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Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development's Role for Instruction in Inclusive Settings

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development's Role for Instruction in

Inclusive Settings

by

Dwight Williams

BS, Northwood University, 1992

MA, Kaplin University, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2019

Abstract

Students with disabilities (SWDs) are being placed in inclusive settings. The problem is that in many cases, teachers who are assigned to these students may not have necessary training in special education. Lack of such teacher training can lead to deficits in learning for SWDs. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify secondary general education teachers' perspectives on professional development (PD) regarding teaching SWDs in inclusion classroom settings. The conceptual framework for this study was Bandura's self-efficacy construct as presented in social cognitive theory. For teachers, self-efficacy may influence instructional practices, classroom climate, and attitudes toward educational processes. In this phenomenological study, data were gathered from 12 high school general education teachers with experience in teaching SWDs in inclusive settings using one-on-one interviews and a short demographic questionnaire. The first research question concerned whether general education teachers believed that PD could improve teachers' performance with SWDs in inclusion settings. Results indicated that respondents generally believed that PD inclusion training was needed. The second research question concerned how PD should influence coteaching in inclusion settings. Results indicated that respondents generally believed that PD inclusion training should provide skills to allow teachers to assist special education students in inclusion settings without making them feel differentiated or singled out. In future studies, it is recommended that the sample be segmented into groups of general education teachers and special education teachers, with an equal number of each. It is also recommended that a quantitative study be initiated to examine whether the findings are confirmed with a larger population.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: To my wonderful, patient, and extremely supportive wife, Sheri Luann Williams, you are the very best wife that a man could ever ask for. God in his infinite wisdom knew I needed you by my side every step of the way to make this dream come to pass. Your constant support, while pushing me to complete this task goes unmatched to any endeavor that I have ever had "including the military". I thank you. I will always love you, be by your side and support any and all endeavors that you choose, my beautiful young wife. I also would like to dedicate this doctorate to our children, Antwaine, Promise, Candi, William, Jonathon, and last but not least, my baby girls Sariah and Sarah. I hope this gives you all the encouragement to continue your lives and know that you can succeed in anything that you want, as long as you put our God first and have the support of people who genuinely love you.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that GOD is number one in my life. He has comforted and encouraged me every step of the way. Not just in completing this tremendous task but in every facet of my life, including restoring me, my faith, and compassion for people. I would also like to acknowledge Mr. Jacob May, Dr. Jonah J. Eleweke, Dr. Dena J. Aucoin and Dr. Joel B. Goodin. I truly appreciate the patience, push and drive to assist me in getting this dissertation completed. I could not have completed this without your support.

Thank you colleagues.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this chapter, there are 12 sections that follow the introduction. The first section contains background information for the study; this section is followed by the problem statement and the purpose of the study. Next, the research questions of the study are posted, and then a description of the conceptual framework of the study is presented. The nature of the study is discussed next, followed by definitions of key terms and assumptions underlying the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study, as well as a chapter summary.

It may be difficult for students with disabilities (SWDs) to learn and retain knowledge compared to their nondisabled peers. Knowles, Massar, Raulston, and Machalicek (2017) asserted that SWDs placed in self-contained classrooms experience inadequate academic progress and encounter difficult postschool issues at a higher rate than their nondisabled peers. Before the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, SWDs assigned to self-contained classrooms did not have access to the same level of educational content as their nondisabled peers. Cipriano, Barnes, Bertoli, Flynn, and Rivers (2016) insisted that SWDs assigned to self-contained classrooms miss the opportunity to learn utilizing the strategies of their nondisabled peers in general education classrooms. As a result, Cipriano et al. stated, SWDs in self-contained classrooms experience little academic progress. Therefore, although SWDs may graduate, they may be limited in their preparation to be productive participants in society. To address this issue, advocates have pressed the government to phase out

special schools and support the idea of non-segregated schools while placing eligible

SWDs in inclusive settings (McMuray & Thompson, 2016).

Inclusion is a term used in education to express the commitment that all children

will be educated to the maximum extent possible with their peers, whether they are

disabled or nondisabled. The initial intent of inclusion policies was that SWDs would

benefit socially from simply being in the classroom with nondisabled peers, not that they

would attain equal academic performance relative to their nondisabled peers (Individuals

with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). While federal law does not require

inclusion, federal law does require that educational facilities make efforts to place SWDs

in the least restrictive environment (LRE), which may include inclusive settings. The

LRE for a student must be in a classroom that meets the unique needs of SWDs. The LRE

may be different for different SWDs based on their individual needs (Individuals with

Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). Olsen, Leko, and Roberts (2016) stated

that the rationale for inclusion of SWDs is educational equity because SWDs have the

right to have access to the same content as their nondisabled peers.

The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted, observed

that due to the declining academic achievement of SWDs, many administrative leaders

are under pressure from the State of West Virginia to increase teacher accountability,

student performance, and academic achievement, thus placing increased responsibility on

the general education teacher. Overstreet (2017) suggested that new teaching strategies

that affect student academic success in high-stakes testing have made teacher learning a

very prevalent topic. Overstreet (2017) stated that student academic success is tied to teacher performance and teacher pay. Research has indicated that the success rate of SWDs is very low in general education classes and that the efficacy of teachers in meeting the needs of SWDs in general education classes is very low (Stefanski, 2018). The claim was made that secondary teachers should be required to develop the skills needed to assist SWDs in inclusion settings (Melekoglu, 2018).

Muega (2016) stated that although placement of SWDs in inclusion settings may be beneficial in enabling SWDs to gain equal access to the curriculum relative to their nondisabled peers, general education teachers may not have sufficient exposure or training that has adequately prepared them to teach SWDs. Muega further noted that many general education teachers have concerns regarding their ability to teach SWDs in inclusion settings. There has not been significant research completed regarding general education teachers' efficacy as it applies to inclusion and the effect of coteaching.

Researchers have stated that it is important that teachers gain sufficient knowledge of the needs of SWDs coming into inclusion settings, especially when PD is not available (Gavish, 2016, Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016). Gavish (2016) and Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) contended that teachers should work in a collaborative manner to ensure that all available resources concerning SWDs is available and to establish professional relationships in order to enhance the learning experience and success of SWDs in inclusion settings. Coteaching provides an opportunity for SWDs to share a classroom with their nondisabled peers while increasing their skills academically

and socially. If both special educators and general educators were available to provide both content and the aforementioned skill sets, there might not be a great need for general educators to have specialized training in meeting the needs of SWDs. Smith (2017) argued that it is helpful if a special education teacher is placed in such a classroom to assist and, in many situations, provide support to SWDs in a smaller group.

While co teaching is designed to enhance learning in inclusive settings, researchers have found that the attitudes and personalities of coteaching individuals appear to be somewhat negative (Strogilos, Stefanidis & Tragoulla, 2016). The principal of the high school, observed that coteachers complained that time might not be well spent collaborating and planning. Researchers have claimed that access to PD may encourage more support and practical implementation of coteaching and that administrative support may be necessary to support coteaching activities while moving in the direction of an inclusive culture (Strogilos et al., 2016). This study has the potential to influence the quality of education for SWDs and enhance general education teachers' self-efficacy as successful teachers of all students.

Background

SWDs are now included in general education classrooms under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law. IDEA 2004, however, is not a law that states that SWDs must be put in inclusion classrooms. The federal law states that all school districts are required to develop and provide a free and appropriate public education for all children. The first legislation of its kind, it required that education be

provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for each child. This means that SWDs

should be taught in neighborhood schools in general education classes, if these settings

represent the LRE. The LRE may or may not be an inclusion setting. General education

teachers have not been pleased about inclusion at all. The high school principal, stated

that general education teachers were not pleased because they were not performing well

with SWDs in their general education classrooms. The principal at the study site, stated

that there were a few reasons for this. First, SWDs may have disabilities that general

education teachers are not equipped to handle from a teaching perspective. Unlike their

general education counterparts, SWDs may come to class unprepared to learn. A teacher

at the study site stated Additionally, SWDs may have behavioral problems that general

education teacher. PD was required to be taken by all teachers. According to a teacher at

the study site, PD geared toward general education teachers who teach SWDs in inclusion

settings was not mandatory and was rarely attended by general education teachers.

Problem Statement

The problem was that the perspectives of general education teachers were not

adequately considered in the development of PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings.

Therefore, it was not known if or to what extent general education teachers believed that

PD could be used to improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings, as

the principal at the high school where the current study was conducted stated that PD had

not been effective with SWDs in inclusion settings thus far. Brown (2017) observed that

general education teachers are teaching SWDs in inclusion classrooms, creating teaching

and learning gaps as SWDs may not benefit in inclusion settings due to lack of teacher expertise and training. Researchers have stated that lack of PD for general education teachers on effectively teaching SWDs in inclusion settings may lead to a decline in academic success for SWDs (Dev & Hayes, 2018; Kent, 2016). The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted, stated that general education teachers are now mandated/encouraged to take PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings. An extensive review of the literature indicated that there has been no quantitative or qualitative research to address this problem. It was important to conduct the current study because inclusion of SWDs will continue and there is no expectation for improved academic outcomes among this population if teacher training does not improve (Brown, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand how the perceptions of general education teachers can be used to improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings. This research investigated the perspectives of general education teachers concerning PD related to teaching in an inclusive classroom and general education teachers' perceptions regarding PD and coteaching in inclusion settings.

Research Questions

RQ1:   Do general education teachers believe that PD related to SWDs in

inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in

inclusion settings?

RQ2:   How should PD influence coteaching in inclusion settings?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The conceptual framework used for this study was Bandura's self-efficacy

construct. Generally, self-efficacy is the influence of beliefs that guide the feelings,

thoughts, and behavior of individuals that lead to the ability to accomplish a task

(Bandura, 2018; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018). Teachers' self-efficacy may

significantly influence their instructional practices, classroom climate, and attitudes

toward educational processes (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018; Malinen et al., 2018).

The influence of teachers' beliefs that guide their feelings, thoughts, and

behaviors toward PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings informed this study's

approach, research questions, instrument development, and data analysis process. The

self-efficacy framework required a qualitative exploratory approach to the beliefs,

feelings, thoughts and behaviors that may affect PD related to SWDs in inclusion

settings. The two research questions in this study were also informed by the self-efficacy

framework, as I sought to understand participants' feelings and thoughts concerning PD

related to SWDs in inclusion settings. With the development of the discussion guide, the

emphasis was on addressing the research questions and exploring participants' feelings

and thoughts toward PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings. Finally, given that the study was qualitative, a content analysis approach was used to analyze the data. With this approach, codes were used to identify verbatim responses related to the research questions, and themes were developed from the codes.

Bandura (2018b) described self-efficacy as having two components: efficacy expectations and outcome expectancy. Efficacy expectation involves the belief that an individual has the knowledge, capability, and skills that can create behaviors or actions that will produce desired outcomes and objectives. Outcome expectancy looks to the person's perception of the likelihood of performing a task or achieving a goal at a self-expected level of performance; it is of the confidence that actions can lead to intended outcomes (Bandura, 2018b).

If teachers have efficacy expectation and not outcome expectancy, they may be unsuccessful in implementing their lesson plans, even if they are professionally qualified. Bandura (2018a) noted that both efficacy expectation and not outcome expectancy are domain specific and observed reciprocal properties with teacher self-efficacy lends to how teacher self-efficacy is a stimulus for teaching evidence-based practice (EBP), also influenced by PD leads to better understanding of the implementation of EBP in an inclusive setting with SWDs.

Therefore, in this study, I considered how teacher efficacy might influence the relationship between PD and the implementation of EBP in an inclusive setting for SWDs. According to Bandura's theory, there are four sources that can affect teacher self-

efficacy levels. These four sources are mastery teaching experience, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. Mastery teaching experiences happen when teachers can consistently demonstrate specific skills and competence in the classroom from previous years while proving their pedagogical effectiveness and efficiency. Vicarious experience refers to learning from a successful teacher. Bandura believed that seeing other teachers similar to themselves succeed through their sustained efforts encouraged teachers to believe in their ability to succeed (Bandura, 2018c).

Observations of nonsuccessful teachers can lead to low self-efficacy (Bandura, 2018c). In describing social persuasion within his social cognitive theory (SCT), Bandura held that a portion of a person's learned knowledge is attributed to observing others in context while interacting with and experiencing outside media influences. For example, behaviors may be modeled by parents, teachers, peers, and individuals portrayed by the media. Modeling provides examples of behavior that may be imitated at a later time (Wright, O'Halloran & Stukas, 2016).) The physiological and emotional state of a teacher can also affect efficacy when the teacher is excited and enthusiastic about teaching. Stress or tension can be signs of vulnerability in regard to poor performance.

Nature of the Study

This study used a phenomenological research design. This design focused on participants' interpretation of their experiences. The phenomenologist does not assume that he or she knows what participants are feeling or how participants interpret things

(Creswell, 2018). Creswell (2018) described phenomenological research as reporting as accurately as possible the phenomenon while remaining true to the facts. Creswell stated that the phenomenological researcher does not add any preconceived notion to the interpretations. The qualitative methodology was the appropriate research approach for this study because I sought to understand the perspectives of general education teachers concerning PD as related to teaching in the inclusive classroom and their perceptions regarding PD and coteaching in inclusion settings. Qualitative research, by definition, focuses on obtaining in-depth insights through open-ended interviewing techniques as well as archival data analysis (Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Omrod, 2018). However, in this study, in-depth interviews were the sole approach used for data collection.

The population of this study was high school general education teachers who had experience with teaching SWDs in inclusive settings. The process for selection of participants was purposeful, which allowed me to deliberate selection of the participants from the study site. The selection included teachers who had experience in working with SWDs for at least 1 year. These teachers were also general education teachers who had participated in at least two PDs at the high school level. It was important to the study that these teachers were involved. I electronically sent a request for participants along with the requirements for participation to the staff at the school. All teachers who met the criteria above were invited to participate in the study. If potential recruits choose not to participate, no further contact was initiated related to the study.

Rumrill, Cook, and Wiley (2018) stated that phenomenologists ensure that they do not ascribe their own meanings to experiences that exist in their participants' lives. In this qualitative study, results may assist in understanding the different experiences and situations of a small group of participants. The case study functioned in a bounded system. A bounded system is described as research that is separated by time, place, and physical boundaries. A purposeful selection of a limited number of participants provided rich insights into the culture of a group. In-depth interviews can assist in explaining significant relationships between real-life situations that can be too difficult to explain with quantitative survey and experimental strategies (Wiatr, 2016, Yin, 2015).

Definitions

Teacher self-efficacy: Teacher self-efficacy involves the influence of beliefs that individuals/groups have in relation to their ability to achieve a desired outcome (Bandura, 2018); essentially, it is teachers' self-perceptions of their ability to teach effectively.

District-level growth and achievement reports: These reports show the median student growth percentile in a content area for all schools in a district for a year, presented in a bubble plot where each bubble represents a school (West Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

Highly qualified school: A highly qualified school is a school meeting the following seven standards to a high degree: Standard I, Positive Climate & Cohesiveness Culture; Standard II, School Leadership; Standard III, Standards-Focused Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessments; Standard IV, Student Support Services & Family/

Community Connections; Standard V, Educator Growth & Development; Standard VI, Efficient Effective Management; and Standard VII, Continuous Improvement (West Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

Individual student growth and achievement report: This report shows a student's growth and achievement over a period of several years based on the student's most recent West/Test2 scores and the previous 3 years (if available). This report is available for reasoning through language arts and math. The report also includes student scale scores, achievement levels, growth percentiles, and growth level. The report also provides a projection of how the student might perform on next year's test given various growth scenarios based on what the model shows statistically (West Virginia Department of Education, 2015).

Norm reports: The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted stated that these are standardized tests that are used to compare student results across the county and state to determine whether test takers perform better or worse than a hypothetical average student.

Quarterly progress reports: These reports were created to determine the level of performance and achievement of individual students in 9-week increments. They also provide data to drive instruction in accordance with curriculum maps (West Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

School grade-level growth and achievement report: This report shows all students' growth percentiles for a grade and content area for a year. It is presented in a

bubble plot, where each bubble represents an individual student (West Virginia

Department of Education, 2017).

West Virginia growth model: This model was adopted to assist in providing more

details on individual student progress. It includes indicators that allow for more student-

centered discussion toward more accurate assessment of what the student knows or has

learned, and it provides data to guide educators in adjusting where necessary to assist in

the learning process (West Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

Related services: Transportation and developmental, corrective, and other

supportive services as are required to assist an eligible student with an exceptionality in

benefiting from special education (West Virginia Policy 2419, 2017).

Transition services: A coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability

designed within an outcome-orientated process that promotes movement from school to

post school activities, including but not limited to postsecondary education, adult

education, vocational training, and integrated employment including supported

employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or

community participation (West Virginia Policy 2419, 2017).

Supplementary aids and services: Aids, services, and other supports that are

provided in general education classes, other education-related settings, and

extracurricular and nonacademic settings to enable students with exceptionalities to be

educated with students without exceptionalities to the maximum extent appropriate (West

Virginia Policy 2419, 2017).

Assumptions

Assumptions are things seen as routine to be true or plausible by researchers and peers who read this dissertation (Creswell, 2018). There were several assumptions associated with this study. First, presumably, the participants were honest when answering questions during the interview process. Honest responses to interview questions are important because the integrity of the research depends upon it. Without honest responses to interview questions, any conclusions draw from the research will not be valid. My history as the former principal of the school where I conducted the study may have led to issues related to respondents' honesty. However, I had not worked at the school for several years, and I no longer worked within the school district. Therefore, any pressure that participants might have felt to be dishonest would have been minimal.

Another assumption was that the discussion guide that I used was a valid instrument to obtain the thoughts and feelings of general education teachers who teach SWDs. This assumption was important because if it had not been a valid instrument, it might have adversely affected the accuracy of the conclusions drawn from the analysis.

A further assumption was that this study related to ontology or the nature of reality (Creswell, 2018). I assumed that there were multiple realities and sought to explore these realities as they related to various individuals and their experiences. This assumption was important because it guided my expectations around data collection. Because there was an expectation of multiple realities, my objective was to ascertain those multiple realities, instead of just looking for symmetry in respondent feedback. The

final assumption of this study related to epistemology, or how a researcher acquires knowledge. I assumed that the data obtained for this study consisted of the authentic individual views of participants in the field and were therefore subjective. This assumption was important because it spoke to the depth of knowledge that I sought to obtain from the respondents, in contrast to the data one might seek in a quantitative study.

Generally, assumptions are important as they speak to the validity and reliability of a study. For example, if it is not assumed that respondents are being honest in their responses, then the data obtained cannot be assumed to be valid (Creswell, 2018).

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations and scope involve the restrictions placed on a study by a researcher (Creswell, 2018). Such restrictions include but are not limited to size and composition of the sample. The first delimitation in this study was the location. All respondents were from a single high school in West Virginia. The second delimitation was the type of teacher, in that only general education teachers who taught SWDs in their classrooms qualified to participate in the study. The final delimitation of the study related to the number of participants, in that there could be no more than 12. Creswell (2018) suggested that in order to obtain a more detailed perspective on a setting, a smaller number of participants studied over an extended period is adequate. Using any other method may not provide the needed information. This study may bring to light the significance of specialized training for general education teachers in the local rural school to assist in closing the gap between theory and practice in relationship to SWDs having access to the

curriculum and receiving a quality education. Insights gained from the local rural school may be transferred to other schools nationwide.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses in a study that are mostly outside the researcher's control (Creswell, 2018). One limitation of this study was that it was qualitative, such that the findings are not generalizable to the larger population of general education teachers who teach SWDs. Another limitation of the study was the low sample size. Data from a smaller sample (in this case, $N = 12$) may have lower reliability than in studies with larger sample sizes. However, small sample size is common in qualitative studies, in which there is an emphasis on depth rather than breadth (Creswell, 2018). Another limitation of the study relates to the analysis of the data. Content analysis was used to interpret the findings of the respondent interviews. This method of analysis was more subjective than quantitative approaches and, therefore, less reliable. Additionally, this data analysis approach may not have led to interpreting the results with a high degree of accuracy, given the subjective nature of interpretation (Creswell, 2018). To ensure increased accuracy during the data analysis process, the interviews were recorded. This ensured that respondents' comments and perspectives were captured verbatim, which in turn improved the reliability and validity of the data analysis process. Additionally, I provided a robust and detailed account of the respondents' experiences during the data collection process. This aided in both accuracy and transferability (Creswell, 2018).

Significance

This study is significant in its potential impact in three areas: the advancement of scientific knowledge, contributions to practice, and social change. Below are details about how this study may affect these three areas.

Contributions to Advance Scientific Knowledge

Research studies can be significant in advancing scientific knowledge. Specifically, a study may be significant if its findings add to the literature by addressing an important research question or filling a gap in existing research. This study has the ability to do both. First, more and more general education teachers are being asked to teach SWDs in inclusion settings. A finding that the perceptions of general education teachers are related to their effectiveness in educating SWDs in inclusion settings, particularly in terms of improvement, would be extremely important and would add to the literature on the topic. Conversely, if the research shows that the negative perceptions of general education teachers adversely affected the academic performance of SWDs in inclusion settings, this would also be worthy of publication, as it would add to the literature. In either event, the results would fill a known gap in the literature and would bolster the argument for the significance of the study.

Contributions to Advanced Practice and/or Policy

If the study illuminates how perceptions of general education teachers positively affect the academic performance of SWDs in inclusion settings, this information can be used to improve practices and policies. First, the specific findings related to perceptions

can be used to develop training programs for general education teachers that promote perceptions and subsequent behaviors that improve academic performance among SWDs in inclusion settings. Second, as inclusion of SWDs in general education becomes more widespread across the country, the findings of this study can be used as foundational knowledge in other programs across the country.

Summary

Although inclusion is increasingly a norm, SWDs may not benefit from inclusive setting due to lack of PD for general education teachers. The problem is that general education teachers may not have the skills to teach SWDs, and PD that helps teachers to develop these skills may not be available. General education teachers are teaching SWDs in the inclusion classroom, creating a teaching and learning gap as the SWDs may not benefit in the inclusion setting due to lack of teacher expertise and training (Brown, 2017). The People with Disabilities Act (2003) mandates that SWDs participate in statewide assessments; however, many states are not meeting an acceptable level of academic progress for SWDs. The reasons offered include teacher perceptions and attitudes, as well as lack of available training for general education teachers (Goldstein & Behnigk, 2012). Some teachers may not have received the level of training needed to support these students, ultimately affecting the level and quality of education that SWDs receive. The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted stated that lack of academic progress for SWDs places pressure on teachers, who may fear losing their jobs if there is a perception that students are not receiving the education that

they are due. This study creates an opportunity for positive social change from which all schools may benefit, in that collaboration between general education and special education teachers may greatly influence the quality of education for SWDs through the improvement of general education teachers' self-efficacy as successful teachers of all students.

The next chapter consists of a review of the literature. In it, I describe the literature search strategy, including specific databases used, the search terms used for each of the databases, and the number of results produced by each search term. Chapter 2 also includes the conceptual framework and a literature review related to key variables and concepts, followed by a summary and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

While inclusion continues to be an increasing norm, SWDs may not benefit from inclusive settings due to lack of PD for general education teachers. Anderson (2017) stated that examination of the effects of teachers' formative practice in the classroom, followed by PD input, revealed that participants in the intervention group consistently outperformed the participants in the controlled group (Anderson, 2017). The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted stated that the problem is that the general education teacher may not have the necessary skills to teach SWDs, and PD training may not be available. Even if training is available, the skills are the main issue, in that training increases the probability of demonstrating skills but does not guarantee the demonstration of skills because some people may be poor students. When general education teachers teach SWDs in the inclusion classroom, there may be a teaching and learning gap, as SWDs may not benefit in the inclusion setting due to lack of teacher expertise and training (Brown, 2017). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify secondary general education teachers' perspectives on PD regarding inclusion and coteaching SWDs. This research investigated the perspectives of general education teachers concerning PD related to teaching in the inclusive classroom and concerning PD and coteaching in inclusion settings.

In its first section, this literature review chapter contains a description of the literature search strategy. The second section contains a review of the conceptual

framework, and the third section contains a literature review related to key variables and concepts. The final section in this chapter consists of a summary and conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

I used several databases to search for relevant and current literature, including EBSCO, Education Research Complete, ERIC, ProQuest, Psychlit, SocINDEX, and SAGE Journals. The search was initiated with the term *access to education*, followed by *least restrictive environment*, followed by *people with disabilities* and *rural schools*. These searches were followed by searches for the terms *retention, training*, *peer training*, and *special education teachers*. The final terms used in the literature search were *program effectiveness*, *teacher collaboration*, and *sustainability in professional development*.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study was Bandura's self-efficacy construct as discussed in his social cognitive theory (SCT). In this section, I first present a detailed description of Bandura's SCT. I then offer a detailed description of the self-efficacy construct, followed by a discussion of how the self-efficacy construct applies to teaching.

Social Cognitive Theory

This conceptual framework demonstrates how personal factors in the form of ethical thinking, emotional self-reactions, moral conduct, and the existing environment interact as causes that influence each other bidirectionally. Moral thinking is a process in

which multidimensional rules and standards are used to judge conduct. Situations with moral consequences are comprised of numerous decisional components that may be given less significance or more weight contingent upon the values by which they are cognitively processed and the specific patterns of events in given moral dilemmas. There are some ethnically universal features to the developmental variations of standards of conduct and the locus of moral agency (Bandura, 2018).

These commonalities arise from basic consistencies in the types of biopsychic-societal changes that occur with increasing age in all cultures. A theory of morality involves a comprehensive beginning that is provided by rationalistic methods cast in terms of skill in intellectual reasoning. Moral conduct is inspired and controlled largely by the constant application of self-reactive influence. Self-regulatory mechanisms, consequently, form an essential part in the outset of moral agency in social cognitive theory. Development of self-regulatory abilities does not generate an invariant control contrivance within a person. Self-reactive influences do not function unless they are triggered, and there are several psychosocial processes by which self-sanctions can be selectively triggered and disengaged from transgressive behavior. Mechanisms of moral disengagement also play a dominant role in the social cognitive theory of morality (Bandura, 2018).

Generally, self-efficacy refers to the personal belief that one can identify and carry out goals both appropriately and effectively (Bandura, 2018; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018). More specifically, as it relates to teachers, self-efficacy may

significantly influence instructional practices, classroom climate, and attitudes toward educational processes (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018; Malinen et al., 2018).

Bandura described self-efficacy as having two components: efficacy expectation and outcome expectancy. Efficacy expectation involves the belief that an individual has the knowledge, capability, and skills to engage in behaviors or actions that will produce desired outcomes and objectives. Outcome expectancy looks to the person's perception of the likelihood of performing a task or achieving a goal at a self-expected level of performance; it involves confidence that actions can lead to intended outcomes (Bandura, 2018).

Self-Efficacy Construct

The way that individuals function is facilitated by a personal sense of control. If people believe that a problem can be solved, then they will be inclined to solve the problem (Winnicott, 2018). Not only will people be inclined to do so, but they will feel more committed to do so. Outcome expectancies refer to the results of an action, while self-efficacy expectancies refer to personal action control or agency. A person who believes that he or she can cause an event can present more of an active and self-determinant life course (Fernandez, Warner, Knoll, Montenegro, & Schwarz, 2015). This demonstrates a sense of control of his or her environment. It can also be thought of as self-confidence in the ability to deal with stressful situations. Schwarzer (2014) stated that self-efficacy makes an impact on how people feel, think, and act. Low self-efficacy is associated with low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. In terms of thinking, high

competence facilitates cognitive processes and academic performance (Schwarzer, 2014).

Schwarzer stated that self-efficacy can improve motivation or hinder motivation. More

challenging tasks are performed by people with high self-efficacy. Higher goals are set

and achieved by people with high self-efficacy (Schwarzer, 2014). Ramella (2017)

pointed out that actions are pre-thought-out as people are either pessimistic or optimistic

about scenarios depending on their level of self-efficacy, contending that people with

high self-efficacy bounce back quickly when setbacks occur. Self-efficacy allows people

to choose challenging settings, as well as to explore or create new environments. This

concept has been applied to diverse areas, including school achievement, physical health,

emotional disorders, and career choice (Williams & Rhodes, 2016).

If teachers have efficacy expectation and not outcome expectancy, they may be

unsuccessful in implementing their lesson plans, even if they are professionally qualified

to do so. Bandura (2018) noted that both efficacy expectation and outcome expectancy

are domain specific and observed reciprocal properties with teacher self-efficacy, in that

teacher self-efficacy is a stimulus for teaching evidence-based practices (EBP), also PD

leads to better understanding of implementation of EBP in an inclusive setting with

SWDs. Therefore, in this study, I considered how teacher efficacy might influence the

relationship between PD and the implementation of EBP in an inclusive setting for

SWDs.

Self-Efficacy Construct and Teaching Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura's theory, there are four elements that can affect teachers'

self-efficacy levels: (a) mastery teaching experience, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social

persuasion, and (d) physiological and emotional states. Bandura (2018) stated that

mastery teaching experiences happen when teachers are able to demonstrate specific

skills and competence in the classroom while proving their pedagogical effectiveness and

efficiency. Vicarious experience involves learning from a successful teacher.

Observations of nonsuccessful teachers can lead to low self-efficacy (Bandura, 2018).

Social persuasion and emotional support from superiors and other teachers in the field

can affect efficacy in a positive way (Bandura, 2018). The physiological and emotional

state of a teacher can also affect efficacy, in that self-efficacy increases when teachers are

excited and enthusiastic about teaching.

Literature Review Related to key Variables and Concepts

Teacher Retention

The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted, said that

one could argue that in order to accomplish their jobs effectively, teachers may need PD.

However, teachers may resent having to participate in non-degree-related PD. Requiring

teachers to participate on non-degree-related PD, could cause an attitude shift regarding

the initial reasons for wanting to teach. Attitude and perception may go hand in hand and

may be closely related and defined as a point of view or the way in which an individual

thinks about something (Chatman, 2017). A study in Serbia that involved monitoring

attitudinal shifts in general educators regarding inclusion of SWDs found that teachers resented having to teach in inclusion settings and held negative attitudes toward mainstreaming. Their chief complaint was insufficient education and inadequate PD. Insufficient education and inadequate PD could lead to a negative perspective regarding academic outcomes of SWDs (Chatman, 2017).

Harfitt (2015) found that teachers who participate in PD programs remain in the profession longer. Sustainability of PD is important, in that skill learning is not a onetime occurrence, as teachers have the opportunity to revisit their skill sets and adjust them when necessary to improve newly learned skills. Long-term programs have proven to be instrumental in showing substantial success (Esser, Newsome, & Stark, 2016).

The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted, stated that teachers in some schools may feel threatened by the need to be more assertive in regard to teaching SWDs. The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted, also stated that teachers may fear that they will lose their jobs when SWDs are unable to meet new initiatives and standards because of teacher training they have not received. Teacher induction programs that include mentorship of new teachers increase the rate of teacher retention (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Avalos & Valenzuela, (2016) conducted a study to ascertain the relationship between teacher accountability and burnout. The study revealed many situations in which teachers, because of expectations of not meeting standards, experience burnout, which leads in some cases to teachers

leaving low-performing schools. Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Zijlstra, and Volman (2017) claimed that PD contributes greatly to high self-efficacy, which leads to teacher retention.

A subsequent study was conducted that addressed whether preparation before going into the classroom was a determining factor for 1st-year teachers to make the decision to continue and make a career out of teaching (Berryhill, 2018). Claiborne (2016) described two separate methods of teacher licensing. One method involves traditional teaching programs in which teachers earn a degree in pedagogy, and the other involves completing a teacher certification program. Claiborne stated that other teachers in the school buildings were influential and most planned to continue teaching. However, teachers who were prepared by college teaching programs had broader views relating to their careers (Claiborne, 2016).

There continues to be a shortage of teachers who are qualified in special education in rural areas. Compared to members of other professions, teachers receive a modest salary, which in many cases leads to them exiting the profession (Latifogulu, 2016). The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted stated, that unfortunately, administrators often must hire less qualified special education teachers in rural areas. The limited availability of special educators in rural schools makes it necessary for less qualified teachers to teach a more diverse population of SWDs. Researchers have stated that the shortage of qualified teachers in rural areas perpetuates attrition because of the increased workload of the teachers who are present. Conditions in which teachers must teach beyond their certifications often cause attrition (Burke, 2018).

Coldwell (2017) stated that PD can influence student academic success and have a positive impact on teacher retention. Wells (2018) claimed that high- quality programs and retention rates are related; therefore, high teacher turnover leads to low-quality education for students. Kelchtermans (2017) stated that qualified teachers who made the decision to leave the profession felt that there might not be a good fit between themselves, their professional goals, and their ambitions and the goals of the school. Leadership may also play a significant role in the retention of teachers. Player, Young, Perrone, and Grogan (2017) stated that strong principal leadership also contributes to teacher retention. It is becoming very difficult to find teachers who will stay in the field. Teacher turnover has posed a challenge to those charged with staffing public schools (Papay, Hicks-Bacher, & Page, 2017). Guili and Zeller (2016) claimed that teacher preparation, teacher education, and the quality of both may be determining factors when teachers are making the decision of whether to continue to teach. Elevated levels of burnout may contribute greatly to teachers' self-efficacy and productivity and may ultimately lower teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (O'Brenan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017).

Motivation is a component of teacher self-efficacy, contributing greatly to individuals' commitment to the teaching profession and encouraging retention in teachers (Imran, Kamaal, & Mahmoud, 2017). Pedota (2018) posited that student success or failure affects teachers' self-efficacy and contributes to teachers' decisions to stay in or

leave the profession. Schools can encourage teachers to pursue and remain in the teaching field by implementing professional learning communities (Trout, 2018).

Sustainability

Many times, outsiders conduct PD at organizations. The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted, stated that teachers may only have one opportunity to visit the outsider PD during the school year. Collins (2019) discussed the importance of continued PD. It has been found that a single instance of PD training may not be enough and that follow-up activities may be very important to the success of PD and may affect how instruction is delivered to SWDs (Collins, 2019). Peter (2018) conducted a study on special school placements in which trainees were prepared for SWDs being included in general education classes as well as SWDs being taught in self-contained classrooms. The teachers used specific rubrics for the expectations and completed 7 weeks of continued training in the form of continuing PD.

Instruction focused on pedagogical knowledge and skills, inner-drive emotional growth, and empathy. Peter (2018) stated that this experience prepared trainees for diverse situations, including dealing with anxieties and developing a deeper understanding of personalized learning. The training made it possible for these trainees to have a better understanding and acceptance of SWD. (Peter (2018) emphasized the importance and long-term effects of PD for sustainability.

Peter (2018) stated that sustainability in the field of educational PD is a key priority in the field. Dumitru (2017) stated that in an effort to contribute to improving the

quality of teaching and learning, continuous professional learning should become a requirement in education. Unsustainable innovations were dropped and forgotten (Zehetneker, 2014). Warr (2017) believed that education for sustainability is a paradigm of education and knowledge that is shared with human society. Warr (2017) asserted that while higher education institutions should encourage sustainability, it discourages sustainability. Esser (2016) has asserted that for sustainability to occur there must be continued collaboration amongst teachers and long-term engagement with an emphasis on student learning.

Workshops designed for PD should occur long-term to provide teachers the opportunity to change their processes. PD should not only affect the teachers' knowledge but also have a long-term effect on teacher confidence and ability to teach (Naizer, Sinclair, & Szabo, 2017). Singer (2017) believed that students learning processes depend upon the pre-seminar sustainability experience. Universities have seen promise in adding sustainability courses to their curriculum. (Lambrechts, Verhulst, & Rymenams, 2017). Lambrechts et al. (2017) encourage that PD initiatives should be framed as an organizational change system that empowers. If not, PD initiatives will have no significance and result in lack of connectivity to the big picture. Alexander (2016) supported that the theoretical and practical understanding of teachers derived from experience, training, and shapes the way that these teachers present the subject.

Melekis and Woodhouse (2016) stated that sustainability is comprised of three things. They are to live a way that is environmentally sustainable, economically

sustainable and socially sustainable. The world should have a vision of just and sustainable society then the educational programs should reflect this, no matter how economically privileged they are or not (Feriver, Teksoz, Olgan, & Reid, 2016). For many years, both international organizations and governments have been encouraging educational leaders to direct their focus on sustainability and social change in preparing students for real-life (Sund, 2018). McConnell, Delate, & Newlon (2017) submitted that continuous PD contributes greatly to the sustainability of knowledge obtained previously.

It gives an opportunity for reflection and improvement. Students of higher learning and working professionals are seeking PD and educational topics in sustainability (Hull, Kimmel, Robertson, & Mortimer, 2016). Teachers expect a PD program that strengthens sustainability. This empowers the teacher while providing the teacher with the motivation to apply the content (Gerda, Rensburg, Janse, & DeWitt 2016).

Necessity

High stakes testing is the cause of most job-related stress in the United States (Gonzalez, Peters, Orange, & Grigsby, 2016). East (2018) indicated that it is challenging to implement new assessment. East stated that proposed assessments must meet the standard and perception of the teachers and students. The standard and perception of what is a good assessment may be different from that of the assessment developer.

Pandhiani (2016) stated that what teachers believe about assessments is very important as it affects their assessment practices. The inclusion of SWDs in the

classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers has been a challenge. The expectation is that they interact while learning both academic and social skills. Presumably, SWDs assigned to the inclusive classroom are competent and capable of educating (Olson, 2017). General education teachers assigned to classrooms that have SWDs in them may not possess the skills needed to teach SWDs. Donohue and Bornman (2018) stated that general education teachers become overwhelmed when assigned to teach SWDs without the proper training. With inclusion becoming the norm in many education settings teachers must teach to a diverse group of students. It is incumbent of them that they are equipped to do so.

SWDs are graduating alongside their non-disabled peers. It is important that SWDs enjoy the same opportunity to learn as their peers. Teacher commitment relates to how they feel about their practice. High teacher self-efficacy is a derivative of how well they do their job and student academic success. When teachers have choices regarding their own learning, their self-efficacy increases, and they gain a more positive attitude about the teaching profession (Kanadi, 2017). Teachers, who are involved in continuous PD, have more of a positive impact on student success and value PD influence teachers' high self-efficacy for teaching (Rutherford, Long, & Farkas, 2017).

The attitude of teachers influences teacher satisfaction with their work, commitment to their work and the belief that the teaching profession and PD is needed (Demir, 2016). Due to the continual new development and differences of strategies, teachers must stay abreast of the changes that inform instruction and assist in the

management of SWDs in inclusive settings. The 21st-century or the globalization era, also called the era of knowledge expects that human resources have high-quality skills (Listiana, Susilo, Suwono, & Suarsini, 2016).

Teachers can deliver superior instruction to students when provided the necessary tools that encourage teachers to succeed in teaching at a level that compliments 21st -century learning (Knezek, 2018). Knezek (2018) examined both the contextual and individual factors that exist with the implementation of PD content including word study and fluency. Murphy (2016) asserted that good PD assists greatly in teachers using research-based strategies. The article discussed the importance of providing PD to all teachers. Traditional PD has a significant effect on teacher practices and stated that principals play a very important role in providing PD to both general educators and special educators, specifically beginning teachers (Murphy, 2016).

The requirement of IDEA Public Law 108-446, (2004) and NCLB Public Law 107-110, (2001) was that SWDs have access to the general education curriculum and meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) on state standards. It has become increasingly important that special educators know how to assist general educators in the delivery of content and instruction to SWDs. Murphy (2016) stated that PD for both special educators and general educators should meet these mandates.

This would mean that they have knowledge of content area and pedagogical knowledge to accomplish this. Abilock, Harada, and Fontichiara (2018) discussed the importance of PD, but more importantly, emphasized the importance of PD in that it

could cause professional growth when PD addresses the needs of the teachers. Teachers should have some input as to what training is needed and less time spent in PD that may not relevant to improving teacher effectiveness.

Summary and Conclusions

The research implies that teachers may be concerned that because of the pressure to teach SWDs and the inability to do so without training may be a cause for low retention. This creates a gap in research in PD of general education teachers to enhance delivery of instruction in inclusive settings. The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted stated that teachers, after the first year, are leaving the profession or moving to better performing schools. General education teachers need to feel secure in their positions and should receive the same level of training as special education teachers. This may encourage and assist these teachers greatly in accomplishing the task of teaching SWDs. Unfortunately, because of funding and the inability to provide adequate resources to rural schools, the level of quality teaching is impaired. The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted stated that smaller counties cannot afford to pay the salaries of larger counties, so the quality of education suffers. Schools in rural areas may not be getting the same quality of training that larger schools in non-rural areas are receiving, which causes a teaching and learning deficit in both teachers and SWDs (B. Cooley, Director of Special Education, personal communication, September 6, 2017).

The next chapter discusses the methodology of this study. This will include details about the research methodology and a justification for this model. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the target participants and the strategies for recruitment and a detailed description of the data collection, data analysis approach, and the data collection instrument.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify secondary general education teachers' perspectives on PD regarding inclusion and coteaching SWDs. In this section, I describe the study methodology and the research design. I also provide a description of the qualitative tradition and a justification for using the research design. I offer a description of the participants, the ethical protection of participants, and the data collection effort. Interview procedures and my role as the interviewer are discussed. Finally, I address methods of data analysis, including coding and credibility procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

At the local high school, the declining rate of academic achievement has brought to the forefront the need for administrators to put more effort in demanding that both general education and special education teachers contribute more to the success rate of SWDs placed in general education classes with their nondisabled peers. Anecdotal evidence indicates that PD is key in providing both added learning capacity to teachers and added learning to SWDs. The qualitative research questions are below.

RQ1:   Do general education teachers believe that PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings?

RQ2:   How should PD influence coteaching in inclusion settings?

The principal at the high school where the current study was conducted stated that teachers at the local study school have implied that the responsibility to teach SWDs

belongs to special education teachers, but the special education teachers are so few that they do not get to all of the SWDs in their caseloads. It has been reported that there is a critical shortage of special educators across the country (Pineda, 2018). Rural populations are particularly impacted by this shortage (Henderson, 2018). The purpose of qualitative research is to seek and understand how people make sense of their lives, to delineate the process of meaning making, and to describe how people interpret their experiences, with identification of themes common to the participants.

Within a qualitative framework, researchers conducting traditional case study explore the meanings and insights of an individual, group, or situation (Jones-Smith, 2015). Jones-Smith (2015) indicated that the researcher would record information provided by the participant. For this qualitative case study, I employed a qualitative approach to data collection using semistructured interviews. Jones-Smith (2015) prescribed that using semistructured interviews allows researchers to conduct investigations in real-life settings as prescribed. Creswell (2018) suggested that qualitative research presents realism to its readers and prompts feelings of shared experiences.

Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to a phenomenon of interest. Purposeful sampling gives the researcher the opportunity to speak with participants with experience in the setting (Tyson, 2017). Purposeful sampling and peer debriefing (in which a colleague examines notes and validates adherence to research questions) can support

quality of data, accuracy, and credibility. Asking a person outside the project to conduct a

thorough review and report back in writing the strengths and weaknesses of the project is

a method of validating certain aspects of the project, called an *external audit* (Creswell,

2018). I used the method of triangulation to validate data collection and analysis to

ensure accuracy. Triangulation is a process of corroborating evidence with different

individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection (Creswell, 2018). I examined

field notes and transcripts of audiotaped interviews at the study site.

The phenomenological research design focuses on participants' interpretations of

their experiences. A phenomenologist does not assume that he or she knows what a

participant is feeling or how participants interpret things (Creswell, 2018). Creswell

(2018) described phenomenological research as reporting a phenomenon as accurately as

possible while remaining true to the facts. Creswell stated that the phenomenological

researcher does not add any preconceived notion to interpretations. This was an

appropriate research design for this study because I sought to understand human

experiences and how people interpret them differently. Rumrill, Cook, and Wiley (2018)

stated that phenomenologists ensure that they do not ascribe their own meanings to

experiences that exist in their participants' lives.

Mixed method research design allows the researcher to use both quantitative and

qualitative methods in a single study or series of studies to understand a research problem

(Creswell, 2018). Mixed method design is a superior design to use if the researcher plans

to build upon both quantitative and qualitative data. I did not use mixed methods because

more focus was given to data derived from open-ended interview questions that provided words from the participants of the study, which offer more perspectives on the study topic while providing a complex picture of the study.

In quantitative research, the researcher seeks to identify a research problem based on trends in the field or a need to explain why something occurs using numerical data. I did not choose quantitative research design because my focus was responses to open-ended interview questions that provided words from participants in the study, which offered perspectives on the study topic along with a complex picture of the study.

Ethnography involves the study of people and culture by observing a society from the point of view of the subject of study. The culture of people is written just as presented. Creswell (2018) described ethnography as a design that involves the collection of data mostly through interviews and observation. According to Creswell, this form of inquiry is used within sociology and anthropology to explore shared patterns of behavior, actions, and language within an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period. In ethnography, the focus of the study is holistic (Creswell, 2018).

The aim of ethnography is to examine the culture of a setting, including its values, to paint a portrait of its complexities. Ethnography is useful to access embedded knowledge within a culture, such as how attitude and value systems directly influence the behavior of the group (Jones-Smith, 2018). For this study, individuals within the culture were of interest, not the culture itself; therefore, ethnography was not appropriate for this study.

Researchers using grounded theory take an inductive approach by continually reviewing collected data to build theory. Grounded theory method was used to study participants who had previously attempted suicide (Chi et al., 2018). Chi et al. (2018) described grounded theory as the study of processes and experiences. This would not have been an appropriate research method for the current study. The current study involved comparing responses to answer the research questions.

In order to investigate the lives of individuals through stories, the narrative approach may be used (Creswell, 2018). The narrative research design involves an inquiry in which the researcher tells stories about the lives of individuals. Creswell (2018) stated that the researcher retells shared stories in a narrative chronology, with the stories often reflecting a combination of the researcher's and participant's views. Owusu-Ansah and Agarwal (2018) agreed that the use of narrative research is to determine the perspective of narrators using interviews. Because participants' life stories were not the focus of this research, a narrative design would have been inappropriate for this study.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was that of an interviewer asking open-ended questions to elicit recorded responses. I transcribed responses from both audiotaped and handwritten notes by typing them into a computer file for analysis (Creswell, 2018). I used open-ended questions in interviews so that participants could describe their experiences without being constrained by any perspective that I might have or any previous research findings. I designed an interview protocol to assist in keeping track of

which questions to ask the participants and to provide a place to take notes during the interview.

Presently, I am the assistant superintendent of a district in a county neighboring the county of the study site. Previously, I was the principal at the study site, but that was 2 years before this study was conducted. I informed the participants of my previous employment with the research site. Although I was somewhat familiar with the dynamics of the organization, I sought to minimize any interference of my experience with the integrity of the study. In my current position, I have no professional connection to the study site, but understandably, there may be concerns about possible bias and even conflict of interest in relation to the research study.

I used several approaches to minimize such concern. Following the recommendations of Creswell (2018), I engaged in self-reflection to create an open and honest narrative that the participants would appreciate. The interview guide was strictly followed (Appendix C). To gain the participants' trust, I assigned them pseudonyms to ensure the protection of their identities, and all responses were confidential. Importantly, I sought to assure the participants that any internal responses of mine would not affect the genuine reporting of their responses.

There are additional types of researcher bias that can be present, including confirmation bias and leading question bias (Creswell, 2018). Confirmation bias exists when a researcher uses respondent information to confirm a belief or hypothesis previously held by the reseacher. To minimize confirmation bias, a researcher should

ensure that verbatim responses are captured via an electronic recording device to ensure accurate retrieval, continually reevaluate impressions of respondents, and challenge preexisting assumptions and hypothesis (Creswell, 2018). Leading question bias occurs when a researcher ask questions in a manner that directs respondents to answer in a way that confirms a hypothesis. It also can occur when a researcher elaborates on a respondent's answer, putting words into the respondent's mouth that align with the researcher's hypotheses. To address this form of bias, researchers should keep questions open ended and should avoid using their own words to summarize what respondents say (Creswell, 2018).

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population was high school general education teachers who had experience teaching SWDs in inclusive settings. The process for the selection of participants was purposeful, which allowed for deliberate selection of the participants from the study site. This assisted me in gaining a greater understanding of the phenomenon under study (Day, 2017). The selection included teachers who had experience working with SWDs for at least 1 year. These teachers were also general education teachers who had participated in at least two PDs at the high school level. It was important to the study that these teachers were involved. I electronically sent a request for participants along with the requirements for study participation to staff at the school. All teachers who met the criteria for

participation were invited to take part in the study. If potential recruits choose not to participate, no further contact was initiated related to the study.

I selected 12 participants for this study. Creswell (2018) stated that to gain a more detailed perspective on a setting, it should be adequate to study a smaller number of participants over an extended period. Creswell stated that this approach is termed *criteria-based selection*. Participants chosen in this manner may offer information that participants chosen by any other method might not provide. Day (2017) recommended using 1-40 participants for this type of research, but the use of more individuals could result in superficial perspectives.

Instrumentation

I created a discussion guide to address the research questions in this study. There was an iterative process used in the development of the discussion guide to enhance content validity. The discussion guide included a demographic section (Appendix D) and a main section that addressed the research questions. The demographic section consisted of nine questions, including questions pertaining to gender, age, ethnicity, grade level currently taught, certification type, degree level, total years teaching, total years teaching special education, and years teaching in an inclusion setting with SWDs. I used the literature as a basis for formulating the demographic questions (Berryhill et al., 2018; Finnegan, 2018). The responses assisted me in explaining the variations of responses by participants to the interview questions. There were 15 content questions that addressed the research questions (Appendix C).

After the initial development of the questionnaire, the discussion guide was sent to another researcher, who assisted in content analysis and in establishing the content validity of the discussion guide, who received a doctoral degree in education from Walden University. I consulted with him to ensure that the discussion guide content had good validity based on the research questions of this study. After the discussion guide was reviewed by Dr. Dodson, it was returned to me with good feedback and no requested revisions.

After receiving the discussion guide from Dr. Dodson, I tested it with a small sample of respondents to ensure that it was clear and that the questions flowed well. After the pilot study, I removed two questions to improve clarity.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I did not make any contact with the study site until I had received approval from the Walden University IRB. The IRB approval number is 06-12-18-0172662. After receiving IRB approval, I sent a request for permission letter to the superintendent of schools to gain access to the school and staff. The principal and staff at the study site received a recruitment letter and an invitation letter. The recruitment letter described the details of requirements to participate in the study. I included contact information for a representative of Walden University in case any participant wanted to speak privately concerning his or her rights as a participant. Information for my instructor at Walden University was also included. I arranged to interview 12 teachers at a prearranged undisclosed location away from the high school. The interview location was at the board

office. I scheduled time intervals for each interview, as discussed by Khan (2016). The participants were willing to share their feelings and thoughts about teaching SWDs and the pressures of doing so. Participants were able to express thoughts about PD.

I interviewed the first 12 teachers who responded to the participation invitation after they reviewed and signed the informed consent form. The informed consent document provided respondents with their rights and responsibilities as participants. Specifically, it indicated that respondents could discontinue the interview at any time. It also stated that that the respondents' personal information would be private and not disclosed to the public.

I used an audiotape recorder to record the interviews, and I took notes in case of recording equipment failure. I transcribed the recording at the end of each interview. Khan (2016) expressed that a plan to transcribe audiotapes must be in place in advance. In preparation for interviews, Khan recommended that researchers create an interview protocol so that the format in which questions are asked and recorded will be consistent.

During each interview, I asked eight open-ended questions in the order in which they appeared on the in-depth interview guide (Appendix C). I wrote down comments to assist in explaining the data, noting details such as the demeanor of the interviewee or other specifics about the situation. At the end of the interview and transcription of the audiotape, I conducted member checking to ensure that the responses were accurate. The trustworthiness of results is the bedrock of high-quality qualitative research. Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique for exploring

the credibility of results. Data or results were returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Member checking is often mentioned as one in a list of validation techniques (Creswell, 2017). When each interview was complete, I thanked the interviewee for participating and then transcribed the data.

It was very important to start at the very beginning to keep track of the data, starting with coding. I used pseudonyms in place of the real names of participants. I utilized a log, to document the time place and duration of the interview, demographic questionnaire, and interview audiotape. I coded all the above with pseudonyms and is the only one with the key to the real names of the participants. I wrote notes during and after the interview, recording any thoughts concerning the responses to interview questions, also making note of the body language of the participants (Hodges, 2019). After completion of the interview, I transferred notes into a database on the computer for future analysis. With the debriefing, respondents were thanked for their participation and told that if they have any concerns or questions they can contact myself or my committee chair.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis Plan**</div>

Initial organization of data requires the collection of data in vast amounts. The collected data was transcribed into written words after collection. The data was next typed and placed into a file. The data was analyzed following each interview. Qualitative and quantitative analysis occurred using Dedoose (2016) qual-quant analytic software analysis. Dedoose (2016) was used to provide descriptive statistics for the demographic

information and used in profiling the participant using the Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix D). The interview transcripts gave an opportunity to inform direction based on the research question and the interview guide (Appendix C).

The first research question stated, "Do general education teachers believe that PD can improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings?" There were specific questions in the discussion guide that addressed this question. One question that explored this question was, "Do you think that general educators should have professional development related to SWDs in inclusion settings? If so, why?" Another question that was associated with research question one was, "Describe the training that you have had in the last 6 months in regards to SWDs in inclusion settings. What did you think of it?" The second research question stated, how PD should influence co-teaching in inclusion setting. The discussion guide question that addresses this research question was, what you feel the role of the special educator is in regards to co-teaching SWDs in the general education class room." Another question that was related to the second research question was, "How is the special education teacher utilized in the general education classroom."

The qualitative examination of the data provided the researcher with the ability to have hands-on data analysis and got me closer to the data. This process is labor intensive in that I manually sorted, organized, and located words in a text database using the Dedoose (2016) qualitative software tool. This method of qualitative analysis is beneficial when researchers are not comfortable with the use of technology or have not yet learned a qualitative computer software program (Creswell, 2018).

This software program is useful with both qualitative and quantitative research. Utilizing this software in this qualitative research gave the researcher access to data coding, which served as anchor points for analysis, separating them into categories and sub-categories of content within these codes. This assisted in separating the original content of the coded sections. Organizing the data was very important to the process of interviews.

It was important to segment or isolate important views of the interviewee. The most efficient method, however; time consuming was recording and transcribing the interviews verbatim. This method took anywhere from six to eight hours to transcribe a one-hour interview. The transcription of the interview included words and gestures such as laughter, pauses, interruptions, changes in vocal tone, and emotion and noted in brackets {laughter}. Jones-Smith (2018) described coding as segmenting of data in relation to the phenomenon and labeling these segments in broader terms to further create an inductive process that examines these small pieces and making sense of them or connecting the pieces.

Both manual and software-assisted analysis was used. Manual data processing took place guided by Strauss (2018) qualitative analytic approach for analyzing qualitative data using a thematic analysis method. Synthetization occurred using the retrieved data and research questions. The software program assisted greatly in sorting out all the data as the use of Meta-Analysis as a quantitative process of systematically combining results to reach a clear conclusion.

For this reason, for step one, it was important that I reviewed the data more than one time to get the best result. In step two, coding in qualitative research is an inductive process as coding and organizing the different segments, different themes will surface, and what started out to be an almost excessive amount of codes began to dwindle down, revealing a better view of the studied phenomenon. Although computer-generated analysis provides the researcher with more methods of organizing the data, it was also important to remember that it is just a tool and that I was still responsible for making decisions on how to do analysis and interpret the data. In step three, the manner of treatment of discrepant cases included me conducting further interviews to draw firmer conclusions until saturation. In step four, I reported the findings. After these steps, I utilized Dedoose (2016) software program that greatly assisted to visually arrange and rearrange codes, add new codes, building codes in successive ranks, while integrating a structure as a code system was built. The utilization of Dedoose comprises step six. I was able to look at text documents systematically and with the click of a button segregate items of interest and coding the same (Dedoose, 2016).

In step seven, after coding the points of interest and labeling, I returned to the document and read further to identify similar codes or create different codes. Assorted colors were used to separate the codes by categories and sub-categories. I was able to utilize the software program Dedoose to check different codes related to the phenomenon, illuminating a theme. The software program allowed visualization of data,

viewing from different angles. This allowed for precise presentations on different formats of the data.

Trustworthiness

The collection of two types of data included first a short demographic questionnaire (Appendix D) and the second was the participants' responses to an in-depth interview (Appendix C). The descriptions of both types of data follow.

Credibility

Another researcher, Dr. Matthew Dodson, assisted in the credibility of data. Dr. Dodson. He has received his Doctorate degree in Education from Walden University. To ensure accuracy of the data collection and analysis, I corroborated evidence using field notes, transcript of audiotape, and official documents at the study site.

The use of the strategy of triangulation which Creswell, 2018 described as the process of confirming information with other members of the setting to support findings. The larger population of the study was the general education teachers that teach SWDs and the target population was the general education teachers that teach in inclusion setting in this study.

Transferability

Transferability reflects the degree to which results was to be generalized to other contexts. Essentially, it was external validity. According to experts, transferability can be improved by providing a detailed and robust description of experiences during data collection (Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Omrod, 2018). This qualitative study provided in-

depth descriptions of the experiences of teachers related to their interaction with SWDs and is transferable across the curriculum.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research relates to the replicability of results (Creswell, 2018; Leedy Ormord, 2015; Yin, 2018). Dependability was assured by detailing all of the sampling procedures, the data collection procedures, and the data analytic procedures. By providing an easy to follow process for replicating the study, future attempts to replicate this study will be more likely to produce the same results. Additionally, triangulation was used to improve the credibility and replicability of this study. Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence with different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection (Creswell, 2018). I examined field notes, transcripts of audiotaped interviews at the study site. Other research studies will be used to assess whether the results confirmed what was expected based on the results of previous studies.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree that the results are corroborated by others (Creswell, 2018; Leedy Ormord, 2018; Yin, 2018). One approach that was used to assist in establishing confirmability was a data audit. The data audit examined the data collection and analysis procedures to assess the potential for bias and distortion (Creswell, 2018; Leedy Ormord, 2018; Yin, 2018). The data audit was conducted by me where the data collection procedures were compared to what was planned.

To ensure intercoder reliability, the cross-checking technique recommended by Creswell (2018) was used. First, the codes that represented the themes were created after a thorough reading of the transcripts. Second, the codes were assigned to the appropriate text passages that supported the theme of the code. This was considered the initial coding of the transcripts. The third step was to select out the passages that had been previously coded and disconnect them from their code. The fourth step was to have a second party code the passages to see if they would code the passages in the same way as the initial coder. The degree of coding symmetry represented the degree of intercoder reliability. If there is at least 80% of code agreement, then there is good qualitative reliability and therefore acceptable transferability.

Instrumentation—Demographic Questionnaire

Participants completed a short demographic questionnaire during the same session where the discussion guide was administered (Appendix D). It took about 5 minutes to complete, and was completed before the discussion guide interviews. Completion of the demographic questionnaire assisted me in generating a descriptive chart as Creswell 2018 stated; the demographic data can assess the personal characteristics of the participants individually. The demographic questionnaire consisted of five short answer items to include; name (coded to protect the participant's identity), years teaching, years teaching at the high school, grades taught, subjects taught. The demographic questions employed the literature for basis and formulation (Berryhill et al., 2018; Finnegan, 2018). The

responses assisted me in explaining the variations of responses by participants to the interview questions.

Discussion Guide/Interview Protocol

The discussion guide/interview protocol was used to collect the data from the respondents. The researcher recorded the data in the interview guide (Appendix C). This data was appropriate for collection because in qualitative case study this method is the major way of collecting data (Creswell, 2018). The goal of this interview was to prompt participants to share through responses their perspectives and experiences of professional development (PD) and how it applied to teaching students with disabilities. I had a prepared list of questions as prescribed (Creswell, 2018) and was prepared to prompt or motivate through probing questions to the participant to provide additional information.

This interview method allowed the participant to describe their experiences in their own words and so this process aligned with the study purpose and research questions. The interview guide consisted of eight open-ended questions based on the research questions, with pertinent prompts to encourage participants to respond fully of their experiences and reflections (Appendix C). An expert panel reviewed the interview questions reflecting the study purpose and research questions. The panel consisted of two doctorate degrees, with the Ed. D; both are experienced in research education. Dr. Shelby Haines, Special Education Coordinator, Marshall County Schools, WV, and Dr. Matthew Dodson, Superintendent Hardy County Schools. Both experts reviewed the questionnaire via email, asked questions and provided feedback pertaining to format, style, content, and

wording. The given feedback was useful in the revision of the guide several times. The guide revised several times per received feedback. The panel of experts indicated that the content was valid. Until the researcher received approval from Walden University IRB, there was no research completed.

Ethical Procedures

The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was required to approve the application for the study. The IRB approval was contingent upon my agreement to proceed with the study exactly as indicated in the final version of the IRB application document. The IRB approval is only active as long as I am registered at Walden University. The IRB approval number is 06-12-18-0172662. To gain access to the site it was important to connect with gatekeepers of the site. (Creswell, 2018) noted that gatekeepers are individuals at the site that are in many cases responsible parties, holding official or unofficial roles. The gatekeepers are invaluable to the research, in that they can make it possible for you to connect with participants and identify places to study. The gatekeeper for this study is the superintendent of the county school system. A letter of permission to connect with participants is included from the gatekeeper at the county level (Appendix A).

The participants were sent a letter of invitation, explaining that the purpose of the study was to assist in understanding the perspectives of general education teachers concerning PD pertaining to inclusion and how PD affects co-teaching in inclusion settings (Appendix B). I also let the teachers know the requirement for participation, the

role as researcher, their role as participant and basic protections of participants'

information. The participants were provided a formal consent form that will required

their signature if they decide that they wanted to participate in the study.

The letter informed the participants of the interview process (e.g. a short

demographic questionnaire, an in-depth interview, the location of the interview, and how

long the interview will take). This letter was given to the respondent before the interview.

To ensure confidentiality, a code was assigned to the respondent to track their interview

responses. The participants were reminded that when filling out the short demographic

questionnaire that they would not be putting their names on the questionnaire. Each

participant was given a pseudonym in place of their names and only the researcher would

know the real names of participants. The letter informed participants that participation

was without compensation, strictly voluntary and at any time, they could have choosen

not to participate in the study with no repercussion from their employer or the

interviewer. I ensured that participants' consent forms remain securely separate from the

data, and they received a copy for their records. The interviews took approximately 30

minutes to complete, and was conducted in person at the school board office.

I informed participants that all information gathered is kept under lock and key

for a period of five years, stored at the researchers' residence, and then shredded as per

Walden University policy. I gave teachers in writing the assurance that any information

retrieved through the study remained confidential and that participation is strictly

voluntary.

Presently, I am the assistant superintendent of a neighboring county of the study site. Previously, I was the principal at the study site, but that has been two years past. My position currently had no present connection to the study site, but understandably, the possibility existed where there would be concerns of bias and even conflict of interest in relation to the research study. I informed the participants of previous employment with the research site, and although I was somewhat familiar with the dynamics of the organization, that I would not let that interfere with the integrity of the study.

To alleviate any concern of unethical treatment or behavior, several approaches discussed above were implemented to minimize the above. Examples of these procedures and approaches include informed consent. With informed consent, I informed the teachers of their rights and requirements for participating in the study. This included their right to privacy, the right to discontinue the interview at any time, and their right to refuse to answer any question that they deem inappropriate. I gave teachers in writing the assurance that any information retrieved through the study will remain confidential and that participation is strictly voluntary. The interview guide will be strictly followed (Appendix C).

Summary

This section described the study methodology. In studying the perceptions of teachers in a small rural high school, the research design was a qualitative phenomenological case study. The research questions explored the perception of general education teachers regarding PD and teaching SWDs in general education classes.

Purposeful sampling of 12 teachers from the local high school that meet the five criteria provided fulfilled the study's intent.

Permission for access to the potential participants and site was through the Superintendent of schools at local high school (Appendix A). I sent invitations to potential participants (Appendix B). I explained in both the invitation and the Consent Form, the requirements for participation in the study and ethical consideration involving their protection and confidentiality. The data that was collected through a short demographic questionnaire (Appendix D) for construction of participant profile and an in-depth Interview Guide (Appendix C) for one-to-one private interviews in a location away from the school.

I collected responses from short demographic questionnaire and audiotape in-depth interview. I also transcribed interview responses into words and place in computer file after the interview. I kept a handwritten journal of own responses and reactions to the experiences and feeling that the participants expressed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to identify secondary general education teachers' perspectives on PD regarding inclusion and coteaching SWDs. This research investigated the perspectives of general education teachers concerning PD related to teaching in the inclusive classroom and their perceptions in regard to PD and coteaching in inclusion settings. There were two research questions that were investigated. The first research question concerned the perspectives of general education teachers about PD pertaining to inclusion. The second research question concerned how PD influences coteaching in inclusion settings.

This chapter contains six sections. The first section addresses the setting and participant demographics. In the second section, I discuss the data collection characteristics, including number of participants, location, frequency, and duration of data collection. The next section addresses the data analysis process; this section is followed by the results of the qualitative data analysis. The final two sections of Chapter 4 present evidence of trustworthiness and a chapter summary.

Setting

Influential Personal or Organizational Conditions

This setting section contains a review of the personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants or their experiences at the time of the study. Personal and organization conditions may include changes in personnel, budget cuts, and other trauma.

During the data collection period, there were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants or their experiences that might have affected the interpretation of the study data.

Participant Demographics

There were a total of 12 participants in this study. All 12 respondents in this study self-identified ethnically as White. Nine of the respondents identified themselves as female, with the remaining three classifying themselves as male. The average number of years teaching across all respondents was 12, with teaching experience ranging from 7 years to 33 years. None of the respondents reported having a special education degree. Additionally, all respondents indicated that they received their teacher certification from a traditional university. Table 1 contains a complete reporting of the available demographic information. Finally, fictitious names were assigned to respondents in an attempt to improve the reporting of the results section.

Table 1

Respondent Demographics

	N	%	Mean
Gender			
Male	3	25%	
Female	9	75%	
Ethnicity			
White	12	100%	
Age			
18-24			
25-35	6	50%	
36-45	1	8.4%	
46-55	3	25%	
56-65	2	16.6%	
Over 65			
Years teaching secondary school	12		12
Years teaching special education inclusion	12		13
Taught high school	12	100%	
Teacher certification received from traditional university	12	100%	
Do not have special education degree	12	100%	
No PD training in the last 6 months	12	100%	

Data Collection

This section provides a description of the location, frequency, and duration of the data collection process. There were a total of 12 respondents who participated in the study. The interviews took place at the local county school board headquarters inside a conference room where there were no disturbances. The 12 interviews took place over a 45-day period between July 15, 2018 and August 30, 2018. The interviews lasted an average of 55 minutes. I conducted all of the interviews, including all of the screening procedures, such as informed consent and demographic information administration. The first 5 minutes were spent reading and discussing the informed consent form. After the respondents read and signed the informed consent form, the next 5 minutes were spent collecting demographic information from nine questions and ensuring that the respondents met the criteria to participate in the survey. After the demographic information was collected, I asked the eight content questions, including follow-up questions to further probe initial responses. Completion of the content questions took on average about 45 minutes.

The Data Recording Process

The data were recorded using a digital MP3 recorder. The specific model of the recorder was Phillips DVT2710. Each interview was recorded separately in MP3 format. After all of the interviews were completed, all of the MP3 recordings were transcribed into individual text files. There were 12 text files in all. Each of the 12 text files was entered into Dedoose (2016) text analytics software.

Adjustments in the Data Collection Process

I arranged to interview the first 12 teachers who signed up to participate in the study. However, data collection took longer than anticipated because many of the teachers were away on vacation, as school was out for the summer. The initial plan was to send two to three reminders. A total of three email invitation reminders were sent. Therefore, there was a slight deviation from the data collection process described in Chapter 3 relating to the timeframe needed to complete the study. The extended amount of time did not break with IRB protocol.

Data Analysis

Codes for Research Question 1

This section provides a detailed account of the data analysis process. First, before the data analysis process began, the text transcripts of the interviews were entered into Deedose (2016) text analytics software. All data analysis, including coding and theme development, was performed inside the Deedose (2016) software. Second, once all of the interview transcripts had been entered into the software, the data analysis process began with an emphasis on addressing the first research question. The first research question concerned the perspectives of general education teachers about professional development pertaining to inclusion. Classification codes were developed to identify quotes that addressed this question either directly or indirectly. First, a code was developed inside Deedose and assigned to quotes that identified respondents' answers that related to the research question directly. A second code was developed that identified quotes related to

the status of PD training in the past 6 months. A third code was also developed that captured quotes that reflected the respondents' views of the current state of inclusion in the classroom.

Resulting Themes From Research Question 1 Codes

After the three codes for Research Question 1 were developed, the quotes from each code were read inside Deedose (2016) to determine what common themes were represented on the code topic. Four themes emerged. The four themes were quotes related to the formal/informal nature of PD training, the planned/unplanned nature of PD training, the frequency of PD training, and special education/general education related PD training. For the code related to the current state of inclusion in the classroom, there were three themes reflected in the quotes. They included collaborative/noncollaborative teaching, part-time/full-time special education teacher presence, and positive/negative effect on the class. The themes that prevailed in relation to PD training in the past 6 months were none/limited and school sponsored/independent PD training.

Codes and Resulting Themes for Research Question 2

After the codes and themes were identified for Research Question 1, I then progressed to code development for Research Question 2. The second research question concerned how professional development influences coteaching in inclusion settings. There was one code that dealt specifically with this question. As with Research Question 1, the quotes from the code were read inside Deedose (2016) to determine what common themes were represented on the code topic. The three themes generated from this code

were student learning quality, coteaching quality, and degree of influence. In the next section, specific quotes associated with each of the themes are presented to confirm the themes' importance.

Code and Theme Descriptions

In the previous section, I described the process of developing the codes and themes for the study. In this section, I describe the specific codes that emerged from the data analysis and a sample of the associated quotations. Research Question 1 addressed the teachers' perspective on PD training related to inclusion. Three codes were used to capture the different thematic quotations associated with Research Question 1. The first code was mandatory training. This code was used to identify the thematic comments related to the teachers' feelings toward mandatory training. There were several quotes related to mandatory training from eight of the 12 respondents. The prevalence of these theme quotations reflects the theme's importance, as there were quotations from eight of the 10 respondents. Table 2 contains a sample of the quotations from the respondents.

Table 2

Respondent Quotations—Perspectives Toward PD Training: Mandatory PD Training

1. RQ1: Perspectives toward PD training related to inclusion	"I can't say that I've ever been personally told that I need that. I think, as an educator, I want to be exposed to whatever will help my students. If I'm weak in that area, I'm not going to say ... I would love to have somebody come in and say, 'Okay, so when you're doing this, why don't you try this and this with these, this group, so that they can that information that way?' I would love for somebody to come in and help me figure out different ways to offer the information because I want my students to get all of them whatever way that they can get them." (Participant 2)

"I'm trying to think how much really special ed direct ... I mean, I just keep going back to ... It seems like it's all about paperwork. Documentation. I think we've probably had more about how to make sure your paperwork's in line than we have on actual teaching." (Participant **1**)

"I think we do need professional development in special education. We've had, what, one or two classes in college that we went through and that was it. I don't even remember what all was taught to me back then and things, special education, it's an ever-changing process. So, keeping up the laws and all that and so I think it's ..." (Participant **8**)

"I don't think anyone likes to be told they must have professional development in any capacity, because sometimes it's presented to the teacher that the teacher's not doing what they're supposed to do, and that kinda makes the teacher have like a chip on their shoulder about professional development." (Participant **4**)

"I think there's a resistance on any training, but I hear and I've seen it for years, and it just that, there's a huge complaint because they feel it's more work or that these kids are unteachable in classes, and that it messes up their flow of what they're comfortable with." (Participant **12**)

"I think that it [PD training] should absolutely be required that we have that kind of professional development. I mean, it's the experience that I've had or whatever, but I don't think that special education students are detriment to the general ed classroom." (Participant **7**)

"I think they have to [mandate PD training]. I think if they don't they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing for their students." (Participant **10**)

"I think it's very important. I think I was very lucky in the classes that I was required to take for my degree. I only had two special ed related classes, but they were very involved, very hands-on and I was also very fortunate, where I student taught." (Participant **9**) |

The second code that emerged from the interviews in relation to Research Question 1, was training frequency. Half of the respondents indicated that PD training related to inclusion occurred infrequently. Some mentioned that they had never had training in this area at all. Given the prevalence of these thematic quotations from 12 of the 12 respondents, it was relatively high in importance. Table 3 contains a sample of the quotations that relate to training frequency.

Table 3

Respondent Quotations—Perspectives Toward PD Training: Training Frequency

Frequency [How often do you have training on collaboration?]	"I would say, we have about, if you wanna call it training, two meetings a year where the special ed teachers will talk to the whole faculty." (Participant **6**)
	"… but as far as a specific training, maybe once a year." (Participant **2**)
	"I mean, as far as a sit-down formal meeting, maybe once every 2 months, once a month, 2 months." (Participant **8**)
	"I'd say at least once a school year, we have training on collaboration." (Participant **4**)
	(I think other than college, it was just that one time, so I haven't had any really since I started working." (Participant **9**)
	"Never" (Participant **12**)
	"Rarely" (Participant **5**)
	"I don't think I've had any in years, honestly. I think the last one I had was when I worked out of state …" (Participant**12**)
	"I don't think that I have had anything." (Participant**7**)
	"Right. I have not had any training in the last 6 months." (Participant **3**)

Yet another code, Code 3 that was used to capture feedback from respondents related to perspectives toward PD training was PD is needed. This code captured the sentiments from respondents concerning whether PD training for inclusion was needed.

Although there were slightly fewer quotations for this code than for the previous codes,

seven of 12 respondents spoke to this theme. The specific quotes associated with this

code are sampled in Table 4.

Table 4

Respondent Quotations—Perspectives Toward PD Training: PD Is Needed

Should we have PD in special ed?	"To actually come into the field as an educator you had to come in with 9 credit hours in special education. But to retain your license you had to have 3 credit hours a year in special education. And I firmly believe that." (Participant **3**)
	"It's got to be valuable, it's got to be real work. And at the high school level, one of the things that we talk about a lot is that, it does need to be tailored for your subject. 'Cause what a K through 3 teacher needs and what a 9 through 12 teacher needs is different. And what an English teacher needs and what a math teacher needs is different and a science teacher." (Participant **7**)
	"That general educator should have it? Yes. And why? Is because, I mean, that is the nature of our classroom. And then, like I said before, I have found that the things that work for special education students work for all students. Yeah, we need strategies, we need to understand how the brain works or I even think about the fact that, in West Virginia in particular, we're finding the statistics of it's like 50 to 70% of students have had a traumatic event in their lifetime that affects their learning. And some of the same strategies that work for brains that have experienced trauma work for brains that learn differently. So I don't think you lose anything by training people." (Participant **1**)
	"Well, I mean I had to have every student no matter what their background or disability, and I think any development in tools to how you can do that is helpful" **(Participant12)**
	"Absolutely. As a general educator, I have a wide variety of learners in my classroom. Some of those have learning disabilities, and as the teacher, I need to know what I should do help those students succeed. So professional development is necessary." (Participant **4**)
	"I would love for somebody to come in and help me figure out different ways to offer the information because I want my students to get all of them whatever way that they can get them. If somebody told me I need it, I'd probably ... I wouldn't have a problem with that because I feel like that would be a good avenue to try to reach those kids, and that's why I'm there." (Participant **2**)
	"I don't see anything wrong with it. I mean, it can't hurt." (Participant **6**)

A code was created to capture *respondents' perceptions towards inclusion*. This was an important theme because a respondent's perception towards PD training on inclusion was related to their perception in inclusion in general. There were 9 of 12 respondents who provided thematic quotation support. Some of the quotes related to the role of the special education teacher in the class, the effect of mixing special and regular education students in the same class, and how involved the special education teacher should be in the classroom planning instruction. Table 5 contains a sampling of the quotes that emerged on perceptions towards inclusion.

Table 5

Respondent Quotations—Respondents' Perceptions Toward Inclusion

4. Perspectives toward inclusion RQ2	"I feel like co-teaching should support the special ed students within the regular ed environment, but when you walk into a co-teaching classroom you shouldn't be able to tell who the regular teacher is and who the co-teacher is. They both are vested in the classroom." (Participant **4**)
	"I think sometimes, in reality, it means you have to slow down your curriculum for everybody and it can lead to mediocre teaching. Or not mediocre teaching, but maybe mediocre standards, and that you're not as rigorous as you want to be with your high level students, but you also wanna help your lower level students, too, so you kinda meet in the middle with your expectations." (Participant **4**)
	As a co-teacher that special educator teachers should be involved with all aspects from lesson planning that involves the course standards, student performance evaluation, collaborative teaching to where it's seamless when, in the classroom students don't identify, "That's the special education teacher. That's the content teacher." It should be truly a collaborative, seamless approach." (Participant **3**)
	"When I first taught social studies I had a special educator in my classroom and we co-taught for two periods. That was awesome because we were working with seventh and eighth graders. We could do stations. She could take a group. I could take a group and we rotated." (Participant **5**)
	"I think they need to be held accountable to expectations, just like the regular students. I understand they need help, but I still think that they should be making an effort to ... Maybe I'm wrong on that, but I just think that they need to have standards as well." (Participant **2**)
	"Patience, definitely, you've got to be patient. They're not going to learn things at the same rate as any other class, especially like an honors class, which is going to be fun this year. You kind of have to view it as its own separate class. Just be open-minded with these kids. Be willing to walk around and help them." (Participant **9**)
	"In my career I've had a lot of different ... they've been used a lot of different ways. I see them as a co-teacher, someone that is an equal. They're a huge help to me in that they help facilitate the needs of my students that have an IEP, can point things out and can assist in making up plans and alternative teaching styles." (Participant **11**)
	"Yeah, we didn't signal out any specific group but we rotated and it was such a great thing. It was fun. We worked together well. One of our administrators came in and observed and she said that she would not have known who was the content teacher and the special educator teacher." (Participant **5**)
	"I always look to them as to help the students that are in there maybe be more organized or more clarification with whatever the teacher is going over. So an extra hand, a teacher couldn't get to every student every time that that special education co-teacher is there to help explain it." (Participant 12)

The second research question was concerned with how PD influences co-teaching in inclusion settings. There were two codes that were used to capture the two themes associated with this research question. The two codes were, *assist without treating them differently*, and the *special education teacher as support for special education student*. There were a total of 11 of 12 respondents who provided quotes for these two themes. The details of both themes are below.

The first code addressing the second research question concerning how PD influences co-teaching in inclusion settings was *assist without treating them differently*. There was commentary on this theme from 7 of the 12 respondents. Quotations associated with this theme are posted in Table 6.

Table 6

Respondent Quotations—How Does PD Influence Coteaching?

5. Assist SWDs without treating them differently	"… You want to treat them just like any other kids. In fact there have been times that I've forgotten some of the kids had any sort of disabilities cause I just treat 'em ... and that's what you should be doing is don't use the modifications as a crutch, use it as a guideline to begin." (Participant **6**)
	"With differentiated instruction, you can do both. You can meet the needs of your higher achievers as well as your students with IEPs, but it is very difficult. And you need that co-teacher. You need that co-teacher." (Participant **4**)
	"I feel like co-teaching should support the special ed students within the regular ed environment, but when you walk into a co-teaching classroom you shouldn't be able to tell who the regular teacher is and who the co-teacher is. They both are vested in the classroom." (Participant **4**)
	"If the special educator knew of a way to teach a concept in a way that the students seemed to understand better, they would switch roles and the general ed teacher would assist" (Participant **9**)
	"…we worked together well. One of our administrators came in and observed and she said that she would not have known who was the content teacher and the special educator teacher." (Participant **5**)
	"As a co-teacher that special educator teachers should be involved with all aspects from lesson planning that involves the course standards, student performance evaluation, collaborative teaching to where it's seamless when, in the classroom students don't identify, "That's the special education teacher. That's the content teacher." It should be truly a collaborative, seamless approach." (Participant **3**)
	"I see them as a co-teacher, someone that is an equal. They're a huge help to me in that they help facilitate the needs of my students that have an IEP, can point things out and can assist in making up plans and alternative teaching styles." (Participant **11**)

The second code was the *special education teacher as support for special education student*. There was commentary on this theme from 4 of the 12 respondents. Quotations associated with this theme are posted in Table 7.

Table 7

Respondent Quotations—The Special Ed Teacher as Support for Special Ed

6. The special ed teacher as support for special ed student RQ2	"…it should be a co-teacher that is in there helping with those students, I wanna say keep up with the other kids in the class. Helping them amend or adjust what they need to do for their learning to keep up with everybody else or excel." (Participant **10**)
	"… [The special ed teacher] makes sure the students are understanding, making sure they're on task, making sure they're understanding what's...what I'm talking about, helping put things into perspective to them in a way they can understand it better." (Participant **9**)
	"I always look to them as to help the students that are in there maybe be more organized or more clarification with whatever the teacher is going over. So an extra hand, a teacher couldn't get to every student every time that that special education co-teacher is there to help explain it." (Participant **12**)
	They're [special ed students] not going to learn things at the same rate as any other class, especially like an honors class, which is going to be fun this year. You kind of have to view it as its own separate class. Just be open-minded with these kids. Be willing to walk around and help them." (Participant **9**)

Results

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, do general education teachers believe that PD

related to SWDs in inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in

inclusion settings. The results of the first research question indicated that respondent

generally believed that PD inclusion training was needed. However, although a majority

were comfortable with the mandatory training, there were some who felt that mandating

the training would offend teachers. The analysis of the respondent interviews revealed

three major thematic insights. The first thematic insight focused on the perspectives of the respondents relating to PD inclusion training. The second thematic insight related to whether PD inclusion training should be mandatory. The third thematic insight related to the frequency of PD inclusion training among respondents. The in-depth analysis of each of these thematic insights follows below.

Theme—PD inclusion training needed. For research question one, which states, do general education teachers believe that PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings, there were 7 of 12 respondents who indicated that PD training on inclusion was needed to improve the performance of general education teachers who work with SWDs in inclusion settings. In fact, some respondents expressed that not only was PD for SWDs in inclusion settings needed, but was expected for anyone who work in an inclusion setting. From the verbatim comments, there were several reasons why respondents indicated PD training on inclusion was needed. One reason was the desire for general education teachers to acquire additional skills to help SWDs in inclusion settings. Another reason for the need for PD on inclusion training was the belief that the skills learned during PD training on inclusion could also help the general education students. Respondents also discussed specific components of the PD training for inclusion training that were needed. Specifically, respondents noted that PD inclusion training needed to be relevant to specific grade levels and subject areas. These beliefs for the basis of the overarching theme, inclusion training is needed to improve the performance of general education teachers who work

with SWDs in inclusion settings. Below are the verbatim comments that support this theme.

One rationale for the need for PD was desire to acquire additional skills to help students. This was reflected from respondent 4 who said, "*As a general educator, I have a wide variety of learners in my classroom. Some of those have learning disabilities, and as the teacher, I need to know what I should do help those students succeed. So, professional development is necessary."* Likewise, respondent 2 stated, *"I would love for somebody to come in and help me figure out different ways to offer the information because I want my students to get all of them whatever way that they can get them. If somebody told me I need it, I'd probably ... I wouldn't have a problem with that because I feel like that would be a good avenue to try to reach those kids, and that's why I'm there."*

It was also noted that skills acquired in PD training for inclusion classrooms could also benefit general education students. Respondent 1 noted, "*That general educator should have it [PD]? Yes, and why? I have found that the things that work for special education students, work for all students. So I don't think you're lose anything by training people."* The helpfulness of PD inclusion training to all student was also expressed in the comment from respondent 12 when they said, *"Well, I mean I had to have every student no matter what their background or disability, and I think any development in tools to how you can do that is helpful."*

Along with being needed, other features that the PD inclusion training should include were discussed. For example, it was noted by respondent 7 that the training

should be relevant to specific grade levels and subject areas, "*It's got to be valuable, it's got to be real work. And at the high school level, one of the things that we talk about a lot is that, it does need to be tailored for your subject. 'Cause what a K through three teacher needs and what a nine through twelve teacher needs is different. And what an English teacher needs and what a math teacher needs is different and a science teacher.*" Finally, it was expressed by respondent 3 that PD training for inclusion was not only needed but expected for anyone who worked in an inclusion setting, "*To actually come into the field as an educator you had to come in with nine credit hours in special education. But to retain your license you had to have three credit hours a year in special education. And I firmly believe that.*" See Table 8.

Table 8

Respondent Quotations—Inclusion Training Needed

"It's got to be valuable, it's got to be real work. And at the high school level, one of the things that we talk about a lot is that, it does need to be tailored for your subject. 'Cause what a K through three teacher needs and what a nine through 12 teacher needs is different. And what an English teacher needs and what a math teacher needs is different and a science teacher." (Participant **7**)

"That general educator should have it? Yes. And why? Is because, I mean, that is the nature of our classroom. And then like I said before, I have found that the things that work for special education students, work for all students. Yeah, we need strategies, we need to understand how the brain works or I even think about the fact that, in West Virginia in particular, we're finding the statistics of it's like 50 to 70% of students have had a traumatic event in their lifetime that affects their learning. And some of the same strategies that work for brains that have experienced trauma, work for brains that learn differently. So I don't think you lose anything by training people." (Participant **1**)

"Well, I mean I had to have every student no matter what their background or disability, and I think any development in tools to how you can do that is helpful" **(Participant12**)

"As a general educator, I have a wide variety of learners in my classroom. Some of those have learning disabilities, and as the teacher, I need to know what I should do help those students succeed. So professional development is necessary." (Participant **4**)

"I would love for somebody to come in and help me figure out different ways to offer the information because I want my students to get all of them whatever way that they can get them. If somebody told me I need it, I'd probably ... I wouldn't have a problem with that because I feel like that would be a good avenue to try to reach those kids, and that's why I'm there." (Participant **2**)

Theme—Should PD training be mandatory? Again, research question one asked, do general education teachers believe that PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings. As noted previously, a majority of respondents believe that PD relating to SWDs in inclusion settings was needed. However, when asked if PD inclusion training should be mandated, the perspectives were mixed, relating to research question one. A minority of respondents had issues with being told they had to take PD training. To some general education teachers, it implied that they were not doing a good job. To others, mandated PD training

is seen as adding on to the already heavy workload. However, most Respondents, 7 of 12, indicated that mandated PD training was acceptable. Below are the verbatim comments that supported the architecture of this theme.

Some respondents expressed reservation about mandated PD training. For example, it was noted that mandating training may give the impression that the teachers are not doing a good job. For example, Respondent 4 stated that, *"I don't think anyone likes to be told they must have professional development in any capacity, because sometimes it's presented to the teacher that the teacher's not doing what they're supposed to do, and that kinda makes the teacher have like a chip on their shoulder about professional development."* Additionally, Respondent 12 noted that they observed resistance to PD inclusion training because the training could be perceived as more work. *"I think there's a resistance on any training, but I hear and I've seen it for years, and it just that, there's a huge complaint because they feel it's more work or that these kids are unteachable in classes, and that it messes up their flow of what they're comfortable with."* Respondent 1 provided similar feedback to respondent 12 by saying, *"it seems like it's all about paperwork, documentation. I think we've probably had more about how to make sure your paperwork's in line than we have on actual teaching."*

However, the prevailing notion was that mandatory PD inclusion training was acceptable. It was noted by Respondent 7 that, *"I think that it [PD training] should absolutely be required that we have that kind of professional development. I mean, it's the experience that I've had or whatever, but I don't think that special education students are*

detriment to the general ed classroom." Additionally, respondent 10 noted, *"I think they have to [mandate PD training]. I think if they don't they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing for their students."* Respondent 8 echoed the sentiment yet again, *"I think we do need professional development in special education. We've had, what, one or two classes in college that we went through and that was it. I don't even remember what all was taught to me back then and things, special education, it's an ever changing process."* See Table 9.

Table 9

Respondent Quotations—Should Inclusion Training Be Mandatory?

"I'm trying to think how much really special ed direct ... I mean, I just keep going back to ... It seems like it's all about paperwork. Documentation. I think we've probably had more about how to make sure your paperwork's in line than we have on actual teaching." (Participant **1**)
"I think we do need professional development in special education. We've had, what, one or two classes in college that we went through and that was it. I don't even remember what all was taught to me back then and things, special education, it's an ever changing process. So, keeping up the laws and all that and so I think it's..." (Participant **8**)
"I don't think anyone likes to be told they must have professional development in any capacity, because sometimes it's presented to the teacher that the teacher's not doing what they're supposed to do, and that kinda makes the teacher have like a chip on their shoulder about professional development." (Participant **4**)
"I think there's a resistance on any training, but I hear and I've seen it for years, and it just that, there's a huge complaint because they feel it's more work or that these kids are unteachable in classes, and that it messes up their flow of what they're comfortable with." (Participant**12**)
"I think that it [PD training] should absolutely be required that we have that kind of professional development. I mean, it's the experience that I've had or whatever, but I don't think that special education students are detriment to the general ed classroom." (Participant **7**)
"I think they have to [mandate PD training]. I think if they don't they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing for their students." (Participant **10**)

Theme—Frequency of PD inclusion training. As previously reported regarding

research question one, most respondents indicated that PD inclusion training was needed. However, there was an inconsistency in the frequency of PD training among respondents. Some respondents reported attending PD training multiple times a year. Yet, others reported having PD training once year. Yet, there were others who reported PD training less frequently than a year, if at all. A reporting of the verbatim comments to support the theme are below.

Some respondent indicated that training occurred at least once a year, For example, Respondent 8 said, *"I mean, as far as a sit down formal meeting, maybe once every two months, once a month, two months."* Respondent 6 also responded, *"I would say, we have about, if you wanna call it training, two meetings a year where the special ed teachers will talk to the whole faculty."* Additionally Respondent 2 remarked, *"...but as far as a specific training, maybe once a year"* and Respondent 4 also remarked, *"I'd say at least once a school year, we have training on collaboration."* There were some respondents who revealed their PD inclusion training occurred even less frequently if ever. For example Respondent 12 said *"I don't think I've had any in years honestly,"* and Respondent 7 stated, *"I don't think that I have had anything,"* and Respondent 10 remarked, *"Never."* So, from the interviews, despite most respondents indicating that PD inclusion training is needed and would be beneficial, they indicated that it does not occur with any great frequency. See Table 10.

Table 10

Respondent Quotations—Perspectives Toward PD Training: Training Frequency

"I would say, we have about, if you wanna call it training, two meetings a year where the special ed teachers will talk to the whole faculty." (Participant **6**)

"…but as far as a specific training, maybe once a year." (Participant **2**)

"I mean, as far as a sit down formal meeting, maybe once every two months, once a month, two months." (Participant **8**)

"I'd say at least once a school year, we have training on collaboration." (Participant **4**)

(I think other than college, it was just that one time, so I haven't had any really since I started working." **(Participant 9**)

"Never" (Participant **10**)

"I don't think I've had any in years honestly. I think the last one I had was when I worked out of state…"(Participant **12**)

"I don't think that I have had anything." (Participant **7**)

Research Question 2

The second research question stated, how should professional development influence co-teaching in inclusion settings. The result for the second research question indicated that respondents generally believed that PD inclusion training should provide skills for assisting special education students in inclusion settings without them feeling differentiated or singled out. The analysis of the respondent interviews revealed two major findings. First, it was revealed that one of the benefits of the PD inclusion training was the skill to assist the special education student in the general classroom without alienating or treating the special education student differently. Second, the analysis of the interviews revealed that PD inclusion training should improve the collaboration in the classroom between the general education and special education teacher.

Theme: Assist without treating them differently. To answer the question, how should professional development influence co-teaching in inclusion settings, it was noted by many that PD inclusion training should improve the ability of the general education and special education teacher to work with special education students without giving them specialized treatment or undesirable attention. In fact, respondents noted that by acquiring the skills of differentiated learning from PD inclusion training could benefits the needs of all students in the inclusion classroom. Finally, respondents reported that there should be no distinction between general education teachers and special education teachers in the inclusion classroom. There were several verbatim comments below that supported the theme, *assist without treating them differently*.

It is believed that PD inclusion training should improve the ability of the general education and special education teacher to work with special education students without giving them specialized treatment or undesirable attention. For example, Respondent 6 stated, *"...you want to treat them just like any other kids. In fact there have been times that I've forgotten some of the kids had any sort of disabilities cause I just treat 'em ... and that's what you should be doing is don't use the modifications as a crutch, use it as a guideline to begin."* It was also noted by Respondent 4 that by acquiring the skill of differentiated learning from the PD inclusion training, the needs of all student could be met in the inclusion classroom, *"With differentiated instruction, you can do both. You can meet the needs of your higher achievers as well as your students with IEPs, but it is very difficult. And you need that co-teacher. You need that co-teacher."* Additionally,

Respondent 1 noted that, *"I feel like co-teaching should support the special ed students within the regular ed environment, but when you walk into a co-teaching classroom you shouldn't be able to tell who's the regular teacher and who's the co-teacher. They both are vested in the classroom."* Also reflected here is the notion that there should be no distinction between the general education teacher and the special education teacher, and their collaboration is almost seamless. This is also noted in other comments from Respondent 9, *"If the special educator knew of a way to teach a concept in a way that the students seemed to understand better, they would switch roles and the general ed teacher would assist",* and Respondent 5, *"we worked together well. One of our administrators came in and observed and she said that she would not have known who was the content teacher and the special educator teacher."* Additionally, Respondent 3 commented, *"As a co-teacher that special educator teachers should be involved with all aspects from lesson planning that involves the course standards, student performance evaluation, collaborative teaching to where it's seamless when, in the classroom students don't identify, that's the special education teacher, that's the content teacher. It should be truly a collaborative, seamless approach."* This notion of collaboration within and outside the classroom, was also reflected here by Respondent 11, *"I see them as a co-teacher, someone that is an equal. They're a huge help to me in that they help facilitate the needs of my students that have an IEP, can point things out and can assist in making up plans and alternative teaching styles."* See Table 11.

Table 11

Assist Without Treating Them Differently

"… You want to treat them just like any other kids. In fact there have been times that I've forgotten some of the kids had any sort of disabilities cause I just treat 'em ... and that's what you should be doing is don't use the modifications as a crutch, use it as a guideline to begin." (Participant **6)**

"With differentiated instruction, you can do both. You can meet the needs of your higher achievers as well as your students with IEPs, but it is very difficult. And you need that co-teacher. You need that co-teacher." (Participant **4)**

"I feel like co-teaching should support the special ed students within the regular ed environment, but when you walk into a co-teaching classroom you shouldn't be able to tell who the regular teacher is and who the co-teacher is. They both are vested in the classroom." (Participant **1)**

"If the special educator knew of a way to teach a concept in a way that the students seemed to understand better, they would switch roles and the general ed teacher would assist" (Participant **9)**

"…we worked together well. One of our administrators came in and observed and she said that she would not have known who was the content teacher and the special educator teacher." (Participant **5)**

"As a co-teacher that special educator teachers should be involved with all aspects from lesson planning that involves the course standards, student performance evaluation, collaborative teaching to where it's seamless when, in the classroom students don't identify, "That's the special education teacher. That's the content teacher." It should be truly a collaborative, seamless approach." (Participant **3)**

"I see them as a co-teacher, someone that is an equal. They're a huge help to me in that they help facilitate the needs of my students that have an IEP, can point things out and can assist in making up plans and alternative teaching styles." (Participant **11)**

Theme—The special education teacher as support for special education

student. Again, regarding how should professional development influence co-teaching in

inclusion settings, research question two, there were some respondents who believed that

the special education teacher in the inclusion classroom should primarily work with the

special education students to ensure they progress with the rest of the class. Those who

took this perspective viewed the special education teacher as more of a classroom aide or

assistant rather an equal to the general education teacher. The verbatim comments to

support the special education teacher as support for special education student are below.

Respondents who believed that the special education teacher in the inclusion classroom should primarily work with the special education students For example, Respondent 10 stated, *"...it should be a co-teacher that is in there helping with those students, I wanna say keep up with the other kids in the class. Helping them amend or adjust what they need to do for their learning to keep up with everybody else or excel."* Another Respondent, 9, echoed this specific role of the special education teacher, *"...[the special ed teacher] makes sure the students are understanding, making sure they're on task, making sure they're understanding what's...what I'm talking about, helping put things into perspective to them in a way they can understand it better."* Another example of this notion is reflected from the comments of Respondent 12, *"I always look to them as to help the students that are in there maybe be more organized or more clarification with whatever the teacher is going over. So an extra hand, a teacher couldn't get to every student every time that that special education co-teacher is there to help explain it."* Respondent 9 noted that the inclusion setting need to be viewed as almost two different classes in one where the special education teacher works to assist the special education students, *"Their [special ed students] not going to learn things at the same rate as any other class, especially like an honors class, which is going to be fun this year. You kind of have to view it as its own separate class. Just be open-minded with these kids. Be willing to walk around and help them."*

Table 12

Respondent Quotations—The Special Ed Teacher as Support for Special Ed Student

"… It should be a co-teacher that is in there helping with those students, I wanna say keep up with the other kids in the class. Helping them amend or adjust what they need to do for their learning to keep up with everybody else or excel." (Participant **10)**

"… [The special ed teacher] makes sure the students are understanding, making sure they're on task, making sure they're understanding what's...what I'm talking about, helping put things into perspective to them in a way they can understand it better." (Participant **9)**

"I always look to them as to help the students that are in there maybe be more organized or more clarification with whatever the teacher is going over. So an extra hand, a teacher couldn't get to every student every time that that special education co-teacher is there to help explain it." (Participant **12)**

Their[special ed students] not going to learn things at the same rate as any other class, especially like an honors class, which is going to be fun this year. You kind of have to view it as its own separate class. Just be open-minded with these kids. Be willing to walk around and help them." (Participant **9)**

Discrepant Cases and How They Were Factored Into the Analysis

There was a high degree of homogeneity in responses from the study participants. This is not surprising, given that they all worked in from the same school district and the high school educational level. There was no respondent who indicated that they were against mandatory PD training. Additionally, there were no respondents who indicated that PD training was not needed. There were some nuanced differences related to comments on perceptions towards inclusion. Most respondents indicated that there should be a seamless integration between the classroom teacher and the special education teacher. For example, Respondent 6 indicated that, *"...somebody should be able to come in the room and not know the difference between who is the general education teacher and who is the special education teacher, who is the subject area teacher and who is the special education teacher."* Likewise Respondent 5 indicated that, *"One of our*

administrators came in and observed and she said that she would not have known who was the content teacher and the special educator teacher.” Respondent 3 went even further by saying, *“as a co-teacher that special educator teachers should be involved with all aspects from lesson planning that involves the course standards, student performance evaluation, collaborative teaching to where it's seamless when, in the classroom students don't identify, ‘That's the special education teacher. That's the content teacher.’ It should be truly a collaborative, seamless approach.”* However, there were a few cases that differed in perspective. For example, there was dissatisfaction that special education students had lower expectations in the inclusion classroom than the general education student. This idea was expressed by Respondent 2 saying, *“I think they need to be held accountable to expectations, just like the regular students. I understand they need help, but I still think that they should be making an effort to ... Maybe I'm wrong on that, but I just think that they need to have standards as well.”* Along this same line of thought, Respondent 4 indicated, *“I think sometimes, in reality, it means you have to slow down your curriculum for everybody and it can lead to mediocre teaching, or not mediocre teaching, but maybe mediocre standards.”* Although these opinions were in the minority, they were included in the analysis as contrary findings. One reason for this was to provide alternative perspectives that could be used as answer choices in a future quantitative study. Additionally, providing alternative perspectives that were expressed by a minority of respondents provide a more comprehensive report of the feedback.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility was checked using saturation and peer review. Saturation occurs when the collection of new data does not provide any new insights (Creswell, 2018; Leedy Ormord, 2018; Yin, 2018). Essentially, the feedback that was received from respondents was relatively repetitive. This indicates that saturation has been reached and data collection should end. By using saturation, it ensured that the feedback from the respondents is consistent and the exhaustive. This ensures credibility is established (Creswell, 2018; Leedy Ormord, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized to other contexts (Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Ormord, 2018; Yin, 2018). In this study, transferability is limited to high school general education teachers in West Virginia who teach SWDs in inclusion settings. The sample inclusion and exclusion criterion also limits the transferability of the results. Specifically, the study is transferable to those who work at the local school site of research and teacher in a classroom at the local school with both SWDs and non-disabled students. These teachers are willing to share feelings and thoughts about teaching SWDs and the pressures of doing so. There were no adjustments in the implementation that affected the transferability of this study. Therefore, the truthfulness of this criterion is sound.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research relates to the replicability of results (Creswell, 2018; Leedy Ormord, 2018; Yin, 2018). Dependability was supported by detailing all of the sampling procedures, the data collection procedures, and the data analytic procedures. By providing an easy to follow process for replicating the study, future attempts to replicate this study will be more likely to produce the same results. Additionally, triangulation was used to improve the replicability of this study. Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence with different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection (Creswell, 2018). I examined field notes, transcripts of audiotaped interviews at the study site. Other research studies were used to assess whether the results confirmed what was expected based on the results of previous studies. The results of these comparisons are discussed in more detail below, but essentially, the results of this study confirm what was expected, based on previous research. Given this, the truthfulness of this criterion is sound.

Confirmability

Finally, confirmability refers to the degree that the results can be corroborated by others (Creswell, 2018; Leedy Ormord, 2018; Yin, 2018). One approach that was used to assist in establishing confirmability was a data audit. The data audit examines the data collection and analysis procedures to assess the potential for bias and distortion (Creswell, 2018; Leedy Ormord, 2018; Yin, 2018). The data audit was conducted by me, where the data collection procedures were compared to what was planned. The data audit

revealed that the I deviated very little from the content of the discussion guide, so the possibility of bias and distortions are minimal. Second, the procedure for content analysis was consistent. The respondents' answers were all very similar, as their experiences with SWDs in inclusion settings were similar based on their self-report. Therefore, given the high fidelity to the discussion guide, the results were very familiar for each respondent. The rigors of this process make the truthfulness of this criterion sound.

Summary

There were two research questions in this qualitative study. The first research question stated, do general education teachers believe that PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings. The second research question stated, how PD should influence co-teaching in inclusion settings. The results of the first research question indicated that respondent generally believed that PD inclusion training was needed. However, although a majority were comfortable with the mandatory training, there were some who felt that mandating the training would offend teachers. Additionally, some respondent view this training as more work. Finally, it was revealed that most respondent received training very infrequently, meaning 1 per year or less frequently.

The result for the second research question indicated that respondents generally believed that PD inclusion training should provide skills for assisting special education students in inclusion settings without them feeling differentiated or singled out. Some believed that the special education teachers' role is to assist the special education student

perform in the inclusion setting. However, most believed that the PD inclusion training should result in greater collaboration within the classroom, such that one cannot distinguish who is the special education or general education teacher.

In Chapter 5, the results of the study will be examined in the context of the Albert Bandura's self-efficacy social cognitive theory. Generally, self-efficacy is the influence of beliefs that guide the feelings, thoughts, and behavior of individuals that lead to the ability to accomplish a task (Bandura, 2018; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018). Additionally, the results of this study will be discussed in the context of previous research studies discussed in the literature review. Chapter 5 will also include recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to identify secondary general education teachers' perspectives on PD regarding inclusion and coteaching SWDs. This research was performed to investigate the perspectives of general education teachers concerning PD related to teaching in the inclusive classroom and their perceptions in regard to PD and coteaching in inclusion settings. The first research question concerned whether general education teachers believe that PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings. The second research question concerned how PD should influence coteaching in inclusion settings.

This chapter first contains a summary of the findings, followed by the interpretation of the findings. The findings are interpreted first in the context of the literature, and second in the context of the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2. A discussion of the limitations of the study is next, followed by recommendations for future research and implications of the study. The implications of the study are discussed in the context of policy, social change, and research methodology. Chapter 5 concludes with a chapter summary.

There were two research questions under investigation. The first research question addressed whether general education teachers believe that PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings. The

results produced three themes. Based on the results, the first theme indicated that the majority of respondents believed that PD inclusion training was needed. It was noted that PD inclusion training could benefit general education students as well and should be relevant to the grade level and subject areas taught by the teacher.

For Research Question 1, results for the second theme revealed that most respondents believed that PD inclusion training should be mandatory. However, there were some who believed that making PD inclusion training mandatory would not go over well with some teachers because they do not like being told what to do. Other respondents believed that PD training would just add to their workload. Still others noted that there is general resistance to any training whatsoever.

The third theme related to Research Question 1 focused on the frequency of PD inclusion training. Most respondents indicated that PD training was very infrequent at best. The highest frequency was noted as every few months, while there were many who indicated that it had been over a year since their last PD inclusion training. Some respondents indicated that they had never taken PD inclusion training.

The second research question addressed how PD should influence coteaching in inclusion settings. The results of the qualitative data analysis revealed several insights. First, an expectation was revealed that PD inclusion training would help teachers assist special education students in the inclusion classroom without treating them differently from the general education students in the class. Additionally, it was generally believed that skills learned in PD inclusion training such as differentiated learning would also

benefit general education students. Moreover, there was a belief that PD inclusion

training would improve the synergy between the classroom and special education teacher,

such that a person coming into the classroom could not tell who the classroom teacher

was and who the special education teacher was. Finally, it was noted from a minority of

respondents that the role of the special education teacher was to ensure that the special

education student kept up with the rest of the class.

Interpretation of the Findings

Necessity

In the literature review, the necessity of PD for inclusion training for students

with disabilities was discussed. Presumably, SWDs assigned to an inclusive classroom

are competent and capable of being educated (Olsen, 2018). General education teachers

assigned to classrooms that have SWDs in them may not possess the skills needed to

teach SWDs. Donohue and Bornman (2018) stated that general education teachers

become overwhelmed when assigned to teach SWDs without the proper training. With

inclusion becoming the norm in many education settings, teachers must teach to a diverse

group of students. It is incumbent upon them that they are equipped to do so. Based on

this, it was expected that the results of the study would reveal that teachers perceived that

there was a need for PD for inclusion training for students with disabilities. The results of

the study confirmed what was expected, indicating that a majority of respondents felt a

need for PD for inclusion training for SWDs. The responses ranged from a statement that

PD training for inclusion should be required to a statement that PD training for inclusion

is helpful. There were no respondents who believed that PD for inclusion training for students with disabilities was not necessary. Additionally, there were no extensions.

Sustainability

Peter (2018) stated that sustainability in the field of educational PD is a key priority. Melekis and Woodhouse (2016) stated that sustainability is comprised of three things, in that it encompasses living in a way that is environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. McConnell, Delate, and Newlon (2018) submitted that continuous PD contributes greatly to the sustainability of knowledge obtained previously. Teachers expect a PD program that strengthens sustainability. PD empowers the teacher while providing the teacher with motivation to apply the content (Gerda et al., 2016). Given benefit, it was expected that teachers would express their desire to apply the lessons from the PD inclusion training program. The confirmation of what was expected was found in responses to Research Question 2. Research Question 2 asked whether PD influences co-teaching in inclusion settings. The respondents indicated that a major influence of PD on coteaching involved the skills that teachers acquired that enabled them to help SWDs without treating them differently. As inclusion classrooms become much more common, it becomes important that SWDs are not singled out in the class as poor students, or as students who are challenged, as this may affect their ability to learn and interact on an equal footing with their peers socially. It was also noted by the respondents that PD taught teachers how to work together in the inclusion setting to ensure that special education students keep up or do not fall too far behind the other students. The skills

learned in PD are critically important in creating an effective learning environment for both general education students and SWDs. Creating an effective learning environment for both general education students and SWDs was why PD inclusion training was deemed desirable by the majority of respondents and why it encourages the sustainability of knowledge acquired in PD inclusion training. However, conversely, there was dissatisfaction among some respondents because special education students had lower expectations in the inclusion classroom than general education students. Other than this, there were no disconfirmations or extensions.

Teacher Retention

A study in Serbia to monitor the attitudinal shift of general educators regarding inclusion of SWDs found that teachers resented having to teach in inclusion settings and held negative attitudes toward mainstreaming (Chatman, 2017). Their chief complaint was insufficient education and inadequate PD. Surely, this could lead to a negative perspective regarding academic outcomes for SWDs. Additionally, Harfitt (2018) found that teachers who participate in PD programs remain in the profession longer. Therefore, it was expected that those who complained about inadequate PD would have negative attitudes toward inclusion settings with SWDs. However, responses in the current study did not align with the expectation of negative attitudes among those citing inadequate PD. First, the complaint surrounding PD from a majority of respondents was about the infrequent availability of PD inclusion training for SWDs. There were no respondents who expressed negative attitudes toward the inclusion setting with SWDs. The expected

finding may not have been confirmed because the complaints were not about the content of PD training, but instead about the availability of PD. Another reason why there may not have been any negative attitudes expressed about inclusion settings with SWDs was social desirability bias. With this type of bias, respondents answer questions or tell the researcher what they think will lead to them being liked or accepted (Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Omrod, 2018). Because inclusion settings with SWDs are now commonplace and are not likely to diminish in use, the respondents may have felt an implicit pressure to communicate any negative feeling toward inclusion settings with SWDs.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study was Albert Bandura's self-efficacy construct discussed in the Social Cognitive Theory. Self-efficacy refers to the personal belief that one can identify and carry out goals both appropriately and effectively (Bandura, 2018; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018). As it relates to teachers, self-efficacy may significantly influence instructional practices, classroom climate, and attitudes toward educational processes (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018; Malinen et. al, 2018). Bandura described self-efficacy as having two components. The components of self-efficacy are efficacy expectations and outcome expectancy (Bandura, 2018; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018).

Efficacy expectation holds to the belief that an individual has the knowledge, capability, and skills that can create behaviors or actions that will produce desired outcomes and objectives (Bandura, 2018; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2018). Outcome

expectancy looks to the person's perception of the likelihood of performing a task or achieving a goal at a self-expected level of performance (Bandura, 2018). If teachers have efficacy expectation and not outcome expectancy, they may be unsuccessful in implementing their lesson plans, even if they are professionally qualified.

The first research question stated, do general education teachers believe that PD related to SWDs in inclusion settings can improve teacher performance with SWDs in inclusion settings. Based on the theoretical framework of Self-Efficacy construct, for Research Question 1, it was expected that respondents would report that PD inclusion training would provide the knowledge, capability, and skills that can create behaviors or actions that will produce desired outcomes and objectives (i.e. improved educational performance among special education students). The results of the study confirmed what was expected based on the theoretical framework in three ways. First, the majority of respondents indicated that PD inclusion training was needed and believed mandatory training was acceptable. It was believed to be needed because of the skills that would be acquired during the PD inclusion session, including differentiated learning (efficacy expectation). Second, a majority of respondents indicated that the skills acquired from the PD inclusion training would not only benefit special education student in an inclusion setting, but also the general education students as well (outcome expectation).

Research Question 2 stated, how PD should influence co-teaching in inclusion settings. For research question two, based on the theoretical framework of the self-efficacy construct, it was expected that respondents would report that PD would have a

positive influence on co-teaching in inclusion settings. The results indicated that respondents believed that the special education teacher should support the special education students, but one should still not be able to differentiate between the special education and general education teachers in the inclusion setting (outcome expectation). There should be no differentiation because it was expected that PD inclusion training would foster skills that promote greater integration between the two teachers (efficacy expectation). Additionally, respondents reported that PD inclusion training would have a positive influence on all students in the inclusion setting (outcome expectation).

Limitations of the Study

In hindsight, the study could have benefitted from having more questions that specifically asked about research questions one and two. This was one possible limitation to trustworthiness of the study. Having more questions that delved deeper into the teacher perspectives on PD inclusion training for special education, and the expected influence of PD training on co-teaching on special education inclusion classrooms, could have provided more in-depth insights related to research questions one and two.

Another limitation of the study was the availability of the sample. Given that the data was collected during the summer when many teachers go on vacation, the sample may have been biased, given that all teachers were not available for sample selection. As such, the perspectives were limited to the teachers who were available for the study.

Other limitations include the small sample size. Data from small samples sizes may have lower reliability than studies containing larger sample sizes (Creswell, 2018;

Leedy & Omrod, 2018). The study was qualitative and therefore the findings are not

projectable to the larger population of general education teachers who teach SWDs

(Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Omrod, 2018). The study also was limited by the data analysis

technique used: content analysis. This method of analysis is more subjective than

quantitative approaches and, therefore, less reliable (Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Omrod,

2018).

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future research. First, if this qualitative

study is to be replicated, it is recommended that more questions be added that more

directly address the two research questions. The study addressed the research questions

indirectly, but it may be interesting to see if the findings change if the questions were

asked differently. Second, it is recommended that the study be conducted during the

school year when all teachers are theoretically available to be interviewed for the study.

This study took place during the summer when some teachers were out of town on

vacation. Third, it is recommended that the sample be segmented by general education

teachers and special education teachers, with an equal number of each. This may also

require a larger sample size, with 12 general education and 12 special education teachers.

This segmentation may provide insight as to whether the perspectives of the two groups

are the same or different. Finally, is it recommended that a quantitative study be initiated

to examine if the findings are confirmed using a larger population. Qualitative studies

provide in-depth directional informational, but the results, as mentioned earlier, are not projectable to the larger population (Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Omrod, 2018).

Implications

The implications of the study's results extend to individual teachers, organizations such as schools and school boards, policy, and theory. On the individual level, teachers may need to be more proactive in finding the right PD inclusion training for special education. Many respondents noted that they received training infrequently and that there training offered by the school or school board may not have been the most beneficial to the teachers. There was one teacher who sought and paid for his own PD inclusion training for special education. It may be incumbent upon teachers to insist to their schools and school boards that the PD inclusion training for special education be more frequent and more useful.

At the organizational level, if the PD inclusion training for special education classrooms are to continue, and the performance of special education and general education students continues to be a concern of schools and school boards, it behooves the organizations to develop training that increases the effectiveness of both the general education and special education teachers in the inclusions special education classroom. Specifically, the trainings should focus on instructional improvements of both the general and special education teacher.

From a policy perspective, the implication of this study may reflect the need for PD inclusion training in the special education field to be mandatory for special education

certification and for all general education teachers who have inclusion classroom settings. Additionally, training for all teachers in the education field on special education inclusion should be included during their college matriculation. There were only a few respondents who stated that they received inclusion training during the college years. If this training was more widespread in the educational curriculum, and reinforced through additionally mandated PD training to keep one's teacher certification, it could benefit both the general and special education teachers and students.

This study has positive implications for social change. If PD inclusion training for special education is conducted more frequently, and with more general and special education teachers, PD training can have an enhancing effect on these teachers' ability to work with each other and with their students. With higher performing teachers, there should be higher performing students, especially special education students. Some respondents noted that there are lower expectations for special education students in the inclusion setting. However, if teachers improve their efficacy of teaching in inclusion settings as a result of PD inclusion training, this could result in higher expectations for the special education student in inclusion settings, which could in turn result in higher performing special education students. This improvement in performance among special education students could result in better work skills, and therefore better jobs for this population, which would be a benefit to the broader society.

This outcome of this study reveals that the qualitative methodology was an effective approach to addressing the current research questions. The in-depth questions

allowed the researcher to delve deeply into the beliefs and perceptions of the teachers in inclusion special education classrooms. This approach is even more appropriate as a first step in the research process, given that these research questions have never been posed before. So, the initial qualitative research step can be followed up by a quantitative research study to confirm the results with a larger population.

Based on feedback from respondents regarding the practice of PD inclusion training for special education, training should emphasize strategies and tactics that improve the skills of teachers and the outcomes of the students in the inclusion setting. These strategies and tactics include a de-emphasis on paperwork in the training, and an emphasis on team oriented teaching, and team oriented lesson planning. Additionally, some respondents indicated that subject-matter-specific inclusion training would be appropriate as well. So, from a practice standpoint, activities that improve performance are preferred.

Conclusions

In this study, the majority of respondents indicated that PD training on inclusion was needed to improve the performance of general education teachers who work with SWDs in inclusion settings. It was also noted by many that PD inclusion training should improve the ability of both the general education and special education teacher to work with special education students without giving them specialized treatment or undesirable attention. However, there were some respondents who believed that the special education teacher in the inclusion classroom should primarily work with the special education

students. Additionally, a majority of respondents indicated that mandated PD training was acceptable. However, there were inconsistencies in the frequency of PD training among respondents. Some respondents reported that PD training multiple times a year, while others reported having PD training once year or less frequently.

The results of the study had implications on individual, organizational, policy, and practice levels. To improve the study in the future, it was recommended that the study be conducted during the school year when all teachers available, and that the sample be segmented by general education teachers and special education teachers, with an equal number of each. This was an important study that yielded very useful insights and positive implications for improvements in PD inclusion training for special education.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Invitation

This study is a part of a doctoral dissertation by Dwight Williams at Walden University. This study will assist in bringing to the surface the perspectives of general educators in regard to professional development and teaching students with disabilities in general education classes with their nondisabled general education peers. This study will assist in bringing to light the pressures involved with teaching to students with disabilities and the professional development needed to do so. If you choose to participate, your name will not be mentioned in this study.

Your name will be kept strictly anonymous, as the researcher will be using codes in the place of name to identify the participants. If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire, and take part in a one on one individual interview with the researcher (Dwight Williams) in a private location at the research location. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed directly afterward. The researcher will also be taking field notes as a backup in case of a malfunction of the audio recorder.

The code used to identify you, will be placed on audiotape, individual interview and field notes and locked away in the researchers' home. You will be asked to respond to questions related to your experiences in teaching students with disabilities in general education classrooms and professional development. You will also be asked to provide

any recommendation you may have to make the process of teaching to students with disabilities easier. You will be asked to review the transcript and conclusion for accuracy.

The interviews should take anywhere from 60-90 minutes. Participants will be informed that the possibility of a follow up interview exist. This is to confirm the accuracy of the account. This also will be in writing (Creswell, 2018). The responses will in no way affect your employment. All information will be reported anonymously. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any time. There will be no adverse effect at your employment for doing so. Your participation is strictly voluntary and no monetary compensation will be given for your participation. This study will benefit you and other practitioners and will assist in making recommendations to administrative leaders concerning teaching to students with disabilities in general education classes alongside their nondisabled general education peers.

The criteria are as follows:

1. You must be a general education teacher assigned to the research study site.

2. You must teach students with disabilities in the general education classroom with non-disabled peers.

3. Have had an opportunity to experience professional development at the high school.

4. Must be willing to share feelings and thoughts about teaching students with disabilities and the pressure to do so.

5. Must be willing to express thoughts about professional development.

6. Must be willing to share recommendations for teaching students with disabilities.

Appendix B : Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you very much for participating in this study. I have prepared some questions for you to answer during this interview. Your name will not be associated with the questions in any way. As with the demographic questionnaire, a pseudonym will be assigned to protect your privacy. There are no right or wrong answers. I am only interested in your perceptions of what you have experienced in professional development and teaching to student with disabilities in inclusive setting. Please feel free to elaborate past the questions that I have asked, if you feel a need too.

1. What do you feel the role of special educator is in regard to co-teaching in the general education class room? How is the special education teacher utilized in the general education classroom?

2. How does having students with disabilities impact your classroom? How do you compensate for slower learnings?

3. Do you feel that SWDs can learn the general education curriculum in the general education setting? Do you think that students with disabilities should have their own class room? Why?

4. What is your perception of general educators being told that they must have professional development in regard to special education? Do you think that general educators should have professional development in special education? Why?

5. Describe the training that you have had in the last 6 months in regard to special education? How often do you have training on collaboration?

6. What do you think is a good number of student with disabilities to have in a classroom of 30 students? Why?

7. Can you tell me what the policy 2419 is? What are your recommendations for teaching student with disabilities?

8. How do you feel about SWDs being in classes with their nondisabled peers? Should students with disabilities in general education classes be require keeping up with their nondisabled peers?