. Group 2 will begin standing behind the chairs of group 1. Each group member will have three chips to use during the general discussion. Group 1 will begin the discussion and Group 2 will begin as listeners. A chip must be turned in after each comment shared. When a member of Group 1 had used all three of their chips they will exchange places with a person from Group 2.

**SWOT Protocol**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>

- Strengths – Characteristics within the school/district that might help solve the problem.
- Weaknesses – Characteristics within the school/district that might hinder solution of the problem.
- Opportunities – External conditions that might help the team solve the problem.
- Threats – External conditions that might hinder the team in the solution of the problem.

(Easton, 2015, Chapter 5)

## Consultancy Protocol – For all three sessions



### Consultancy Protocol

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*Developed by Faith Dunne, Paula Evans, and Gene Thompson-Grove as part of their work at the Coalition of Essential Schools and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.*

#### **Purpose**

The structure of the Consultancy helps presenters think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma. The Consultancy protocol has 2 main purposes – to develop participants’ capacity to see and describe the dilemmas that are the essential material of their work, and to help each other understand and deal with them.

#### **Time**

Approximately 50 minutes

#### **Roles**

Presenter (whose work is being discussed by the group)  
 Facilitator (who sometimes participates, depending on the size of the group)  
 Consultants

Outside perspective is critical to the effectiveness of this protocol; therefore, some of the participants in the group should be people who do not share the presenter’s specific dilemma at that time. The Consultancy group is typically a small and intimate one – from 4-7 people. Larger groups can easily subdivide into consultancy groups.

#### **Process**

1. The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which she/he is struggling, and frames a question for the consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenter’s reflection on the dilemma being discussed, are key features of this protocol. If the presenter has brought student work, educator work, or other “artifacts,” there is a pause here to silently examine the work/documents. The focus of the group’s conversation is on the dilemma. (10-15 minutes if there are artifacts to examine)
2. The consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter — that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. (5 minutes)
3. The group asks probing questions of the presenter (See Pocket Guide to Probing Questions). These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand her/his thinking about the dilemma presented to the consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question she/he framed and to do some analysis of the dilemma presented. The presenter responds to the group’s questions, although sometimes a probing question might ask the presenter to see the dilemma in such a novel way that the response is simply, “I never thought about it that way.” There is no discussion by the consultancy group of the presenter’s responses. At the end of the 10 minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to re-state her/his question for the group. (10 minutes)

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community and facilitated by a skilled facilitator. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for facilitation, please visit the School Reform Initiative website at [www.schoolreforminitiative.org](http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org).

4. The group talks with each other about the dilemma presented. In this step, the group works to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively. Sometimes members of the group suggest actions the presenter might consider taking; if they do, these should be framed as “open suggestions,” and should be made only after the group has thoroughly analyzed the dilemma. The presenter doesn’t speak during this discussion, but listens in and takes notes. The group talks about the presenter in the third person. (15 minutes)

*Possible questions to frame the discussion:*

- What did we hear?
  - What didn’t we hear that might be relevant?
  - What assumptions seem to be operating?
  - What questions does the dilemma raise for us?
  - What do we think about the dilemma?
  - What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma? What have we done in similar situations?
5. The presenter reflects on what she/he heard and on what she/he is now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for him or her during any part of the Consultancy. (5 minutes)
  6. The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group’s observation of the Consultancy process. (5 minutes)

*Note: See Consultancy Dilemmas to craft dilemmas for use with the Consultancy Protocol and Facilitation Tips for process advice.*

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community and facilitated by a skilled facilitator. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for facilitation, please visit the School Reform Initiative website at [www.schoolreforminitiative.org](http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org).

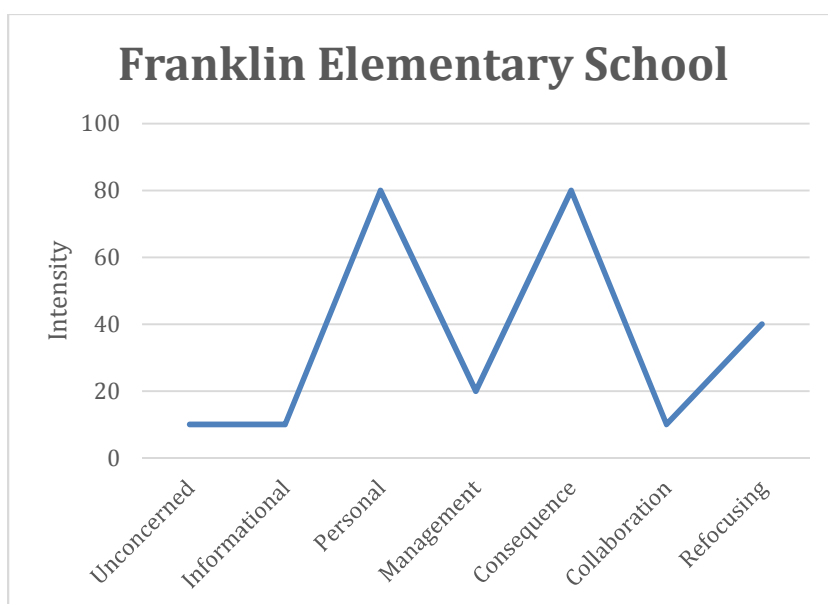
(School Reform Initiative, 2017)

### School Level CBAM Data

The graphs included below are based on the concerns-based adoption model (Hall & Hord, 2015). These graphs have been created using hypothetical data to create examples that could be distributed to school teams during this PD. School teams could use this data to build personalized PD for their own school staff. This data would only be one piece of the planning process but it would give teams a starting point for planning.

Example 1:

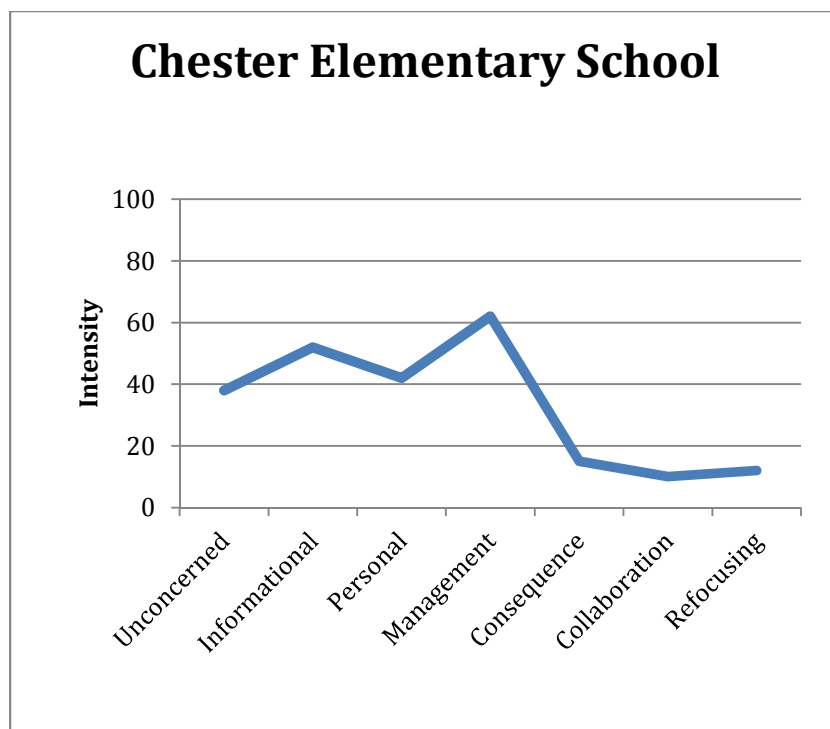
Franklin Elementary School CBAM Graph (Hall & Hord, 2015)



The data in the Franklin Elementary School graph indicate two peaks that should be considered when developing PD. Staff members need more information about how this initiative will affect them personally and how it will impact their students.

Example 2:

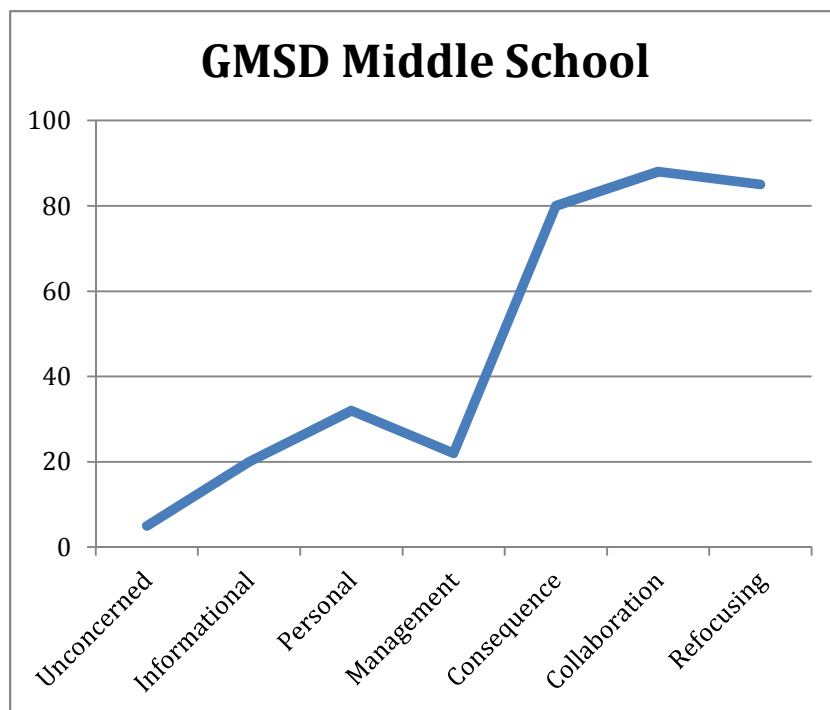
Chester Elementary School CBAM Graph (Hall & Hord, 2015)



The data in the Chester Elementary School graph indicate one major and one minor peak that should be considered when developing PD. There is a clear need for PD in management of this initiative. Teachers may have concerns about the process and task involved in the integration of SWED in the general education classroom. The minor peak on the graph indicates a concern about general information about this initiative.

Example 3:

GMSD Middle School (Hall & Hord, 2015)



The data for GMSD Middle School indicate that this staff is ready for PD around impact.

The data indicate concerns focused around the impact on students, on collaboration, and possible alternatives and innovations that might personalize the initiative to the needs of the middle school.

### Action Planning Framework

	Change in Knowledge and Skills	Change in Attitudes, Beliefs and Behaviors	Change in Instruction	Change in Student Learning and Achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are district or school-based systems impacted?</li> <li>• How will data be collected at each stage?</li> </ul>				
Clear Goals and Objective Include for each column				
Content Focus Is it included?				
Active Learning Is it included?				
Coherence How have you created connection to the school vision?				
Duration How is the work supported over time?				
Collective Participation Are collaborative learning opportunities embedded?				

Constructed based on work by Desimone (2011) and Killion (2011).



### Session 1 Reflection and Evaluation Questions

Reflection questions:

What is your team definition of capacity building? Please create a visual for your team on flip chart paper and post on a wall.

Has your team developed common language and foundation for building capacity? What are the next steps for the team in this area?

Based on the limited time the team spent with the CBAM data for your school, what are your general impressions of where your school is and what some key PD components may be to support necessary growth?

When considering an action plan for PD, what information do you feel would support your team over the next two sessions?

Evaluation:

What ideas and structures from today worked for you?

What ideas and structures from today could be improved to help in the next session?

What lingering questions do you have?

### Session 1 Independent Study Materials

- Given an initial list of references and journals, school teams will work between sessions to build an annotated bibliography of resources to be used during campus level PD or to support individual teachers throughout the change process.
- At the close of the session for Day 1, each team will set a goal based on team size for the number of articles to be reviewed by team members. Teams will decide whether they would like member checking to be built in by having multiple team members review the same article.
- Teams will be asked to organize their research and create a display for a Gallery Share on Day 2.

#### **Potential Journals to consider:**

Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rebd20>

International Journal of Inclusive Education

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tied20/current>

Journal of Behavioral Disorders

<http://www.ccbd.net/publications/behavioraldisorders>

Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders

<http://journals.sagepub.com/home/ebx>

Preventing School Failure

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/vpsf20/current>

**Tools:**

Each team will be provided with a copy of the following texts:

Crowther, F. (2011). *From school improvement to sustained capacity: The parallel leadership pathway*. Thousand Okas, CA: Corwin Press

Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (2015). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Person Educational, Inc.

Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*.

[Kindle iOS version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com

Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2010). *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is*

*Hard* [Kindle iOS version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com

**References:****Inclusive Schooling:**

Botha, J., Kourkoutas, E. A community of practice as an inclusive model to support children with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties in school contexts.

*International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(7), 784-799.

DiGennaro, D. C., Pace, E. M., Zollo, I., Aiello, O. (2014). Teacher capacity building through critical reflective practice for the promotion of inclusive practice.

*Problems of Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 60, 54-66.

Mowat, J. G. (2015). 'Inclusion – that word!' examining some of the tensions in

supporting pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural

difficulties/needs. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 20(2), 153-172.

doi:10.1080/13632752.2014.927965

- Nishimura, T. (2014). Effective professional development of teachers: A guide to actualizing inclusive schooling. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 10*(1), 19-42. Retrieved from [www.wholeschooling.net/](http://www.wholeschooling.net/)
- O'Rourke, J. (2014). Inclusive schooling: If it's so good – why is it so hard to sell? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 19*(5), 530-546.  
doi:10.1080/13603116.2014.954641
- Orsati, F. T., & Causton-Theoharis, J. (2013). Challenging control: Inclusive teachers' and teaching assistants' discourse on students with challenging behaviour. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 17*(5), 507-525.  
doi:10.1080/13603116.2012.689016
- Scanlon, G., & Barnes-Holmes, Y. (2013). Changing attitudes: Supporting teachers in effectively including students with emotional and behavioral difficulties in mainstream education. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, 18*(4), 374-395.

### **Coteaching:**

- Conderman, G., Hedin, L. R. (2014). Co-teaching with strategy instruction. *Intervention in School & Clinic, 49*(3), 156-163.
- Conderman, G., Hedin, L. (2015). Differentiating instruction in co-taught classrooms for students with emotional/behavior difficulties. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, 20*(4), 349-361.

### **Academic Choice and Student Engagement:**

- Casey, L. B., Williamson, R. L., Black, T., & Casey, C. (2014). Teaching written expression in the inclusive high school classroom: Strategies to assist students

with disabilities. *National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal*, 27(1/2), 45-56.

Cramer, A. M., & Mason, L. H. (2014). The effects of strategy instruction for writing and revising persuasive quick writes for middle school students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders*, 40(1), 37-51.

Ennis, R. P., & Jolivette, K. (2014). Using self-regulated strategy development for persuasive writing to increase the writing and self-efficacy skills of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in health class. *Behavioral Disorders*, 40(1), 26-36.

Skerbetz, M. D., & Kostewicz, D. E. (2013). Academic choice for included students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Preventing School Failure*, 57(4), 212-222.

Skerbetz, M. D., & Kostewicz, D. E. (2015). Consequence choice and students with emotional and behavioral disabilities: Effects on academic engagement. *Exceptionality*, 23(1), 14-33.

### **Parents:**

Broomhead, K. E. (2013). Preferential treatment or unwanted in mainstream schools?

The perceptions of parents and teachers with regards to pupils with special educational needs and challenging behaviour. *Support for Learning*, 28(1), 4-10.

doi:10.1111/1467-9604.12009

Scorgie, K. (2015). Ambiguous belonging and the challenge of inclusion: Parent perspectives on school membership. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 20(1), 35-50. doi:10.1080/13632752.2014.947098

## Session 2 Agenda

### Session 2 Goals:

- Goal 4: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner
- Goal 5: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition.
- Goal 6: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support SWED, including action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff is aware of these resources.
- Goal 7: The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including SWED in the general education classroom; and will include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.

<b>Objectives</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Create a common language and foundation of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner.</li> <li>5. Develop an understanding of the local resources available to support SWED.</li> <li>6. Review practical strategies available to assist teachers working with SWED in the general education classroom; begin to select potential strategies to include in a campus-level PD.</li> <li>7. Continue work on the action plan for professional development for your school. Build in opportunities for staff to explore and develop an understanding of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner.</li> </ol>

<b>8:00 - 8:30 am</b>	<p>Introductions –Please share your name, your role, your school, and the last book your read for pleasure and the last book you read to keep current professionally. (5 minutes)</p> <p>Ice-Breaker – One Word</p> <p>Have participants count off to four to create small groups.</p> <p>Each participant’s task is to consider the following question and then share with their small group. What one word comes to mind when you consider an ED learner in your classroom?</p> <p>After allowing time for discussion in small group, move back to the larger group to finish the discussion as a large group. (20 minutes)</p> <p>Introduce the goal and objectives for today’s PD session. (5 minutes)</p>
<b>8:30 – 9:50 am</b>	<p>Getting to the root of the ED definition.</p> <p>Check nametag to break into smaller groups. Each group will be given one of the components of the ED definition. Individual groups will be asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate any wording that would not be user-friendly to parents or students.</li> <li>• Describe how that characteristic of the definition could manifest in the classroom.</li> <li>• Describe what a teacher might see or hear based on that portion of the disability.</li> <li>• Describe the impact on other learners.</li> <li>• Brainstorm strategies, both proactive and reactive, that could be used in this situation.</li> <li>• Create a visual for this information. Be prepared to share with the larger group. (30 minutes)</li> </ul> <p>Whole-group share and discourse (50 minutes)</p> <p>This session will be co-facilitated by J. P. a district special education coach.</p>



<b>9:50 – 10:05 am</b>	Break
<b>10:05 – 10:50 am</b>	<p>Consultancy Protocol: See attached protocol.</p> <p>Group 2: One-third of the group will arrive with a particular dilemma regarding the inclusion of ED students into the general education classroom in their building. The small groups created in Session 1 will be regroup and follow the step of the consultancy protocol.</p> <p><a href="http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/consultancy.pdf">http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/consultancy.pdf</a></p>
<b>10:50 – 11:30 am</b>	<p>Article Share: Each team will be asked to introduce their materials. (10 minutes)</p> <p>Gallery walk to share out and collect new ideas. (30 minutes)</p>
<b>11:30 – 12:30 pm</b>	Lunch
<b>12:30 – 2:30</b>	<p>Learning via local resources: There will be four sessions happening every half-hour. Each participant will move through each of the four sessions during the afternoon.</p> <p><u>Session 1: Developing a Relationship.</u> Nell Dewing has worked with students with emotional disabilities for over 20 years. She has served as a clinician and then director of the local therapeutic day-treatment facility. She is currently a community-based therapist. Nell will focus on helping staff members create techniques to allow them to focus on the importance of creating honest and meaningful relationships with students in their schools and classrooms. She will talk about the importance of understanding the ED definition so that staff can see the emotional responses and actions that may occur in class res a manifestation of the disability and not a personal attack.</p> <p><u>Session 2: Trauma and ED</u></p>

	<p>Erin LaPierre has worked in the mental health field for over 20 years. She will talk about the impact of trauma and how it can impact SWED. Erin will focus on ways to be proactive but will also include strategies and ideas for those times when teachers are in a difficult situation and need to react.</p> <p><u>Session 3: Practical Strategies</u></p> <p>Shelby Lawson is a successful part of the alternative program that is in place at the high school in the GMSD. She works with students to complete high school requirements, transition to the work force, and become contributing members of our community. Her experience can benefit other general education classroom teachers.</p> <p><u>Session 4: Emotional Disturbance and Adverse Effect</u></p> <p>Julie Potter has been a special educator and a special education coach for over 20 years. Her strength is in educating general education teachers about the nuts and bolts of accommodating a student disability in the classroom. Julie's session will be focused on ways to find natural ways to play to a student's strengths while helping them to strengthen weaknesses.</p> <p>Possible topics could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the writing process to help an ED learner organize their thoughts and use writing as a way to make them heard.</li> <li>• Blending assignments to incorporate both instruction and independent tasks as a way to build momentum.</li> <li>• Taking an inventory of our toolbox to see if there are enough tools to support students for both academic and behavioral weaknesses.</li> </ul>
<b>2:30 – 2:45</b>	Break
<b>2:45 – 3:30</b>	<p>Team time -</p> <p>Teams can use this time to integrate the ideas generated in the afternoon session into their action planning.</p>

<b>3:30 – 4:00</b>	Day 3 Preview Reflection and Evaluation Independent Study – School Data Collection
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## Session 2 PowerPoint Slides

BUILDING CAPACITY FROM DEFINITION TO DELIVERY

INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES  
IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

Day 2

Nicole Corbett  
Walden University

# Welcome!

## INTRODUCTIONS

PLEASE SHARE:

Name

School

Role


What was the last book you read for pleasure and the last book you read to keep current professionally?

## WARM UP ICE BREAKER

What one word or phrase comes to mind when considering an ED learner in the classroom?

Small Groups

Whole Group Discourse



## Goals

Session 2 Goals:

**Goal 4:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the definition of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner

**Goal 5:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition.

**Goal 6:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support students with ED; include action steps in the PD action plan to insure that staff is aware of these resources.

**Goal 7:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including students with ED in the general education classroom; include action steps in the PD action plan to insure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.

## Objectives

**Objective 4:** Create a common language and foundation of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner.

**Objective 5:** Develop an understanding of the local resources available to support students with ED.

**Objective 6:** Review practical strategies available to assist teachers working with students with ED in the general education classroom; begin to select potential strategies to include in a campus level PD.

**Objective 7:** Continue work on the action plan for professional development for your school. Build in opportunities for staff to explore and develop an understanding of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner.

**Emotional Disability/Disturbance (ED):**  
A condition including schizophrenia, exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Characteristics of an emotional disturbance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.


Vermont Agency of Education, 2013.

## ED Definition Task

Check name tags for task groups and locations.

- Translate any working that would not be user friendly to parents or students.
- Describe how that characteristic of the definition could manifest in the classroom.
- Describe what a teacher might see or hear based on that portion of the disability.
- Describe the impact on other learners.
- Brainstorm strategies, both proactive and reactive, that could be used in this situation.
- Create a visual for this information. Be prepared to share with the larger group.

30 minutes



# Break

Please be ready to participate in the next activity at 10:05


### Consultancy Protocol

- Check the name tag for consultancy group assignments and locations.
- Use the Consultancy Protocol procedure.
- Timeline – 50 minutes

## Article Share

Introduce Materials

Gallery Walk




## Lunch

Please be ready to participate in the next activity at 12:30

### Afternoon Resource Sessions

- A • Developing a Relationship – Nell Dewing
- B • Trauma and ED – Erin LaPierre
- C • Practical Strategies – Shelby Lawson
- D • ED and Adverse Effect – Julie Potter



## Break

Please be ready to participate in our next activity at 2:45

## Action Planning

School Teams  
Work session from 2:45 – 3:30

Teams will have time to begin developing ideas for campus level PD.

Coaches are available for assistance

### Day 3 Preview

Session 3 Goals:

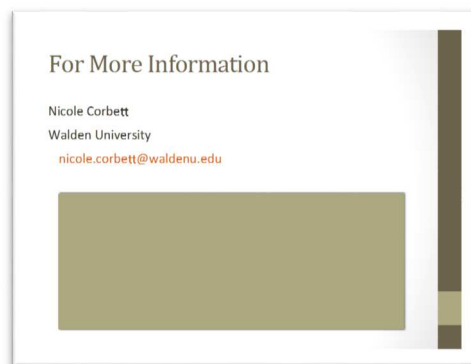
**Goal 5:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition (continued).

**Goal 6:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support students with ED, include action steps in the PD action plan to insure that staff is aware of these resources.

**Goal 7:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including students with ED in the general education classrooms; include action steps in the PD action plan to insure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.

**Goal 8:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will understand the components to the PD evaluation process.

## Reflection and Evaluation



## Session 2 Materials

## Emotional Disability / Disturbance Definition Handout

***Emotional Disability/Disturbance (ED):***

A condition including schizophrenia, exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Characteristics of an emotional disturbance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Vermont Agency of Education, 2013.

## Session 2 Reflection and Evaluation Questions

Reflection questions:

Has your team developed common language and foundation for the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of an ED learner? What are the next steps for the team in this area?

Based on the afternoon sessions, did you find any resources that will support PD opportunities for your school based on their level of concerns?

When considering an action plan for PD, what information do you feel would support your team over the next session?



Evaluation:

What ideas and structures from today worked for you?

What ideas and structures from today could be improved to help in the next session?

What lingering questions do you have?

## Session 2 Independent Study Materials

Teams need to gather school-based information for all students identified with an emotional disability. Team will need to have these data available at Session 3.

- Currently levels as based on IEP data
  - Behavior plans
  - Grades
  - Attendance
  - Discipline data
  - Tier 2 Interventions utilized
  - Involvement in school activities
  - Any other relevant data as noted by the team.
- 
- The Director of Special Education will be responsible to collect current data for students currently placed in alternative settings. These data will be provided for each school. Teams will need to plan in terms of needs, resources, and training necessary to reintegrate these SWED into the general education setting when appropriate.

### Session 3 Agenda

#### Session 3 Goals:

- Develop an understanding of the local resources available to support SWED; include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff is aware of these resources.
- Develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including SWED in the general education classroom; include action steps in the PD action plan to ensure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.
- Understand the components to the PD evaluation process

<b>Objectives</b>	
<p>8. Continue to develop an understanding of the local resources available to support SWED.</p> <p>9. Continue work on the action plan for professional development for your school.</p> <p>10. Build opportunities for staff to explore and develop an understanding of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner into the campus-level PD.</p> <p>11. Begin to consider an evaluation system for the PD program.</p>	
<b>8:00 - 8:30 am</b>	<p>Introductions –Please share your name, your role, your school, and how you differentiate between a teacher and a lead learner. (5 minutes)</p> <p>Ice-Breaker – One Word</p> <p>Have participants count off to four to create small groups.</p> <p>Each participant’s task is to consider the following question and then share with their small group. What one word comes to mind when you consider effective professional development? After allowing time for discussion in small</p>

	<p>group move back to the larger group to finish the discussion as a large group. (20 minutes)</p> <p>Introduce the goal and objectives for today's PD session. (5 minutes)</p>
<b>8:30 – 10:30 am</b>	<p>Morning Sessions:</p> <p><u>Session 1: Yoga / Meditative Movement</u></p> <p>Kay Olsen is a certified Yoga instructor and a middle school special educator. Introducing new techniques for self-regulation, stress relief, and mindfulness allows SWED an opportunity to increase the strategies they have available in emotional situations.</p> <p><u>Session 2: Restorative Justice</u></p> <p>Ryan Daniels is an administrator at the GMSD high school. He has worked as an administrator at the high school for over 20 years. He has attended trainings on restorative justice and works to integrate it into the structures and systems of the high school. Including restorative justice as an option for students allows for increased opportunity for student voice and choice.</p> <p><u>Session 3: Understanding the Role of the Behavior Team and Behavior Plans</u></p> <p>There are four members of the behavior team for the GMSD. The behavior team provides services to all the schools in the GMSD. There are times when school teams may not feel as strong of a connection as the behavior team members are in and out of the school. Having a deep understanding of the role of the behavior team members and the function and process of the behavior plan can help to build that sense of connection.</p> <p><u>Session 4: Planning for Transition to or from an Alternative Program</u></p> <p>Rachel Flynn and Ron Truman are special education case managers at a school in the GMSD. These two case managers provide services for SWED at the middle school level. Middle school is a time when students may be re-entering the regular education program from an alternative program or may need to receive their services in a different setting. Rachel and Ron work with staff from the local day-treatment facility,</p>

	behavioral specialists, other special educators, and general education teachers to provide plans to support these transitions.
<b>10:30 – 10:45 am</b>	Break
<b>10:45 – 11:30</b>	<p>Team Time</p> <p>Teams will arrive with school-based information for all students identified with an emotional disability. Currently levels, behavior plans, grades, attendance data, etc. will be on hand to allow teams to begin to make some connections between the students on campus and the ideas generated in the morning session.</p>
<b>11:30 – 12:30</b>	Lunch
<b>12:30 – 1:20</b>	<p>Consultancy Protocol: See attached protocol.</p> <p>Group 3: One-third of the group will arrive with a particular dilemma regarding the evaluation of professional development. The small groups created in Session 1 will be regroup and will follow the steps of the consultancy protocol.</p> <p><a href="http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/consultancy.pdf">http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/consultancy.pdf</a></p>
<b>1:20 – 2:15</b>	<p>Whole Group</p> <p>Evaluating Professional Development</p>
<b>2:15 – 2:30 pm</b>	Break
<b>2:30 – 3:30</b>	<p>Team Time</p> <p>Continue Action Planning Work</p>
<b>3:30 – 4:00 pm</b>	<p>Reflection and Evaluation</p> <p>Next Steps</p>

### Session 3 PowerPoint Slides

BUILDING CAPACITY FROM DEFINITION TO DELIVERY

INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES  
IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

Day 3

Nicole Corbett  
Walden University

# Welcome!

## INTRODUCTIONS

PLEASE SHARE:

Name

School

Role

How do you differentiate between the terms teacher and lead learner?

## WARM UP ICE BREAKER

What one word or phrase comes to mind  
when considering effective PD?

Small Groups

Whole Group Discourse



## Goals

Session 3 Goals.

**Goal 5:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will include action steps in the action plan that will assist staff members with developing their own understanding and creating a school-wide shared definition (continued).

**Goal 6:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of the local resources to support students with ED, include action steps in the PD action plan to insure that staff is aware of these resources.

**Goal 7:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will develop an understanding of additional practical strategies available to assist teachers with including students with ED in the general education classroom; include action steps in the PD action plan to insure that staff continues to build capacity in this area.

**Goal 8:** The administrators and the instructional teacher leaders will understand the components to the PD evaluation process.

## Objectives

**Objective 5:** Continue to develop an understanding of the local resources available to support students with ED.


**Objective 6:** Continue work on the action plan for professional development for your school.

**Objective 7:** Build opportunities for staff to explore and develop an understanding of the ED diagnosis and the learning profile of the ED learner into the campus level PD.

**Objective 8:** Begin to consider an evaluation system for the PD program

## Morning Resource Sessions

- A • Yoga / Meditative Movement – Kay Olsen
- B • Restorative Justice – Ryan Daniels
- C • Understanding the Role of the Behavior Team and Behavior Plans – GMSD Behavior Team
- D • Planning for Transition to or from an Alternative Program – Rachel Flynn & Ron Truman




# Break

Please be ready to participate in the next activity at 10:45

## Team Time

Work session from 10:45 – 11:30

Coaches are available for assistance



## Lunch


Please be ready to participate in our next activity at 12:30

### Consultancy Protocol

- Check the name tag for consultancy group assignments and locations.
- Use the Consultancy Protocol procedure.
- Timeline – 50 minutes

### Evaluating FD

- Short Term:  
Knowledge and Skills
- Mid Term:  
Attitudes, Beliefs, Perceptions  
Change in Instruction
- Long Term:  
Student Achievement



## Break

Please be ready to participate in the next activity at 2:30

## Next Steps

**Session 3 Materials**

Article for Evaluating PD session:

Desimone, L. M. (2011). A primer on Effective professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(6), 68-71.



**Session 3 Reflection**

Reflection questions:

Based on the morning sessions, did you find any resources that will support PD opportunities for your school based on their level of concerns?

When considering an action plan for PD, what information do you feel would support your team over the next school year?

## Appendix B: Participant Invitation to Participate in Research Questionnaire

Teachers and Administrators of GMSD:

My name is Nicole Corbett. I am a doctoral student at Walden University and I am conducting a study as a part of my doctoral program. You might already know me as principal at a local school, but this study is separate from that role. You are invited to take part in a research study about perceptions of the role of school administrators in building capacity for inclusion of students with emotional disabilities. I obtained your name/contact info via the central office.

The purpose of this study is to build understanding as to perceptions of the role of school administrators in building capacity for inclusion of students with emotional disabilities.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete one anonymous survey about inclusion of students with both academic and emotional/behavioral disabilities in your classroom. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

I believe the results of the study may provide a foundation to improve the structures and systems in place to support students and teachers involved in the inclusion of students with emotional disabilities in the district.

Below this invitation is a complete letter of consent that provides more detailed information regarding procedures, the voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of being in the study, privacy, and people you can contact if you have additional questions about the research.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Nicole Corbett, principal researcher

Appendix C: Participant Follow-Up Invitation to Participate in Research Questionnaire

Teachers and Administrators of GMSD:

This is a follow up my original invitation to participate in a research study about perceptions of the role of school administrators in building capacity for inclusion of students with emotional disabilities. The purpose of this study is to build understanding as to perceptions of the role of school administrators in building capacity for inclusion of students with emotional disabilities.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete one anonymous survey about inclusion of students with both academic and emotional/behavioral disabilities in your classroom. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

I believe the results of the study may provide a foundation to improve the structures and systems in place to support students and teachers involved in the inclusion of students with emotional disabilities in the district.

Below this invitation is a complete letter of consent that provides more detailed information regarding procedures, the voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of being in the study, privacy, and people you can contact if you have additional questions about the research.

If you have not had an opportunity to complete the questionnaire, I hope you will be able find a place for it on your schedule before the end of this week.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Nicole Corbett, principal researcher

## Appendix D: Questionnaire

## Questionnaire

With which age group do you work:

\_\_\_\_\_ PK-K    \_\_\_\_\_ 1-4    \_\_\_\_\_ 5-8    \_\_\_\_\_ 9-12

Total number of years teaching in a PK – 12 setting

\_\_\_\_\_ 0-2    \_\_\_\_\_ 3-5    \_\_\_\_\_ 6-10    \_\_\_\_\_ 11-15    \_\_\_\_\_ 16-20    \_\_\_\_\_ 20+

Total number of years in administration in a PK-12 setting

\_\_\_\_\_ 0-2    \_\_\_\_\_ 3-5    \_\_\_\_\_ 6-10    \_\_\_\_\_ 11-15    \_\_\_\_\_ 16-20    \_\_\_\_\_ 20+

Total number of years in this district

\_\_\_\_\_ 0-2    \_\_\_\_\_ 3-5    \_\_\_\_\_ 6-10    \_\_\_\_\_ 11-15    \_\_\_\_\_ 16-20    \_\_\_\_\_ 20+

Educational Background

\_\_\_\_\_ Early Childhood Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Elementary Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Middle Level Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Secondary Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Administration

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelors in Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Masters in Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Post-Masters level work in Education

I have had one or more students with **academic** disabilities in my general education classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

How do you define **academic** disabilities?

I have had one or more students with **emotional/**

**behavioral** disabilities in my general education classroom. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

How do you define **emotional/behavioral** disabilities? Short answer

### How do you define academic success in your classroom?

#### Answer box

Please indicate on the percentage line what percentages of students with **academic** disabilities are academically successful in your general education classroom?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

Please indicate on the percentage line what percentages of students with **emotional/behavioral** disabilities are academically successful in your general education classroom?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

### How do you define behavioral success in your classroom?

#### Answer box

Please indicate on the percentage line what percentages of students with **academic** disabilities are behaviorally successful in your general education classroom?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

Please indicate on the percentage line what percentages of students with **emotional/behavioral** disabilities are behaviorally successful in your general education classroom?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

### How do you define social success in your classroom?

#### Answer box

Please indicate on the percentage line what percentages of students with **academic** disabilities are socially successful in your general education classroom?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

Please indicate on the percentage line what percentages of students with **emotional/behavioral** disabilities are socially successful in your general education classroom?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

There are structures, programs, and resources in my school to support the inclusion of students with *emotional/behavioral* disabilities  Yes  No

There are structures, programs, and resources in my district to support the inclusion of students with *emotional/behavioral* disabilities  Yes  No

Have you received effective training to manage inclusion for students with *emotional/behavioral* disabilities?  Yes  No

If yes, please answer the questions below. If no, please skip to the next section.

- I received effective training in undergraduate work  Yes  No
- I received effective training in post-graduate work  Yes  No
- I received effective training through workshops/conferences.  Yes  No
- I received effective training through district initiatives/ Professional Development.  Yes  No

Building administrators help to support the inclusion of students with *emotional/behavioral* disabilities  Yes  No

District administrators help to support the inclusion of students with *emotional/behavioral* disabilities  Yes  No

What actions can administrators take to build capacity to support inclusion of students with *emotional/behavioral* disabilities in the general education classroom?

- Provide technical support via district staff or consultant experts
- Establish working relationships with appropriate community agencies
- Provide professional development
- Establish collaborative planning time
- Insure appropriate personnel/staff
- Give consideration to staffing ratios
- Establish supports for students and staff members
- Other

Please expand upon any of the options you selected in the response box below.

**Please assess your proficiency level on the following teaching strategies and tools:  
(Stetson & Associates, 2007)**

	Expert	Practitioner	Apprentice	Novice
Using pre and post assessment data to guide instruction	_____	_____	_____	_____
Using pre assessment data to develop lessons	_____	_____	_____	_____
Using behavioral data to work proactively in the area of student management	_____	_____	_____	_____
Developing a class profile of student learning characteristics to guide instruction	_____	_____	_____	_____
Delivering instruction to accommodate different learning styles	_____	_____	_____	_____
Providing opportunities for student choice in activities or assessments	_____	_____	_____	_____
Incorporating IEP accommodations into the daily instruction and assessment	_____	_____	_____	_____
Working with classes to develop classroom norms	_____	_____	_____	_____
Understanding the resources available in the school to support student behavior needs	_____	_____	_____	_____
Accessing the resources available in the school to support student behavior needs	_____	_____	_____	_____

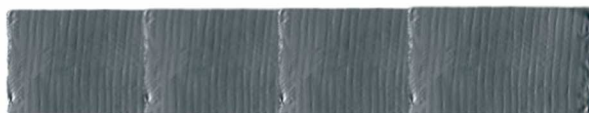


## Appendix E: Interview Protocol

## Interview Questions:

- Describe your background working in an inclusive school or classroom.
- How do the structures and systems in place in this district support or hinder the inclusion of SWED?
- How does the district PD support or hinder the inclusion of SWED for inclusion in the general education classroom?
- How do teachers perceive administrators can support the inclusion of SWED in the general classroom setting?
- In your experience, what components must be present in the systems of a school to lead to successful inclusion of SWED?
- Are there strategies or programs being implemented in your school to help with the successful inclusion of SWED?
- Are there other strategies or programs you would like to see implemented in your school to help with the successful inclusion of SWED?
- What professional development opportunities need to be provided to help with the successful inclusion of SWED?
- Is there any other information you would like to share to help me to develop a deeper understanding of inclusion of SWED into the general education classroom?

### Appendix F: Letter of Cooperation



*...committed to the development of Character, Competence, Creativity and Community.*

March 15, 2016

Dear Nicole Corbett,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Administrative Leadership to Build Capacity for Inclusion of Students with Emotional Disabilities within the [redacted]. As part of this study, I authorize you to communicate with prospective participants via email, conduct anonymous questionnaires using a survey site, interview district teachers and administrators, engage in member checking of interviews to insure reliability of collected data, and present results of the project study to the district leadership team. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Access to teacher and administrators' email addresses. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

