

**LITERATE CITIZENSHIP: THE CULTURE OF LITERACY IN  
INCLUSIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOMS  
AND STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

As more and more students with intellectual disabilities are included in the general education middle school setting, the culture and context of the literacy instruction they are receiving is severely limited in the existing literature. In this study, the researcher employed an ethnographic research design to observe the literacy culture of two middle school general education social studies teachers in the context of a district and school that had focused on more inclusive practices over the past five years. The learning environment and the general education teachers' perceptions and expectations of the nature of literacy for students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting were observed over a nine week period using two theoretical frameworks; the culture of inclusion (Giangreco, Cloninger, Dennis, & Edelman, 1994) and socio-cultural literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). The data gathered is reflective of the literacy practices used with the four students with intellectual disabilities who agreed to participate in the in-depth analyses, though nine were enrolled in the three general education classes. The themes of socialization for students with intellectual disabilities in general education classes, and the immersion in and isolation from literacy practices within the general education social studies literacy culture emerged and are discussed in detail. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research for students with intellectual disabilities in general education middle school settings are provided.

*Keywords:* inclusion, intellectual disabilities, literacy, social studies, middle school, general education

This dissertation is dedicated to my sister Lori whose love and self-determination are forces to be reckoned. Through Lori's eyes I have learned much about life. My sister has taught me how to serve others with humility and to allow others to serve me. She has taught me that a person's capacity to learn may be limited more by a lack of expectation and opportunity from others, than a person's ability or will.

This work is also dedicated to the many children with varying support needs who taught me more than I taught them. To my children and so many others, whose defining characteristics of fierce determination, tenacity, humor, persistence, loyalty, and sensitivity make me beam with pride. Finally, this work is dedicated to my best friend and husband, Sheridan.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CCR	College and Career Readiness
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CCSSO	Council of Chief State School Officers
CTD	Constant Time Delay
EHA	Education for All Handicapped Children Act
ELA	English/Language Arts
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
GE	General Education
ID	Intellectual Disabilities
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual Education Program
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NGACBP	National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices
NRP	National Reading Panel
SE	Special Education
SC	Self-Contained
SwIDs	Students with Intellectual Disabilities
SwDs	Students with Disabilities

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Literacy has been defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as “a human right and the basis for lifelong learning” (“Literacy for All”, n.d., para 1) and the lack of literacy, as the road to disenfranchisement by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). Students with intellectual disabilities (SWIDs), have generally been excluded from literacy instruction in the general education (GE) curriculum (Agran, Cavin, Wehmeyer, & Palmer, 2006; Copeland & Keefe, 2007; Erickson, Hanser, Hatch, & Sanders, 2009; Kliewer & Biklen, 2001; Kliewer & Landis, 1999; Ryndak, Morrison, & Sommerstein, 1999) as a result of the generally held belief that they were unable to attain literacy (Houston & Torgesen, 2004; Katims, 2000, 2001; Keefe & Copeland, 2001; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007). This lack of literacy and academic expectation has significantly constrained SWIDs’ educational progress (Kliewer & Landis, 1999; McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morrison, 1997; McGrew & Evans, 2004). Scholars credit this population’s lack of access and progress in the GE core content to two widely-held views of literacy (Forts & Luckasson, 2011; Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Kliewer & Biklen, 2001). First is the prevailing understanding that literacy develops on a linear continuum from emergent to conventional literacy (Kliewer & Biklen, 2007; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Once the components of conventional literacy are attained in third grade, students are expected to be proficient enough readers to move from having learned to read to reading to learn (Chall, 1983). At the middle school level, teachers develop lessons with the expectation that students know and can use the literacy

strategies necessary to learn the content (Jacobs, 2008). The second view is the generally held perception of incompatibility between the literacy potential of SwIDs in inclusive secondary content and the literacy requirements of the GE curriculum (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002; Erickson et al., 2009; McGrew & Evans, 2004; Ruppert, 2013). Teachers see the gap between a student's emergent or early literacy level, the middle school content reading level, and the student's ability to "show what they know" (Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012, p. 29) as essentially unbridgeable (Agran et al., 2002; Doyle & Giangreco, 2009).

The resolution to this often wide gap between the literacy skills of SwIDs and the literacy demands of the middle school content remains elusive to educators in inclusive GE settings (Agran & Alper, 2000; Browder, Wakeman, Spooner, Ahlgrim-Dezell, & Algozzine, 2006; Courtade, Spooner, & Browder, 2007; Ruppert, 2011; Shurr & Bouck, 2013). While researchers have begun to address the lack of literacy instruction for SwIDs in the inclusive elementary classroom (Al Otaiba & Hosp, 2004; Coyne, Pisha, Dalton, Zeph, & Smith, 2012; Johnson, McDonnell, Holzwarth, & Hunter, 2004; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007; Mirenda, 2003; Schnorr, 2011), there remains an absence of content-area literacy research and instructional techniques for SwIDs in inclusive middle school content-area classrooms (Agran & Alper, 2000; Collins, Evans, Creech-Galloway, Karl, & Miller, 2007; Courtade et al., 2007; Roberts, Leko, & Wilkerson, 2013; Shurr & Bouck, 2013). This lack of research has resulted in a limited understanding of literacy instruction (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006) and expectation for this population of students (Kliewer & Biklen, 2007; McDonnell et al., 1997; McGrew & Evans, 2004). The potential for literacy in the middle school inclusive academic classroom for SwIDs is, simply, unknown (Courtade, Spooner, Browder, & Jimenez, 2012).

Literacy, acknowledged as a human right and the path to lifelong learning (Luckasson, 2006; UNESCO, 2003) critically impacts the quality of life for SwIDs (Erickson, 2006). Identified as central to modern living (Collins & Blott, 2003) and linked to one's ability to thrive in society (Alexander, 2005; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), literate competence empowers individuals with disabilities to access and navigate the world (Agran, 2011; Forts & Luckasson, 2011). In Kamil's (2003) report, *Every Child a Graduate: Adolescents and Literacy: Reading for the 21st century*, he argues that the four areas of literacy, those of writing, listening, speaking, and reading, are "critical to the development and success of adolescent learners" (p. 4). Without literacy, a SwID's potential for academic success is nonexistent.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The need to better understand literacy practices for adolescent SwIDs was the impetus for this research study. The learning environment and the GE teachers' perceptions and expectations of the nature of literacy for SwIDs in the GE setting were critical components of this qualitative inquiry (Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Kliewer, 2008; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007; Koppenhaver, Coleman, Kalman, & Yoder, 1991). Two theoretical lenses were used to frame this research: Giangreco, Cloninger, Dennis, and Edelman's (1994) culture of inclusion and Barton and Hamilton's (1998) socio-cultural literacy. These two frameworks served to situate the perspective of the researcher in the context of literacy practices in the inclusive general education classroom. Figure 1, the *Cone of Theoretical Focus and Data Sources*, is the researcher's representation of the order in which these two theories will be used to direct the qualitative analysis of the two classrooms observed (Grbich, 2007).



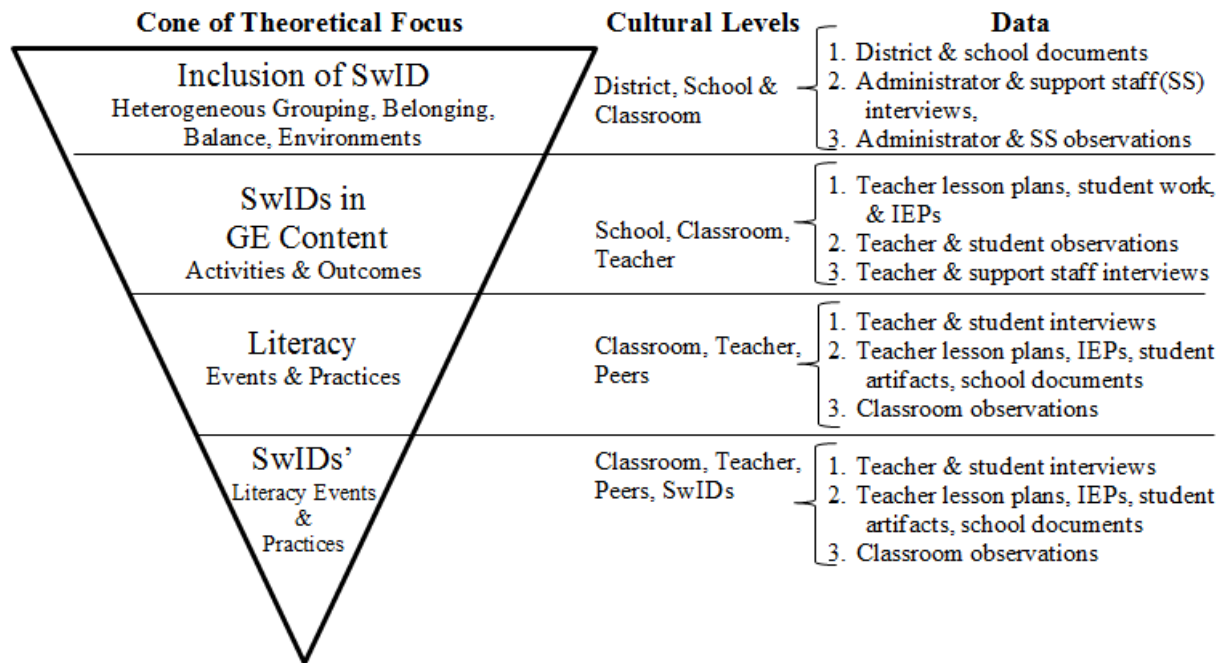


Figure 1. Cone of Theoretical Focus and Data Sources  
Devised using Giangreco and colleagues' (1994) and Barton & Hamilton's (1998) theoretical frameworks of inclusion and socio-cultural literacy, respectively.

The culture of inclusion provided the preliminary lens guiding data collection. The nature of socio-cultural literacy practices situated within the general education inclusive classroom served as a fundamental and increasingly specific lens throughout data collection. As depicted in Figure 1, the culture of inclusion resides at the widest spot on, what the researcher termed, the Cone of Theoretical Focus and gradually drills down through the practices and events of socio-cultural literacy and specifically literacy events for SwIDs. It was through these theoretical frameworks that the data were analyzed.

In 1994, Giangreco and colleagues defined a culture of inclusion through five principles of expectations, practices, and shared beliefs. These principles of inclusion, listed below, comprised the primary theoretical framework for this study.

1. Heterogeneous grouping.....,
2. A sense of belonging to a group.....,
3. Shared activities with individualized outcomes.....,
4. Use of environments frequented by persons without disabilities....., and
5. A balanced educational experience.... (p. 294).

Socio-cultural literacy experts have suggested that to understand the nature of literacy, one must understand literacy as a life-long process (Alexander, 2005; Koppenhaver et al., 1991) with its inherent social connections and practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Keefe & Copeland, 2011), and a means by which “people make sense of their lives ... [and] their everyday practices” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. xvi). Socio-cultural literacy represents a relatively new and broader conceptualization of literacy, one that legitimizes emergent, everyday socially situated literacies and removes obstacles inherent in the developmental ladder (Kliwer & Biklen, 2001). The socio-cultural literacy lens comprised the secondary theoretical frame for this investigation.

### **Units of Analysis**

The culture identified for exploration was the culture of literacy within GE teachers’ inclusive social studies classrooms. Administrators were asked to recommend two teachers who regularly engaged their students in content literacy (including those with an intellectual disability [ID] enrolled in their course). Barton and Hamilton’s (1998) work in socio-cultural literacy provided the primary units of analysis in this study.

Barton and Hamilton (1998) explored the nature of socio-cultural literacy through two main units of analysis:

1. Literacy events point - the basic unit of analysis, “activities where literacy has a role” (p. 8).
2. Literacy practices point - made up of numerous literacy events, “what people do with literacy... cultural ways of utilizing literacy” (p. 7).

Through these two primary literacy units, the researcher identified literacy events and practices within the inclusive classroom.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The researcher sought to examine and explore the literacy culture of two middle school general education teachers’ social studies classrooms through the lenses of inclusion and socio-cultural literacy, with a concentrated focus on the literacy practices of SwIDs.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study were as follows;

1. What is the culture of literacy in two middle school social studies teachers’ inclusive classrooms where SwIDs are enrolled?
2. How is instruction individualized for SwIDs in the literacy culture within two middle school social studies teachers’ inclusive classrooms?
3. What are stakeholders’ perceptions and expectations of literacy for SwIDs in two middle school social studies teachers’ inclusive classrooms?
4. How are SwIDs accessing academic grade-level curriculum and the two College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards of (a) Speaking and Listening, and (b) Reading, in the middle school social studies literacy content?

## **Significance of the Study**

While investigations into literacy for SwIDs exist, the predominant research in the field is that of functional sight word literacy (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006) and typically decontextualized instruction (Katims, 2000; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007) in separate class settings (Agran & Alper, 2000; Courtade et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2013; Shurr & Bouck, 2013). Though scant, there are literacy studies of SwIDs in the general education elementary settings (Kliewer & Biklen, 2007; Kliewer et al., 2006) and a few in middle school settings (Fisher & Frey, 2001; Ryndak et al., 1999). No research was found, however, specific to literacy in the core content courses or literacy specific to the core disciplines of English language arts (ELA) or social studies at the middle school level for SwIDs in inclusive environments. The lack of research exploring literacy in these core disciplines, for SwIDs in inclusive environments, presents a gap in the field. This exploratory study extends the research base to include literacy for middle school SwIDs in the GE inclusive social studies environment. The qualitative data gathered through the socio-cultural literacy lens provides a transparent view of the GE teachers' disciplinary literacy expectations, beliefs, practices, and routines for SwIDs and insight into the methods and strategies that two GE teachers used to bridge the gap and instruct SwIDs within their GE courses.

## **Organization of the Study**

The questions for investigation were explored through the use of an ethnographic design. The cultural context was that of two GE social studies middle school teachers' classes, each with three SwIDs enrolled. The key study informants were the two social studies teachers. A total of nine SwIDs were included in three eighth-grade social studies classes. Two classes were taught

by one teacher and the third class was taught by the second teacher. Secondary informants were those individuals essential to each classroom culture and included students without intellectual disabilities (ID), support teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrative support. Secondary settings in the investigation included the school and district within which the classes were housed.

Utilizing the ethnographic approach of theory directing (Grbich, 2007), the researcher developed the *Cone of Theoretical Focus and Data Sources* (see Figure 1), including first Giangreco and colleagues' (1994) principles of inclusion and then a finer focus of Barton and Hamilton's (2005) socio-cultural literacy practices. The four core constructs employed in the data analyses included (a) environment, (b) activities and outcomes (Giangreco et al., 1994), (c) literacy practices, and (d) literacy events (Barton & Hamilton, 2005). Each classroom culture was explored through multiple data sources of semi-structured interviews, intensive observations, document analysis and photographic artifacts. The data were collected and analyzed through the frames of inclusion, as defined by Giangreco and colleagues (1994), and socio-cultural literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). The researcher utilized theory directing (Grbich, 2007) and spiraling iterations of description, analysis, and interpretation (Wolcott, 1994) in the data analyses. Results of the study are discussed in Chapter 4 and a discussion of the findings and results are explored in Chapter 5.

## Operational Definitions

The following are operational definitions of terms and concepts contained within the manuscript and used to guide the researcher throughout the study.

*Academic curricular content:* the grade-level knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading/language arts, [social studies] and/or science, which are included in a State's standards for all public school students (U.S. DOE, 2007).

*Adolescents:* Students in grades 4-12 (generally 10-21 years old) (National Institute of Literacy, 2007).

*Core content:* subject areas of English language arts, science, social studies and mathematics (Birman et al., 2007; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers [NGACBP&CCSSO], 2010).

*Common Core State Standards (CCSS):* a set of standards developed by NGACBP and the CCSSO, published in 2010, to identify rigorous common goals defining what students are expected to know and do in English language arts and mathematics.

*College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards:* students must learn to read, write, speak, listen and use language effectively in all the content areas and therefore the Anchor Standards are based on ELA Literacy and provide a common framework from which each standard is developed (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010).

*Content area:* a core subject or academic discipline (e.g., English language arts, science, social studies, history, mathematics) (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010).

*Conventional literacy:* the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000).

*Disciplinary Literacy*: “the use of reading, reasoning, investigating, speaking, and writing required to learn and form complex content knowledge appropriate to a particular discipline” (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010, p. 16).

*Functional curriculum*: a curriculum philosophy emphasizing “chronologically-age-appropriate functional skills in natural environments” (Brown et al., 1979, p. 81) and focused on increased independence in the natural, post-school environments of home, work, and community for SwIDs.

*Functional sight words*: individual words often related to life or community skills and taught to SwIDs to recite upon prompting in both community and school contexts (Browder & Xin, 1998).

*General Education curriculum*: “the same curriculum as for nondisabled children” (Department of Education, 2006, p. 46787).

*Grade-aligned instruction*: “...teaching academic content aligned with the student’s chronological age and grade placement” (Browder & Spooner, 2014, p. 6).

*Inclusion*: an interpretation of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) clause in IDEA, 2004 section 613 [a] [5] [A], “To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities...are educated with children who are not disabled...” (p. 2677) from a continuum of services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998) to full membership in a GE classroom for the entirety of the school day (Stainback & Stainback, 1992), to varying degrees of access to the curriculum within the GE classroom (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993).

*Individual Education Program (IEP)*: an annual written statement for each SwD which includes present levels of performance, measurable academic and functional goals, special education and related and supplementary aids and services, and the degree of participation in general education (IDEA, 2004).

*Intellectual disability (ID, 2010):* Intellectual disability has been recently redefined as “...characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills” (Schalock et al., 2010, p. 118), by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD). Though seemingly minor differences, the phrasing and AAIDD’s further explication changes the construct of ID from a person as defective to a construct which “views the disability as the fit between the person’s capacities and the context in which the person is to function” (Schalock et al., 2010, p. 13). This ecological construct of ID, focusing on the degree of fit between an individual and the context, is central to understanding the fit of socio-cultural literacy for this population.

*Lifespan literacy:* the lifelong process of the learning and application of knowledge, interests, and strategies through multiple modes of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Alexander, 2005).

*Literacy:* a constructive, social process where individuals utilize their background knowledge and communication skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking - or other alternative communication methods - to make and give meaning to others (Erickson, 2006). Note: there is no one common definition of literacy.

*Literate citizenship:* the presumption of an individual’s full belonging and literate capacity in a community evidenced through responsive contexts (Kliwer & Biklen, 2007).

*Physical inclusion:* refers to the location of education for SwIDs as sharing the same location as peers without disabilities, though not sharing in the same instructional activities. Example: a SwID working in the back of a general education classroom with a paraprofessional on a separate activity and/or content (Wehmeyer, Lattin, Lapp-Rinker, & Agran, 2003).



*Presumption of competence:* the positive expectation of a student's ability to learn (regardless of a given label) and represented by the provision of supports toward the "students' full membership, participation, and learning within the GE classroom" (Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier., 2007, p. 251).

*Self-contained (SC):* refers to the location of instruction for SwIDs that are substantially segregated (less than 40% of the school day in general education classrooms) and where students without disabilities are not typically instructed (McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, & Algozzine, 2014).

*Self-determination:* "the combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior" (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001, p. 219).

*Socio-cultural literacy:* a constructive and situated social process of making and giving meaning, realized through relationships, and contained of multiple methods of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (e.g., technology literacy, workplace literacy, school literacy) (Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

*Universal Design for Learning (UDL):* a framework for teaching and learning through multiple means of expression, representation, and engagement (Rose, 2000).

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

“Today our nation is in danger...from a lack of the most basic foundation of knowledge [literacy].... And there can be no education without literacy” (NASSP, 2005, p. v), wrote the executive director of The National Association of Secondary School Principals. This culture of literacy, however, is often not maintained as a standard for those with the most significant challenges, those with intellectual disabilities (ID). Historically perceived as incapable of literacy (Houston & Torgesen, 2004; Katims, 2000, 2001; Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007), SwIDs have been excluded from academic literacy instruction (Copeland & Keefe, 2007; Erikson et al., 2009; Kliewer & Biklen, 2001), general education (GE) classrooms (Davis, 1995; Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Archwamety, 2002), and the GE curriculum (Agran et al., 2006; Kliewer & Landis, 1999; Ryndak et al., 1999). The absence of an expectation of literate citizenship has stifled SwIDs’ educational progress (Kliewer & Landis, 1999). Students with IDs’ education in the middle school GE classrooms remains limited in spite of stakeholders’ generally positive perceptions of the benefits of inclusion of SwIDs (Carter & Hughes, 2006). Access to the GE setting has changed little over the last 25 years for this population, from 10% of SwIDs educated in the GE setting 80% or more of the day in 1989 to 17 % in 2011 (Katsiyannis et al., 2002; U. S. Department of Education, 2014). At the middle and secondary levels, 80% or more of a student’s day represents not only traditional electives but academic content courses as well. The persistent question in the field remains how best to meet the academic needs of a wide range of learners, including those with ID, while providing access to and progress in the GE curriculum and classroom (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2007; Carter &

Hughes, 2006; Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012; Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006).

In this chapter the evolving construct of ID and the historical and contemporary contexts of inclusive literacy instruction for SwIDs in middle school content classrooms are identified. A review of literacy instruction within the content areas of English/language arts (ELA) and social studies for this population is provided. Finally, a theoretical framework to observe literacy practices for SwIDs in inclusive middle school settings was developed.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section the history of instruction for SwIDs is briefly reviewed, including the ramifications of the location of the instructional services for SwIDs. A conceptual framework of inclusion is identified and followed by a cultural definition and review of inclusive practices. Next, a brief review of the national and legislative events preceding the standards reform and the cumulative impact on the curriculum and instruction for this population is provided. Building upon the standards and curricular reform, the beliefs and expectations of general and special education teachers in inclusive classrooms are explored.

In the second section, the past and current literacy practices for SwIDs are discussed. Two views of literacy, conventional and socio-cultural lifespan literacy, are explored. Barton and Hamilton's (1998) theory of socio-cultural literacy is further developed as the theoretical lens for this work. The researcher concludes with the extant research in literacy within the content areas of ELA and social studies instruction for SwIDs in middle school inclusive settings.

Literacy has been defined by the *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) as the ...ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Readers can construct meaning from texts in a variety of forms. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and in everyday life, and for enjoyment (Mullis, Martin, & Sainsbury, 2015, p. 12).

The PIRLS definition as well as the definition from Barton and Hamilton (2000) identify literacy as “realized in social relationships” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 13), within communities rather than individuals, and viewed through a socially situated lens. For the purpose of this work literacy will be defined as a constructive, social process where individuals utilize their background knowledge and communication skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking (or other alternative communication methods) to make and give meaning to others (Erickson, 2006). Additionally, literacy is interpreted as a lifelong developmental process (Alexander, 2005) that empowers teachers to continually explore and expand students’ literacy practices, skills, and experiences. Lastly, literacy practices and events will be viewed through the conceptual lens of the CCR Anchor Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGACBP] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010) of (a) Speaking and Listening, and (b) Reading.

### **A Background of Instruction for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Inclusion**

Education in self-contained (SC) settings too often has resulted in reduced expectations, limited academic curriculum (Agran et al., 2002; Browder, Courtade-Little, Wakeman, & Rickelman, 2006; Downing, 2010; Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994;

Kliewer & Landis, 1999), and a narrow focused functional curriculum for SwIDs (Soukup, Wehmeyer, Bashinski, & Bovaird, 2007) instead of balanced, inclusive, functional, and academic goals (Browder, Spooner, Wakeman, Trela, & Baker, 2006; Ryndak et al., 1999). Though inclusive education has been identified as a best practice for SwIDs (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008; Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin, 2012; Smith, 2007; Wehmeyer, 2006; Wehmeyer, Lance, & Bashinski, 2002) little research on inclusion at the middle school level exists (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001), and this population continues to be educated in predominantly separate settings. The *35<sup>th</sup> Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2013* (U.S. Department of Education, 2013) identified 61% of students served under IDEA were educated in the regular class 80% or more of their day, whereas on 17% of SwIDs were educated in the regular class 80% or more of their day. Though Congress' intent was to raise expectations for SwIDs through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Agran & Alper, 2000; IDEA, 1997), and increase access and progress in the GE curriculum (IDEA, 1997), education for SwIDs in the GE classrooms is still not the accepted practice in many schools (Agran et al., 2002; Giangreco et al., 1993; Smith, 2007; Wehmeyer et al., 2003).

### **Inclusion Defined**

Inclusion is not a term in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975, nor in any of the more recent legislation guiding education for students with disabilities (SwDs) (No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB] 2001; IDEA, 2004). Inclusion is an interpretation of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) clause in IDEA, section 613 [a] [5] [A], "To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities...are educated with children who are not disabled..." Since the LRE clause first appeared in EHA (1975), SwIDs and their families have

endured differences in interpretation of LRE from a continuum of services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998) to full membership in a GE classroom for the entirety of the school day (Stainback & Stainback, 1992), to varying degrees of access to the curriculum within the GE classroom (Giangreco et al., 1993). Today there is little more clarity on the meaning of LRE and the inclusion of SwIDs. For the purposes of this study, inclusion, in the context of inclusive education, is described as a culture in which a set of routines, practices, beliefs, and expectations are shared and lived. More specifically, Giangreco and colleagues' (1994) definition of inclusion embodies this cultural perspective and provides a lens through which to identify inclusive education. Giangreco and colleagues (1994) define inclusion as occurring when the five expectations, practices and shared beliefs listed below occur on a regular basis.

1. Heterogeneous grouping: All students are educated together in groups where the number of those with and without disabilities approximates the natural proportion. The premise is that “students develop most when in the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual presence of non-handicapped persons in reasonable approximations to the natural proportions” (Brown et al., 1983, p. 17).
2. A sense of belonging to a group: All students are considered members of the class rather than visitors, guests, or outsiders. Within these groups, students who have disabilities are welcomed, as are students without disabilities.
3. Shared activities with individualized outcomes: Students share educational experiences....Even though students are involved in the same activities; their learning objectives are individualized and, therefore, may be different. Students may have different objectives in the same curriculum area (e.g., language arts) during a shared activity.

4. Use of environments frequented by persons without disabilities: Shared educational experiences take place in environments predominantly frequented by people without disabilities (e.g., general education classroom, community worksites).
5. A balanced educational experience: Inclusive education seeks an individualized balance between the academic/functional and social/personal aspects of schooling (p. 294).

Inclusion remains a tentative and debatable concept (Yell, 1995), especially for students with significant disabilities (i.e., those with intellectual, developmental, and multiple disabilities). In a review of national data for the 2002-2003 school year, Smith (2007) determined that only 10.95% of SwIDs were in inclusive education for 79% or more of their day. That represented a 5.01% national drop in the numbers of SwIDs fully included in GE from the previous five-year count (1997-1998). This low number of SwIDs included in GE is in part a reflection of the lack of a common definition of inclusion in the field. While some scholars contend that students with significant disabilities must be fully educated in the GE classroom (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1992) in order to receive a rigorous education, others maintain the need for a continuum of services to better meet each student's educational needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). The continuum of services approach was supported by Carlberg and Kavale's (1980) meta-analysis of 50 studies suggesting that students with below average IQs made significantly more gains in SC classrooms, while other researchers identified the benefits of education in the GE classroom for SwIDs (Agran & Alper, 2000; Hunt et al., 1994; Matzen, Ryndak, & Nakao, 2010). The debate continues in the field today.

## **National and Legislative Context**

The education of SwIDs has been a road with challenges and victories over the past 40 years. Yell, Rogers, and Rogers (1998) reminded the field that this population of students was often excluded from public schools and, in some places, not even allowed to enter the school 40 years ago. Though the passage of the EHA in 1975 afforded SwIDs the right to a free and appropriate education, it was not until the reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (renamed NCLB) in 2001 and IDEA in 2004 that there were expectations that SwIDs would be taught to the same academic standards as their nondisabled peers. These combined legislative actions required both access to the GE curriculum for all students with disabilities, including SwIDs, and their inclusion in state and national assessments.

## **Standards Reform**

The origin of the standards reform is often attributed to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (Browder, Spooner, et al., 2006; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) which decried mediocre educational standards in the United States. The subsequent reauthorization of the ESEA in 1994 (renamed Improving America's Schools Act [IASA]) assured the birth of the standards reform in education (Browder, Spooner, et al., 2006; Thurlow, Quenemoen, & Lazarus, 2012). State and national standardized testing became the metric for identifying educational proficiency for children in America, with the exception of those with disabilities. The customary exclusion of this population from standardized testing and accountability systems severely limited the identification of performance outcomes for SwDs (Erickson, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1996; McDonnell et al., 1997; Thurlow, 2002; Ysseldyke, 2001); however, the reauthorization of NCLB in 2001 and IDEA in 2004 mandated inclusion of all students, including those with ID, in state and national testing. Following these legislative



mandates was the initial, nearly complete (45 states) national adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGACBP] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO]) by 2011. This move, from individual state standards to overall more rigorous national standards, highlighted a critical concern for all students to be working toward grade-level academic core content (Christensen, Carver, Van De Zande, & Lazarus, 2011). Including SwDs in the core standards however, continues to present concerns in many states. In the *2012 Survey of States* report by National Center on Educational Outcomes (Rieke, Lazarus, Thurlow, & Dominguez, 2012), over half of the state leaders reported defining the meaning of College and Career Ready (CCR) standards for SwDs as a challenging issue.

### **A Functional Curriculum**

Though SwIDs were provided the right to a free and appropriate education through the EHA (P.L. 94-142) in 1975, there was little expectation of academic literacy for SwIDs (Kliewer, Biklen, & Kasa-Hendrickson, 2006; Ryndak et al., 1999) who could not speak or write their name by the third grade. The typical education model in the late 1970s for SwIDs often was referred to as the readiness model (Brown et al., 1979). If a student was unable to attain the prescribed developmental milestones, they were deemed not *ready* for literacy (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2007). Most SwIDs could not access opportunities for academic literacy under this model. Some scholars suggested SwIDs were never expected to be able to read (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006; Kliewer et al., 2006). As SwIDs were beginning to be included in the public schools, Brown and colleagues (1979) proposed an alternative curriculum focusing on adolescents with significant ID and emphasizing “chronologically-age-appropriate functional skills in natural environments” (Brown et al., 1979, p. 81). Students with severe disabilities

entering middle and high school environments were still working on elementary, and for some preschool, curriculum. Brown and colleagues believed that prioritizing functional skills over developmental academic skills for adolescents would enable the attainment of critical functioning skills for adulthood. They proposed teaching the functional skills in middle and high school that SwIDs would need to live “as independently and as productively as possible” (Brown, 1979, p. 87) in their natural, post-school environments of home, work, and community. A crucial development in the field, the functional curriculum with a literacy focus on safety and functional sight words, enabled SwIDs to become more independent and productive in their schools and communities (Browder & Xin, 1998).

The emphasis in the field on functional curricula led to a shift in focus, often to the exclusion of academic content (Alfassi, Weiss, & Lifshitz, 2009), such as English/language arts, math, science, and social studies (Agran et al., 2002; Browder, Spooner, et al., 2006; Katims, 2000; McDonnell et al., 1997; Wehmeyer, 2006). In comprehensive reviews of special education literature from 1976 to 2010 (Nietupski, Hamre-Nietupski, Curtin, & Shrikanth, 1997; Shurr & Bouck, 2013), researchers identified an overwhelming majority of published articles on functional content, with a relatively scant number on academic content. From Shurr and Bouck’s review in 2013, only 6% of the literature represented academics. Of the 10 special education journals reviewed, each journal published less than one curricular article per year for 15 years. This continued focus on functional curriculum, to the near exclusion of academic curriculum, leaves a large gap in the field for understanding both what and how to teach academics to SwIDs. Scholars in the field have taken differing views on functional and academic content. Where some (Collins, Branson, Hall, & Rankin, 2001) suggested the need for parallel course content (e.g., functional sight words; Collins et al., 2007) to provide the functional academic objectives

for SwIDs in the GE classroom, Ruppert (2013) suggested that “access to grade-level literacy and life skills” (p. 46) can be achieved simultaneously in the GE classroom.

### **Learning Academic Curriculum in General Education Classes**

As more reforms were implemented, questions of what curriculum and goals and where the services and supports should be located for SwIDs became a part of the national debate (Courtade et al., 2007; Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2008; Shurr & Bouck, 2013; Spooner, Knight, Browder, Jimenez, & DiBiase, 2011; Spooner, Knight, Browder, & Smith, 2012). During the past five decades, the philosophy of education for SwIDs changed dramatically from an assumed inability to benefit from education and being hidden in overpopulated and desolate institutions in the 1960s (Blatt & Kaplan, 1966; Spooner & Brown, 2011), to the mandate for public education in the 1970s (EHA, 1975), to the inclusion of SwIDs in GE classes alongside their non-disabled peers in the 1980s and 1990s (Wehmeyer, 2006). Though the education of SwIDs in the GE classroom has been acknowledged by many as the most appropriate (Jackson et al., 2008; Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012; Villa & Thousand, 2005), the prevailing practice of receiving education outside of the GE classroom for the majority of the school day for this population continues (Smith, 2007).

Researchers have identified evidence to support the GE classroom as the most effective placement for SwIDs for accessing and engaging in GE content. Two teams of researchers found that as SwIDs’ time was increased in the GE classroom, their engagement in the curriculum also increased (Agran & Alper, 2000; Wehmeyer et al., 2003). Wehmeyer and colleagues (2003) found that SwIDs, included in the GE classroom, had more access to and spent more time engaged in tasks linked to the standards than their peers in the SC classrooms. In a follow-up study, Soukup and colleagues (2007) found similar results. Students with ID, who spent more

than 50% of their day in the GE classroom, participated in on-grade level standards 96-98% of the measured intervals. Students with ID who spent 50% or less of their day in the GE classroom were participating in activities linked to GE standards only 46% of the measured intervals. Wehmeyer and colleagues (2003) and Soukup and colleagues (2007) have supplied evidence that access provides increased engagement in the GE curriculum. While increased engagement is positive, the absence of research evidencing SwIDs' progress in the GE curriculum remains a gap in the literature (Agran et al., 2006; Browder & Cooper-Duffy, 2003; Savarese & Savarese, 2012; Wehmeyer et al., 2003).

### **Universal Design for Learning**

In order to address the gaps of access and progress in the GE curriculum for SwIDs, researchers have used student-mediated technologies as everyday-literacies to increase learning (Edyburn, 2007), motivation, (Davies, Stock, King, & Wehmeyer, 2008), self-determination (Lee et al., 2011; Wehmeyer et al., 2011), and access to grade level content (Braun, 2007; Douglas, Ayres, Langone, Bell, & Meade, 2009). With technology as a key component, researchers developed a template for planning instruction that incorporated opportunity and access for students of all abilities with the key tenant of progress and learning, called universal design for learning (UDL; Meyer & Rose, 2005). The concept of UDL is an educator's framework of core components for student access and learning when developing curriculum, lessons, and activities. Rose, Meyer, and Hitchcock (2005) identified three core components of any lesson, or curriculum necessary to create access for all students to learn: (a) multiple representations of content, (b) multiple forms of expression, and (c) multiple options for engagement. Wehmeyer (2006) suggested UDL as a bridge for SwIDs to access and learn the GE content. "Universally designed instructional formats ensure that students have access to content that other students read

from, they can use that technology to learn essential literacy skills" (Wehmeyer, 2006, p. 324).

The components of UDL can be used across any assignment, curriculum or standards to support all students, but is especially important for SWIDs to access the GE curriculum.

### **Common Core State Standards**

The educational progress of SwIDs in the GE curriculum is directly tied to each state's academic standards. While many states have adopted and begun to implement the CCR CCSS (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010), state leaders (Rieke et al., 2012), GE teachers (Matzen, Ryndak, & Nakao, 2010), and special education teachers (Agran & Alper, 2000; Agran et al., 2002) struggle to understand how to implement the CCR standards in the GE curriculum for SwIDs. At the middle school level, inclusive content area teachers struggle with demands (a) to teach reading strategies (Kamil, 2003) and independent study skills, (b) to increase rigor and higher level content, and (c) to increase instructional pacing (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). These issues of literacy and implementation of the CCSS in the GE content for SwIDs represent major challenges for the field (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2007).

Prior to the release of the CCSS, in 2010, scholars had already begun to identify possible strategies for making GE academic standards meaningful for SwIDs. Ford, Davern, and Schnorr (2001) suggested the alignment of four foundational skills for SwIDs to appropriate GE standards:

- 1) interacting with people and information in a multicultural society,
- 2) navigating the tasks of living,
- 3) solving problems, and
- 4) making contributions (p. 216).

Ford and colleagues' (2001) foundational skills align to the four ELA CCR Anchor Standards. For example, the first CCR Anchor Standard for speaking and listening under the subheading of comprehension, "Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively" (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010; ELA-Literacy CCRA SL1), aligns with Ford and colleagues' foundational skills one and four.

The CCR Anchor Standards within the CCSS provide the foundation from which every standard is generated. The four ELA CCR Anchor Standards include: (a) Reading, (b) Writing, (c) Speaking and Listening, and (d) Language. The four Anchor Standards stretch across the content (ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) and grades (K-12) and are what all students, including SwIDs, are expected to master. The two Anchor Standards of focus in this study were (a) Reading and (b) Speaking and Listening. The Reading Anchor Standards are parceled into four subheadings: (a) key ideas and details, (b) craft and structure, (c) integration of knowledge and ideas, and (d) range and reading level of text complexity. The Speaking and Listening Anchor Standards are divided into two subheadings: (a) comprehension and collaboration and (b) presentation of knowledge and ideas (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010).

Research on the implementation of the CCR Anchor Standards in GE curriculum for SwIDs, since adoption of the CCSS, is lacking. Hudson, Browder, and Wood (2013) highlight the need for more complex engagement in the GE curriculum (as called for by the CCSS) for SwIDs. They cite Jimenez, Browder, Spooner, and DiBiase's (2012) concept identification and Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran Mithaug, and Martin's (2000) self-directed learning as instructional examples that align with the CCR Anchor Standards. In spite of the clear access and accountability mandates of IDEA (1997 & 2004) and NCLB (2001), the lack of research focused

on changing educators' expectations of and goals for SwIDs towards deeper engagement and progress in the GE curriculum, creates a significant challenge for the field (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2007). This challenge is increased by the lack of literacy emphasis for SwIDs in the GE content areas (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006; Courtade et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2013).

### **Teachers' Perceptions and Expectations in the General Education Context**

Access to and progress in the curriculum through literacy is integrally tied to teachers' perceptions and expectations of their students (Zygouris-Coe, 2014). The expectations that teachers have for students also can be powerful determinants. Dweck (2008), through her research on growth mindsets, explained that teachers who believe their students are malleable and can learn tend to be the teachers who accept responsibility for making sure all students have the strategies and access they need to master the content. Teachers with this *growth mindset* "believe that intellectual abilities can be cultivated and developed through application and instruction" (p. 2) and their students respond through increased achievement. Growth mindset teachers believe everyone can learn. Teachers with a growth mindset encourage their students through *process* praise such as "Everyone learns in a different way [and] let's keep trying to find the way that works for you" (p. 14). General education teachers who have a growth mindset engender in all their students the expectation of growth and learning, regardless of any identifiers to the contrary, and are committed to that outcome (Dweck, 2010).

In the same conceptual family as growth mindset, Kliewer and Biklen (2007) use the term *local understanding* as a particular way in which the GE teachers perceive and respond to all students, including SwIDs. Using Geertz' (1983) anthropologist's lens of "local frames of awareness" (p. 6), Kliewer and Biklen (2007) describe GE teachers' "local understanding" (p. 2579) of their SwDs. Specifically, they identified teachers who frame their instruction and

interaction with all students through a recognition of the students' innate "value, intelligence and imagination" (Kliewer & Biklen, 2007, p. 2580) by providing a class culture responsive to students' knowledge and literate citizenship. The GE teachers' lens of local understanding interprets every student as a citizen (with full membership) capable of learning and participating as literate citizens (Kliewer & Biklen, 2007). Teachers' perceptions and expectations framed in local understanding presume competence of all students to become literate citizens (Kliewer & Biklen, 2007).

### **Special Educators' Perspectives**

This challenge of what to teach SwIDs is not isolated to GE. Researchers have realized a lack of alignment in special education teachers' beliefs and expectations for SwIDs and the recent legislative mandates (Agran & Alper, 2000; Agran et al., 2002). In Agran and colleagues' (2002) survey of 84 special education teachers in Iowa, researchers found the "majority of respondents did not believe that access to the general curriculum is appropriate for students with severe disabilities and that these students should not be held accountable to the same performance standards as typical peers" (p. 129). In a separate survey, special educators identified that 75% of their students needed to learn to read (Agran & Alper, 2000). When asked to rank the importance of instructional content, the same special educators ranked social, communication, and self-determination skills higher than reading social studies or science content. Additionally, Agran and Alper (2000) found that the more intensive the student's disability the less importance the teacher attributed to the GE academic curriculum. This lack of expectation and importance of GE curriculum by special educators sends conflicting messages to GE teachers who are held accountable for the SwIDs in their classes.



## **General Educators' Perspectives**

General education teachers' perceptions of support for the inclusion of SwIDs is contingent on the intensity of a student's disability, as identified through national and international syntheses of 40 years of survey research (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). The less intensive the support required by the students the more accepted they were by the teachers. Alternately, the more intensive the support a student required the less accepted they were by the teachers (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). These results held across location and time. Additionally, though over half of the teachers stated their belief in the benefits of inclusion, two-thirds felt they were lacking the skills, resources, and preparation to teach SwDs. The research continues to confirm this wariness by GE teachers towards students with more intensive support needs, such as SwIDs, in the GE classroom (Giangreco et al., 1993; Matzen et al., 2010).

A conflicting rationale of curricular expectations and instruction for SwIDs, provided to GE teachers, created a sense of frustration with the fragmented inclusion and provisional membership of SwIDs in GE classes (Matzen et al., 2010). In two separate studies, GE teachers were asked to volunteer for students with significant disabilities to be enrolled in their classes (Giangreco et al., 1993; Matzen et al., 2010). In both studies, the GE teachers were informed that the purpose of the SwIDs' presence in their class was for exposure to non-disabled peers and social skill development. The GE teachers also were made aware that they could, at any time, request the SwIDs no longer attend their class. Special educators provided parallel content for their students and in both studies the GE teachers were exempted from providing any instructional content to these students. Instead of allaying fears of increased workloads as anticipated, the GE teachers reported frustration in not being able to assist in accommodating the students' academic work, lack of collaboration with special educators, and the inability to

include the SwIDs in the instructional activities of the class. Shielding the GE teachers from responsibility for SwIDs resulted in the teachers knowing little more about the SwIDs at the end of the year than the beginning, the lack of academic expectations of the SwIDs, and less, rather than more, access to the GE curriculum for SwIDs (Giangreco et al., 1993; Matzen et al., 2010).

Scholars have suggested the need for further research into the GE teachers' inclusive environments including policies, instructional responsibilities, and resources to better understand teachers' attitudes towards and curricular decisions for SwIDs (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Copeland & Cosbey, 2008; Ward, 2010).

### **Literacy Practices for Students with Intellectual Disabilities**

Beyond teachers' perceptions is the obligation to educational equity for SwIDs (Schuelka, 2012). The essential challenge is that of empowering SwIDs to progress in the GE content curriculum (Courtade et al., 2012; Downing & Eichinger, 2003; Wehmeyer, Lattin, & Agran, 2001). The limitations of the developmental era's academic prerequisites are no longer valid (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2007; Koppenhaver et al., 1991). When provided with opportunities of learning with non-disabled peers, access and expectation of literacy instruction and models, and the technology necessary to demonstrate learning, SwIDs can progress in the GE content-area classroom (Copeland & Keefe, 2007; Courtade et al., 2012).

Academic expectations for SwIDs have been raised as a result of the legislated access and accountability mandates (IDEA, 2004; NCLB, 2001; Shurr & Bouck, 2013). This population is now expected to access and progress in grade-aligned instruction in the GE content and the CCR Anchor Standards of the CCSS (Courtade et al., 2012). Grade-aligned instruction, explained by Browder and Spooner (2014), refers to promoting "foundational academic learning [for SwIDs]

while engaging students in the same content as their same-age peers” (p. 6). Foundational to all middle school content (NASSP, 2005), literacy must be addressed for SwIDs, especially in the content areas of ELA, math, science (Hunt, McDonnell, & Crockett, 2012; NCLB, 2001), and social studies (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2011).

### **Historical View of Literacy and Students with Intellectual Disabilities**

This shift to access and mastery of the highest level possible in the CCSS - CCR has roots in the importance of literacy to the success of individuals in society (NASSP, 2005; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Literacy has a history of being and continues to be an issue of social justice in the United States (Kliewer & Biklen, 2001; Prendergast, 2002). United States education policy in the 1960s effectively restricted access to literacy for African Americans (Prendergast, 2002), and essentially, for SwIDs as well. The lack of SwIDs’ access to schools, as late as the 1960s (Yell et al., 1998), resulted in the absence of literacy instruction. The uprising of civil rights and educational opportunities for African Americans in the United States brought to light the right of equal educational opportunity for all children and paved the way for students with disabilities (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954; Yell, 1995). Internationally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had been working for over half a century toward the vision of literacy for all (2014). Many education scholars have come to consider literacy a basic human right (Allor, Mathes, Roberts, Jones, & Champlin, 2010; Courtade et al., 2012; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007; Kliewer et al., 2006; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) and synonymous with a right to education (Kliewer & Biklen, 2001).

Literacy, as the cornerstone on which the U.S. education system is built (Agran, 2011) and around which lives are centered (Houston & Torgesen, 2004), is the tool with which students

access new information, new stories, new worlds (Houston & Torgesen, 2004), and the world in which they live (Kliewer et al., 2006). Yet, there remains a not so subtle belief that students who have been assessed by school systems (for educational access and support) and received the label of ID are not capable of literacy (Alfassi et al., 2009; Houston & Torgesen, 2004; Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Kliewer et al., 2006; Kliewer & Landis, 1999) – and therefore, are not capable of accessing middle school academic core content through literacy (Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Miranda, 2003). Today, educators continue to assume that if SwIDs do not learn the developmental pre-reading and emergent foundational reading skills by early elementary grades, the window for learning literacy has closed (Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Miranda, 2003).

For SwIDs, literate citizenship in the U.S. has yet to be realized, in part, due to the conceptualization of reading as a strictly developmental process. In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) reviewed 20 years of reading literature and subsequently published a report identifying *the* five components of reading as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). The omission of all qualitative research in the review excluded socio-cultural literacy components crucial to students with limited or delayed communication and language; the interconnectedness of literacy, the meaning-making, the routines, and the methods of literacy support within a classroom environment (Alfassi et al., 2009; Kliewer, 2008; Pressley, 2002). Without specifically defining literacy, the NRP's identification of the five literacy components implied a conventional and standardized definition of reading, significantly limiting SwIDs' access to literacy (Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007). Kliewer and colleagues (2006) have termed this restricted access to literacy education and the opportunities afforded as *literate invisibility*. The lack of expectation of literacy capacity (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006;

Courtade et al., 2012; Houston & Torgesen, 2004; Katims, 2000; Kliewer et al., 2006; McDonnell et al., 1997) and confined literacy instruction has led to the lack of evidence in how to teach SwIDs literacy (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006; Roberts et al., 2013).

## **Two Views of Literacy**

How then do SwIDs access and progress in academic literacy content to become literate citizens? This question is difficult to answer when no single agreed-upon definition of the term *literacy* exists (Ferdman, 1990; Reder & Davila, 2005). The definition of literacy is an essential component that drives the instruction and opportunities that follow (Keefe & Copeland, 2011). Two general views of literacy are supported in education today (Flewitt, Nind, & Payler, 2009; Katims, 2000). The first and more prominent view is that of the standardized conventional literacy summarized by the NRP 2000 report, a five-component-based, often decontextualized school literacy, learned primarily by third grade (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1996; Katims, 2000). This view continues at the middle school level with an additional component of motivation necessary with adolescents (Kamil, 2003). Literacy, in the conventional view, projects a narrow singular perspective, which excludes many SwIDs (Erickson, 2006; Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007).

The second view is a situated socio-cultural literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) which spans one's lifetime (Alexander, 2005; Koppenhaver et al., 1991) and includes multiple and everyday literacies (Alvermann, 2002; Franzak, 2006; Moje et al., 2004). This socio-cultural literacy is defined broadly here as a constructive, social process (Scribner, 1984) where individuals utilize their background knowledge and communication skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking - or other alternative communication methods - to make and give meaning to others (Erickson, 2006). In other words, while the socially-situated view of literacy includes

the NRP's reading components, it also legitimizes multiple forms of literacy and authentic everyday knowledge to collaborate in the meaning-making of text (Alvermann, 2002; Franzak, 2006; Moje et al., 2004). A socially situated view of literacy expands school literacy to include information-based technologies creating home, school, commerce (e. g., banking and shopping), health, and workplace multiliteracies required for social access, participation, and employment (Browder & Spooner, 2014; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Barton and Hamilton (1998) define literacy practices as "way[s] of conceptualising [sic] the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape" (p. 6). Through a socially-situated literacy view, SwIDs have accessed text, content, language, and meaning at the elementary level (Kliewer & Biklen, 2007), but have had limited access at the middle school level.

At the middle school level, literacy takes a prominent role through increased expectations of students' ability to read for depth of meaning in the various academic disciplines (Deshler & Hock, 2007; Lee & Spratley, 2010). The socially-situated view of literacy embraces both the functional and academic constructs and provides the potential for both access and progress in the CCR Anchor Standards of (a) Listening and Speaking, and (b) Reading for SwIDs.

Rather than a choice between functional or academic curriculum and goals, scholars suggest SwIDs need access and progress in both functional goals and a standards-based curriculum (Browder, Spooner, et al., 2006; Courtade et al., 2012; Hunt et al., 2012). As the result of the nearly national adoption of the CCSS (2010) and the requirements of NCLB (2001), scholars and educators have much work ahead in aligning academic instruction for SwIDs, to access both the functional skills required in their everyday adult lives and the academic skills which enrich lives through lifespan literacy learning (Browder & Spooner, 2014; Browder,

Spooner, et al., 2006; Copeland, & Keefe, 2007). Figure 2, SwIDs Literacy Journey, represents the changing views and expectations of SwIDs regarding literacy over the past forty years.

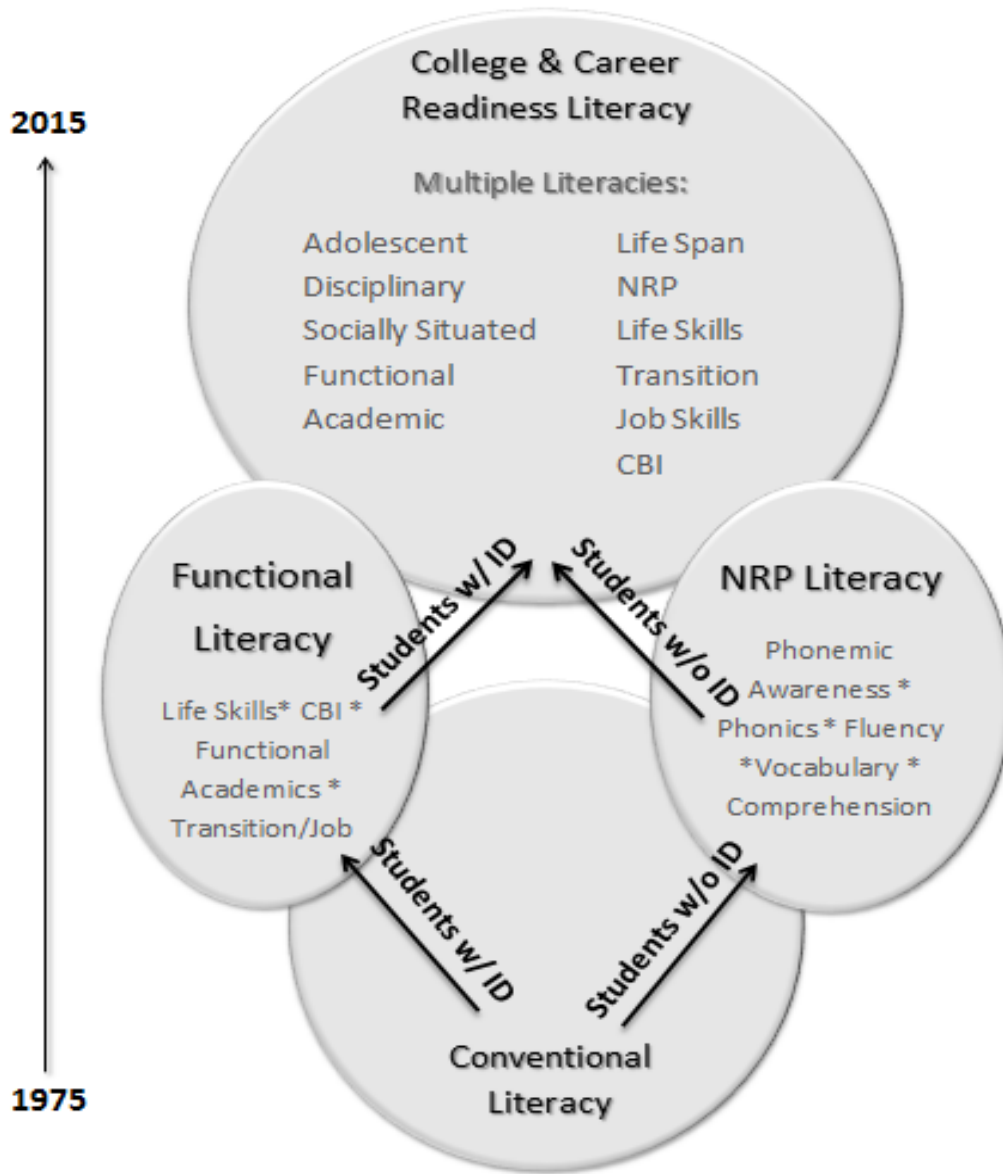


Figure 2. SwIDs' Literacy Journey

## **Lack of Literacy Instruction**

The predominant conventional view of literacy in today's schools has limited the literacy instruction for SwIDs to little more than sight words (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006; Joseph & Seery, 2004; Roberts et al., 2013). Scholars however, have confirmed the capability of SwIDs in learning phonics (Joseph & Seery, 2004) and reading at various grade levels (Katims, 2001; Ryndak et al., 1999). Utilizing NRP's conventional lens of the five reading components, researchers have consistently identified sight word identification or vocabulary as the predominant component of literacy instruction for this population (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006; Joseph & Seery, 2004). Additionally, at the middle school level, the curriculum for SwIDs continues to focus primarily on functional literacy in the segregated rather than inclusive environment (Roberts et al., 2013; Shurr & Bouck, 2013). The scarcity of comprehensive literacy instruction in the GE content for SwIDs is a prevailing theme in the literature (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006; Roberts et al., 2013; Shurr & Bouck, 2013).

Though comprehensive literacy instruction is not prevalent, SwIDs are learning to read. Katims (2001) assessed 132 SwIDs in four literacy components: word recognition, fluency, comprehension, and writing vocabulary. He found SwIDs reading from elementary to high school at various skill and comprehension levels. From a cohort of 85 students, Katims found 49% of the middle school and 57% of the high school students scored between primer and sixth grade level on word recognition, 31% and 37% (respectively) attained primer to sixth grade level in comprehension, and 38% and 63% (respectively) scored from primer to sixth grade in phonemic awareness. Scholars suggest that SwIDs have the capacity to achieve literate citizenship (Katims, 2001; Kliever & Biklen, 2007). In general, though, the literature continues to focus on safety and social sight-word instruction instead of a broader comprehensive literacy (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006; Joseph & Seery, 2004).



Joseph and Seery (2004) found seven studies in a literature review of alphabetic instruction (i.e., phonics and phonemic awareness) for SwIDs from 1990-2002. In one comprehensive literacy study (Hedrick, Katims, & Carr, 1999) that contained an embedded phonics component, researchers reported all nine participants made gains across concepts of print, story retelling, writing, and word recognition. In three studies, researchers found SwIDs were able to make phonetic generalizations (Barudin & Hourcade, 1990; Calhoun, 2001; Lane & Critchfield, 1998). Joseph and Seery suggest that their findings could only point to the potential for SwIDs to learn words through letter-sound associations since none of the studies contained a component of explicit phonics instruction. Though a small set of studies, these researchers support the premise that SwIDs are able to use and generalize phonics and that this population's capacity for literacy may be underestimated (Joseph & Seery, 2004).

In a comprehensive meta-analysis of 128 studies of reading for SwIDs, Browder, Wakeman, and colleagues (2006) sought to identify the frequency of inclusion of NRP's reading components. In a 28-year period (1975 – 2003), more than 70% of the studies focused on safety and functional sight words. Two, of the five NRP components, were the most found in any one study. Researchers focused on phonics instruction in 13 studies, phonemic awareness in 5 studies, targeted fluency in 36 studies, and measured or taught comprehension in 23 studies. Further, the majority of studies were conducted in SC classrooms; only 14 studies, in the 30-year period, were conducted in GE classrooms. The lack of instruction in the NRP's core reading components points to 30 years of consistently under-emphasized reading instruction for SwIDs (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006).

Literacy in general has been a long neglected and quite limited topic in the literature for SwIDs, but the research has been even less in the area of literacy instruction for adolescents with

ID (Kamil, 2003). In a final review, comprehensive literacy instruction in academic content, for adolescents with significant ID, Roberts and colleagues (2013) identified 19 intervention studies in 10 key journals spanning 36 years (1975-2011). Though literacy for this population has received minimal focus and research in the past, the trend has increased from zero studies between 11 and 20 years ago to seven studies in the past decade. In their review, Roberts and colleagues (2013) identified 6 studies (32 %) that represented academic content literacy interventions, while 19 studies (68%) represented functional content interventions. In line with Browder, Wakeman, and colleagues (2006), Roberts and colleagues also classified the interventions utilizing the five NRP reading components and found a similar lack of reading component instruction and heavy emphasis on vocabulary (63% of the studies). Roberts and colleagues concluded that 19 studies in 36 years represented a gap in the literacy literature for adolescent SwIDs. The prevalent focus and overreliance on functional sight word instruction (Browder, Wakeman, et al., 2006) and the lack of academic content and authentic texts, at the middle school level for this population, points to a significant need for research in core content literacy (Roberts et al., 2013).

### **Disciplinary Literacy**

The passage of the CCSS placed on teachers an increased focus and complexity on teaching literacy in each middle school content-area or discipline without guidance to facilitate the learning of students who read significantly below grade level (Zygouris-Coe, 2012), such as many SwIDs. Not only is literacy central to each content area in the CCSS, but the *English Language Arts College and Career Readiness (ELA CCR) Anchor Standards* (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010), provide an overarching frame from which all content standards emanate. In other words, at the middle school level, students must master each discipline's specific literacy

(of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language) to exhibit the “capacities of the literate individual” (CCSS Initiative English Language Arts Standards, 2010, para 1) and teachers must teach discipline specific literacy. Differences in reading intent, method, and comprehension were identified by Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) in the demands of content literacy in math, science and social studies. This differentiation in “use of reading, reasoning, investigating, speaking, [listening] and writing required to learn and form complex content knowledge appropriate to a particular discipline” is termed disciplinary literacy (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010, p. 16).

Ultimately, Zygouris-Coe (2012) identified the content-area teacher as the guide through each discipline’s specific literacy requirements for all students. “Teachers play a key role in rigor not only in selection of texts but especially in their expectations, instruction and support they provide to students, and in the environment they create for learning” (p. 94). In a 2010 report by the Carnegie Corporation, Lee and Spratley identified eight discipline specific reading strategies “that should be taught [by content-area teachers] to meet the needs of adolescent struggling readers in the content areas....

- 1) Build prior knowledge
- 2) Build specialized vocabulary
- 3) Learn to deconstruct complex sentences
- 4) Use knowledge of text structures and genres to predict main and subordinate ideas
- 5) Map graphic...representations...
- 6) Pose discipline relevant questions
- 7) Compare claims and propositions across texts
- 8) Use norms for reasoning within the discipline...to evaluate claims (p. 16).

Literacy in the middle school academic disciplines and access to these discipline specific reading strategies is the common thread through which all students access the subject-area content, including SwIDs.

### **Current Literature in the Core Content**

A small, but growing corpus of research provides evidence that SwIDs can access and progress in content area literacy including ELA and social studies (Hudson et al., 2013; Zakas, Browder, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Heafner, 2013). In the following sections, the researcher explores the content, context, and implementation strategies scholars have used to access literacy in the secondary ELA and social studies content for this population. In the limited studies focusing on literacy in the ELA content, researchers implemented the innovative strategy of grade-level adapted text with response options (Browder, Trela, & Jimenez, 2007; Mims, Hudson, & Browder, 2012; Mims, Lee, Browder, Zakas, & Flynn, 2012), and instructional practices of reciprocal teaching (Alfassi et al., 2009), corrective reading, and comprehensive connected phonics instruction for SwIDs (Bradford, Shippen, Alberto, Houchins, & Flores, 2006).

The content-area of social studies represents the least studied content-area relative to this population. The two social studies focused investigations identified (Schenning, Knight, & Spooner, 2013; Zakas et al., 2013), utilized adapted leveled text and graphic organizers, similar to the ELA investigations, as well as inquiry-based learning. As with other recent investigations (Mims Hudson & Browder, 2012; Mims, Lee, Browder, Zakas, & Flynn, 2012), it is interesting to note that both social studies investigations focused strongly on content comprehension. The research reviewed in the following sections provides glimpses of emerging practice in literacy in the disciplines of ELA and social studies for this population.

## **Literacy in English/Language Arts Instruction**

“Creating access to grade-level ELA content for SwIDs, who may be grades below the academic level of the class, has been a crucial obstacle for many teachers (Hudson, Browder, & Wakeman, 2013). However, the disciplinary literacy in the ELA classroom outlined by Petrosky, McConachie, and Mihalakis (2010), reflects a classroom immersed in inquiry, apprenticeship, and “authentic literate activity...with scaffolding, [differentiated support], and content coaching provided to meet individual student needs” (p. 10). A condensed outline of Petrosky and colleagues’ disciplinary literacy practices in the ELA classroom is provided here.

1. Engage in literary inquiry through oral and written argument and interpretation
2. Respond to text through various cultural lenses
3. Use the methods of various types of literature to gather, organize, and present sources and arguments
4. Use pedagogical routines... to learn more about the content, ideas, and structures of texts
5. Share, respond, and make sense of the literature through interactions with others
6. Engage in ELA apprenticeships in and out of school
7. Read, write, and compose texts from models
8. Engage socially with others through reading and writing
9. Use ELA tools and techniques to comprehend, interpret, and write
10. Engage in personally and socially valued inquiry discussions and intellectual routines
11. Accept the responsibility to ask questions, justify responses with evidence and challenge other's ideas
12. Create, reflect, and revise work products
13. Engage in self-assessment and reflection of their own learning

This type of classroom culture socializes intelligence (Petrosky et al., 2010) and allows all students to actively participate while learning at their own level.

A cohort of scholars have directed their attention toward developing comprehensive ELA content literacy instruction in the SC classroom for SwIDs (Alfassi et al., 2009; Browder, Trela, et al., 2007; Mims, Lee, et al., 2012; Mims, Hudson, et al., 2012; Roberts & Leko, 2013), while others work toward strategies such as embedded instruction in the GE classroom (Jameson, Walker, Utley, & Maughan, 2012). As evidenced by the research, the use of practices such as shared reading, (Browder, Trela, et al., 2007; Mims, Hudson, et al., 2012; Mims, Lee, et al., 2012) and comprehension strategy instruction (Alfassi et al., 2009) and content modification such as adapted grade-level biographies (Browder, Trela, et al., 2007; Mims, Hudson, et al., 2012; Mims, Lee, et al., 2012), provide increased opportunities for SwIDs to access and progress in the GE curriculum (Ryndak, Jackson, & White, 2013).

### **Grade-level adapted text and shared reading.**

The methods of access to grade-level ELA content must be identified before progress is attainable for SwIDs. Adapted grade-level text, often with multiple response options and shared reading, are flexible points of access for this population in the following investigations. Mims, Hudson, and colleagues' (2012) study was one of the first to adapt authentic grade-level biographies and align them to middle school ELA grade-level standards using the evidence-based practice (Hudson & Test, 2011) of shared reading with SwIDs. Their single-subject multi-probe design provided evidence that SwIDs can comprehend adapted grade-level biographies. Mims, Hudson, and colleagues' study provided rich literacy content in text-dependent, listening comprehension instruction for four middle school SwIDs and autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in a one-on-one format in a SC classroom setting. The participants' methods of communication

varied from spoken language to the use of pictures and objects referents with limited to no sight-word recognition. Five biographies typically read in sixth grade language arts, by peers without disabilities, were chosen for adaptation. Students accessed the text through personal copies adapted with paired text-to-symbol summaries, controlled vocabulary, sequencing and comprehension graphic organizers, and student paired symbols-to-text response cards. Read-alouds (shared reading), rereading, and graphic organizers were implemented to enhance text comprehension. All students increased listening comprehension from baseline measures, while three of the students generalized the listening comprehension to a new genre of literature.

In another literacy-rich investigation with emergent readers and utilizing adapted middle school novels, Browder, Trela, and colleagues (2007) trained special education teachers to follow story-based literacy lessons within a SC setting. A multiple-probe-across-participants single-subject design was employed with three middle school teachers and six SwIDs. Eight middle school novels (e.g., *Call of the Wild*, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*) were adapted, creating summarized student sets, modified to a second/third grade listening level, and embedded with vocabulary definitions and text-to-picture/symbol support. The observed baseline literacy instruction of primarily functional sight word identification embedded during morning calendar and schedule review was consistent with teachers' reported limited literacy instruction. The intervention phase included individual literacy teacher development sessions and receipt of literacy lesson templates (task analysis) and teacher/student sets of adapted books. The results of the Browder, Trela, and colleagues investigation (2007) illustrated the ability of the special education teachers to readily master, self-monitor, and maintain all steps of the literacy task-analysis. Researchers also found that all students increased independent correct responses in

early literacy skills, comprehension of grade-level literature, and responses to teacher questions within and across reading material.

In another investigation with grade-level, adapted literature, Mims, Lee, and colleagues (2012) investigated a comprehensive set of literacy skills aligned to middle school GE ELA standards. Participants in the one-group non-randomized, pre-posttest design included five special education middle school teachers and 15 middle school SwIDs. Mims, Lee, and colleagues developed flexible lessons, student-use materials, response options and adapted novels. The same-grade novels were adapted and condensed using symbol/word pairing software and controlled text for teacher and student use. Writing journals also were adapted to provide response options and support for students' varied levels. Pre and post-tests were based on targeted ELA middle school skills including vocabulary, definitions, and targeted comprehension questions. The intervention included systematic and direct instruction in eight scripted lessons (five days each) consisting of vocabulary review, read-alouds, comprehension, story grammar, and writing. Teachers assigned vocabulary and response options based on students' symbolic skill level but also encouraged incidental learning. Students' showed significant gains in vocabulary (pre  $M = 41.18$ ,  $sd = 28.87$ ; post  $M = 77.8$ ,  $sd = 27.01$ ;  $p < .05$ ) with a large effect size of 1.31 (Cohen's  $d$ ) and comprehension of familiar text (pre  $M = 41.7$ ,  $sd = 30.2$ ; post  $M = 66.7$ ,  $sd = 23.4$ ;  $p < .05$ ) with a large effect size of .93. Students showed positive results in spite of a lack of exposure to "extended periods of academic work" (p. 423) with only 45 minutes to an hour. Consistent with previous studies, the context of the study was in the SC classroom.



### **Comprehensive connected instruction.**

As is noted in each of the previous ELA focused studies, SwIDs tend to be emergent or struggling readers lacking instruction in the alphabetic, vocabulary, and fluency components of reading (Kliewer & Biklen, 2001). Bradford and colleagues (2006) demonstrated that SwIDs can be successful phonetic readers with comprehensive and connected instruction. Researchers investigated the efficacy of a corrective reading program for SwIDs using a pretest-posttest design with a curriculum originally developed for students with learning disabilities (LD). Bradford and colleagues taught three middle school SwIDs to decode unfamiliar words, blend sounds, and read sentences utilizing systematic instruction and the scripted program. Prior to intervention, no students were able to complete the placement test requiring reading of connected text, even though the SwIDs' sight word reading ranged from 32 to 123 words. The dependent measures used included the Dolch and Edmark reading lists (dependent upon the student) and the criterion-referenced measures in the reading program (oral and written letter-sound correspondence, word recognitions and fluency of connected text).

The six month intervention, comprised of 65 (45-55 minute) lessons, from Level A of the Corrective Reading Program consisted of instruction in word recognition skills of blending, rhyming, sounding out, and word and sentence reading. The mean percent correct for each student in the areas of oral and written letter sound correspondence and word recognition was calculated at 97% or above. Each student attained mastery for reading accuracy and exceeded the reading fluency mastery level by 10-19 seconds. Upon completion of the intervention, students were able to read short sentences and passages at a second grade level as well as generalize to decode unfamiliar words. Additionally, students successfully completed the placement test for the subsequent level. Students showed a mean gain on sight word reading of

47%. Bradford and colleagues' study provides evidence that given appropriate instruction, SwIDs can attain conventional components of reading.

### **Comprehension monitoring strategy.**

Researchers succeeded in teaching SwIDs the components of literacy alphabets and fluency (Bradford et al., 2006) and comprehension (Alfassi et al., 2009) through contextualized, connected, and socially organized practices (Scribner & Cole, 1981). With a comprehensive and connected instruction approach, Alfassi and colleagues (2009) implemented a social-cultural paradigm to investigate the efficacy of a literacy-based comprehension monitoring strategy called reciprocal teaching. The quasi-experimental two-group, pre-post-test design study took place in a separate school for SwIDs and included 35 secondary students. Students were randomly assigned to an intervention or control group, assessed prior to intervention, provided the intervention or the control condition, and then reassessed with the same tests. All reading assessments and instructional materials were read aloud to the students to accommodate the low reading levels. The 12 weeks long intervention consisted of reading instruction for all participants. The experimental group received the reciprocal teaching method of summarizing, questioning, predicting, clarifying, and teacher modeling and scaffolding of skills in group sessions. The control group followed the standard independent workbook reading curriculum used in the school.

The researchers identified statistical significance between the study phases and instructional methods. The experimental group improved significantly on the comprehension assessments and maintained use of the strategy after 12 weeks without intervention. The control group however showed no improvement. Although Alfassi and colleagues (2009) stated that SwIDs may require additional time to engage in the discussions in reciprocal teaching, their

findings support the premise that the collaborative and socially connected strategy instruction of reciprocal teaching in which students utilize "literacy as a tool to communicate" (p. 301) is superior to decontextualized, reading skills instruction in fostering reading comprehension for secondary SwIDs, although the findings did occur in a SC setting.

### **Self-directed dictionary skills.**

Connected strategy instruction also has been used to provide a relevant platform from which to embed discrete skill instruction (Jameson et al., 2012). The literature on discrete skill acquisition through embedded instruction for SwIDs continues to grow as a non-disruptive and successful method of instruction in the GE classroom (Collins et al., 2007; Riesen, McDonnell, Johnson, Polychronis, & Jameson, 2003). Jameson and colleagues (2012) identified the need to teach SwIDs complex skills in the GE classroom. In the only investigation found conducted in a GE inclusive language arts classroom, Jameson and colleagues (2012) utilized a single-subject alternating treatment design to focus on an ELA grade-level standard for secondary SwIDs. The researchers aligned a complex chain of skills to the secondary curriculum standard, "use resources to learn new words by relating them to known words and/or concepts" (p. 326). The students were taught to access a physical dictionary or a website dictionary to define an unknown word. Words were identified from natural instructional stimuli within the classroom. Two secondary SwIDs were able to master the complex behavioral chains embedded within the GE classroom routines. This research extends the work with SwIDs in inclusive settings from discrete skills to complex chains and provides opportunities to learn more complex skills in the GE environment. Consistent with other studies using embedded instruction, the students were isolated during the classroom breaks to conduct the instructional intervention; hence instruction did not occur in an inclusive setting. Nevertheless, self-directed dictionary use by SwIDs,

provides the field with a self-determined practice for consideration in secondary inclusive literacy settings.

### **Literacy in Social Studies**

Disciplinary literacy in social studies requires specific skills, not unlike those of ELA, to comprehend expository text. Social studies texts require investigative skills, similar to those of a historian; to identify the writers' purposes and possible biases, the structures and sources of texts, and to organize the information toward ultimate decisions and conclusions (Ogle, Klemp, & McBride, 2007). Social studies is the “place to teach students to ask questions about truth and evidence in our digital age” (Wineburg & Martin, 2004, p. 42), in essence, to teach thinking skills. Social studies also is where students learn about cultures, society, and citizenship. Though not required by the ESEA of 2001, scholars consider the thinking and inquiry skills and concepts learned in social studies essential for all adolescents to acquire, those with and without IDs (Courtade et al., 2012; Hunt et al., 2012; Memory, Yoder, Bollinger, & Warren, 2004; Schenning et al., 2013).

Until recently, very little literature existed for teachers regarding how to bridge the literacy gap, for adolescents with IDs, in such a text-laden content area (Browder, Spooner, & Zakas, 2011). Scholars evidence the absence of research in the social studies content for SwIDs (Browder et al., 2011; Knight, & Sartini, 2015; Zakas et al., 2013). While a few investigations have included social studies (Agran et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2007; Fisher & Frey, 2001; McDonnell et al., 2006; Riesen et al., 2003), it was not the primary focus of the investigations. Only recently have researchers begun to target the secondary social studies content areas (e.g., civics, government, geography, and history) for SwIDs (Schenning et al., 2013; Zakas et al., 2013). In the scant (2) investigations identified for this review, where social studies was the

primary focus for adolescents with IDs, both utilized adapted text (from same-age grades) and graphic organizers to teach concepts and measure comprehension of content.

In the first study, Schenning and colleagues (2013) conducted a single-subject multiple probe across participants investigation to identify the effects of structured inquiry on comprehension of adapted social studies lessons with students with developmental disabilities (ASD and ID). The three middle school (6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade) participants, enrolled in a full-day special education class, presented with IQs of 55 or less. Through an inquiry procedure of explicit instruction and graphic organizers, students were asked to identify problems and solutions from an adapted social studies text and generalize the solutions to a current scenario. Comprehension of the lessons was measured by percent of correct responses to the multi-step inquiry process. Literacy components of the social studies lessons included: (a) 17 adapted texts (corresponding to the middle school social studies text) with vocabulary picture cues and text level reduction to a second to third grade reading level, (b) a graphic organizer with picture cues, (c) question boards for the seven-step inquiry process, (d) six-choice picture answer boards, and (e) teacher re-alsouds.

Schenning and colleagues identified a clear functional relationship between the teacher's use of the structured inquiry process and the students' comprehension of the social studies content. While conducted within the SC setting and by the special education teacher and teacher assistant, Schenning and colleagues suggested the results and methods employed may encourage special education teachers to use methods and materials similar to those in the GE settings (Schenning et al., 2013). Additionally, researchers recommend further investigations should replicate the intervention in a GE social studies setting.

In a second and similar study, researchers (Zakas et al., 2013) conducted a single-case multiple-probe across participants investigation also with middle school participants with developmental disabilities (ASD & ID). The purpose of the study was to instruct the students in a procedure, using a graphic organizer, to comprehend expository text. The three participants' IQ scores ranged from 76-61 and their educational settings ranged from full time attendance in GE to full time attendance in a SC class. Literacy components of the study included: (a) an instructional graphic organizer modified with picture cues, (b) seven instructional concept history terms, (c) seven student-use concept picture/definition cards, (d) a student-use vocabulary map with corresponding picture cue and definition cards, (e) adapted history passages (3rd grade leveled text with picture symbols), and (f) a student-response modified graphic organizer.

Each of the student's data reflected dramatic therapeutic increase in both slope and trend from baseline and through all three subsequent phases. Zakas and colleagues' (2013) findings indicated a functional relation between the graphic organizer intervention and correct comprehension responses using a graphic organizer and adapted text. Additionally, students were able to generalize the use of the graphic organizer to unfamiliar adapted texts, correctly answering comprehension questions. The pre-teaching, of the instructional concept terms (e.g., event, location, time, and detail) and use of the graphic organizers and adapted text, provided students with an instructional text level, disciplinary vocabulary, and a response mechanism to comprehend and show they learned both familiar and unfamiliar expository text. Though the context of the intervention was predominantly the SC classroom, the instructional strategies of adapted text and graphic organizers also have been effective in the GE setting.

## **A Descriptive View**

The investigations described above in ELA and social studies, have for the most part, been conducted in isolated settings or settings where SwIDs were physically included in the GE classroom while receiving instruction separate from the students without ID. A glimpse of practices in the GE setting for this population emerged from a few qualitative studies (Fisher & Frey, 2001; Ryndak et al., 1999). Fisher and Frey (2001) and Ryndak and colleagues (1999) explored the impact of inclusive literacy practices for adolescents with IDs in GE content courses. Qualitative research provides a naturalistic view of a phenomenon of study and is a social science method of inquiry (Creswell, 2007). These two qualitative studies (Ryndak et al., 1999; Fisher & Frey, 2001) provide a depth of perspective not available in quantitative research and present examples of authentic literacy practices for SwIDs within the core content GE curriculum and classroom setting.

In a 1999 longitudinal case study, Ryndak and colleagues followed 15-year-old Melinda's literacy growth for seven years, beginning in a segregated environment and moving to an inclusive environment. Melinda grew from a reluctant reader (2.5 grade level reading) at 15 in a SC classroom, to a self-directed and literate individual in home, school, and post-secondary contexts (college-level reading). Melinda's parents believed that when her classroom environment changed so did the expectations teachers and peers had of her and the expectations she had for herself. The shift from the readiness and isolated skill development approach (e.g., four years of the same phonics book) to a conceptual core academic curricular approach through literacy (e.g., frog dissection and use of the appropriate vocabulary to describe the activity) was identified as crucial to Melinda's education. Conceptual literacy meant meaningful participation through an emphasis on language by overlapping the literacy components of the speaking, listening, reading, and writing throughout Melinda's day. Ryndak and colleagues suggested that

the increased exposure to "meaningful literacy artifacts and activities for instructional purposes" (p. 18) within the GE classroom had a powerful effect on her literacy growth. These methods of literacy access provided a beginning understanding of instructional content in inclusive environments. Understanding of the cultural aspects of routines, beliefs, practices, and expectations in the GE classroom is critical to understanding literacy acquisition for SwIDs.

Fisher and Frey's (2001) grounded theory investigation sought to identify methods of access to the core curriculum in the GE classrooms for SwIDs. Researchers recorded three years of experiences and thoughts of the peers, teachers, and families of three SwIDs (in grades: 3–5, 6–8, and 10-12). Each of the students studied had a significant cognitive disability and attended GE classes full time. Observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted two days each month in English, language arts, math, social studies and science. Special educators served as consultants and developed and implemented flexible and accessible curricular accommodations and modifications. Examples of a fifth grade student's access to the social studies curriculum included shared reading of picture books on Westward Expansion; an audio book of the required reading, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*; a modified paired symbol-word version of a text book chapter; and additions to the student's AAC device specific to westward expansion. In a seventh grade student's science class studying the periodic table the teacher read daily from the text and asked comprehension questions. The SwID's responded yes or no by looking up or down. Pictorial referents, the student's voice output device, and typing an outline were additional methods of literacy access and response options for this student. In the tenth grade English class the SwID was able to respond to the assignment by creating a pictorial essay (with peer assistance in cutting the pictures) in addition to the written essay of the student's group. Overall, Fisher and Frey identified methods of access to literacy in the core content in which



teachers spent more time facilitating than leading which allowed more student-directed learning (i.e., learning centers, cooperative learning, and partner activities) with authentic materials in meaningful activities. Though this study resulted in a rich repertoire of methods and means to access, it provided only a glimpse of the rich and authentic literacy in inclusive core GE content classrooms. The age of these studies necessitates more recent data to inform the field of literacy in GE social studies classes for SwIDs. The social contexts of setting and practices, beliefs, and expectations are needed to understand the culture in inclusive core content GE classes related to literacy instruction for SwIDs (Morgan, Cuskelly, & Moni, 2011).

### **Summary**

Inclusion continues to be a sought-after means to appropriate education for SwIDs. The waves of standards reforms have required enormous change and resulted in uncertainty in the field. For the first time, SwIDs were to be counted in the state and national assessments and for the first time, the majority of states had a set of common standards, the CCSS (CCSSO & NGACBP, 2010). The new increased rigor of national standards and inclusion in national assessments raised questions about the absence of academic rigor and grade-aligned instruction in the functional curriculum for SwIDs (Browder & Spooner, 2014). For these students, an assumption of incompetence rather than a presumption of competence (Jorgensen et al., 2007) has existed in academics as a result of low literacy levels. Students with ID were not expected to be able to read.

In an effort to respond to the expectations of the CCSS and grade-aligned instruction, researchers have begun to move beyond sight-word recognition to literacy in the GE ELA and social studies content, specifically text and disciplinary concept comprehension (Alfassi et al.,

2009; Collins et al., 2011; Mims, Hudson, et al., 2012; Mims, Lee, et al., 2012; Schenning et al., 2013; Zakas et al., 2013). Though nearly exclusive to the SC context, researchers are finding the uses of inquiry (Schenning et al., 2013), task analysis (Browder et al., 2007) , graphic organizers (Browder et al., 2007; Schenning et al., 2013; Zakas et al., 2013), adapted text (Browder et al., 2007; Mims, Hudson, et al., 2012; Mims, Lee, et al., 2012; Schenning et al., 2013; Zakas et al., 2013), and reciprocal teaching (Alfassi et al., 2009) to be effective methods of grade-aligned instruction for SwIDs.

Fisher and Frey's (2001) and Ryndak and colleagues' (1999) qualitative studies were the only two found to directly explore comprehension of the core-content instruction in the middle school GE classroom. On a similar note, through a lens of self-determination, Agran and colleagues' study, on a self-directed learning model of instruction (2006) SDLMI, employed literacy as a mechanism to access the GE content-area curriculum and promoted self-determined learning in the GE classroom. The balance of the studies implemented in the GE context were those which employed embedded instruction of grade-aligned discrete literacy skills such as vocabulary sight words (Collins et al., 2007) and recited definitions (McDonnell et al., 2006; Riesen et al., 2003), though without measures of vocabulary/concept use or comprehension. These discrete skills were primarily taught in isolation rather than integrated into the GE instructional activities. During transitions and breaks in instruction, when SwIDs might otherwise have opportunities to socialize with nondisabled peers, they were separated from the class culture for discrete skill instruction.

Students with IDs continue to spend more time in the SC rather than the GE environment, in spite of the literature that identifies SwIDs access more GE content in the GE classroom. Although the current literature base of core-content literacy instruction for this population in the

GE inclusive classroom is limited, the studies reviewed reflect an emerging line of research in academic literacy in the GE core content for middle school SwIDs.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, the researcher provides a summary of the methodology used to investigate two inclusive middle school classrooms, through the lenses of inclusion and socio-cultural literacy. The researcher focused on the role of the general education (GE) teacher providing literacy instruction to students with intellectual disabilities (SwIDs) in the GE setting. The researcher opens with the purpose of the study, the research questions that frame this qualitative investigation of literacy in an inclusive culture, and the rationale for the study design. The theoretical frameworks of the culture of inclusion (Giangreco et al., 1994) and the model of socio-cultural literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) are briefly described. The method of investigation follows with the presentation of the (a) researcher as instrument, (b) settings, (c) participants, (d) instrumentation, and (e) procedures. The researcher concludes with the method of data analysis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Through the use of an ethnographic study, the researcher explored the culture of inclusion and the literacy practices of SwIDs within two middle school social studies teachers' classrooms. The purpose of this exploration was to discover the culture engendered by the GE teachers who engaged SwIDs in content literacy, the teachers' perceptions and understandings of literacy, and the literacy practices and events in which SwIDs were actively engaged. Additionally, the researcher explored connections between the literacy events of SwIDs and the College and Career Ready (CCR) Anchor Standards of a) Speaking and Listening and b) Reading.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions pertained to the culture of inclusion within the teachers' classrooms and, to a lesser extent, the larger school community. Additionally, the questions related to the understanding and enactment of literacy within GE teachers' inclusive classrooms as identified within the state's academic standards. The questions focused on the individuals within the culture and the events, practices, expectations, and outcomes (Hays & Wood, 2011).

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What is the culture of literacy in two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms where SwIDs are enrolled?
2. How is instruction individualized for SwIDs in the literacy culture within two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms?
3. What are stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of literacy for SwIDs in two middle school social studies teachers' classrooms?
4. How are SwIDs accessing academic grade-level curriculum through the two CCR Anchor Standards of (a) Speaking and Listening, and (b) Reading in the middle school social studies literacy content?

## **Qualitative Ethnographic Research Design**

Qualitative research is a well-used methodology regarding understanding individuals with disabilities (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). Ethnographic research is primarily a constructivist and systematic approach to identify social patterns and norms of a culture-sharing group (Hays & Wood, 2011). The lack of current research on SwIDs accessing and progressing in the GE core content in the GE classrooms (Agran et al., 2002;

Courtade et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2013) presents a need for further exploration within the inclusive culture. The use of an ethnographic design allowed the researcher to explore the inclusive culture within two middle school GE classrooms with a focus on the literacy practices, routines, beliefs, and expectations of the SwIDs. This understanding only can be realized after prolonged engagement and in-depth fieldwork, in the naturalistic settings (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The inclusive learning environment and understanding the perceptions of the nature of literacy for SwIDs were the impetus for this qualitative inquiry (Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Kliewer, 2008; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007; Koppenhaver et al., 1991). The theoretical lenses of Giangreco and colleagues' (1994) culture of inclusion and Barton and Hamilton's (1998) socio-cultural literacy were used to frame this research. Designating the setting and culture, inclusion provided the larger framework through which socio-cultural literacy was viewed. The Cone of Theoretical Focus, in Figure 1, represents the graduated narrowing focus through which the data were viewed; beginning with the wider culture of inclusion and narrowing to the specific literacy practices and events with SwIDs within the inclusive environment. Literacy, built on opportunities of high expectations and authentic environments (Jorgensen et al., 2007; Ryndak et al., 1999), presumes that all children can become competent literate citizens (Kliewer & Biklen, 2007). Similarly, Dweck's (2010) growth mindset exemplifies the teacher's ability to expect SwIDs to be capable and develop their intellect through application and instruction in a literacy rich environment. The culture of inclusion, as defined by Giangreco and colleagues (1994), embodies such an assumption of competence and authentic environments.

The socio-cultural lens of literacy events and practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) is represented in the focused point of the cone. In Bloome's (1998) description of our social connectedness through literacies, he stated, "it is no longer possible to describe literacy credibly without also describing the people involved and places in which it occurs" (p. xii). Socio-cultural literacy scholars have suggested that to understand the nature of literacy, one must understand literacy as a life-long process (Alexander, 2005; Koppenhaver et al., 1991), with inherent social connections and practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Keefe & Copeland, 2011), through which people make sense of their lives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Socio-cultural literacy represents a relatively new and broader conceptualization of literacy: one that legitimizes emergent, everyday socially-situated literacies and eliminates obstacles inherent in the developmental ladder (Kliewer & Biklen, 2001). Students with intellectual disabilities' (ID) literacy practices in their social studies classes were viewed through this socio-cultural literacy lens.

### **Units of Analysis**

Barton and Hamilton (1998) explored the nature of socio-cultural literacy through two main units of analyses, literacy events and literacy practices. Literacy events were the basic units of analysis; "activities where literacy has a role" (p. 8). The second unit of analysis, literacy practices, was made up of numerous literacy events: "what people do with literacy... cultural ways of utilizing literacy" (p. 7). The researcher used these two units to identify and explore literacy in the classroom. Following, is an example referencing these two units. The literacy event, as the basic unit of analysis, may be a student choosing pictures from the Internet to represent a social studies concept. The literacy practice may be the act of creating a report of

pictures (incorporating numerous picture choices or literacy events) to define a social studies concept. See Figure 1 (in Chapter 1) for a pictorial representation of these literacy points within the theoretical framework.

In addition to these two primary units, Barton and Hamilton (1998) identified five other points of reference in their analyses, three of which were considered. Each of the following points represented facets of the events and practices. The first was the social structure point, which refers to how a literacy practice is socially situated and that there are often “different literacies for different domains in life” (p. 7). Through this point, the social interactions within, prior, or subsequent to the literacy practice provided additional information for analysis. The second was the historical point, which references the basis or origin of the literacy practice. Literacy practices may be standardized or district required, handed down from a previous teacher, or a product of a teacher’s personal experience. The origin of a practice provided a basis for understanding the practice. The third and last to be employed was the dynamic point. This point identifies the purpose of the practice; the teacher’s intent or reasoning behind its use. These three latter points provided additional bits of information with which to understand each literacy event and practice.

## **Research Method**

### **Researcher as Instrument**

As a seasoned teacher, parent, and advocate, I am passionate about a public education system in which all students, including those with ID, are educated in GE content courses *in participation with* their non-disabled peers. I understand disability as a normal part of the human condition; we each have our different strengths and perceived weaknesses, with or without



labels. I grew up in a large Irish Catholic family of eight children. My sister, Lori, a year younger than I, took longer to walk, talk, and learn. She was diagnosed at the age of three with what was then termed *profound mental retardation*, now *significant intellectual disabilities* (Schalock, Luckasson, & Shogren, 2007). Growing up playing, teaching, and learning from Lori and watching my mother's perseverance in advocating for Lori to attend school *and learn*, had an enduring impact.

The advocacy for my own three children, whose disabilities require Individualized Education Programs (IEP) to guide their educational supports in school, has fortified my resolve to positively impact the field. I have experienced a range of classroom cultures throughout my 10 years as a teacher and many more years as an advocate for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Some cultures have been welcoming and nurturing, while others have been cold and even hostile. Through these experiences, I have come to recognize the importance of the culture the teacher engenders within the classroom to the academic success of the students. This study is of critical professional and personal significance for me, in identifying the literacy cultures within two inclusive classrooms where all students are encouraged to progress and learn the core content through literacy. Although my belief in inclusion and the rights of individuals with disabilities to be educated with their same-age peers without disabilities is strong, the teachers' expectations and experiences are key factors in their classroom cultures.

I conducted this study as the primary researcher in both the collection of all data and analyses of the information gathered. Informants assisted through member checking of interview transcripts and peer researchers assisted during debriefing data sessions. Throughout the data collection and analyses, I continually reflected on my biases through memo development and

reflexivity in the research journal. Additionally, throughout coding and theme analysis, excerpts were continually reviewed for researcher bias and when found, excluded from analysis. These activities have allowed me to confront and continually bracket my biases (Creswell, 2007) throughout the study process.

## **Settings**

The setting for this ethnography was two eighth grade general education classrooms (three periods of classes observed) in a suburban middle school on the mid-Atlantic coast. Initially built in 1956 as a high school, the campus has served as a middle school (grades 6-8) since 1993. The school enrollment at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year was 1,436 including 183 SwDs (8%) and 18 of those SwIDs (.8%). The diverse student population was comprised of 40% African American, 37% Hispanic, 12% White, and 10% other nationalities. The school employed 137 licensed staff. School programs identified through district documentation, included honors courses, alternative education, accelerated math, English as a second language, special education, talented and gifted, and inclusion. The primary study settings were three eighth grade social studies classes.

## **Culture Groups**

The culture groups studied were those of the two social studies teachers' classes where SwIDs were enrolled. The researcher sought local and national education experts, in inclusive best practices, to identify positive examples of inclusive education. While a number of leads were identified, few were in schools with a systemic inclusion policy where there was relative certainty that teachers would have SwIDs in their classes each year. Eventually, a school district was located on the east coast that systemically included SwIDs in core content courses. The year

prior to the study, the researcher briefly met with a GE teacher, identified by two district personnel, who readily included the SwIDs in the content literacy. The original intent was to use intensity sampling to explore “information-rich cases”(Creswell, 2007, p. 127) where the SwIDs were immersed in the literacy content. However, upon arriving at the school site the following year, the identified teacher had no SwIDs enrolled in her classes. As a result of the difficulty in locating sites and the small number of content teachers with SwIDs enrolled in their classes, the sampling criteria was amended to inclusion of SwIDs in a GE core content class. Two GE teachers were identified at the same site and met the criteria below:

1. Middle school GE English language arts (ELA) or social studies content teacher and
2. One or more SwIDs were enrolled in at least one of the target teacher’s GE courses.

Two GE middle school social studies teachers (T1 = 1 class observed, T2 = 2 classes observed) were identified and agreed to participate in the study. Table 2 reflects descriptive data for each key teacher. Key teachers and paraprofessionals are designated by a T1 or T2 and P1, P2, and P3 respectively (see Tables 1- 4). To explore a multi-perspective of each teacher’s literacy culture, individuals perceived as salient to the culture of each inclusive classroom were considered as secondary informants. The informants included one teacher for SwIDs (SE1), one lead special education teacher for students with learning disabilities (SE2), one district and three school administrators (A1 – A4), three paraprofessionals (P1 – P3), three peer-students (Edmond, Hamere, and Savannah), and four SwIDs (Dale, Raphaela, Philare, Dabir).

Table 1 Informants’ Pseudonyms and Codes

Number	Positions	Informant Codes
4	Administrative	A1, A2, A3, A4
2	GE Teachers	T1, T2
2	SE Teachers	SE1, SE2
3	Paraprofessionals	P1, P2, P3
3	Student w/o IDs	Edmond, Hamere, Savannah
4	Student w/ IDs	Dale, Raphaela, Philare, Dabir

Note. All names reflected in this table are pseudonyms.

Table 1 reflects codes or pseudonyms for all informants in the study. While there were five additional SwIDs present in the GE classes observed and these students may have been represented in the data through observations and interviews, no demographic or student specific information was collected or reported. When referred to, these students are simply called “a peer with ID or a SwID”. Any names provided within the text or tables are pseudonyms. No informants’ actual names were used in this manuscript.

Table 2 Descriptive Teacher Data

Teacher Codes	Reporting Para-professional	Gender	Race	Age	Education & Certifications	Years Teaching
T1	P1	F	Anglo	25	Master’s Degree: Social Sciences 6-12, English Learners Pre K-12	2
T2	P2, P3	M	Anglo	33	Master’s Degree: History & Social Sciences 7-12	9

### **Teacher One.**

Teacher One (T1) is a Caucasian female, 25 years of age, at the time of study. She was certified to teach grades 7-12 English Learners (EL) and social studies. T1 always wanted to be a teacher and spent most of her own schooling in gifted classes. An avid reader, she was conversant in Spanish, Russian, French, and sign language. During her college coursework, she had two long-term substitute positions; one, in a class for SwIDs and the second, in a class for students who were gifted. Her student teaching was in a co-taught classroom that included SwIDs. During her first year teaching, she taught EL science and language arts. The study occurred during her second year teaching, though her first year teaching social studies. Her fourth period class was identified for observations, an average attendance of 21 students including three SwIDs who were emergent readers. Her goal for the SwIDs was “realistic content ...now my focus is ‘the executive branch is President Barack Obama’” (T1, I1, p. 2). A paraprofessional (P1) was assigned, from the self-contained (SC) class for SwIDs, to attend with and support the SwIDs in T1’s class. See Table 3 for demographic information regarding the paraprofessionals in the study.

### **Teacher Two.**

Teacher Two (T2) is a Caucasian male, 33 years of age, at the time of the study. He was certified to teach grades 7-12 social studies. He had been teaching middle school social studies for 9 years and was finishing his last course to complete a Master’s degree in History. With a new baby at home and classes at night, T2 was challenged to keep everything in balance. The previous year was his first year with SwIDs who were “almost non-verbal” (T2, I1, p. 1) in his class. This year he had six SwIDs, each on, or about, a second grade reading level, divided between two social studies classes. Both classes were identified for observation. He described

the SwIDs that he had this year as, a few who could copy things down, some, not very independent and one, unable to explain himself. His period one class attendance averaged 19 students with three students identified as SwIDs. A paraprofessional (P2) was assigned to assist the SwIDs in period one, but her presence was inconsistent. T2's third period class averaged 18 students with a paraprofessional (P3) assigned to assist the three SwIDs in that class. T2's goal for the SwIDs in his classes was, "that they try to keep up as much as they possibly can" (T2, I1, p. 2). The analyses of T2's classes were summarized as a single unit.

### **Paraprofessionals.**

Three paraprofessionals were assigned, from the SC class for SwIDs, to assist the SwIDs in their social studies classes. P1 is a Caucasian female, 38 years old, who, though living in the US for over 15 years, spoke in broken English. She had a Bachelor's degree in Archeology from a university in Egypt. She worked with the students with disabilities for 15 years and through her statements shared a commitment of care and concern for the SwIDs. "I love them, not like them, love them [and will] cry for [SDL and SPR when they] move to high school next year." (PM, I1, p. 2) She perceived her job as taking care of the SwIDs and making sure they completed their cutting and pasting tasks. P1 believed that her students needed to be learning about things more important than social studies, like how to work. P2 is an African American female who was 41 years old and stated she wanted to work with students with disabilities since she was 14. She expected the SwIDs to work and learn. When a student "[went] independent on her" (P3, I1, p. 2), she gave him his space. P2 was taking classes to finish her Bachelor's degree in education to be a teacher. P3 is an African American male who was 36 years old with teaching certifications in reading and early childhood. He worked as a teacher, private school administrator, and paraprofessional for nine years before he worked with the SwIDs in T2's class

for three years. He scribed for the SwIDs during notetaking and provided read-alouds for assessments and text passages. P3 felt like it was a waste of the SwIDs’ time “just memorizing something that was said” (P3, I1, p. 1).

Table 3 Descriptive Paraprofessional Data

Para-professional Codes	Reporting Teacher	Gender	Race	Age	Highest Educational Level	Certifications	Years’ Experience
P1	T1	F	Egyptian	38	Bachelor	N/A	15
P2	T2	F	African American	41	AA	Early Childhood	7
P3	T2	M	African American	36	Bachelor	Early Childhood, Reading	9

**Student informants with intellectual disabilities.**

The SwIDs’ case manager, the teacher for SwIDs (SE1), divided the students between the two social studies teachers, based on their reading levels. SE1 thought T2 might give too much academic work for emergent readers and placed the emergent readers in T1’s class. The students who read near the second grade level were placed in T2’s classes. Table 4 provides descriptive data, from school documents, for the four SwIDs for whom parental permission was received. Table 4 also identifies the teacher and paraprofessional each student had in social studies. Below, are brief narratives describing each of the four SwIDs.

Raphaela, an African American female who was 14 years old at the time of the study, was quiet, shy, and struggled to comprehend the information read to her. She sat quietly, next to P3, in the back of the room, rarely speaking to anyone. P3 felt Raphaella was too dependent on him to write everything down. Raphaella explained to the researcher that she could not use her cell phone because her mom turned it off – because of the bill. She liked to play X-box games,

watch Netflix, and sleep. Raphaela wanted to go to college and learn how to cook and maybe work in a restaurant one day.

Table 4 Descriptive Data of Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Teacher/ Para-professional	SwIDs Code Names	Gender	Race	Age	Reading Levels	F&P Reading Level	I.Q. Score	Identified Disability
T1/P1	Dale	M	Irish	13	Emergent		56 S	ID
T2/P3	Raphaela	F	African American	14	271 L, 2 G	B	57 W	ID
T1/P1	Philare	M	Anglo	14	Emergent		44 W	Autism/ID
T2/P2	Dabir	M	African American	13	273 L, 2 G	B	61 S	ID

Note. T1 = Teacher 1, T2 = Teacher 2; IQ Scores W =WISC-IV, S =SBV; F & P =Fountas & Pinnell; L = Lexile, G=grade equivalent

Dabir, an African American male who at the time of the study was 13 years old, stated that though he had no friends in social studies, he had a lot of friends in his drama class (also inclusive). He named a few of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books (by Jeff Kinney; grade equivalent 5.2, Lexile 950) as favorites he had read. Without a cell phone, his older sister taught him how to use an app on his tablet to make phone calls. Dabir usually sat by himself in the second row in class. Occasionally, P2 sat next to him, but she was not always there. He liked social studies because he thought he learned a lot.

Dale, an outgoing Anglo male who at the time of the study was 13 years old, liked to tease the adults who worked with him. Though an emergent reader, he was adept at finding Star Wars videos on YouTube when the paraprofessional was not looking. He was quiet in class, but would raise his hand to participate. When T1 explained an upcoming fieldtrip to the Capital,



Dale asked if they would see President Obama. Confident and self-determined, if there were laptops or scissors to be put away, Dale took it upon himself to take care of it.

Philare, a Caucasian male who at the time of the study was 14 years old, had a twin sister and older brother. He recognized a few sight words and could write a few letters in his name. Sometimes he studied at home with his sister, who also had T1 for social studies. In choir, the teacher often asked Philare to sing a new part for a student who was struggling with the music. With his perfect pitch, Philare had only to read the music to know the song.

### **Student informants without disabilities.**

Table 5 Descriptive Data of Students without Disabilities

Student Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Nationality	Teacher
Edmond	M	14	Hispanic	T2
Hamere	F	13	Ethiopian	T2
Savannah	F	14	Hispanic	T2

Three peers without ID, from the social studies classes, returned parent permissions and agreed to be interviewed. See Table 5 for descriptive student data. Every student's name, reflected in Table 5, is a pseudonym. Edmond, a Hispanic Male, in T2's class was 14 years old and sat directly in front of Raphaela. He loved history and wanted to be a lawyer. T2's class was easy for him and he and his friend were the only two students without disabilities who sat on the left side of the classroom, where the SwIDs sat. Hamere, a soft spoken Ethiopian female, was 13 years old and wanted to become a surgeon. She too found T2's class easy and was happy to have the SwIDs in her class. Savannah, a Hispanic female, was 14 years old and occasionally grew tired of waiting for T2 to finish helping the SwIDs. She used to be in the honors classes but decided the work was too hard. Savannah would rather get her work done and then relax. She

thought something in cosmetology might be interesting when she finished school. At the end of the interview, Savannah casually mentioned she had a three year old nephew who had Down syndrome.

### **Instrumentation**

The data for this study were collected through interviews, observations, and artifacts of the literacy culture engendered by the key teachers. The researcher maintained a digital field protocol file to document the “the attitudes, opinions...beliefs” (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 196), and routines of each teacher’s culture and literacy practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) with a focus on those for SwIDs (see Appendix A). Researcher and informant instruments are described related to procedures followed in each class and with all informants.

#### **Field protocol.**

The digital field protocol was maintained on a dedicated hard drive and was used as the primary instrument for data collection (see Appendix A). The researcher used a field journal to chronicle general observations throughout the study; changes in protocols, schedules, or activities; and spontaneous encounters with informants. Within this file, the researcher maintained a field log of scheduled and completed activities, future activities needed, informal observations, and thoughts. An artifact log also was maintained of photos, student de-identified file data and student activity or lesson documents, and teacher lesson plans. The field and artifact logs enabled the researcher to maintain an audit trail of activities and collection of data. Thick descriptions of the environment, culture, personal observations, and reflections were noted in the field journal.

### **Interview protocol.**

Interview protocols, specific to each informant, were used to explore the literacy within the inclusive classrooms (see Appendices B, C, D, and E). Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and students with and without ID (see Tables 6 and 9). As the key cultural figures, the two classroom teachers were the most involved with two to three interviews ranging from 20 – 60 minutes in length (see Appendix B). The questions for each informant were grounded in (a) gaining an understanding of each informant’s history of literacy (Smith, 2001), (b) SwIDs’ participation in each key teacher’s classroom culture, (c) student expectations (Dweck, 2008), and (d) presumed competencies (Jorgensen et al., 2007). Table 6 identifies uses of the interview protocols.

### **Observational protocol.**

The observation protocol, grounded in the culture of inclusion as defined by Giangreco and colleagues (1994) included the five components of inclusion: heterogeneous grouping, belonging, shared activities and individual outcomes, shared experiences in GE environments, and a balanced education. Additionally, observations were viewed through a socio-cultural literacy lens where events and practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) were documented through notations, photographs, and document artifacts. The observational protocol employed in this study was to maintain the literacy focus in the inclusive environment (see Appendix F). Finally, the CCR Anchor Standards provided a reference for framing the content instruction. See Table 6 and Appendix F for a delineation of observation protocols used.

Table 6 Data Sources, Locations, and Instrumentation

Data Sources	Observations	Interviews	Photo Elicitation	Artifacts
Classrooms	Teacher, SwIDs, Peers, ancillary staff	Teacher, Peers, Admin, SwIDs, Students, Peers,	Researcher's documentation of students' literacy	Lesson plans, Student work, Classroom photos (R)
School at Large	Teacher, SwIDs, Peers, ancillary staff	Support Staff, Administration	Researcher's documentation of the literacy cultures	School testing data, website, newsletter, SwIDs' IEPs,
School Vicinity		Parents, District staff		
Instrumentation	Observation Protocol, Field notes, Reflexive Journal	Interview Protocol, Field notes, Reflexive Journal	Document Review Protocol, Reflexive Journal	Document Review Protocol, Reflexive Journal
Data Collection & Analysis	Documented in Field Log with reflections, entered into Dedoose and coded	Transcribed and provided to informants for member checks. Coded in Dedoose	Labeled with ID codes to support observation and interview data	Labeled with ID codes to support observation & interview data

## Procedures

### Access to sites.

The researcher contacted leaders in the field to identify possible research sites that met the intensity and criterion sampling. The first to be referred was a mid-Atlantic urban school district through a contact with the Director of Special Education Services. The researcher met briefly with the director (effectively the gatekeeper) and a special education teacher. Both highly recommended the same middle school science teacher. The researcher briefly met with the teacher to identify interest in participating and her expectation and engagement of the SwIDs in the content literacy. Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications were submitted to both the University (see Appendix G) and the school district's research department. The applications included requests for human subject research, photography, and digital recordings. Two additional site recommendations were identified and followed up without success.

## **Timeline.**

### **Phase 1.**

During phase one, the researcher developed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol and completed the school district's research application. Each was submitted for approval. The IRB protocol was completed within a 30 day window (see Appendix G). The school district required three months to complete their review. Upon approval, the researcher coordinated with the gatekeeper to continue participant selection and schedule dates to begin. See Table 7 for further details.

### **Phase 2.**

Phase two began with the referral to a school-based liaison from the gatekeeper. This liaison, though not a key informant in the study, was a school-level support person (SLSP) and familiar with school initiatives. The school calendar and testing dates were reviewed to identify dates for the researcher to be on site. The availability for investigative access to begin observations and site interviews for each teacher was limited by the review process and district and state testing schedules. The SLSP approached the only two content teachers who had SwIDs enrolled in their classes during the 2014-2015 school year. One SwID was in a math class, on a trial basis, but was not expected to stay. Once on site, the researcher held an informational meeting with the SLSP and the two social studies teachers (T1 and T2) to provide consent documents, explain the study, and obtain consent.

Throughout the data collection, one researcher assembled data including field notes, journaling, observation memos, photographic and document data, and descriptive transcriptions of interviews (see Table 7 of phase timelines). The researcher sought prolonged engagement, a critical measure of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Brantlinger et al., 2005), through

intermittent and intense data collection, over a nine-week period, in the teachers' classes (periods 1, 3, and 4). Fifteen days of observations were coordinated through the SLSP in 2015: March 3-11, April 13 - 21, and April 27 - 29. The key informants' classes were observed a total of 34 times (T2 = 23, T1 = 11) allowing for redundancy of information and data saturation (Hunt, 2011). Additional data collection occurred simultaneously and included face-to-face interviews, artifacts, and documents. The researcher collected digital photographs of the teachers' literacy enactments for the targeted students through the use of a smart phone.

A form of iterative data collection was used with each observation, interview, and artifact, providing further lines of inquiry, observation, and analyses (Creswell, 2007). Member checks were conducted after the majority of interviews to allow participant voice and strengthen trustworthiness of the data gathered and analyzed (Hunt, 2011). The member checks included providing interviewees with a transcription of the interview and requesting clarity, accuracy, and additional thoughts or discussion regarding the interview content. The researcher began initial analyses in tandem with the first observations, interviews, and artifact collection through initial coding and continued in an iterative fashion with the data collection (see Table 6). In order to enable quick turn-around of the transcripts to the informants for member checking, the researcher prioritized interview transcriptions ahead of other data analyses. Artifacts were coded with ID numbers as soon as collected to maintain a connection to the observations or interviews.

### **Phase 3.**

During the final phase data analysis continued with secondary coding and theme development through the use of Dedoose®, a Web 2.0 qualitative software program.

Throughout this process, the researcher utilized peer debriefers and a doctoral student to assist

with inter-coder reliability. The results of findings in each phase and discussion are presented in chapters four and five.

Table 7 Study Phase Timelines

Phase	Setting	Procedures	Data Collection
1	UCF	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IRB &amp; district approvals</li> <li>2. Ongoing gatekeeper contact for identification of participants and contact information</li> </ol>	
2	On Site & UCF	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact Teachers to coordinate observation &amp; interview dates</li> <li>2. Solicit informants' consent forms</li> <li>3. Conduct member checks</li> <li>4. Conduct document reviews</li> <li>5. Begin initial analyses</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin observations and interviews on-site</li> <li>2. Complete Field journal daily, transcribe interviews and develop memos</li> </ol>
3	UCF	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue data analyses</li> <li>2. Peer Debriefing</li> <li>3. Complete written analysis</li> </ol>	

## Data Collection

### Observations.

The key teachers' classrooms provided the formal observation sites. A total of 35 observations, representing 28 classroom hours, were conducted in three time periods over the course of nine weeks (see Table 8). T1 had SwIDs only in her 4<sup>th</sup> period class and was only observed during that period, while T2 had SwIDs in two periods and was observed during both class periods. During the first observation period (March 3 -11) the researcher was limited to four days of observations due to school closings for snow days and a teacher workday. The second observation period (April 13 - 22) allowed for eight days of observations. The final observation period (April 27 - 29), the researcher was able to observe three days of classes. Due to teacher absences, meetings, field trips and snow days, the three social studies classes were observed an average of 12 times across the 15 available days of observation (see Table 8).

Informal observations also occurred throughout the school day in the hallways and occasionally in a self-contained classroom. The observations focused on the inclusive culture (expectations, activities, lessons, routines, opportunities, interactions, and assessments), socio-cultural literacy events and practices, and the two CCR Anchor Standards of (a) Listening and Speaking, and (b) Reading. Throughout the observations, the researcher maintained an ongoing record of thoughts, concerns, and experiences, in the Field Log, to become both more aware of assumptions or biases and to bracket (set aside) researcher biases (Morrow, 2005). See Appendix F for the observation protocol.

Table 8 Observation Data by Teacher and Period

Participant /Period	Number of Observations	Total Number of SwIDs/Period	Consented SwIDs /Period	Total Time
Teacher 1/4	11	3	2	8.1 hours
Teacher 2/1	11	3	1	8.3 hours
Teacher 2/3	13	3	1	8.7 hours
Totals	35	9	4	25 hours

### **Interviews.**

Qualitative research requires a process of questioning over time, in order to reveal informants’ perspectives and enable the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the culture (Agee, 2009). Through multiple scheduled semi-structured informal interviews and unscheduled informal conversations, across a nine week period, the researcher was able to “identify, confirm and cross check ... [her] understanding of societal structures, social linkages and the behavior patterns, beliefs and understandings of people within the culture” (Grbich, 2007, p. 40). T1 was interviewed two times ranging from 40-60 minutes and T2 was interviewed three times ranging from 22 to 30 minutes (see Table 9). In order to explore a complete perspective of each



teacher’s classroom culture, 17 secondary informants (SI) also were interviewed, ranging from a 10 minute student interview to a 48 minute parent interview. The SI interviews included: four district and school-level administrators, two SE teachers, three paraprofessionals, three students without disabilities, and four SwIDs. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, by one researcher, and with some additional clarifications occurring through casual conversations and email. Most interviews were voice recorded, descriptively transcribed (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006) and followed up with “reflexive journalizing” (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006, p. 41) to chronicle the researcher’s reactions and biases, also termed bracketing, throughout the process (Morrow, 2005). The same researcher transcribed and developed memos for all of the interviews. Informants’ transcripts were coded with all identifiable information removed. Transcribed interviews were provided to all informants for member-checking with the exception of the student informants.

Table 9 Informant Interview Data

Number of Informants	Informants	Number of Interviews/ Informant	Total Interviews	Durations (min)
2	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade GE Teachers	2-3	5	25 - 60
4	SwIDs	1	4	5 - 9
3	Peer Students	1	3	9 - 22
4	Administrators	1	4	15 - 20
2	SE Teachers	1	2	19 - 45
3	Paraprofessionals	1	3	10 - 34
1	Parent of a SwID	1	1	54
19		Total Conducted	22	8.25 hr

The interview settings included the classrooms, a small office within the school, a nearby school, and a local coffee shop. Interview protocols focused on the informants’ own literacy, perception of inclusive culture (routines, practices, attitudes, and expectations) specific to the

SwIDs, and the socio-cultural literacy events and practices within each GE teacher's classroom and the larger school or district culture (See Appendixes B - F). The researcher used an iterative process of questioning to allow for an evolving understanding of the questions and issues (Creswell, 2007).

#### **Administrators' interviews.**

The principal often is interpreted as the leader who designates and guides the structure and culture within the school. The principal was interviewed for 40 minutes during the second period of observations. See Appendix C for the Administrator's Interview Protocol. Three other informants were interviewed and categorized as administrators; a district level administrator, district-wide level teacher, and school-wide level teacher. See Table 1 for additional data.

#### **School staff interviews.**

The school level staff interviewed included a literacy instructional coach, the eighth grade lead special education teacher, and the teacher of the SwIDs (see Tables 1 and 9). These informants were each interviewed once with interviews ranging from 20 to 45 minutes. Individuals were interviewed because of their expected support of or collaboration with the GE social studies teachers. See Appendix D for School Staff Interview Protocol.

#### **Parents of students with intellectual disabilities' interviews.**

Although four families signed consents for their students to participate in the study and two were reached by phone, only one parent consented to an interview. She was interviewed once for 48 minutes off campus. Due to the lack of additional parent interviews, parent data were not included in the final analyses for this study. See Appendix E for Parent Interview Protocol.

### **Peer student interviews.**

T2 was asked to identify four students without disabilities, in the same social studies classes, who might be appropriate to interview. These interviews were conducted toward the end of the observations and as T1 was absent when the researcher solicited peers without ID to interview, no students from T1's class were interviewed. Of the four students who received the parental consent forms, three were returned signed (see Tables 5 and 9). Individual interviews were conducted with each of the three students in a small office down the hall from T2's classroom. These interviews ranged from 10 – 21 minutes. See Appendix E for the Peer Interview Protocol.

### **Artifacts.**

Qualitative research is often triangulated through three different data sources to seek “a converging line of inquiry” (Yin, 2013, p. 120). This convergence serves to increase the trustworthiness of the study and reduce researcher bias (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Artifacts of school documents (e.g., IEPs, student work products, unit lesson plans and materials) and photographic representations of literacy in situ by the researcher (during lessons, assignments, and class activities) represent the third source of data in this study. See Figures 9 and 12 for photographic examples of student work and Figure 3 for photographic examples of teachers' lecture slides. Through the iterative process of skimming, reading, and interpretation (Bowen, 2009) the artifacts were analyzed and utilized to assist in confirming or disconfirming themes. While the majority of artifacts did not inform the researcher of the SwIDs' ability to read and comprehend the content, they did inform the researcher as to the teachers' literacy expectations of the SwIDs through their styles of presentation, levels of access to the literacy content, and

opportunities for student response or expression. See Appendix H and Figures 6-15 for additional examples of artifacts.

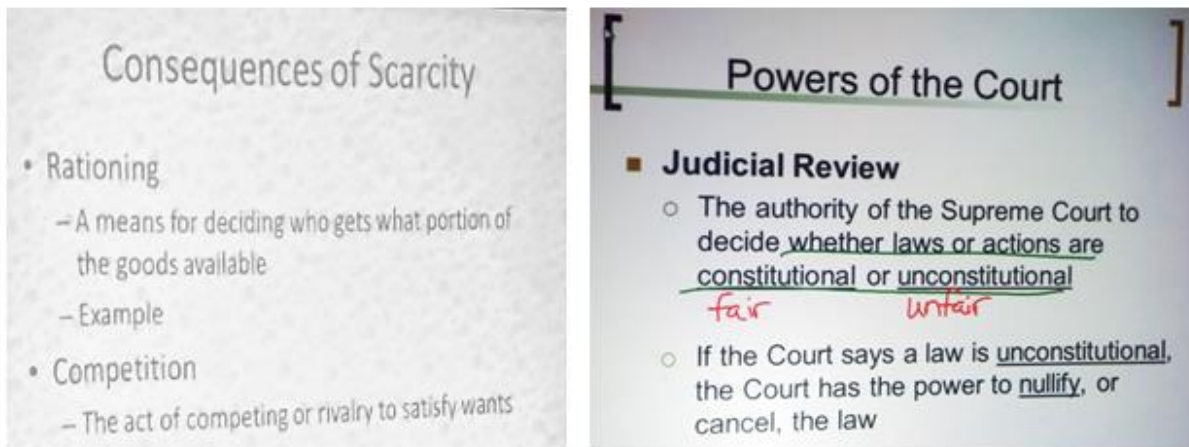


Figure 3. Teachers' example lecture slide artifacts

### Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis began with the initial process of data collection and continued through the process of interpretation (Creswell, 2007). The data sources collected in this study included semi-structured and digitally recorded interviews, informal conversations with school personnel, students, and families; document analysis of student, teacher, and school data; teacher and student observations; and the researcher's digital photographs of the environment and literacy events and practices during observations. The data were analyzed using Wolcott's (1994) three aspects of description, analysis, and interpretation through an iterative spiraling process. Data were touched, coded, reconsidered and recoded, often multiple times, as additional data were assembled and coded and themes began to emerge.

The researcher generally conducted interviews in the afternoon after the observations were completed and during teachers' planning periods. Short memos were completed after each interview and transcribed by the researcher within a one to three week window. The informant

memos were provided to each informant with the exception of the students with and without IDs. Informants were asked to provide any corrections or clarifying information they deemed necessary to assist the researcher to fully understand their perspective. Most memos were returned with only minor suggestions or clarifications. Asking informants to review and clarify transcripts, also known as member checking, is one of a number of credibility measures used in qualitative research (Brantlinger et al., 2005). As the interviews were transcribed and member checks returned, the data were entered into the Dedoose software and coded. These transcripts were the first data to be coded and entered into Dedoose.

During each of the 35 observations (25 hours) conducted over the 9-week period the researcher generated field notes and reflective memos. After each observation, the field notes were reviewed and expanded for depth of description and clarity. Artifacts were labeled as collected to identify the contexts, typically the classroom observations, from which they were gathered. The observations were entered and coded after the transcriptions were completed. The artifacts of student work, teacher lessons, and classroom activities were entered last and used as confirming and disconfirming evidence. As the data were entered into Dedoose, the researcher withheld data that contained her own personal opinions, concerns, and biases as much as possible.

Through the Cone of Theoretical Focus (see Figure 1), data were analyzed first through Giangreco and colleagues' (1994) principles of inclusion and next through the finer focus of Barton and Hamilton's (2005) socio-cultural literacy practices. This approach, of identifying the theoretical frameworks against which the data were viewed is called theory directing (Grbich, 2007). Initially, the five principles of inclusion were set as constructs within Dedoose. Nearly half way into the collection and analysis, the researcher consulted a peer to assist in sorting

through the themes. The inclusion constructs of heterogeneous grouping, the sense of belonging, and a balanced educational experience, although emerged, were omitted due to lack of relationship to the proposed research questions. The inclusion constructs of (a) environment and (b) activities and outcomes were maintained and are represented within the first two levels of the *Modified Cone of Theoretical Focus* (see Figure 4). The data codes were reassessed and themes began to reemerge from these two constructs. Initially, the researcher coded all the literacy activities within the classes and, as a result, lost sight of the literacy activities individualized for the SwIDs. Upon collaboration with a peer unfamiliar with the data, the decision was made to focus only on those literacy activities, which were shared with and/or individualized for the SwIDs. The coding was revised within Dedoose to reflect this change. This modification in the data analysis aligned well with the Modified Cone of Theoretical Focus (see Figure 4). The exploration of the finer focus of the literacy practices emerged within the inclusion construct of activities and outcomes as the literacy events and practices of the SwIDs, closer to the point of the cone.

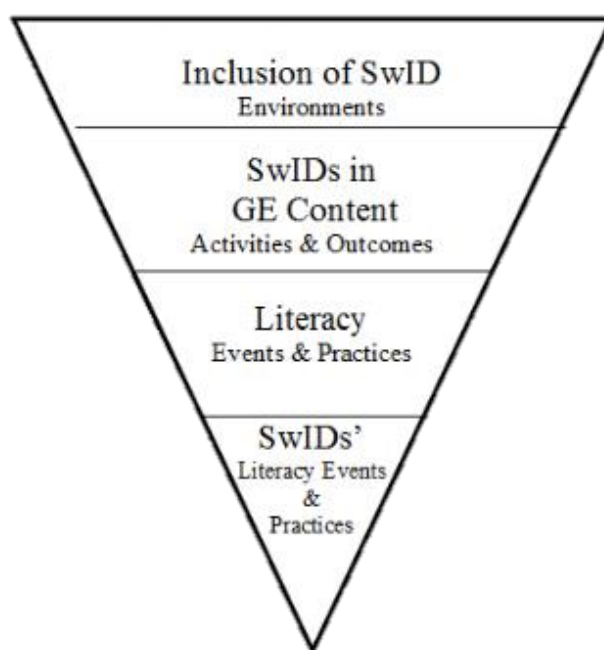


Figure 4. Modified Cone of Theoretical Focus

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness or credibility is identified in qualitative research as a set of strategies used to ensure the soundness or high-quality of the research methodology (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The credibility measures employed in this study are identified.

The researcher strove to attain prolonged field engagement to allow for saturation of data (Hunt, 2011) and an in-depth understanding of the teachers' literacy culture. The 35 classroom observations conducted, provided 28 hours of immersion in the teachers' classrooms allowing for data repetition and understanding. Nineteen informants were interviewed for over 28 hours of transcripts. The key informants were each interviewed three times (though one interview recording was lost), to allow for a deeper understanding of the classroom activities and the teachers' choices and actions. Finally, students' IEPs and assignments, teachers' lesson plans and presentation materials, and in situ photographs taken by the researcher of the environment and literacy practices and events provided over 100 artifacts and documents for analyses.

Throughout the study, the researcher, assembled multiple opportunities for "thick, detailed description" (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201) through detailed data collection; descriptions of what did and did not occur were incorporated into the observation notes, detailed notations of teacher and student comments were recorded; pictures of teachers' literacy practices during instruction and presentation of information were collected; and the students' literacy practices through the class assignments and activities were documented. A reflexive journal (Hunt, 2011) also was maintained, for researcher bracketing and objectivity, as a log of daily activities, and an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of researcher activities and decisions.

Through the multiple data sources of interviews, documents, and observations, the researcher was able to use data triangulation, to confirm and disconfirm emerging themes.

Finally, the researcher employed member checking of interview transcripts to allow for informants to present themselves as they intended. Peer debriefing also was used on two occasions to enable the researcher an external check and balance for the researcher's bracketing of personal experiences and possible biases. The analysis and discussion in chapters four and five contain sufficient thick description through quotations of informants' comments and researcher's observations, to enable particularizability and readers' transferability of results (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

## **Ethics**

Throughout the research activities, the researcher maintained the anonymity of informants through participant coding and pseudonyms. Informed consents were provided and explained to each adult informant. Signed parental consents were obtained for all student informants prior to interview and document analysis activities. Student materials, information, and data were de-identified throughout the study. Photographs taken using the smart phone were immediately downloaded to the dedicated hard drive and online servers were checked and cleared of any study photos. Peer researchers remained blind to the informant identities during peer debriefing activities.



## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings of the ethnographic study of the literacy culture of two general education (GE) inclusive social studies teachers and the literacy practices provided to the students with intellectual disabilities (SwIDs) enrolled in their classes. The data were organized initially through the seven identified constructs from the previously discussed theoretical frameworks of inclusion (Giangreco et al., 1994) and socio-cultural literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) as represented in Figure 1. This ethnographic approach, called theory directing (Grbich, 2007), enabled the researcher to analyze the data through the identified theoretical lenses. Additionally, data were analyzed in an ongoing process of collection and analysis, as is distinctive of ethnography (Creswell, 2007). The organization of the data and the coding of emergent themes were aided through the use of the qualitative Dedoose software. Data obtained from observations of literacy practices, interviews, and documents were given primary codes when first entered into Dedoose. As more data was entered, codes were reassessed and secondary codes were identified as necessary to fit the emerging understanding. As themes began to emerge, through the triangulation of data, codes were reviewed for confirming and disconfirming evidence.

This chapter is divided into four sections, each corresponding to a research question, its construct, and the themes that emerged relevant to that question.

The following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the culture of literacy in two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms where SwIDs are enrolled?

2. How is instruction individualized for SwIDs in the literacy culture within two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms?
3. What are stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of literacy for SwIDs in two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms?
4. How are SwIDs accessing academic grade-level curriculum and the two College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards of (a) Speaking and Listening, and (b) Reading, in the middle school social studies literacy content?

The first section describes the literacy culture of the inclusive eighth grade social studies classes, viewed through Giangreco and colleagues' (1994) inclusive lens of environment, and provides the background for research question one. The three themes that emerged within the environment construct are discussed. A vignette of each teacher's classroom literacy is provided followed by the two environment themes that emerged from the data (a) SwIDs immersed in the classroom environment and (b) SwIDs isolated within the classroom environment.

The next section explores the literacy culture of the eighth grade classes through Giangreco and colleagues' (1994) activities and outcomes component of inclusion. The inclusive activities and outcomes from this study provide the second construct; individualized instruction provided to SwIDs through social studies literacy practices. This section provides the background for question two. Three themes emerged within this construct (a) choice of the intensity of supports provided to SwIDs to access the GE literacy practices, (b) individualized instruction by shared literacy practices, and (c) individualized instruction by separate literacy practices. The teachers' choices of supports were an overarching theme across the teachers and across shared and separate literacy practices. Thick descriptions are provided through eight examples of literacy practices observed.

In the third section, the researcher explored the construct of each stakeholder group's perceptions and expectations of literacy for SwIDs in the social studies classes. While themes emerged within each stakeholder group, the overarching theme of socialization emerged across the groups. Themes are explored for each of the groups of stakeholders; administrators, GE teachers and paraprofessionals, and students with and without intellectual disabilities (IDs) and provide the background for question three.

Finally, the researcher explored how SwIDs were able to access eighth grade academic curriculum through asking and answering questions within their social studies classes. In this section, the researcher identified instances observed of SwIDs accessing the eighth grade content through the lenses of (a) activities and outcomes (Giangreco et al., 1994) and (b) the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCSS, CCR) of speaking and listening and provide the background for question four. The Anchor Standard of reading was not addressed as the SwIDs were not provided identifiable opportunities for reading in their social studies classes.

## **The Environment**

### **Culture of Literacy: Research Question 1**

The culture of literacy was first explored in answer to the question, "What is the culture of literacy in two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms where SwIDs are enrolled?" The construct of "Use of environments frequented by persons without disabilities" (Giangreco et al., 1994, p. 294), on the Modified Cone of Theoretical Focus (see Figure 4), was the lens through which two themes emerged; SwIDs were either immersed in the classroom culture through shared literacy activities or isolated from the classroom culture and literacy

activities while in the classroom. The evidence from both themes is discussed through thick description of informant quotations, pictures and supporting details (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The three additional inclusion constructs (Giangreco et al., 1994) of heterogeneous grouping, belonging, and a balanced educational experience were omitted due to the lack of relationship to the research questions. Two vignettes begin this section to provide the reader with a brief snapshot of each teacher's class environment, activities, routines, and practices.



Figure 5. Teacher One's classroom door

### **Teacher 1.**

In this first vignette, Teacher One (T1) infrequently provided instruction that immersed the SwIDs in the class and content. She primarily provided instruction that isolated the SwIDs within the classroom. The function of the paraprofessional within the environment served to solidify the isolation. In her second year teaching, but first year teaching Civics and Economics, T1 acknowledged that she was still getting to know the content. T1 was observed during her fourth period GE social studies class in which two of the three, SwIDs, Dale and Philare (IQs 56 & 44 respectively) were enrolled. Dale, Philare, and a third SwIDs sat next to each other in the back left corner of the classroom. They were singularly assisted by a paraprofessional (P1),

usually within arm's reach. The nine English learners (ELs), also in this class (4<sup>th</sup> period), precipitated an EL co-teacher. The EL co-teacher, the second that year, was a long-term substitute teacher with a special education background instead of EL. With T1's certification in EL and the co-teacher's lack of it, T1 developed both the ELs' accommodations and the SwIDs' modifications for the lessons. T1's class attendance ranged from 23-29 students during the observation period, though typically every desk was filled.



Figure 6. Teacher One's classroom

Literacy in T1's class began at the door, where students were greeted with an assortment of political signs and language strips, proclaiming "Welcome" (see Figure 5) in four different languages. Once inside, a profusion of student desks in six tight rows seemed to overwhelm the room. Two walls, lined with waist-high shelves and a wall-length table top further constricted the space. The teacher's go-to tool, a document camera, had a permanent home on a small media table in the first row of desks (see Figure 6). Teacher and student demands and productivity were evidenced on the boards and walls covered with posters, vocabulary, upcoming assignments, past assignments on display, 'Essential Questions', learning goals, and state standards.

The class routine, though not clearly defined or posted, was predictable. T1 generally stood at the door welcoming students in English and Spanish, often with personal comments. Students greeted each other loudly in a number of languages, picked up *bell work*, a half sheet of paper from a table near the door, and moved to their assigned seats. When the bell rang, T1 walked to the front of class and began announcements and review of the bell work. The bell work, a question with multiple choice answers, was read aloud by T1, while its image was projected on the white board with the document camera. Literacy in the social studies content was a focal point in T1's classroom with her intentional use of such strategies as think-alouds, structured notetaking, and graphic organizers. In response to a student's unsolicited answer T1 said, "I think you are throwing guesses at me and I'm not going to answer that because we have a process" (O3315P4). Teacher 1 began to work through the question and each answer. "What is the key word? What am I focusing on?" When a student answers "safety," T1 says, "yes" and extends the student's answer to "maintaining public safety," and then circles the words 'public safety' on the projected document. Next, when a student answers T1's question about why B is the answer, she responds by repeating the correct answer and praising the student, "It is the only one that talks about safety, very good" (O3315P4).

When asked about the bell work and the process through which she took the students, she explained,

At the end of the year they take a big multiple choice test with questions like that [the bell work question], which was actually from a released test. So, because they are all terrible test takers and they've never been trained in test taking strategy, I'm starting now to get them used to actually taking the time to cross off answers that don't make sense, which

they don't do. So I'm trying to get them into the habit of doing it so it is just second nature to them (T1, I1, p. 3).

Directly after the bell work, T1 spent the rest of the class in a guided lecture format; directing and organizing students' notetaking with the use of a graphic organizer (GO). With the GO projected on the white board, T1 progressed through the lecture completing the GO. During this activity, T1 explained the format of the GO, provided definitions within the context, tied information to students' prior knowledge, engaged students with topical stories, and elicited student participation through questioning and restating. Though the SwIDs, engaged in a separate activity, were generally not included in the large group lectures or lessons, T1's primary method of dissemination of information was auditory with the supporting visual of the GO.



Figure 7. Teacher Two's classroom

### **Teacher 2.**

Teacher Two's (T2) instruction wavered between immersing the SwIDs within the class and content and isolating them from the class and content. Somewhat smaller classes than T1, T2's observed classes (Periods 1 and 3) ranged between 11-23 students with an average of 19 per class. Of the six SwIDs enrolled in T2's period one and three classes, only one SwID from each

was a study participant (Raphaella, IQ 57 and Dabir, IQ 61). Students were greeted by T2 as they walked past him at the door to enter the classroom. Each student had an assigned seat in one of the four neat rows of desks. A document camera on top of a media cart split the rows down the middle into two sections (see Figure 7). The room was uncluttered, the agenda and the week's lesson presented sharp contrasts in dark blue and red marker on the white board, outlined with printed headers (see Figure 8). Neatly spaced across the white walls were larger-than-life posters of Martin Luther King Jr., Barack Obama, and Mahatma Gandhi (see Figure 7).

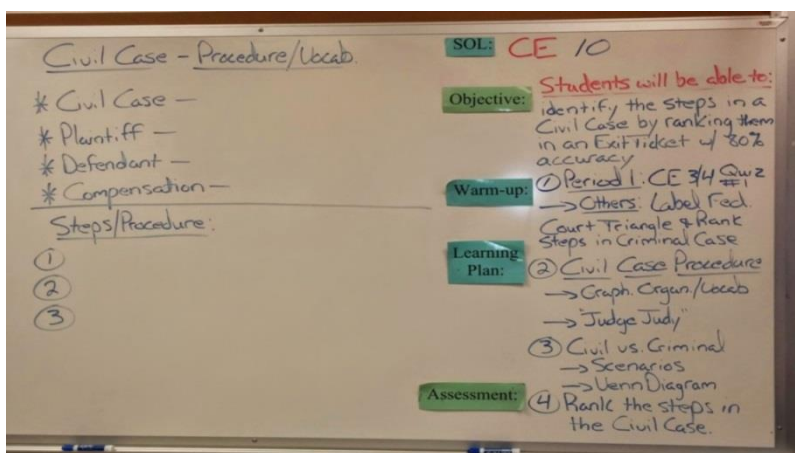


Figure 8. Teacher Two's agenda board

The teacher began class by providing nine students with laptops and directing the rest of the students to begin the pencil and paper warm-up, a GO of the federal court system. As he explained the warm up, T2 reminded students of what they did last week and what the agenda was for today. Utilizing the word bank projected on the SMART® board, the students with a paper copy, completed the warm up with pencils. The students with the laptops (all students with disabilities [SwD] used the SMART® file to move the phrases from the word bank onto the graphic on their screen, without the difficulty of writing or spelling (see Figure 9). T2 used multi-media on a regular basis which had the effect of keeping the students engaged and keyed



into where he was in the lesson. Definitions were often presented in uncluttered slides with arrows, circles, and underlines added by T2 as he spoke or emphasized a point.

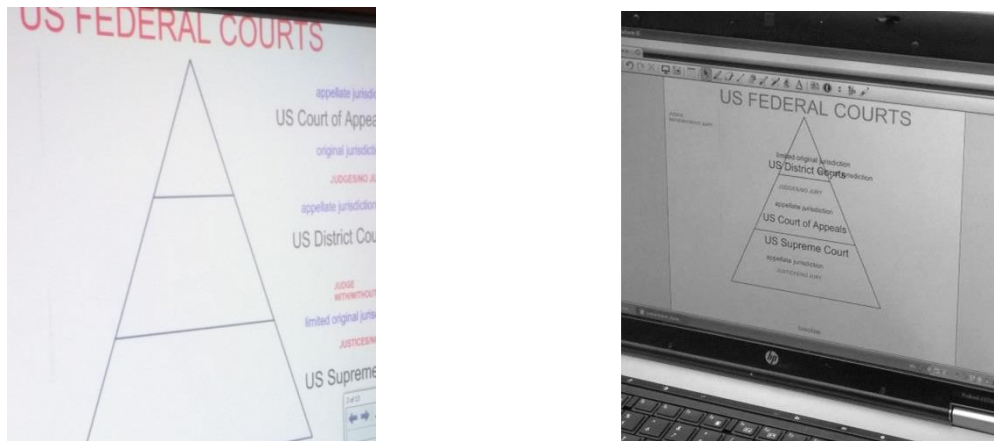


Figure 9. Graphic organizer on the SMART board and laptop

Practice in the social studies content was conducted regularly during the class warm-ups or exit tickets. As T2 canvassed the room checking on students' progress, he stopped the class to explain that when they come to ranking the felony court case, that means to put the steps into the correct order. Continuing to check on students' progress, T2 stopped to individually assist a number of students throughout the room. After about ten minutes, T2 called for the students' attention and conducted a whole-class review of the warm-up. Standing in front of the SMART® board, T2 asked students to tell him where each phrase went and then moved it from the word bank onto the triangle GO. He also regularly used the marker to draw directional lines on the graphic. Moving onto the second part of the warmup, T2 began by asking the class what the police needed to arrest someone. Raphaela, a SwIDs, answered from the back row, "handcuffs." Though looking for the answer of 'probable cause' the teacher answered her, "Yes, [Raphaela] absolutely they need handcuffs, what else do they need?" Asking students to help him to the last step in the felony criminal case, T2 reminded them that, "You will see this on your test again at the end of the week" (O42275P3).

Students were next instructed to get out their judicial packets and to open to the civil case GO. Having finished the criminal court section they moved on to civil cases. T2 provided definitions and synonyms as he moved through the sections of the organizer, “What do I mean by two parties?” Without waiting for a response he said, “Two groups, two people, two businesses.” Similarly, on the document projected on the board, T2 crossed out the ‘tar’ in monetary; to show students the base word was money. T2 directed the students, when he switched from the slides to the GO projected with the document camera, “Everybody should be looking at this graphic organizer right here....Write your definition from right here” (O42715P3). Though T2’s primary method of information dissemination was auditory, it was heavily supported visually through the use of GOs and slides containing key words, definitions, and concepts (see figure 10).

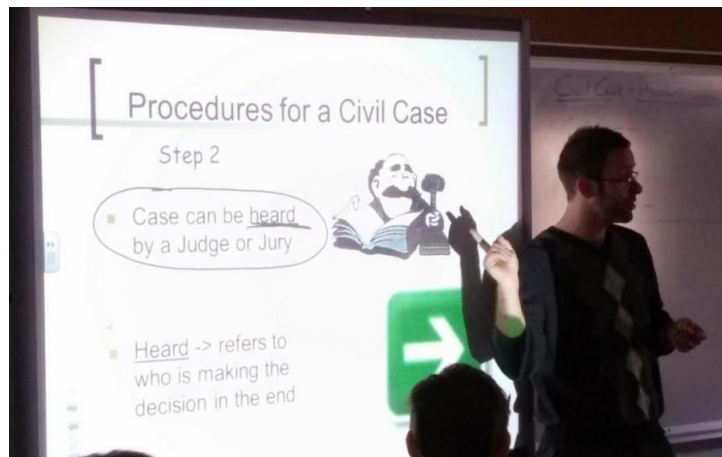


Figure 10. Teacher Two's use of the Smart board

Each classroom environment reflected the teacher’s own interests and style and provided students with multiple methods of literacy access to the content, though some more accessible to SWIDs than others. T1’s room was visually overstimulating, with student work, vocabulary, and unit content covering the walls. Her instructional style was conversational, verbally intense, and

often supported by GOs. T2's room was almost visually stark with a handful of posters of key historical figures. His instructional style, conversational and deliberate, was supported visually by single-concept power point slides, easy to read and copy and projected GOs. Additionally, T2 conducted formative assessments regularly through student practice of core unit content and daily student checks for understanding. T2 provided multiple methods of access to practice content through laptops and pen and paper depending upon the student's needs.

### **Immersed in the classroom.**

Three subthemes emerged under the theme of *immersed in the classroom*. Students with IDs who were immersed in the environment of the social studies classroom evidenced personal responsibility and participation. In essence, when the SwIDs showed similar personal responsibility and participation as their peers without ID, the SwIDs were interpreted to be immersed in the environment. Conversely, a third subtheme that emerged was the lack of assessment of academic progress in the content area of social studies for the SwIDs.

### ***Responsibility.***

Instances were observed when the students, including those with ID, evidenced responsibility for themselves, their choices, and their actions through their literacy practices. For example, all middle school students were required to carry hall passes when they were late to class or in the hall during class time. At times, SwIDs were expected to be responsible for themselves. When a SwID requested to leave for a drink and the teacher said he needed to write a hall pass from the back of his planner, neither the paraprofessional nor the teacher did this for the student. When the student couldn't read the time, he asked, so he could complete the hall pass. When a SwID didn't have a pencil, he raised his hand to ask for one. In another example, T2 asked if everyone was finished copying from the slide and a SwID spoke up, so the teacher

waited. Finally, when Dabir didn't study for his test and as a result did very poorly, he received a failing grade. The next test he studied for and passed, albeit with curved scoring on the assessment.

Most students in the social studies classes carried their work packets and binders in and out of the class with them. The SwIDs however often struggled with organization and a few of them kept their packets in notebooks behind the teacher's desk. So when the teacher asked the students to take out their packets, two SwIDs independently got up to get their packets from their notebooks behind the teacher's desk. Two SwIDs, who kept their packets in their notebooks and took them out of the classroom, looked furiously through the jumbled materials in their backpacks. These two students continued to look until one found his packet and the other had to begin with a new one.

### ***Participation.***

Though the eighth grade content level was six or more grade levels above where the SwIDs were reading at the time of this study, occasions were observed in which the social studies teachers provided opportunities for and expected all students to participate in the lesson or activity. Students with ID were noted to be active and contributing participants. T2 described his expectations of literacy practices for the SwIDs in his classes.

Even if it's simple like analyzing scenarios, underlining words, and seeing if we can substitute one word in for another word to help it make sense a little bit more. If the phrase being read doesn't have the vocabulary [used in class]; (if it says 'selects', but we've been learning 'appoints'), how can we make the connection? I think in a very basic way, that is where I'm trying to take my own academic literacy and trying to relate that, even if it's a very elementary way to the classroom. For [two of the SwIDs],

sometimes they can't quite follow along on their own, but [two other SwIDs] will try to stay with me and try to underline. Whether or not they are really understanding what it is they are doing, they'll at least try to model what I'm doing. (T2, I1, p. 1)

In one example, the multiple formats in which the teacher presented the activity allowed all the students to participate. In the T2 vignette, the activity included the completion of a GO with a word bank. Students were able to use either a hard copy of the document or a digital copy of the document to place the phrases from the word bank in the correct orientation on the GO. All students were expected to complete the assignment, and the teacher checked every student's work, including the SwIDs, assessing understanding and explaining further if necessary.

In a second example, T1 provided guided notes through the use of a GO, document camera, and supplemental slides and pictures. All the students were expected to copy the words T1 wrote on the GO via the document camera, except for the SwIDs. They were expected to match the cut out phrases and paste them onto a GO in the correct locations.

Finally, in a creative effort to clearly demonstrate to all students the Supreme Court's actions when a law is ruled unconstitutional, T2 held a piece of paper in front of a SwID and asked, "If a law is unconstitutional, is it good or bad?" The student replied, "Bad." The teacher then instructed the SwID to rip the unconstitutional law [paper] in half. The student did so exuberantly and grinning. In each of these examples opportunities were provided for all the students to participate in the lessons and activities of the class.

During whole-group instruction the teachers frequently used technology, such as a document camera, slides, pictures, videos, and GOs. The technology, coupled with teacher questioning, enabled students to engage on various levels of the instruction. In some instances, questions were asked specifically for the SwIDs to be able to answer. In others, even the general

class questions, SwIDs were found answering with a correct or at least topical answer. For example, when T2 was reviewing the steps of felony criminal cases, for the second or third time, he asked the class, “What does the policeman need to arrest someone?” Raphaela, who rarely volunteered, replied confidently, “Handcuffs” (O42275P3). On the introductory slide for criminal cases, which T2 had reviewed by then a number of times, was a picture of handcuffs. Though the teacher was looking for the phrase “probable cause,” T2 responded with surprised praise for her answer. Quiet Raphaela found her voice a second time after a YouTube video clip of a young girl’s inappropriate drug induced behavior during arraignment. The teacher asked what the students thought about the girl’s behavior in front of the judge. Raphaela surprised T2 with her raised hand again and answered, “She thinks it’s not that serious.” When reviewing the steps of felony criminal cases, T2 asked the whole class to fill in the blank: “In a criminal case a person is blank or blank?” A number of students responded in unison, including SwIDs, “Guilty or not guilty.” Finally, when introducing a whole-class lesson about the executive branch, T1 specifically asked Dale a question to which she knew he had the answer. “[Dale], who is the President of the United States? He called out proudly, “Obama” (O3315P4).

***Progress.***

Assessment of the SwIDs, in the social studies content, was rarely observed to include individualization sufficient to identify progress in the social studies content. When conducting assessments, T2’s go-to accommodation was reducing the number of multiple choice answers from four to three or occasionally, two; however he still expected the SwIDs to answer the 30 (eighth grade level) questions. Numerous times, especially if the paraprofessional was absent, T2 read the quiz aloud. This practice always took longer, but T2 understood the need for the read-aloud accommodation. “He knows how to modify tests; he understands read a-louds and

how to handle all that stuff” (SE1, I1, p. 3). On one quiz, two of the SwID’s received a 20 percent score. T2 would often curve the score or throw out certain questions. When the quizzes were given for the state standards, the SwIDs were told to go ahead and take it, but not to worry about it, because it was just practice. In T1’s class the SwIDs did not take quizzes with the class. They just waited patiently until the quiz was finished and class could begin. Both teachers struggled with grading their SwIDs. T1 explained, “I asked P1 to let the students choose the pictures so that I could grade them, however as I look through I think that P1 [told] them where to put the pictures....The grades are kind of a joke” (T1, I3, p. 4).

However, there was evidence of SwIDs’ progress in the social studies content. P2 explained what happened when the SwIDs brought T2’s *National, State and Local Branches of Government* quiz to the SE teacher’s room to finish,

...she was shocked, she said she was shocked. They [SwIDs] knew what went where and she didn’t have to help them. [With an excited voice she exclaimed], they get more than just social skills. You know they don't really socialize in there. Cause [T2] is like bam, bam, bam. So they get more than what ... the school is askin’ from them to pick up [she laughs at this, proud of the kids] (P2, I1, p. 4).

On another occasion, T2 modified the exit ticket for the SwIDs. As the rest of the class wrote the steps in a civil case and the definitions to four vocabulary words, T2 crouched down next to two of the SwIDs and conducted a kind of “discussion quiz”. In a conversational tone, T2 asked both students, “If you guys were having an argument would it be a civil or criminal case?” Both answered, “Civil.” Continuing, in a conversational explanation, T2 defined each of the four vocabulary words and then asked for the correct word. In each instance, the SwIDs answered correctly. T2 gave them a thumbs-up and glanced at the researcher with a smile, as if

to say, “They got it” (O42715P1). T2 explained later that this was the first time he had modified something like that.

### **Isolated within the classroom.**

Students with IDs also were observed to be isolated from the literacy culture (e.g., whole-class lessons or activities) in a number of instances. This isolation was observed when SwIDs were provided separate activities from the rest of the class with minimal or no teacher involvement or direction. The separate sight word cut and paste activities effectively excluded the SwIDs from any interaction with peers without ID as well. T1 explained her dilemma, “They [SwIDs] don’t even have the same standards as the other kids in the class. They don’t have the same objectives. We find objectives that are the closest. A lot of times it’s just sight words” (T1, I3, p. 1).

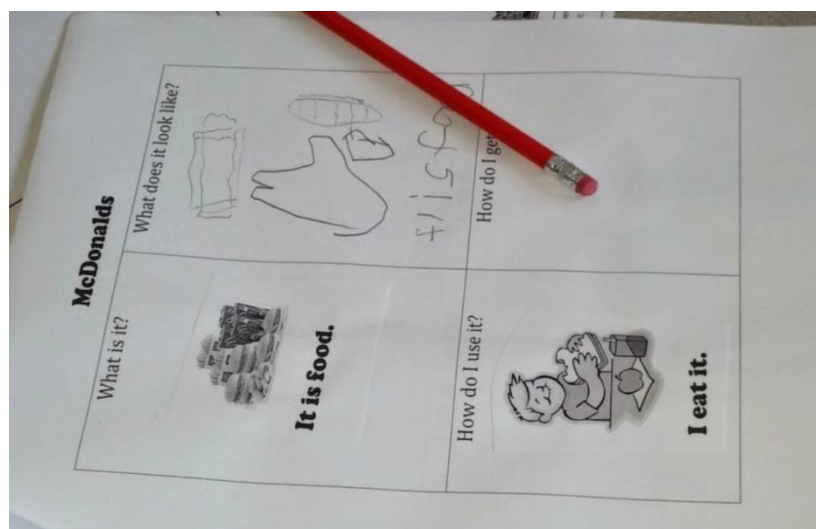


Figure 11. A separate activity for SwIDs



### ***Separate activities.***

The SwIDs were observed at times to be working on separate activities from the rest of the class or waiting for the rest of the class to finish a separate activity. For example, T1 began a unit on economics with a large group activity asking students to list things they liked to do and then to choose only two due to lack of resources. Simultaneously, the SwIDs were working on a money packet under the direction of the paraprofessional. The SwIDs were asked to match pictures (e.g., dollar bill, wallet, food, and a child eating food) to short phrases on a page (see Figure 11).

Though both activities had some relationship to money, the money packet was unrelated to the larger class activity and directed solely by the paraprofessional. In a similar example, SwIDs matched six vocabulary words to pictures representing those words (e.g., judge, court, law, jail, innocent, and guilty) while T1 played a Brain Pop video of the court process for the rest of the class. The SwIDs were not directed to attend to the video nor brought in during the subsequent discussion and questions students without disabilities raised in order to complete their guided notes. In a third example, the SwIDs sat idly at their desks waiting for the rest of the class to finish a quiz, so that they could participate in the next activity.

### ***Teacher oversight.***

Though the provision of the paraprofessional in the GE classroom was a support to the GE teacher, without teacher oversight through direction and ongoing teacher contact, it became a source of conflict and isolation. The generally 10 second directive, from the GE teacher to the paraprofessional as students filled the room, sometimes led to misunderstanding of the instructional intent of the SwIDs' activity and a different activity occurring than what was planned. P1 described the interaction between herself and T1 at the beginning of each class.

“From the door, [T1] tells me what I can do with them... sometimes she has a worksheet and ... it’s different than the [other] kids. I go finish it with them” (P1, I1, p. 1).

In one instance, T1 had prepared modifications in a guided note task in which the SwIDs could follow along with the large group instruction. She provided the SwIDs matching pictures from her lecture slides, to glue them (instead of write the information) onto the guided notes. The paraprofessional, however, had the students cut and paste the pictures on a piece of construction paper without attending to their meaning or teachers’ whole-group guided instruction. Without the teacher’s visual check on the progress of the SwIDs in their guided notes or verbal engagement, as she did with the students without disabilities, little opportunity existed to draw the SwIDs into the whole group instruction. This lack of teacher contact isolated P1 from T1’s instructional activities as well.

Additionally, without the oversight of T1, P1 sometimes completed the task *for* the SwIDs. In one example, Dale waited for quite a while for P1 to bring him his papers and glue to complete his work. When she finally brought his materials, he refused with a shake of his head and a twirl of the scissors. In response, she cut the items, pasted them in the correct location on the document, wrote Dale’s name on it, and filed it with the completed activities. In explanation she said, “Sometimes he has a bad attitude and doesn't like to work. I showed him what you can do” (P1, I1, p. 2).

This lack of teacher contact or intervention served to separate the SwIDs from the rules and responsibilities of the class and the teacher. When T1 told the class to get out their packets, students responded in near instant activity, some going to their lockers, some to the pencil sharpener, except for the SwIDs. They did not move, because P1 provided all of their materials. In T1’s class, SwIDs were not responsible for their materials. At the end of an activity, P1

collected everything and filed it in a crate behind the students. It appeared that the SwIDs reported only to P1. Dale got up and walked out of class twice one day, with no pass in his hand and no word from the teacher. When another SwID finished a task, he waited 20 minutes with no intervention from the teacher, though she walked right past him.

In a similar lack of teacher direction in T2's classroom, the instructional lesson became one of task completion rather than learning. Raphaela and a second SwID were trying hard to keep up with T2 on the GO but had to wait for P3 to write the notes first. Working as their scribe, P3 took the notes as the teacher presented them. Once P3 had copied a section, he gave the document to Raphaela to copy. While the second student waited for her turn, P3 wrote the continuing lecture notes on a blank sheet of paper. When Raphaela finished her section, she passed the sheet to the second SwID. They were constantly behind the teacher's lecture. The paraprofessional had no opportunity to explain, and the SwIDs had no opportunity to ask questions. They were completely task oriented. Without direction from the teacher of what concepts of the lesson the students were responsible for, the paraprofessional and the SwIDs felt responsible for all of it. The paraprofessional explained his changing perspective,

When I first started working with them I thought it was like 'have them meet the level where the other kids are, make sure the information given to them is clear as possible,' but those expectations went far out the window...[Now, I just] pretty much keep them on task and make them feel comfortable in being in there (P3, I1, p. 1).

### ***Peer interaction.***

Interaction and collaboration with their peers without disabilities was scarce in both classrooms and led to isolation, for the SwIDs, even within small groups. In T2's classes the students with any disability or the ELs were generally seated on the left side of the room. This

didn't go unnoticed. "You know how in the front section, by the door, where he helps out the kids? I think those are special ed kids or something" (Savannah, I1, p. 1). When small group collaboration was employed, the SwIDs typically worked together to facilitate the support of the paraprofessional, but didn't go unnoticed. One student without ID described the group work in T2's classroom. "Most of the time they [SwIDs] work with each other. If they want, we'll pair up, but most of the time they pair up with the teacher who sits with them [referring to the paraprofessional]" (Hamere, I1, p. 1).

When students with and without IDs were integrated in group work, it was done without guidance or modeling of students' interactions with their peers with IDs. Both classrooms conducted a unit review using the game of Jeopardy and employed integrated teams of students with and without IDs. In T1's class, she passed out a study guide for the students to use as a resource. Dale picked it up to read, modeling his peers' behavior. The study guide, at an eighth grade reading level, was not modified however, and Dale was unable to access any information from it. When it was Dale's team's turn to answer, he managed to snag the small white board on which to write their answer. Dale's peers without disabilities tried to convince Dale to turn over the board, but to no avail. Instead of working with him and guiding Dale to an answer they all agreed upon, the students let Dale copy the wrong answer from the study guide and lost any possibility of points.

In T2's class, Raphaela and her peer with ID were paired with two boys without ID. Without any engagement from her peers, Raphaela just sat with her arms across her chest while the other SwID hummed quietly. The girls watched the two boys write answers on the white board for each question without any input from them. T1 summed up her thoughts about the SwIDs' isolation, "I think right now they [the peers without IDs] are used to having them in the

room, [but] they don't really communicate with them. I'd like to have much more collaborative things" (T1, I3, p. 4). The paraprofessionals realized the lack of interaction as well.

I would like to see [Dabir] pair up with one of the other kids in the class and be able to, even if they can't do all, or give a lot of input, be able to give something, be able to work with someone else other than them two or them three [SwIDs] together. (P2, I1, p. 3)

### **Providing Individualization in Literacy Practices**

Three themes emerged within the individualization of literacy practices for SwIDs. Access to the literacy practices in the GE social studies classroom was generally provided through two avenues; the identified themes of the provision of individualization of instruction in shared literacy practices and individualization of instruction in isolated literacy practices. A third and overlapping cultural theme emerged regarding the GE teachers' choice of the intensity of supports provided to the SwIDs to access the GE literacy practices. Teachers tended to rely primarily on grade level content accommodations or separate instruction with related content modifications to individualize instruction for SwIDs. These overlapping themes appeared to revolve around the teachers' school-level support system rather than identified academic levels or skills or content related goals. The theme of choice of intensity of support is explored first to provide an understanding of the larger influences on the teachers' decisions. Next, the two themes of the individualization of shared and isolated literacy practices are discussed. Each of these two sections contains vignettes of the literacy practices the teachers employed.

In the field of education, individualized instruction for students with disabilities (SwDs) is often perceived through the lens of intensity or levels of support such as the delimitations of

accommodations and modifications. Though the criteria change state by state, the PEAK Parent Center in Colorado provides two very clear definitions on their website.

Accommodations are changes in how a student accesses information and demonstrates learning... [but does] not substantially change the instructional level, content, or performance criteria. Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn... [and can include] changes in the instructional level, content, and performance criteria.

(Peak Center, para. 2)

The terms accommodations and modifications were used interchangeably by informants and presented a source of misunderstanding for the GE teachers when differentiating the level of supports needed for the students in special education (SE) and those identified with IDs. Additionally, the phrase 'big idea' was provided as the method of content access for the SwIDs but was rarely explicitly defined or assessed. To explore how the SwIDs instruction was individualized in the GE classroom, it is important to understand how the GE teachers were expected to plan for the SwIDs in their classrooms.

Special education students (often referred to as *sped* students) – defined primarily as students with learning disabilities and high functioning autism - were understood to need accommodations in GE classes. The special education (SE) teachers (primarily learning disability teachers) were a well-established component of the eighth grade team. A team meeting, including the GE teachers and SE teachers, was held weekly to discuss upcoming quizzes, standards of focus, Essential Questions for the unit, and strategies for the SwDs. Through these meetings, the GE teachers received support and suggested strategies and accommodations to assist their SwDs. The SE teachers who taught SwIDs were not attendees at these team meetings and the information provided to the GE teachers focused primarily on

accommodations for the SwIDs. T2 relied on the information from the SE teachers who predominately provided accommodations to what he was already doing in the classroom.

When I give them notes, I try to give them some sort of a guided note, so that they have minimal writing, even for your average gen-ed kid, they need to have some sort of structure. Sometimes I might for [two of the SwIDs] include more information and less writing, but sometimes I just give them what we're doing as a class. Because I have them sitting up front, I can see, 'Are you struggling here? Are you not writing this? Let me help guide you in that way.' Some of the handouts are a little bit simpler, but a lot of the stuff that I try to do at this point is guided, for all my students. (T2, I1, p. 3)

T1 met with the SE teacher who taught the SwIDs regularly to identify modifications that they both thought were appropriate but which generally resulted in separate activities. With her previous experience with SwIDs, T1 focused more on the students' IEP goals and sight words than on the social studies content.

So I start with what's the overall goal, and usually, just because of the direction I've gotten, then I look at how are they going to be able to access this activity because frankly they won't have the same objectives as the rest of the kids and they don't need to be able to use their graphic organizer with the text, cause they are not going to read and comprehend the text like the rest of the kids. I can give them a different text and have them read and comprehend that with a graphic organizer, but the comprehension piece is really not realistic for things that are not [pause] like ...three word sentences because I think that is where all three of their reading levels are... I can't even give these kids [SwIDs] a modified version of what the other kids are doing because it doesn't help them at all. It wouldn't really be appropriate and wouldn't really help them with what they

need to be working on. So when we are doing a round table activity I have them watching a Brain Pop because it's actually a pretty good resource; the text is there, they can start recognizing some of the words, it's on the same topic. (T3, I1, p. 4-5)

The "Big Idea," a phrase heard repeatedly from the social studies teachers, the SE teacher who taught the students with learning disabilities (SE2), and the SE teacher who taught SwIDs (SE1), was a concept that gave the social studies teachers a content direction to strive for beyond socialization. SE1 described her understanding of the big idea in the social studies classes.

When they [social studies teachers] look at their lesson plans and planning for our kids they always take the big idea, over that lesson that they want the students to master. So when it was government, I think they basically wanted the students to understand that there were three branches of government, so just picking up the largest idea that they feel is necessary, and it might be the two ideas or three ideas, you know it just depends on the group and the kids. (SE1, I1, p. 4)

T1 and T2 provided more comprehensive pictures of what they were teaching as the big idea to the SwIDs in their classes.

Right now the big ideas [are]; the structure of the US Federal Court system, you've seen me use the triangle [a GO of the levels of the Federal court system] focusing on that quite a bit and even if the other kids are trying to write the steps of the criminal procedures, which is complicated itself, I'm still having them [SwIDs] focus on the Federal Court system. Understanding why people end up in court, guilty or not guilty- accused of crimes, civil cases- people are having a disagreement, and if you are in court what is the job of the court and how do you progress through the court system. A lot of the excess vocabulary is overwhelming even for gen-ed kids. What I think I've been able to do is



simplify that [vocabulary] to the point where we know we are talking about courts, we have different levels of courts, using the SMART® board technology they can structure the court system from highest to lowest with a great deal of accuracy and I think in that sense they are getting the big picture of what the unit is about. (T2, I3, p. 3)

The last unit we worked on [the big idea was] recognizing Obama's name or talking about Governor verses President which still didn't really stick, but we tried, but they know Obama. They know Obama is the President. They got the President. They don't really realize that the Governor and the President are two different people [sounding very discouraged]. It's really funny every time I talk about the President they [two of the SwIDs] suddenly hop to attention and both their hands go up because they want to say Obama.... For this unit the big goal was to work on guilty, not guilty, court, jail, and stuff they would be familiar with. They get jail, they get court, and they get judge. (T1, I3, p. 2)

Though not written into lesson plans, the big idea helped the teachers identify what main concepts they focused on for the SwIDs.

### **Individualized Instruction: Research Question 2**

The researcher further analyzed the data to answer question two, "How is instruction individualized for SwIDs in the literacy culture within two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms?" Instruction for SwIDs was individualized differently by each teacher. T1, who had Philare and Dale, both emergent readers, primarily provided modified separate instruction led by the paraprofessional. T2, who had Dabir and Raphaela, both reading at the second grade level, primarily provided accommodations in the representation of and access to the shared eighth grade content. The themes that emerged related to this question included

individualized instruction in literacy practices shared by all students in the class and individualized instruction in separate literacy practices only presented to the SwIDs in the class. The data to support each theme is provided through examples of literacy practices observed. Table 10 provides examples of observed individualized instruction for SwIDs during shared (when SwIDs were immersed in the environment) and separate (when SwIDs were isolated in the environment) literacy practices. The individualization of each literacy practice also is characterized by the method of individualization and the presence of text level modification or scaling.

### **Individualized instruction in shared literacy practices.**

The shared literacy practices observed in the social studies classes where SwIDs received individualized instruction included lectures, guided reading, guided notetaking, assessments, warm-ups, and exit tickets. Many more literacy practices were shared by T1 and T2 with their students with and without IDs in the social studies classes. However, literacy practices that were not individualized (e.g., class announcements, field trips, videos, and classroom routines of requesting, writing, and using hall passes) were not included in this section. Examples of SwIDs' shared social studies literacy practices, involving lecture, guided reading, guided notetaking, a warm up, an exit ticket, and assessments, are described in eight vignettes.

#### ***Literacy practice: Lecture.***

When all students were working on shared literacy practices, the most predominant form of individualization for the SwIDs observed was the paraprofessional's or teacher's support as scribe, reader, and prompter. During lectures, the paraprofessional's responsibility was to create a desk copy of the notes for the SwIDs to copy. The content level, structure, and amount of

content of the guided notes or GOs were not altered for the SwIDs when involved in shared literacy practices.

***Literacy practice: Guided Reading 1.***

Following T2's whole-class modeling of a guided reading passage, the students were beginning the next of two passages on their own. T2 placed the text on the document camera opened to the page students were asked to read and reference for their worksheet. The SwIDs, unable able to access the text at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, were waiting to copy answers from P3's worksheet. P3 got to work locating the answers in the text and completing his own guided note sheet to create the desk copy for the SwIDs. P3 watched Raphaela and another SwID copy the answers. P3 occasionally paused to prompt Raphaela to move to the next blank, while Raphaela, in turn, waited for P3 to give her the next answer.

***Literacy practice: Guided reading 2.***

On the document camera (see Figure 7) is the page of the packet on which the students were working. Since the paraprofessional was absent, T2 sat down between two of the SwIDs to read the packet aloud and scribed for them, while the rest of the class worked independently. As T2 read aloud, one SwID asked, "Why is he a judge?" Then T2 asked, "For the first time, what did the supreme court do with the law...?" The SwID responded, "Ripped it up." T2 then read, "The law was...." [Pausing for the student] "Unconstitutional," came the SwID's reply. Though the guided reading page was not modified by reading level or amount of text, it was modified on the spot, through T2's verbal mediation, and the SwID was completely engaged. Prior to this activity, when T2 discussed the Supreme Court's ability to strike down a law, he gave this SwID a piece of paper to rip in half. Once ripped, T2 said to the class, "This is what the Supreme Court does to a law that is unconstitutional" (O41515P1).

***Literacy practice: Guided notetaking.***

Students were each given a graphic organizer on which to write their notes as the content was presented. T1 used of the document camera, Power Point slides, photos, and videos to explain the different branches of government. While T1 lectured, she also modeled completing the GO projected on the white board. The SwIDs were to follow along, using the same GO as the rest of the class. Their notetaking however, consisted of choosing the correct block of phrases from a word bank and pasting, instead of writing, the phrases on the GO. The phrases the SwIDs used were not modified by reading level or scaled in the amount of text. They were the same phrases the rest of the class was copying to their GOs. As emergent readers, these phrases were not understood by the SwIDs (see Figure 12).

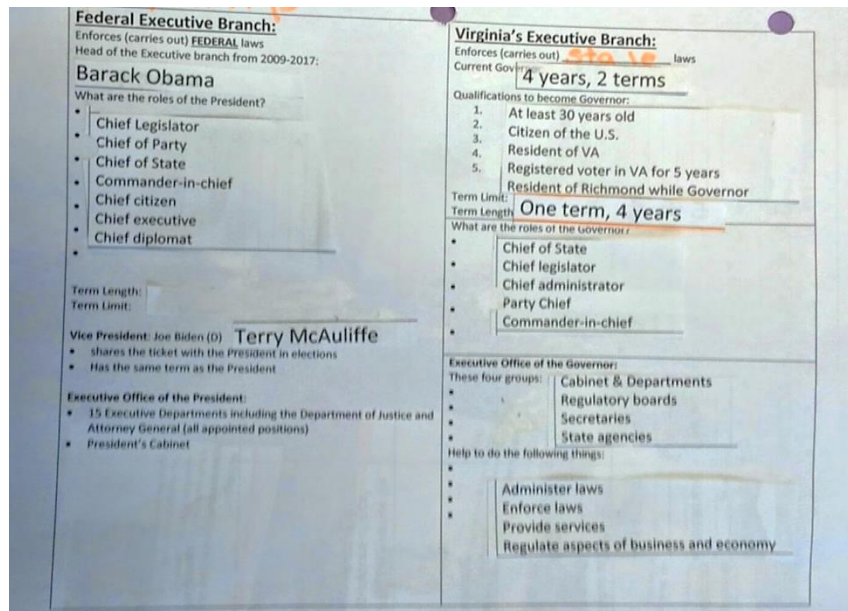


Figure 12. Guided notetaking with cut and paste phrases

***Literacy practice: Warm-up.***

The teachers also used computer assistance in assignments and assessments. T2 provided two of his students with an accessible computer quiz which negated the need to spell or write the

answers. The content of the GO quiz was not modified in amount or level, but provided the students with a word box of answers. Students also were provided with multiple opportunities to correct their answers. While the rest of the class took the paper/pencil quiz on the three branches of the Federal government, Dabir and another SwID were working on laptop computers taking the same quiz; dragging and dropping the phrases from the word box into a location on the GO (using SMART Notebook® software). T2 used the same program for the SwIDs' quiz that he used in class to explain the GO and that the SwIDs had used to practice the content. While T2 canvassed the room checking on students, he stopped to ask Dabir to move two of the phrases to the side and try again (see figure 9).

*Literacy practice: Test.*

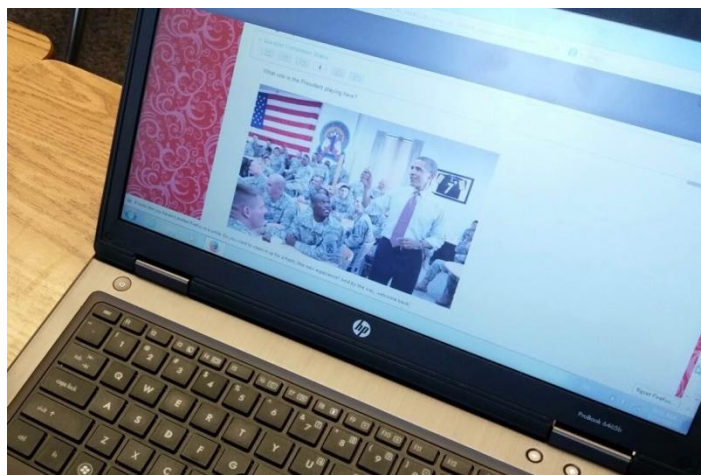


Figure 13. Online Blackboard assessment for SwIDs

T1's use of a computer assessment provided mixed results. She solicited assistance from the technology support at her school to create an individualized computer assessment for Dale and two of his peers with ID. The five question multiple choice assessment was teacher created and dictated using the Blackboard® software (see Figure 13). Both the amount and level of content were individualized for the SwIDs. The same pictures used in class activities were used

in the questions. This test was given in conjunction with the class's unit test on the same, though more detailed, content. Due primarily to district access issues (T1 needed each student's password to access the software), it took T1 25 minutes to provide access to all three of the SwIDs on the computer program. During this time the SwIDs waited quietly at their desks. The SwIDs were unable to take the test independently however, due to the lack of automated scrolling to the next question and the need to scroll back and forth to access the answers. P1 was there to assist the students with the test, but had to help each student through the test one at a time. Given practice with the Blackboard® format, the students may have been able to become independent.

***Literacy practice: Exit ticket.***

As a variation of the exit ticket T2 gave to the class, he conducted a small group discussion with three SwIDs to assess their understanding of the essential components of the exit ticket. He explained later, "Instead of giving them the exit ticket [rank ordering a list of court procedures on paper], I went over and kind of had a conversation with them which allowed them to articulate to me their understanding as opposed to being consumed by the writing task" (T2, I3, p. 1). The individualization in this literacy example included modification of content and decreased amount of text, through teacher discussion instead of reading of text or read-aloud.

***Literacy practice: Multiple choice assessment.***

In an example of decreased choices without content amount or level modification, T2 gave the SwIDs a 33 question test, with two of the question options scratched off, creating a multiple choice test with two choices per question. The test was read aloud to the students. Though individualized, the reading level was more than four grades above the SwIDs' reading levels rendering it inaccessible to the students.

Table 10 Individualization of Literacy Practices by Immersion and Isolation

Literacy Practices & Events	Immersed in GE Classroom			Isolated within GE Classroom		
	Individualization	Modified Reading Level	Scaled Amount of text	Individualization	Modified Reading Level	Scaled Amount
Guided Reading 1	Paraprofessional, reader	No	No			
Guided Notes	Paraprofessional/scribe/ Teacher attention	No	No	Paraprofessional/ Matching pictures to vocabulary words	Yes	Yes
GO & Doc Cam notes	Paraprofessional, scribe Teacher attention	No	No	Paraprofessional, Pasting words into GO	Yes	Yes
Guided Reading 2	Teacher read-aloud, scribe	No	No			
Guided Notetaking						
Test	Laptop/ SMART® Notebook file, Teacher attention	No	No	Paraprofessional Laptop/Blackboard	Yes	Yes
Exit Ticket	Discussion quiz	Yes	Yes			
Warm up Quiz	Laptop/ SMART® Notebook file	No	No			
Multiple Choice Assessment	Decreased choices from 4 to 2, read-aloud	No	No			
Video Clip & Notes	No	No	No	None		
Power Point notes	Scribe, Teacher attention	No	No	Paraprofessional Cut & paste	Yes	Yes
Vocabulary Match to Sample				Paraprofessional Cut & paste	Yes	Yes
Turn in Assignments	Not Required			Not Required		
Write name	Yes			Paraprofessional Scribe		

### **Individualized instruction in separate literacy practices.**

The second theme regarding individualized instruction was that of separate literacy practices. The literacy practices observed in the social studies classes where SwIDs received individualized instruction, in an activity separate from their peers, included sight word matching, a graphic organizer, and worksheets (see Table 10). Examples where SwIDs participated in individualized literacy practices separate from their peers without IDs are provided in three vignettes.

T1 provided primarily separate instructional lessons for her SwIDs in an effort to provide what, she thought, would be the most appropriate and functional. In one interview she spoke about her plans for the next unit.

I know for economics we are going to try really to incorporate a lot of their math goals...which is like one and two digit addition and recognizing currency. That's a pretty easy one to incorporate with economics. [The ID teacher and I] will sit down and look for a couple things that are appropriate for them. The things that are big for them and that kind of tie into what I'm teaching. (T1, I3, p. 2)

When the SwIDs' literacy practices were separate from their peers without disabilities in the social studies classrooms, the SwIDs often were focused more on task completion than content or concept comprehension.

#### ***Literacy Practice: Sight Word Study***

T1 developed a unit for the three SwIDs in her class that would correspond to the criminal court system unit planned for the rest of the class. The unit consisted of four related activities; match word to sample, match word to picture, match picture to word, and a vocabulary booklet. The unit contained six vocabulary words; jail, court, judge, law, innocent, and guilty.



With each activity, except the booklet, the SwIDs were cutting and pasting pictures or words or both onto a “T” chart. In the culminating activity, the SwIDs were scanning social studies magazines for pictures to match each of the vocabulary words to cut and then paste on the correct page in the booklet. Generally, P1 would show the students what to cut out and where to paste it with mostly gestures and rarely words. Occasionally, P1 removed an incorrectly pasted picture and replaced it in the correct location on a SwID’s paper, without explanation. During one of these activities, the rest of the class was watching a Brain Pop video on criminal law and completing a GO.

***Literacy practice: Graphic organizer.***

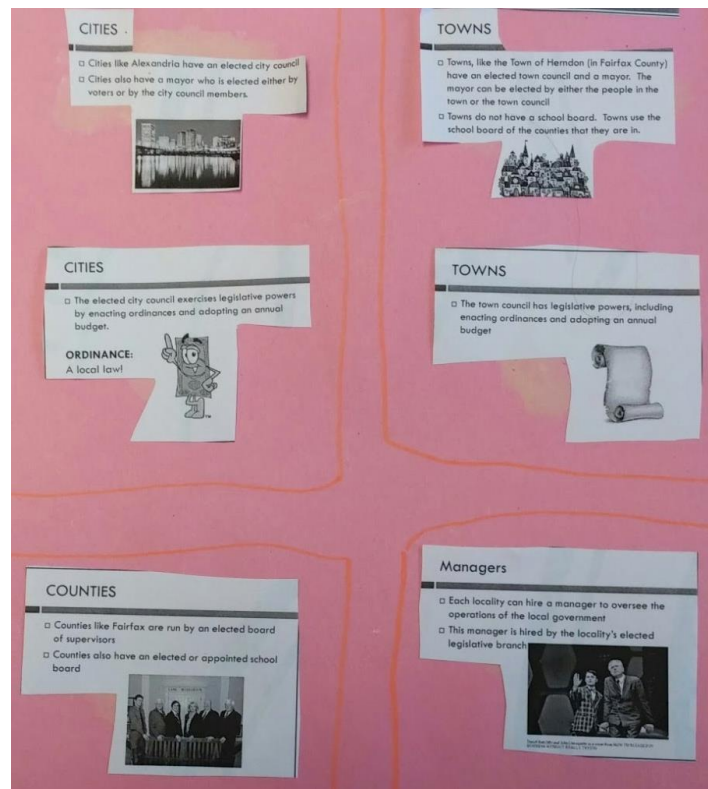


Figure 14. Match-to-sample notetaking

T1 created mini Power Point slides for the SwIDs to find and match to the projected image, as she worked through the content (see Figure 14). In this way, the SwIDs would be

involved in the whole class instruction, through a match to sample activity, matching their ‘notes’ to her slides. The day before the activity, T1 explained how what she had planned would help the SwIDs attend to the instruction.

I'll give them this picture, and they'll have to match it to the text. So I'll give them a similar looking set of notes and then they'll have the pictures to cut and paste into the right place to see if they are following along with the words from the screen [what she had on the document camera and slides] and the pictures associated with them. (T1, I1, p. 4)

Instead of directing the SwIDs to follow T1's presentation, P1 was observed directing the students to cut the pictures out and paste them on a piece of construction paper without identification of concepts or explanation of the pictures. The SwIDs did not use the organizer as intended to match their pictures to T1's GO. P1 and the SwIDs were unaware of T1's instruction in front of them. No intervention occurred on T1's part to direct P1 and the students' attention to her instruction. Once the cutting and pasting was complete, P1 wrote the students' names on the papers and filed them in the students' portfolios.

***Literacy practice: Worksheets.***

T1 was pleased about moving into the Economics unit as she saw plenty of opportunity to connect the concepts of purchasing and money for her SwIDs. The ID teacher helped T1 to develop the unit on money for the SwIDs to correspond to the larger Economics unit. The SwIDs spent two weeks working on a four page money packet as a separate activity with modified content(see Figure 15). Each page had four places for pictures to either be drawn or pasted with phrases like, “How do I use it?” and the picture that matched it, “I eat it”.

The individualization of instruction created quite a conundrum for the social studies teachers when the stated goal for the SwIDs enrollment in the social studies classes was behavioral rather than content focused. As the content experts however, the teachers focused on teaching their content in addition to socialization.

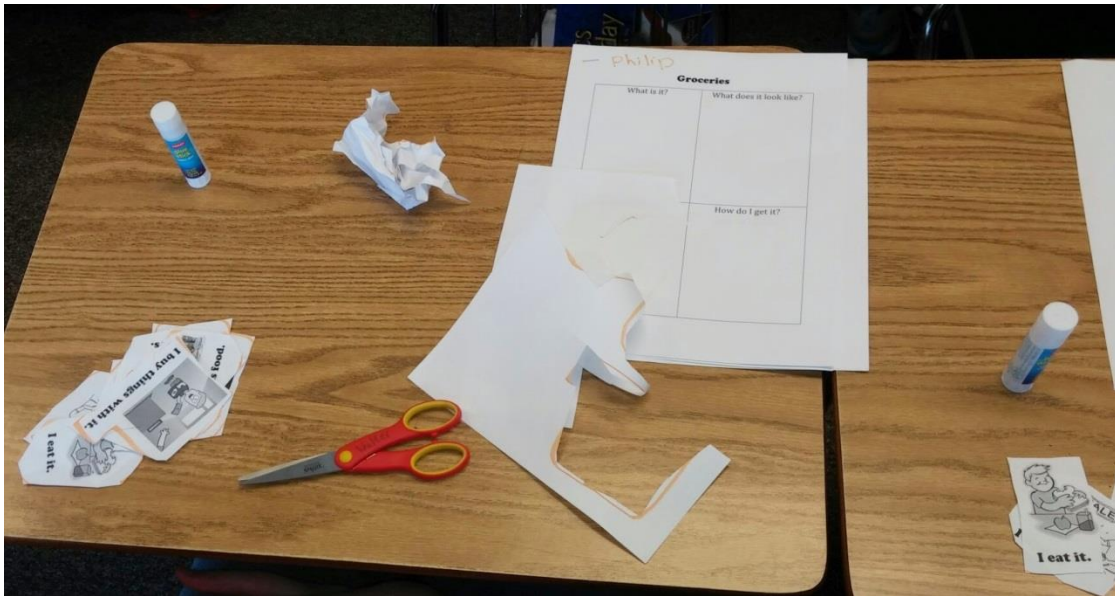


Figure 15. Separate activity with parallel content

### Stakeholders' Perceptions

The overall theme that emerged within stakeholders' perceptions was the theme of socialization as the principle goal for SwIDs in included social studies classes. The stakeholders' predominant perception of SwIDs in the social studies classrooms was one of "social integration" [A1, I1, p. 2); students' learning appropriate behaviors, work skills and peer interaction. With minimal exception, administrators, teachers, and support staff, from the district to the school level, said that the expectations for SwIDs in the GE (i.e., social studies) classrooms were of socialization. The day after an interview with an administrator, a staff member was asked what literacy was expected from the SwIDs in the GE classes. Minimal

expectations for academic instruction or use of literacy for the SwIDs in the social studies classrooms were expressed. Anything academic the SwIDs learned while in social studies was an unexpected bonus. “I think it's just an accepted part of the program; the content classes are for socialization” (T1, I1, p. 7).

### **Stakeholder’s Perceptions: Research Question 3**

The findings for question three, “What are the stakeholders’ perceptions and expectations of literacy for SwIDs in two middle school social studies teachers’ inclusive classrooms?” reflect the perspectives of two primary groups of stakeholders, the teachers and paraprofessionals, and the students. The themes of conflicting policies, different standards, and ongoing questions of what teachers should be teaching to SwIDs, led to the finding that literacy in the social studies content was not an expectation for these eighth grade SwIDs in their GE classes. The perceptions of the students without ID, of their peers with ID, while positive and accepting were primarily superficial due to a lack of awareness of the disability and minimal interaction with their peers. While Dale and Philare, did not articulate any feelings about their social studies class, they came to class independently, completed their tasks, and both participated enthusiastically when directly spoken to by the teacher. They both appeared to master the concept of what would happen if they broke the law – jail. Dabir said social studies was his favorite class because he learned a lot, while Raphaela said that social studies was hard, but she learned a lot.

### **General Education Teachers and Paraprofessionals**

The social studies teachers’ perceptions and expectations of the SwIDs represent a more complex ‘boots on the ground’ perspective which emerged into three themes, conflicting policies

of standards and socialization, respect and belonging, and learning. Context and examples for each of these themes are provided.

**Conflicting policies.**

*Standards.*

The singular goal of socialization for SwIDs in the GE classroom conflicted with the pressures of standards reforms and vied for the teachers' instructional and planning time. T2 honed in on the critical issue of state assessments.

Last year was my first experience, and I really didn't quite know how to go about it. As I said, my wife was pregnant last year, on top of grad school and they're like, 'You got to plan all the materials for them [SwIDs]'. I don't have enough time in the day for myself, let alone planning extra lessons for kids who aren't even going to take the (state's standardized assessments] ....I have 25 students in my room, 23 of which are going to be taking the [state assessments]. Naturally, I'm going to focus most of my attention on [the students without ID]. (T2, I1, p, 1)

As the content experts, the social studies teachers were expected to teach the state standards of eighth grade civics and economics to their GE students, but for the SwIDs who were taking the alternate assessments, the social studies teachers were to teach socialization. The SwIDs "...worked on the state standards for science and social studies, reading, writing – in our self-contained classrooms" (SE1, I1, p. 4). The ID teacher, who served as a support to the GE teachers with SwIDs in their classes, said socialization in the GE classroom was their main goal. "Our main overarching goal is for them to learn appropriate social skills among their peers and then beyond that is the big picture, the main idea of the standard" (SE1, I1, p. 3).

***What to teach and how to teach it.***

The ID teacher had divided the SwIDs into the three social studies classes based on their reading skills at the beginning of the school year and each teacher's perceived style of instruction. The three SwIDs in T1's class were each considered emergent readers, whereas the SwIDs in T2' class were considered second grade level readers. "He's [T1] kind of like a higher level kind of teacher, very notes and everything. So we try not to put kids [with him] that need maybe more supports and visuals and now he's good" (SE1, I1, p. 3).

T1, in her first year with SwIDs in her class, understood the goal for the SwIDs in her class. She collaborated regularly with the ID teacher to modify content lessons and materials for them. Yet, she still struggled with the appropriate strategies to incorporate the SwIDs into the fabric of her class.

The direction I'm getting is that it's more important to have them [SwIDs] included and working with good group skills than it is to having them do the academic work and so, [I can either say] you're in charge of materials and you're in charge of cutting [or]... you have a different activity, the three of you... are working on putting three words in the right order in the sentence.... So usually what I would actually do, is [find a way] to have them access this activity in a way that has them feel mostly a part of the class, which is mostly where I am reaching for them. (T1, I1, p. 5)

The SwIDs that T1 had in her class were emergent readers and writers; most were able to write their names and knew a few sight words. They could ask for what they needed, follow simple directions, and follow the routines of the class. But T1 saw the lack of literacy as a major obstacle. "...it's not – the - same [deliberately drawn out] as the kids who are *just* below the cut-off IQ, which is who [T2] has. They can actually read. These kids maybe - have - sight words" (T1, I3, p. 1), she said, pausing a few times between words.

Her frustration remained two months later.

I don't know what I'm supposed to give them. I don't know what the goal of them being in here is [said emphatically]. Cause it's not to treat them like all my other students. And I get that. That would not work. I feel very directionless. (A1, I3, p. 4)

Yet her frustration was more at herself, she wanted to do better and make a difference for her students. "The one week when I did have it set up they were out all week. I know what a good-well integrated class looks like. I know this is not that" (T1, I3, p. 2).

T2, who was in his second year with SwIDs, had developed a perspective of his purpose for the SwIDs in his class.

My expectation is for them to walk away with a sense that 'although I'm not used to a larger classroom, I can be successful. In a classroom, I'm gaining the necessary social skills to communicate.' Hopefully by the end of the year, they'll work up that confidence that, 'if I need help, I'm going to raise my hand.' ....Simple communication skills that adults take for granted need to be encouraged in order to grow! Even if it is something as simple as [one SwID] asks me for a pencil if he doesn't have one, where at the beginning of the year, he might sit there for 30 minutes and I'll say, "[SwID], why aren't you writing anything? Oh, I don't have a pencil". Now at the beginning of class, he'll ask me. It's simple things like that, that I have to say, Okay, they are in a gen-ed classroom with varying degrees. (T2, I1, p. 4)

Though the SwIDs in T2's classes were able to read up to a second grade level, the written materials that T2 provided the six SwIDs were the same level materials he provided to all his eighth grade students.

My expectation is that they try to keep up as much as they possibly can and if I'm giving them a test, I'll modify it, take away some test questions and so reduce the burden or if it's a multiple choice question with four answer choices maybe I'll give the two or three in an effort not to overwhelm them. (T2, I1, p. 2)

He also wanted to be able to do more for the SwIDs.

In some ways I like the idea of full inclusion and in some ways I don't like it, because I don't feel like I'm reaching everybody... [where] I should be reaching them. If I had a smaller group setting, or it was just [the six SwIDs], then I could tailor my instruction even more to meet their needs. But if they're in a room with 25 other kids that have varying needs, then I can [only] try. (T2, I1, p. 3)

The paraprofessionals who supported the SwIDs in T2's class struggled to maintain the students' notes and assignments at T2's pace. P3 asked the ID teacher [SE1] to speak to him.

Sometimes I think he expects too much .... I would have to come to [SE1] and be like, 'This is what is goin' on in the classroom, what can I do? Okay, you talk to him.' At one point he was like, they were taking tests that the general ed kids took and wasn't passing, and I'm like 'They can't take this, they can't do this.' (P2, I1, p. 4)

The perceptions and expectations of the GE teachers and the paraprofessionals' school and classroom policies were often juxtaposed, creating a tension within the GE classroom. The dichotomy of two sets of standards; one for the students without IDs and one for the SwIDs often left the GE teachers uncertain as to what to teach the SwIDs in their content classes.



## **Respect and belonging.**

The theme of respect and belonging also emerged in the data from the teachers' and paraprofessionals. They each cared deeply about the students; what they were learning, how they were treated by others, and that they felt like they belonged.

I do try to call on them and periodically, I'll see them raise their hands and if they feel comfortable, whether or not they are right or wrong, for me to have them feel comfortable in my class to the point where, even if they are unsure, they still want to participate [is the important part]. (T2, I1, p. 2)

P2 gave an example about how T2 was so welcoming to the SwIDs.

'What's up T2, how you doin?' Hey, P2! You **always** get that. Our kids always get that. He meets them at the door. If he's in the classroom, he'll turn around and speak to them. And it works for them. I wish every teacher could do that. (P2, I1, p. 4)

T2 described the culture of respect that he tries to engender in his room.

As a starting point, I would like everyone to feel comfortable enough to be able to participate ... and that there isn't any disrespect toward people of other learning abilities...I don't tolerate it. Even when someone raises their hand and gives an incorrect answer, why is it acceptable to laugh at someone when they give an incorrect answer? (T2, I1, p. 3)

T2 also encouraged self-determination. He described one instance when a SwID wanted to write the notes himself instead of having it scribed for him.

If... that is what they want, then I will try to accommodate that as much as possible. You've seen that I have had to sit with [SwID] a few times and kind of help him along, but he wants to do things like everybody else is doing things. I will try to respect that as much as I can and provide the secondary assistance if needed. (T2, I3, p. 1)

Additionally, T2 provided the SwIDs the opportunity to choose how they would like to access the lecture one day, through a video or the teacher's guided reading. Prior to giving them the option, he conducted one guided reading with the whole class. All three SwIDs wanted to follow the teacher in the guided reading. Though a more difficult route, they all stayed focused while the paraprofessional read the passages aloud; breaking to ask the questions they needed to answer on their notes.

T1 spoke about the phases of understanding and respect that her class had gone through with the SwIDs.

We had to work on not making jokes out of kids who are just going to say yes over and over again. [One SwID was very amenable and had a tendency to always answer a question with a yes,] They think that's hilarious. I had to work on them being respectful of each other. The big issue right now is some of the girls think they are their new little brothers. Two of the girls will say 'aww' a lot whenever Dale answers a question. I tell them, [privately] they're not dogs, they're not puppies, they're people'. (T1, I3, p. 4)

Respect and belonging were viewed from divergent perspectives among some. Two of the paraprofessionals questioned whether the GE class was the best situation for the SwIDs. P1 was concerned that the SwIDs didn't have a place in the GE classroom, as if they didn't belong.

It's different with the general [education] class between the special education class, if you go to [the SE class] now, then everyone knows where to put his stuff, because they have a place, because [the SE] class for them, they know... They don't know they have a folder to put work in [in T1's class]. (P1, I1, p. 2)

P3 was more concerned about wasting the SwIDs' precious time to learn. He didn't see the benefit of the social studies class for them.

I don't think it's the right setting for them. The information is given too fast. Yes, they need to know everything that is being presented. I don't think they're going to get it. I think they need to be in a smaller group. (P3, I1, p. 2)

**Progress.**

The social studies teachers surprised themselves when they began to realize how much the SwIDs in their classes were learning. The SwIDs learned the requisite behavior and peer social skills as well as more social studies content than anyone expected. Near the end of the year when T1 was asked what Dale had learned that year in her classroom, she responded immediately.

Appropriate behavior in the classroom was the big push ... modeling his behavior after other age- appropriate [pause] actions and following classroom routines coming into the room. At the beginning of the year he'd walk into the classroom and steal something, I had fly swatters... so that was a big [thing]. 'No, this is the class routine, this is where materials' [belong]. The fact that he now moves around the room to get materials, to go back to his seat without prompting, coming to class on time without running away. (A1, I3, p. 2)

Dale had learned the class routine and the U.S. President. Philare, also an emergent reader, had learned social studies content as well.

The other day they [all students] were filling out the chart of the National/State/Local Governments and [Philare] raised his hand. I'll call on him, as long as they are on topic. I get pretty excited about it. He actually knew the Governor was the seat of the Executive [Branch].... I asked him how he knew, and he said he'd been studying with his sister

who I also teach [laughs]. So he is also recognizing a lot of the related words. He knows that in [T1's] class these are the things we talk about. (T1, I3, p. 2)

T1 shared a story the ID teacher told her, that she was proud of, related to student learning. The ID teacher quizzed the SwIDs on some of the social studies content learned in T1's class and T1 said,

They actually knew some stuff; 'If I break the law, I go to jail,' punishment and that kind of thing. She said they were inferencing things that were civics related, [like] 'If you break a law, or did a bad thing then what happens? He goes to jail'. So they are [pause] getting [pause] something, some kind of content. As long as they get something and they know that civics is about government and there are laws and you have to follow laws. Some laws mean different things. If you break a law you have to go to jail, but if you break a rule you go see [school administrator]. So they really do recognize the differences. (T1, I3, p. 2)

## **Students' Perspectives and Expectation**

### **Students without intellectual disabilities.**

The three students without ID who were interviewed were of Hispanic and Ethiopian decent, 13-14 years old, and each spent the last three years with SwIDs in some of their classes. The interviews lasted between 9-22 minutes and took place in a small office down the hall from their social studies classrooms. Students' reflections and perspectives of their peers with ID, for the most part, reflected a relatively superficial awareness of ID and the lack of engagement with their peers with ID during class. Overall, the students expected their peers with ID to be working on the same assignments and taking the same notes and tests, though perhaps with more time and

help. The students believed that their peers with ID had contributions to make and belonged in their classes.

The understanding of individuals with disabilities varied greatly across the students interviewed. Hamere had just arrived from Ethiopia in sixth grade and remembered what she said upon hearing that there would be SwIDs in her sixth grade classes. "Oh my God, don't say that. What are they going to do?" (Hamere, I1, p. 1) By eighth grade, however, her perspective had changed dramatically. She believed that each of the SwIDs could read, even when a SwID had volunteered to read a passage the other day in class and T2 suggested that, since there were big words in it, he would read it himself.

Oh, they're good, they can learn. They are the same... they have a helper in class, that's really good. I think it is good for them and us too. It is good to work with each other and see what they can do.... They do the same thing as we do and better than us [referring to one student who had significant articulation and fine motor issues but did not have intellectual disabilities] (Hamere, I1, p. 1).

Similarly, Savannah's perspective was that everyone just did their work and took their tests. Though she thought she knew who had a disability, she wasn't quite sure.

They take the same tests; it's just easier-less reading. They also go out to another room and have it read to them....we just sit down and do what we do [referring to all the students including those SwIDs]....I have noticed [they have a disability], but I just don't say anything because I don't want to be mean. I understand if you have a disability. I have no problem with that. There is no issue with me and you, it's perfectly fine. I think I can tell, but at the same time I don't know if I'm sure. (Savannah, I1, p. 1)

Edmond believed his perspective was not typical of his peers.

I feel pretty good about working with them [SwIDs] and usually some people are like ‘Oh God, disability or disabled people.’ My opinion about disabled people is literally different from other people, because disabled people might know the answer that you don’t know ....SwIDs are friendly people, and it’s actually pretty amazing to have them here learning what their experience is and their challenges in having a disability.

(Edmond, I1, p. 3)

The students without ID didn’t recognize many opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers without ID. This perspective may have been in part, a result of the seating arrangement and the expectations that the SwIDs would be working with their “helpers” [paraprofessionals]. Savannah identified how most of the students who sat on the other side of the room from her had disabilities. In fact, all but two of them did have some kind of disability.

He helps the kids on that side of the room [nearest the hall door] and the rest of us [on the window side] just do our own thing for a little bit. You know how in the front section, by the door, where he helps out the kids? I think those are special ed kids or something. And the rest of us, I guess we understand it ... he pays less attention to us ‘cause he knows we’ll get it right away. (Savannah, I1, pp. 1-2)

Hamere observed the proximity of the paraprofessional to the SwIDs and saw their obvious partner as the paraprofessional. “Most of the time they [SwIDs] work with each other. If they want, we’ll pair up, but most of the time they pair up with the teacher [referring to the paraprofessional] who sits with them” (Hamere, I1, p. 1).

During two different collaborative groups where SwIDs were included, no activity was observed where the students were all actually working together. Edmond gave an example of collaborating with two SwIDs during a Jeopardy review for a test in T2’s class. Though Edmond

remembers working together to come up with the answers, no interaction was observed between the two SwIDs and the two peers without ID in the group. Raphaela and her peer with ID were observed watching the two boys talk about and write down the answers without any assistance or interaction from them.

When we play the game Jeopardy, I would sit with them and help them with the things, and they would help me and my other friend come up with the topic, something that they would know. Then they would help us and give us answers, and we would write them down. Sometimes we don't know the answers, and they would give us the answers.

(Edmond, II, pp. 2-3)

T1's class also was observed playing Jeopardy to review the same material. Dale was in a group with three of his peers without ID. When Dale managed to get a hold of the white board to record an answer, the three peers in his group tried to physically take it from him. Dale, unwilling to give up a turn, diligently copied a line from the study guide the teacher had passed out earlier. Except that it wasn't the right line. Dale's peers finally relented and allowed him to finish writing and submit the wrong answer, losing the points. Though Dale got his turn, there was no collaboration with his peers in the group.

Savannah reflected on why some of the students, including those with ID, used the computer sometimes to complete their work

I'm guessing that it's probably faster; they probably need some movement to understand things. They're probably kinesthetic learners. They do the same work. It's smart sync, I believe. It's the same thing he has on the board, it's just for them and they can move it

(Savannah, II, p. 3).

### **Students with intellectual disabilities.**

The four interviews with the SwIDs took place in the small office down the hall from their social studies room and in a small room off of the library. Each student was interviewed once with interview times ranging from five to nine minutes. Dale and Philare sat very quietly in the back of the class, furthest from the white board and the teacher. P1 generally sat next to or between them directing them in their assignments. Due to Dale and Philare's limited expression, they were interviewed together to allow for interaction and increased motivation to share. Their interview took place in the library during independent study time from their social studies class and lasted five minutes. Dale answered only direct questions that required a single word response. Dale was asked a question from his social studies class, "Where do you go if you break a law?" Dale answered immediately, "Jail" (SPRSDL\_I 422). When questions were asked of Dale that he didn't know he looked at P1, and she would give him the answer to parrot. Both students shared information about their ID classes and teachers. Philare was anxious to share on his own topic –his Language Arts teacher's name. When asked, "What happens if you break a law?" Philare's answer was similar to Dale's, "Then I go to jail" (SPRSDL\_I 422). Though neither student mentioned their social studies teacher they were both able to answer a social studies content question.

The other two SwIDs were interviewed separately in the small office. Raphaela, who often fell asleep in the back of class, spoke very quietly during the interview. She identified a few things she learned in her social studies class, "the government and the judges and being not guilty or guilty" (Raphaela, I1, p. 1). When asked how she was doing, she said, "Okay, but it's kind of hard though...because there are different places to learn, different things you have to learn, new things. It's kind of confusing sometimes, I can't keep up" (Raphaela, I1, p. 1).



Raphaela explained that when she needs help she asks the teacher what she is supposed to do, though she was never observed asking for help from T2. Later she said, she doesn't ask questions of T2 because P3 can help her. P3 always sat between Raphaela and her peer with ID. When asked what she thought his job was she said, "He helps us to catch up with our work, and he helps us write what we're supposed to write for our work. He does the writing for us, and we do the writing too" (Raphaela, I1, p. 2).

Dabir sits in the second row closest to the white board in class, generally quiet and attentive. He rarely volunteers to answer questions and reports that though he has a lot of friends at school, none of them are in his social studies class. Dabir identified social studies as his favorite class because, as he said, "I learn a lot." When asked what he does in that class, Dabir stated, [I learn] "about the Civil War, how many presidents there were, and what you do when you're in a court". These were all recent units from class. He also stated that his teacher is "Cool" because "He is nice" (Dabir, I1, p. 1). Though he remarked that social studies was easy, he also said that P2 helped him keep up with the teacher.

### **College and Career Ready: Access to Grade-Level Curriculum through Speaking**

The most observable self-determined student responses in all three classes were student initiated, asked and answered questions. Reading or sight word recognition or comprehension was not observable in T1's class as the only instruction provided with the sight word and GO activities was P1 directing the students where to put each item in the GO. Reading was not observable in T2s classes as the eighth grade content was not modified to the students' second grade literacy level. The literacy events where SwIDs were observed answering questions

generally involved teacher directed whole class instruction. Far fewer observations of student initiated questions were observed.

**College and Career Ready Anchor Standard: Research Question 4**

The question, “How are SwIDs accessing academic grade-level curriculum through the two CCR Anchor Standards of (a) Speaking and Listening, and (b) Reading, in the middle school social studies literacy content?” could not be answered in its entirety. There were few if any opportunities to observe SwIDs reading in the GE classroom as a result of limited content leveled to the targeted students’ literacy abilities or when content was modified, no opportunities were observed in which SwIDs were asked to read or show comprehension of the content. The question that could be answered was, “How are SwIDs accessing academic grade-level curriculum through speaking and listening, in the social studies literacy content?” This question was answered through the identification of observations, across all three classes, in which SwIDs were observed to have asked or answered content questions through self-determined (unprompted) language. As represented in Table 12, SwIDs were observed providing self-determined correct (or topical) answers to social studies teachers’ concept and vocabulary questions. The observed teachers questions and student answers are explored in detail.

Table 11 Observed Literacy Practices of Asking Questions

Size	Context	Student’s Question
WC	Discussion of field trip to the Capital (O42715P4)	“Will we see the President?”
I	Read-aloud about the Supreme Court Justices (O41515P1)	“Why is he a judge?”
I	Discussion of the Supreme Court ruling a law unconstitutional (ripping it up) (O41715P1)	Student asks T2 about ripping the paper

Table 12 Observed Literacy Practices of Answering Questions

Grouping	Teacher Question	Student Answer	Expected Answer
WC	“What does the policeman need to arrest someone?” (O42275P3)	“handcuffs”	Probable Cause
WC	“What do you think about the girls [inappropriate] behavior in front of the judge?” (O42115P3)	“She thinks it’s not that serious.”	Students’ opinions
WC	“What is a criminal case?” (O42715P1)	“Judge says guilty or not guilty”	Guilty or not guilty
WC	“For the first time... what did the supreme court do with a law (the teacher had ripped up a piece of paper to signify ‘getting rid of’ the law)?” (O41515P1)	“Ripped it up”	Declare it unconstitutional
WC	“The law was?” (O41515P1)	“Unconstitutional”	“Unconstitutional”
I	“If something is supreme it is at the ____.” (O41515P1)	“Top” (student puts his hand on top of his head)	Top
I	“Who is the President of the United States?” (O3315P4)	“Obama”	Obama
WC	“If I go to court and I am looking for _____ that is a civil case.” (O42715P1)	“Money”	Money
I	Economics Unit “What is this (hamburger, fries, and a coke) a picture of?” (O42715P4)	“Coke”	Food
WC	“What is bail?” (O42715P1)	“Money”	Money
SG	“If you guys were having an argument, would it be civil or a criminal case?” (O42715P1)	“Civil”	Civil
WC	“Misdemeanor is a small crime, low amounts of what? (O42115P1)”	“Money”	Money
I	“If the Executive Branch is Article #1 and the Legislative is Article #2, what number is the Judicial?” (O31015P4)	“Three”	Three

Key: WC = whole class, I = individual, SG = small group

Table 11 contains the few instances when SwIDs were observed to ask a question of the teacher. Questions asked of a paraprofessional, were not recorded. The most important data of note in this table is that the data are limited. In 28 hours of observations and 35 observations of three different classes, SwIDs were not observed to have asked questions when their peers without IDs were observed asking questions daily.

Table 12 provides examples of instances in which SwIDs were observed answering a teacher's question without any assistance or prompting from another individual; in a self-determined manner. Each question is identified by whether the teacher asked it of a small group of students, an individual student, or a whole class of students. Additionally, noted in the table are both the answer the teacher was looking for and the answer the SwID gave. Though there were incorrect answers provided by the SwIDs, the answers listed in Table 12 reflect only the teachers' expected answers or the students' conceptually correct answers (represented the students' comprehension). The questions were typically closed ended questions with one to three word expected answers. One open ended question, answered by a SwID, was observed after a riveting video of a young girl in court. Many questions were asked repeatedly over the course of a few days. These questions were typically key concepts or vocabulary. Finally, some of the questions were answered in class using a unison structure. Each of these strategies may have provided SwIDs more opportunities to learn the social studies content, practice the content, and safe opportunities in which to share the content. Additionally, the questions captured only reflected SwIDs' learning content and vocabulary comprehension.

The questions did not explicitly capture evidence of listening, but since the SwIDs answered questions accurately, which were asked by the teacher, it is reasonable to infer that the SwIDs were accessing the content through the Anchor Standard of listening as well as speaking.

## **Conclusion**

The researcher identified the prevalent themes first through the lens of Giangreco and colleagues' (1994) four cultural components of inclusion and then through the lens of Barton and Hamilton's (1998) two components of socio-cultural literacy, literacy practices and events. The findings were summarized in two overarching themes; socialization and individualized instruction.

### **First Overarching Theme - Socialization**

The theme of socialization emerged as the predominant theme within the stakeholder construct but also the predominant theme across all constructs. Socialization, as the primary goal of including SwIDs in the content classes, effectively appeared to have marginalized the SwIDs' attainment of the social studies content. Both teachers spoke of this dissonance in identifying instructional goals for their SwIDs. Each teacher endeavored to include the SwIDs in their instruction by seeking resources within the school culture.

The tracking of the SwIDs into the teachers' classes, by their literacy skills, resulted in two very different instructional responses by the teachers. These different instructional responses led to the emergence of two subthemes within the environment; how SwIDs were either immersed or isolated within the class environment. T1 focused on the three SwIDs as emergent readers, by principally creating separate content for which the paraprofessional was primarily responsible. T2 focused on the six SwIDs as readers (though second grade level), providing essentially the same level and amount of content with the typical accommodations provided by the paraprofessionals of read-aloud and scribe. A salient difference, beyond the instructional choices the teachers made, was T2's accessible visual style of presenting information in small chunks, regular practice of key concepts, and continual formative

assessments of students. T2 continually brought all the students into discussions and instruction, including those SwIDs. These strategies enabled the SwIDs more opportunities for participation within the teacher's instruction.

As part of the culture of each class, the paraprofessionals were influenced by the focus on socialization and the minimal direction received from the social studies teachers. Each struggled with the goal of socialization and the lack of teacher direction differently. P1 was observed completing the tasks for the students on more than one occasion or 'fixing' their work so that it was correct. There were times when she directed the SwIDs away from the intended focus on the teacher, unaware of the connection between the SwIDs' task and the teacher's instruction. She was rarely observed speaking with the SwIDs. Her focus appeared to be more on completion rather than concept or vocabulary learning. P2 was proud of her students in social studies and believed they could learn at least some of the content, but she was often absent and could not be counted on for assistance. P3 felt the students would be better served in the separate classes learning information that would impact their daily lives. He felt the level of the content was inaccessible to the SwIDs and would tell them, "Do your best, that's all you can offer right now" (P3, II, p. 1). P3 usually came in late to class receiving little to no direction from the teacher and appeared disillusioned with his ability to support the SwIDs.

If behavior is communication, the SwIDs enjoyed their social studies classes; they came in willingly, sat quietly, and some more than others, raised their hand to participate. The perspectives of the peers without ID however, reflected a lack of awareness in spite of attending classes with SwIDs for the past three years. The students without ID perceived the SwIDs to be able to do the same work they did, except slower or with someone reading it to them. This may be, in part, due to the minimal opportunities provided the students to work in collaborative

groups with their peers with ID as well as the on-grade-level accommodations they saw their peers using. In general the peers without ID believed that the SwIDs belonged in their classes and were treated like anyone else.

The stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of literacy for SwIDs in the social studies classes centered on the conflicting policies of the state standards and the SwIDs attending social studies for only socialization. In spite of the focus on socialization and the lack of direction in how to teach content to their SwIDs, both teachers were committed to teaching their SwIDs some social studies content. Their primary goals were that the SwIDs were respected, felt comfortable and included, and progressed. While both teachers expressed pride in the degree of growth they saw in their SwIDs' in socialization (e.g., following routines, raising hands, getting materials), they also wanted do more to help them access the content. Essentially, the SwIDs learned the routines of their social studies classes, but did not socialize in them or with their peers without ID.

### **Second Overarching Theme – Individualized Instruction**

The provision of individualized instruction for the SwIDs, within the social studies literacy practices in the GE classes, was a second focal theme in this study. Though teachers were creative in adapting instruction, the individualized instruction provided and the lack of assessment was inadequate to enable the SwIDs to access and progress in the eighth grade GE content. The teachers were imaginative and creative in identifying ways for the SwIDs to access the social studies content along with the class. For example, T1's creation of the mini slides for SwIDs to match to her samples on the front screen was an ingenious method of helping her SwIDs 'take notes'. However, due to the teacher's lack of direction to the paraprofessional and check-in with the paraprofessional and the students, the SwIDs pasted the slides onto

construction paper and did not attend to the content T1 was discussing. In another example, T2 utilized the Smart file technology, on laptops instead of the Smart board, to enable the SwIDs and a few others to access and manipulate the content into the GO without the struggle of writing and spelling. Both of these examples illustrate the teachers' efforts to individualize instruction for the SwIDs to access the same eighth grade content with the rest their peers without IDs. Though T2 typically provided individualized instruction within the construct of the entire class, through a scribe, read-aloud, and decreased multiple choice answers, the SwIDs were unable to independently access or comprehend the content. "I don't think she quite understands what she's written" (P3, I1, p. 2).

Individualized instruction for the SwIDs also was provided through separate activities isolating the SwIDs from their peers. T1 provided primarily separate individualized literacy practices for her SwIDs in response to their emergent reading skills and the direction provided by the ID teacher. Typically, sight word activities of matching words to pictures, the content generally included some of the vocabulary used in the whole class instruction. These separate activities however, tended to be conducted as rote tasks rather than content oriented activities.

Finally, perhaps the most important question is: How *are* the SwIDs accessing the content? When the "speaking" literacy events of the SwIDs, were sifted from the data, there was a clear picture of SwIDs accessing the eighth grade social studies content, to some degree, and answering their teachers' questions. Students with IDs both asked and answered questions in the eighth grade social studies content. The questions and answers represented were self-determined (without prompting or cueing), on-topic, and conceptually accurate. To T2's question, "What does the policeman need to arrest someone?" Raphaela said, "Handcuffs". Raphaela was answering a question to which she knew the answer. T2 accepted and praised her answer and



extended the question again. “He absolutely does need handcuffs. What else does he need?” A peer without ID’s response was heard, “Probable cause”. SwIDs were observed beginning to access the content through speaking.

The two overarching themes of socialization and individualized instruction reflected the two anchoring frameworks of inclusion and literacy practices. Socialization, as the goal for SwIDs in the GE classroom, instead of access to and progress in the GE content, was an evident theme filled with tension throughout the study. The goal of socialization appeared to be so ambiguous as to not only leave the GE teachers uncertain about what to teach but resulted in intentionally teaching neither socialization nor content for the SwIDs. The tenuous individualization of instruction for the SwIDs through the teachers’ literacy practices evidenced the conflict of focus on the state standards versus socialization; the variously divergent direction, provided to the GE teachers by the SE teachers, to enable SwIDs to access the content; and the lack of effective utilization of the paraprofessionals within the GE environment..

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

Through this study, the researcher explored the culture of literacy within two inclusive general education (GE) social studies teachers' classes, in a suburban middle school. An ethnographic research design was used to guide the examination of the GE teachers' literacy routines and practices within their inclusive social studies classes, and the teachers' beliefs and expectations of the literacy practices of the included students with intellectual disabilities (SwIDs). Data were collected through multiple sources of interviews, observations, and documents. Informants interviewed, included social studies teachers, special education (SE) teachers, administrative school and district level personnel, paraprofessionals, and students with and without intellectual disabilities (ID). Three clusters of observations were conducted in the targeted inclusive social studies classes over a nine week period. Finally, targeted SwIDs' records were reviewed. Utilizing the Dedoose qualitative software, data were analyzed and triangulated across sources. Themes emerged both within and across the teachers' classes and across the stakeholders.

In this chapter, the researcher begins with a discussion of the findings of the study, in relationship to the research questions and the current literature. An explanation of expected and unexpected findings is included and followed by the demands and challenges faced by the researcher in exploring the literacy practices of SwIDs in GE settings. Limitations to the study are presented for reflection and for the impact they may bear on the findings. Next, implications for practice in the field are explored relevant to the emergent themes. The chapter closes with recommendations for future research regarding the GE teachers' literacy practices for and expectations of SwIDs.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the culture of literacy in two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms where SwIDs are enrolled?
2. How is instruction individualized for SwIDs in the literacy culture within two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms?
3. What are stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of literacy for SwIDs in two middle school social studies teachers' inclusive classrooms?
4. How are SwIDs accessing academic grade-level curriculum and the two College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards of (a) Speaking and Listening, and (b) Reading, in the middle school social studies literacy content ?

## **Summary of the Themes**

Following the two theoretical frameworks of Giangreco and colleagues (1994) inclusion principles and Barton and Hamilton's (1998) socio-cultural literacy, the data were analyzed along the following three constructs (a) environment, (b) activities and outcomes, and (c) perceptions and expectations. Themes were identified within each of three constructs.

### **Immersion and Isolation**

From the construct of environment, two subthemes emerged (a) immersion and (b) isolation of the SwIDs within the social studies classes. Although opportunities for immersion and isolation were evidenced in both classrooms, each teacher had a tendency toward either immersion or isolation of the SwIDs. The subthemes that emerged from the immersion of SwIDs within the GE class were those of student responsibility, participation, and progress. Immersion of the SwIDs was predominantly observed in T2's class through his deliberate

instructional style and intentional engagement of every class member. The subthemes that emerged from the isolation of SwIDs within the GE class were those of separate activities, lack of teacher oversight, and lack of peer interaction. Students with IDs in T1's class were predominantly isolated from the rest of the class, in their activities and content. Perhaps because of the separate activities, teacher oversight and peer interaction, were limited in T1's class. However, within T2's class instances of lack of teacher oversight and peer interaction also were observed.

### **Individualization in Literacy Practices**

Both teachers worked to individualize content instruction for the SwIDs, whether the environment of their class was predominantly one of immersion or isolation. The individualization of literacy practices for SwIDs emerged as a primary theme from the construct of activities and outcomes, the second principal of inclusion (Giangreco et al., 1994). Two subthemes of shared activities with individualized outcomes and separate activities with individualized outcomes were identified. These subthemes tended to cross classrooms and were complicated by the emergence of a third theme, the intensity of the supports chosen. Within the culture of the school was a delineation of support structures for the teachers. The established structure was that of the special education (SE) teachers who worked in collaboration with GE teachers to provide the strategies and accommodations that students with learning disabilities needed to succeed in the core content. The smaller and less established structure was that of the SE teacher who worked with the SwIDs in the self-contained (SC) classrooms. This SE teacher collaborated with the GE teacher to assist in identifying strategies to support the SwIDs in the GE content classes. The intensity of supports implemented for the SwIDs, depended upon from which SE teacher the GE teacher requested direction. The SE teacher, who supported students

with learning disabilities, directed T2 toward eighth grade content level accommodations and the SE teacher, who taught the SwIDs, directed T1 toward separate emergent reader level modifications. Each GE teacher was observed once to have modified the content level or amount of text of an assessment for the SwIDs. No other shared activities were observed with content modifications by either GE teacher.

### **Stakeholders' Expectations and Perceptions**

In the third construct, Stakeholders' expectations and perceptions, socialization emerged almost immediately and remained a fixed theme which overlaid all others. This theme was explored within the culture of the classroom including two stakeholder groups: (a) teacher and paraprofessional and (b) students with and without IDs. From the teachers and paraprofessionals expectations and perceptions, three themes emerged; conflicting policies, respect and belonging, and progress. The theme of conflicting policies referenced the expectation that the GE teachers teach socialization to the SwIDs and content to the students without ID. Both teachers appeared to want to teach their content to all the students but struggled with the appropriate method to include the SwIDs and in part, because of that struggle the two paraprofessionals did not see the point of the SwIDs in the GE classes. Both teachers and paraprofessionals accepted the SwIDs and strove to instill respect for all students in their classes. The theme of progress in the social studies content, for the most part, left the teachers and paraprofessionals frustrated. Though two examples of progress are provided, they represent the exception to the typical assessments. Teachers generally opted the SwIDs out of the assessment or reduced the number of answer choices. The researcher did not observe regular social studies content assessments accessible to the SwIDs.

## **Summary of Findings**

"Meaningful participation in the general education community is dependent on two elements: social inclusion and academic participation"

(Spooner & Brown, 2011, p. 512).

### **The Culture of Literacy in the Secondary Social Studies Classroom**

The juxtaposition of perspectives across the stakeholders, in this study, created a conflict of intentions: (a) the district's intent of socialization versus the general education teachers' desires to teach their content, (b) the GE teachers' focus on state standards versus the alternative standards required by the teacher of the SwIDs, and (c) the GE teachers' lack of management of the paraprofessionals created isolation instead of access to the content.

#### **District's intent versus general education teachers' desires.**

The SwIDs in this study were physically included in the general education community, learned socialization skills, and participated in the academic content. Participation does not equate to access or progress in the content (Wehmeyer, 2003). The lack of GE content modifications effectively obstructed the SwIDs' access and progress in the social studies content. In this study, the pervasive expectation of the socialization of the SwIDs, led instead to isolation and minimal assessment of progress for the SwIDs. The focus on social access rather than progress in the content area kept expectations low for SwIDs (Wehmeyer, 2006). District and school leaders were clear that students *without* IDs were expected to progress in the content and meet the state content standards learned in the social studies classes. It was also understood that students with IDs were *not* expected to progress in the content, or to meet the state content standards in their social studies classes. "Our main overarching goal is for them to learn

appropriate social skills among their peers and then beyond that is the big picture, the main idea of the standard... [The SwIDs] worked on the state standards for science and social studies, reading, writing – in our self-contained classrooms” (SE1, I1, p. 3-4). These expectations left the GE social studies teachers bewildered and without an instructional focus for the SwIDs.

There doesn't really seem to be content goals, because they are assessed with a different standard at the end of the year, so as far as I can tell [spoken slowly and deliberately], its socialization, and then everything else is gravy. (T1, I1, p. 2)

During her last interview, five weeks later, her sentiments were the same, “It’s very, very unclear what I am supposed to be doing and what their [SwIDs] goals are in my classroom” (T1, I3, p. 2). These findings of a focus on socialization and frustration are consistent with earlier research (Giangreco et al., 1993; Matzen et al., 2010).

### **State standards versus alternate state standards.**

Though the myth that SwIDs could only be included in the GE environment for socialization, was discredited years ago (Fisher & Frey, 2001; Jimenez, Browder, Spooner, & DiBiase, 2012; Ryndak et al., 1999; Wehmeyer, Lattin, Lapp-Rincker, & Agran, 2003), this belief still continues today. Students with IDs, in the observed classrooms, were expected to learn socialization in the middle school social studies classroom and social studies in the self-contained (SC) classroom for the alternate state standards assessment. This finding is in line with Agran and Alper’s work (2000). The SC teacher for SwIDs explained, “We work on the [state alternate] standards for science and social studies, reading, writing – [and the assessments of those standards] in our self-contained classrooms” (SE1, I1, p. 3). The culture of literacy in the GE social studies classrooms did not regularly allow for, nor expect, SwIDs to access – at their academic level – and progress in the academic content. This finding is consistent with

Agran and colleagues' 2002 study, in which students with moderate to severe disabilities were reported to participate in GE on a frequent basis without access to the general curriculum.

The disjointed effects of teaching content in a GE class and teaching and assessing the same or similar content in a SC class presented mixed messages for the SwIDs and the GE and SE teachers. This structure precluded GE teachers' accountability and *accomplishment* for the SwIDs' learning. Standards for SwIDs not correlated to the GE curriculum, wreaked havoc in providing cohesive lessons accessible to all students and led to the duplicity of instruction of the similar content in separate classes. The lack of actual assessment of SwIDs in the GE classroom and subsequent authentic grades, for their performance, strips the SwIDs of the opportunity for self-determination and responsibility for learning as well as acknowledgment of legitimate accomplishments.

#### **Teacher and paraprofessional facilitation.**

Access to the academic content, for the SwIDs, was provided entirely by the GE teacher, through the literacy components of listening and speaking, and irrespective of the paraprofessional or peer collaboration. The GE teachers utilized the paraprofessionals to serve as either the primary means of instruction (T1's class) or as the primary means of accommodation of the content (T2's class; scribe, reader) for the SwIDs. Both of these methods resulted in isolation of the SwIDs and neither facilitated access to the academic content. Access to the content was incumbent on the GE teacher and varied widely. Paraprofessionals' instructional responsibility, proximity to SwIDs, and lack of direction created obstacles to the social studies content.



### ***Paraprofessional responsibility and proximity.***

The constant proximity of the paraprofessionals and the limited direction from the GE teacher, served to separate the peer students from the SwIDs in all classes. In T1's classroom, P1 appeared exclusively responsible for the direction of the separate activities of the SwIDs, creating a "boy[s] in the bubble" (McDonnel, 1998, p. 201). Additionally, T1 understood that the paraprofessional was to only work with the SwIDs. "Her sole responsibility is those three kids....she is always with them ... and I think contractually too, she is just for them" (T1, I1, p. 5). In T2's classes, the proximity of the paraprofessionals and the division of the classroom into two sections – those students who needed more help and those who didn't – disallowed any assistance from or interaction with nearby peers.

### ***Lack of direction.***

While T2 attended to nearly every student every class period, including the SwIDs, his instructional direction to the paraprofessionals was minimal. Instead of facilitating the students' self-determination and independence in the content, T2's paraprofessionals were left struggling to provide assistance to the SwIDs, in the eighth grade content, with only read-aloud and scribe supports to students reading at the second grade level. As a result, one of the paraprofessionals felt the students would be better served in the SC setting.

I don't think it's the right setting for them. The information is given too fast. Yes, they need to know everything that is being presented. I don't think they're going to get it. I think they need to be in a smaller group. (P3, I1, p. 3)

Researchers have identified the need for paraprofessionals to receive clear instructions and ongoing supervision and support to be able to effectively support SwIDs (Brock & Carter, 2013). These issues of proximity, primary instructional responsibility, and lack of direction are ongoing

concerns in effective implementation of paraprofessional support for SwIDs in the GE classroom (Brock & Carter, 2013).

***Content access.***

The GE teachers' whole class instruction and discussions were the primary opportunities for SwIDs to be immersed in the social studies content and environment. These opportunities typically occurred when the teachers focused on current news, familiar student issues, and students' known background or content knowledge. It occurred in both individual student and whole-class directed questions. In T1's class, it occurred infrequently as the SwIDs were typically working on separate activities with related content modifications. These activities were primarily directed by the paraprofessional when T1 was conducting whole-class instruction. In T2's classes, with few exceptions, all students participated in the same activity in the eighth grade content. With the exception of one exit ticket activity, T2 relied on grade level content accommodations to individualize instruction for SwIDs. Though this did not assist the SwIDs in T2's classes - second grade level readers - in accessing the content, T2's instructional style did; grabbing students' attention with current issues and relating them to the topic, volleying questions to every student, repeating key content information and questions, and providing repeated opportunities for practice. Further, when a SwID's was having difficulty with writing the notes down, T2 would pause and act a scribe for the SwIDs.

***Peer collaboration.***

Minimal collaborative work was expected by or requested from the peers without IDs. Peer-to-peer assistance was requested by T2 if both were students without ID: the occasional shoulder partner was directed to assist a peer who came in late, to get caught up on the notes or students were grouped for activities like a Jeopardy review. Peers without IDs were not

observed to be paired with SwIDs to help them get caught up or even to work as shoulder partners. When all students were grouped for a Jeopardy game, minimal interaction was observed between the students with and without IDs. While there was a lack of evidence of peer-mediated support in this study, it has been shown to support more meaningful engagement of SwID in the GE content (Carter & Kennedy, 2006).

### **Assessment and progress.**

Accessible assessment of progress in the grade-aligned social studies content was observed on only one occasion. Toward the last of the observations, T2 conducted a “discussion assessment,” a modified exit ticket, with three SwIDs. The process was captivating and the outcome inspiring. On a whim, instead of asking the SwIDs to write out the exit ticket as the rest of the class was doing, T2 just talked to and questioned the three students, drawing out their answers and supporting them in their knowledge. Every one of the students understood and could answer fill in the blank questions about the differences between civil and criminal court, between arguing with someone and suing them for money or breaking the law and going to jail, and between a felony and a misdemeanor crimes. Students with IDs and T1 gave a thumbs-up all around for knowing the answers. A thumbs-up was directed at the researcher and a report of success to the paraprofessional. Instructional participation and progress can result when effective adaptations and supports are in place (Janney & Snell, 2013). In this instance, SwIDs accessed and progressed in the eighth grade social studies content.

### **Access to the Grade Level Content**

While the access to grade-aligned content, through the literacy components of reading and writing, was limited in the GE classes for the SwIDs, the researcher identified the observable

data of SwIDs' speech that demonstrated access to the social studies content, in reference to the CCR Anchor Standard of speaking and listening. The observed data of SwIDs asking and answering questions through self-determined language was reviewed. While few instances were observed of SwIDs asking content related questions (3), 13 instances were observed of SwIDs answering content related questions. This finding of SwIDs' questioning and answering patterns, suggests that when provided even limited access to the GE content, SwIDs did access the grade level content through speaking and listening. The meaningful participation through the overlapping literacy components of speaking and listening, predominantly in T2's classes, enabled the SwIDs to access the content through conceptual literacy. This finding is supported by Ryndak and colleagues' (1999) study of an adolescent's literacy changes from isolated skill development to conceptual core academic literacy approach when immersed in GE core content classes. While SwIDs were observed to access the CCR Anchor Standard of Speaking and Listening, the lack of observable access to the Anchor Standard of Reading is especially disturbing.

### **Expected and Unexpected Findings**

Throughout the study there were expected and unexpected findings based related to the literature in the field. These included the goal of socialization without content in the GE classes, the division of students based on their conventional literacy skills, and the lack of technology use to enable the SwIDs to access the content.

Though the literature supports the finding of the goal of socialization and the physical presence for SwIDs in the inclusive setting (Agran et al., 2002; Browder, Spooner, et al., 2006), the five years of systemic implementation of inclusion by the school district, where the teachers

were observed, made this finding an unexpected one. The literature in the field also identifies the significant challenge educators' face to empower GE teachers to instruct SwIDs to progress in the GE grade-aligned content (Courtade et al., 2012; Downing & Eichinger, 2003; Wehmeyer et al., 2001). But the continued acceptance of the singular goal of socialization, in the GE class, does not meet the requirements of IDEA (2004) or ESEA (2001) for access and progress in the GE content for SwIDs.

The dichotomy of supports provided to the SwIDs by the two GE teachers and the division of SwIDs based on their reading levels were unexpected findings. While T1 had been assigned the SwID who were emergent level readers, because she was perceived to be a more visual teacher, she provided primarily separate content and activities for the SwIDs. Even during class discussion of students' favorite activities, where SwIDs might have been included, they were still isolated. T1's reliance on the paraprofessional for their primary instruction seemed to facilitate this isolation. This finding of lower teacher expectations based on the SwIDs increased intensity of support needs is supported by the literature (Wehmeyer et al., 2003).

Conversely, T2, with the exception of one instance, provided only typical accommodations to the eighth grade content assignments and assessments that did not take into consideration the SwIDs' second grade reading and comprehension levels. All six of the SwIDs in T2's two classes were given the same assignments and readings as their peers without IDs. T2 did, however, provide access to the content verbally and visually during his whole class instruction. He intentionally called on each student throughout class using leveled and repeated questions, while providing repeated practice of key concepts. Additionally, his visual presentation style, of single concept slides with large font and clear language, provided visual support for SwIDs to access the eighth grade content.

The minimal application of technology to provide access to the eighth grade content was an unexpected finding as well. Only one of the four SwIDs had technology suggested on their Individual Education Programs (IEP). None, however, had technology identified to assist with access to the grade-aligned content. Both teachers used laptops to some degree, to assist the students in accessing the content, though with mixed results. While T1 created a narrated assessment in Blackboard® for the SwIDs, the text level and format of the program made the tool inaccessible to the students. T2 used the Smart board ® software to enable the SwIDs to practice the unit's key concepts, but the lack of text-to-speech availability limited the students' access of the text. The technology is available to assist SwIDs to access the GE academic content and researchers suggest that SwIDs should be provided technology-enhanced reading as a means of access to the content (Edyburn, 2007; Wehmeyer, 2006).

### **Demands and Challenges**

The school district in which the study took place was committed to providing inclusive education for the SwIDs. The scheduling of the inclusive classes however, was an unexpected challenge. The previous year a science teacher had been identified, due to her high level of literacy expectations for the SwIDs, and was interested in participating in the study. However, unbeknownst to the researcher, the school rotated the science and social studies each year for SwIDs. The previous year, all the SwIDs had taken science and the year of the study, all the SwIDs were enrolled in social studies. The focus of the study had followed the current, though minimal, literature regarding the literacy practices of SwIDs included in English language arts (ELA) and science classes as only two studies, that focused on social studies included SwIDs (Schenning et al., 2013; Zakas et al., 2013). The study, though remaining grounded in literacy

for SwIDs in the inclusive setting, was changed from science to social studies the week before data collection began.

The delays and limitations in access to the school and teachers presented unexpected challenges. The school district's scheduled research reviews and state and local testing limited the researcher in both beginning and scheduling data collection. Though research requests were due by December, if approved, data collection was not permitted to begin until March. The beginning of local and state testing in April, spring break, snow days, and teacher absences all contributed to less than optimal time for observations and interviews.

Additionally, the amount of data and the rapidity with which it accumulated presented an unexpected challenge in keeping up with the coding and reflections sufficiently to be able to identify follow-up questions or foci of interest in subsequent interviews and observations. A schedule of 3-4 observation days with a week or two between each would have provided additional time for transcription, memos, coding, and reflection for identification of specific questions and topics to investigate further. The district's schedule limitations however, did not allow for a wider spread of the observation schedule.

### **Limitations**

The very nature of ethnographic inquiry involves the exploration of attitudes, beliefs, opinions, reactions, and the identification of "social patterns and norms for a culture-sharing group" (Hayes 2011, p. 289) with a focus on individuals at a particular site. Choosing to study such a small cultural group, of two teachers from the same school, limits the transferability of the understandings gained from the study. The results and understandings from this study are not generalizable to other groups. Additionally, ethnographic inquiry requires prolonged

engagement at the site and with the culture group. While the study was extended over a nine-week period, additional engagement at the site may have provided additional noteworthy evidence. Lastly, the restriction of one researcher to collect and analyze the data does present the opportunity for researcher bias to enter into the understanding and analysis of the data. The results should be read with caution and with a focus on the particularizability of the findings to teachers' own classrooms.

While the initial teacher for this study had been chosen due to her high degree of literacy practices within her science classroom, at the onset of the study, she had no SwIDs enrolled in her classes. Therefore, the criterion of exploring a teacher's data-rich literacy environment was revised to the typical literacy culture of middle school content teachers who have SwIDs enrolled in their classes. Though, a limitation to the initial study, the results may provide better particularizability of the results to typical GE content area teachers.

The choice of SwIDs was determined by the receipt of parental consents. While nine consents were sent to families, the receipt of only four, limited the number of SwIDs who could be studied at the level of student work products and IEPs. Additionally, the choice of SwIDs for the study was limited by the ID teachers' decisions regarding what students had access to the GE classrooms. At least one SwID was identified as "not ready" to be in the GE classroom yet. This decision may have limited the inclusion of students with more intensive support needs in the study.

School testing schedules, snow days and significant teacher absences provided ongoing obstacles to prolonged engagement. Teacher absences and school closures (due to inclement weather) totaled nine of the 25 scheduled observation days, while the onset of state and national spring testing schedules precluded teacher and student availability for additional observations.



As a result, Mr. T2's assistance was employed to identify peers without IDs for interviews. The assumption was made that Mr. T2 would identify students most likely to agree to be interviewed and have views to share. The high-achieving students chosen, however, may have provided a somewhat narrower and non-representative student perspective of their peers with IDs. Additionally, students from Ms. T1's class were not interviewed due to the extended unavailability of the teacher. Given the significantly different reading, writing and communication skills of the SwIDs in Ms. T1's class, their peers without ID may have had different perceptions and expectations than the peers without IDs in Mr. T2's classes. Although additional observations and interviews may have served to add to the depth of insight about SwIDs' literacy practices in the GE classrooms, the member checks conducted with the key teacher informants and peer reviews, confirmed accurate representations of the literacy culture in the teachers' classrooms.

While the classroom observations were scheduled with teachers in advance, there is still the possibility that teachers changed their typical style of instruction or put forth more effort to include the SwIDs, as a result of the observations. To control for the impact of this limitation, visits for observations and interviews were scheduled intermittently over the course of nine weeks and teachers' lesson plans were reviewed for both scheduled and unscheduled observation timeframes. The teachers' lesson plans showed no significant differences between days of observation versus days of non-observation, though the accommodations and modifications observed in the classrooms were not always reflected in the lesson plans.

The expectations and practices of the SwIDs' families provide important insight into students' actions and motivations. Though the focus of this study was on the culture of literacy in two teachers' classrooms, parents are an important component within that culture. The lack of

parental input obtained in this study (only one parent consented to the interview), presents a limitation to a comprehensive understanding of literacy practices for SwIDs.

### **Implications for Practice**

The instructional delivery, enhancements, and multiple avenues of access to the social studies content for SwIDs, without identification, modification, and assessment of scaled critical content, only maintains the barrier to access and progress in the GE curriculum for this population. The focus on push-in support by the use of paraprofessionals and the lack of collaborative peer grouping further solidifies the isolation of the SwIDs in the GE classroom. The entrenchment of programs, for SwIDs in the schools, makes the shift in the field, from the focus on an individual's disabilities to understanding the mismatch between the individual and the environment (content), extremely difficult for many to overcome (Pugach & Warger, 2001; Schalock et al., 2007; Soukup et al., 2007; Wehmeyer, 2003). These core issues are discussed further for their implications in the GE classrooms.

### **Identification of Critical Content**

In this study, the focus of instruction provided to the GE teachers, of social skills attainment, for the SwIDs in the social studies classes, presented a significant challenge for the GE teachers. The focus on social skills alone left the GE teacher uncertain what to teach the SwIDs included in their classes. Instead of focusing on prioritized and modified social studies content and concepts to enable the SwIDs to learn the content, they either provided the SwIDs the full scale of eighth grade content with some accommodations or a single unit concept for the students to learn, such as 'the President of the United States'. General and special educators

need to engage in the “alignment of the instructional targets” (Agran et al., 2002, p. 131) with their state’s educational standards to enable students to learn core content and avoid the unnecessary duplication of resources. General education and SE teachers and paraprofessionals alike need to presume academic competence (Jorgensen et al., 2007) of the SwIDs: they should be prepared to expect that all students can and will learn the highest level content while meeting IEP goals.

Students with IDs need the skills and concepts learned in the social studies content. The investigative skills necessary to identify an author’s purpose or possible bias and then make decisions from that information (Ogle, Klemp, & McBride, 2007), have become critically important in this age of immediate multimedia information access (Alvermann, 2002). The thinking and inquiry skills and concepts that comprise the disciplinary literacy of social studies are critical for this population (Courtade et al., 2012; Hunt et al., 2012; Memory, Yoder, Bollinger, & Warren, 2004; Schenning et al., 2013). For SwIDs to access and progress in the disciplinary literacy of social studies, grade-aligned content is required. Browder and Spooner (2014) defined grade-aligned content as “academic content that has been prioritized and adapted for [SwIDs] but is the same content being learned by peers of the same chronological age in the student’s assigned grade” (p. 278). To prioritize the social studies content, GE teachers are encouraged to identify core content and concepts of the unit being planned. The instructional strategies, enhancements, and modification of content (e.g., read-alouds, GOs, adapted text, and multiple response options) should support the prioritized content and concepts and be preplanned into the teacher’s instructional unit, rather than adapted on the fly, for SwIDs.

It is interesting to note that many informants stated that the SwIDs were in the GE social studies classes to learn social skills, yet social skills goals were not observed to be identified,

mentioned, or assessed. In the interviews, teachers and paraprofessionals talked about social skill growth, but almost as an unintentional positive outcome rather than a focused and deliberate outcome. In general, SwIDs require grade-aligned content, supported by ‘just right’ modifications, and assessment of both academic and social skills within the inclusive classroom context to truly meet the needs identified in most SwIDs’ individualized education programs.

### **Content Modification**

Once a units’ content and concepts have been prioritized, the content instruction, text, and activities need modification for SwIDs’ success in accessing, understanding, and learning the literacy content and key components. The SwIDs’ literacy levels are important factors in identifying the types of strategies, enhancements, and modifications, but teachers must also be careful not to limit their expectations of student learning based only on conventional literacy skills (Keefe & Copeland, 2011). As a constructive and social process (Scribner, 1984), literacy in the social studies content has been taught through vocabulary, structured inquiry (Schenning et al., 2013) and comprehension of expository text (Zakas et al., 2013). Taking from ELA, content also has been taught through apprenticeship and “authentic literate activity...with scaffolding, and content coaching” (Petrosky et al., 2010, p. 10). Adapted texts supported by graphic organizers (GOs), answer boards, choice response systems and read-alouds (Schenning et al., 2013) are a few flexible points of access that have allowed effective access to and progress in the GE content. Content modification should be considered with the expectation of content comprehension and conceptual understanding in addition to content recall (Riggs et al., 2013). Blending literacy and content goals with the CCR standards could lead to a new outcome for SwIDs in inclusive settings.

## **Assessment of Progress**

The lack of summative and formative assessment, in this study, prevented SwIDs from opportunities to show progress and their GE teachers' opportunities to acknowledge student accomplishments and refine their instruction. As with any student, SwIDs should enter a unit, knowing what is expected of them so that they and the teacher know when progress has been made. As in the example of T2 with his discussion assessment, both the SwIDs and the teacher were excited about what had been learned and about the progress that had been made. Progress in the academic curriculum cannot be measured if it is not assessed and assessments cannot be conducted if the teacher did not identify critical content to be taught.

Teachers should conduct formative and summative assessments of the identified content for the SwIDs on a regular basis. A number of methods have been identified in the literature to assess SwIDs' knowledge attainment of the GE content. Assessments have been conducted through the use of GOs, (Mims, Lee, et al., 2012; Zakas et al., 2013), response options (Mims, Hudson et al., 2012; Mims, Lee, et al., 2012; Schenning et al., 2013), picture referents (Mims, Lee, et al., 2012; Zakas et al., 2013), reciprocal teaching (Alfassi et al., 2009), KWHL charts (Mims, Lee, et al., 2012), and a self-directed learning model of instruction (SDLMI; Agran et al., 2006). Though some of these concepts did take place within the GE classroom, most were conducted only in the SC setting. The use of T2's alternate exit ticket in this study provided the SwIDs the opportunity to be assessed in a way that allowed them to "show what they know." Though the assessment looked different than the exit ticket the other students were completing, it was the same eighth grade content reduced in amount to the four central concepts of the three day unit. General education teachers and paraprofessionals need preparation and ongoing professional development to support their use of multiple means of assessment as SwIDs are included.

## **Collaborative Peer Grouping**

Enhancing learning and CCR standards are best approached through integration with nondisabled peers (Carter & Kennedy, 2006). Peer collaboration has been shown to be a critical component for SwIDs to access the GE curriculum (Fisher & Frey, 2001). However, the need for guided peer collaboration was a missing component in the three social studies classes. In all three classes, the teachers felt overwhelmed at trying to do everything themselves. Though there were a number of occurrences when both teachers asked a student without IDs to assist a peer, it was only extended to peers without IDs. The classroom and instructional formats also disallowed peer collaboration. The seating in any classroom is critical for many students, who they sit next to, who they don't sit next to, how close they are to the board, and how close they are to the teacher. Neither teacher used peer collaboration during the observations. The use of peer collaboration and cooperative learning methods could have provided valid and effective strategies for student support (Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000).

## **Intentional Paraprofessional Support**

The use of paraprofessionals has continued to increase in the GE inclusive settings primarily as a means of support for the GE teacher (Soukup et al., 2007). Researchers however, question the reliance on the paraprofessional in the primary role of instructor with activities that are too often separate from the students without IDs (Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012). The GE teachers need direction in the effective use of paraprofessionals to support SwIDs' access to and progress in the GE content. The use of paraprofessionals requires intentional planning and direction by the GE teacher. The paraprofessional could provide support to students in effective self-determination strategies to access the content (Agran et al., 2006) or to students with and without IDs learning to collaborate or provide peer interventions

(Carter & Kennedy, 2006; Jimenez et al., 2012). In other words, the paraprofessional is an available resource to assist in facilitating natural supports in the GE environment that enable SwIDs to access and progress in the GE content.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Students with IDs' engagement in literacy practices in GE classrooms is essential to move beyond physical inclusion, of SwIDs, to access *and* progress in the GE curriculum. The lack of SwIDs' observable reading (for comprehension) in this study, supports Kliever and Biklen's (2007) call for a revolution toward literate citizenry as the "full presumption that all children can be understood as competent and can grow in sophistication as literate citizens" (p. 2598). Research is needed to identify content area GE teachers' literacy practices and their impact on literacy achievement in both the academic content and reading comprehension for SwIDs in the inclusive setting.

The limited access to the GE content, provided for the SwIDs in the inclusive classes, is consistent with past research findings (Agran et al., 2002; Roberts et al., 2013). With the increasing inclusion of SwIDs in the GE content classes, research is needed into the training of preservice and inservice teachers regarding the development of lessons accessible to all students: lessons universally designed that reflect the UDL construct of multiple methods of representation, expression, and engagement (Rose, Hasselbring, Stahl, & Zabala, 2005; Wehmeyer et al., 2003). Future research is needed to identify how GE teachers choose the components within the GE content (state standards) for the SwIDs to master. In the current study, teachers lacked a method to identify key unit concepts and vocabulary for the SwIDs to

learn. Without identified content goals for the SwIDs, teachers lacked authentic assessment for the SwIDs and the ability to use assessment to improve instruction.

A cross-regional survey is needed to inform the field of GE teachers' current literacy access practices to the GE curriculum for SwIDs. The results from this survey would provide a stepping stone toward the determination of methods of literacy access in the GE content, for students from emergent to below grade level literacy. Specifically, the development of an ecological construct of fit between the SwIDs skills, the GE context (Schalock et al., 2010), and the literacy content is needed to provide GE and SE teachers with a guide toward 'just right' modifications to the curricular content.

In the current study, the GE teachers were uncertain as to their ability to direct the paraprofessionals supporting SwIDs in their classes. The lack of direction from the teacher led to SwIDs' loss of instructional time and, in some cases, promoted exclusion within the GE classroom. Further, the use of paraprofessionals as the method of access to the content deters students' from learning to be self-determined and advocate for their educational needs. As paraprofessionals continue to become increasingly significant components of the education of SwIDs in the GE classrooms (Giangreco & Broer, 2005), research is needed in the area of preservice and inservice training of GE teachers' in the effective use of paraprofessionals and self-determined learning in the general education classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

This study serves to extend the limited research regarding how SwIDs are accessing literacy in the inclusive GE content. In exploring the literacy culture of GE teachers' inclusive content classrooms, the goal was to understand how SwIDs were currently accessing



individualized instruction in the grade-aligned content. The roads in and out of the GE classroom presented a diversity of students and demands that allowed little comparison. The demands on the GE teachers are many, with state standards and assessments perhaps among the frontrunners. Two very capable, but distinctly different, middle school social studies teachers allowed a researcher to observe their efforts toward making the social studies curriculum accessible for SwIDs. What the teachers were looking for was direction. “I rather wish that you had been able to give me feedback instead of just observations” (T1, E2, p. 1). Yet, what was observed was a lack of systemic clarity in the goals of access to and progress in the academic content balanced with the functional goals of each student’s IEP.

In the back of my mind, are my own three children, all through middle school now, but each having traveled this road: the steep uphill climb trying to access the content with a gaggle of disparate literacy levels, three to six years, behind their peers without disabilities. Admittedly, I was looking for the ingenious ways the teachers had found to support SwIDs to gain access to the content, to include them into the fabric of the class, and to enable them to participate in the learning and assessment of eighth grade social studies. Instead, I found teachers working hard to include SwIDs in the eighth grade content without expectations of what they would learn or meaningful methods to access the text. I saw either a disregard for the disparity in reading levels or a lack of presumption of the ability to learn the grade level aligned content. I also saw teachers creatively including the SwIDs through leveled instructional questioning and technology for alternate response options. What I did not see, was the expectation of literate citizenship.

This is neither the first, nor the last exploration of the GE teacher’s style and choice of embrace of the SwIDs in their midst. Shurr and Bouck (2013) called for inquiry as to what the instruction should look like for SwIDs in the inclusive GE classes. There is much work to do, in

order to allow SwIDs to “show what they know” to their GE teachers and to raise the bar of literate expectations. The work must be about literate citizenship through the immersion of SwIDs in the GE content and context; through prioritized and modified GE content, assessment, and progress; peer collaborative learning and relationships; and intentional paraprofessional supports toward self-determined learning. Students with IDs’ access to the GE social studies content was observed only through speaking and listening in this study. The literate disparity between students whose reading is significantly below grade level and their middle school peers reading on or near grade level, must not be seen as an unbridgeable gap. We must promote and expand the capacity for literacy of SwIDs through an understanding of socio-cultural literacy and literate citizenship for all students.

## **APPENDIX A: FIELD PROTOCOL**

## **Field Protocol**

The field protocol was maintained on a separate study-dedicated hard drive using OneNote software. The data included the following items:

1. Interview Protocol Documents
2. Observation Protocol Documents
3. Field Journal/Notes/Reflexive Notations
4. Schedule of Activities
5. School and Teacher Contact Information

**APPENDIX B: GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER INTERVIEW  
QUESTIONS**

## General Education Teacher Semi-Structure Interviews Questions

Questions	Probes
1. Please describe your teaching background.	Age, certifications, level of schooling, years & content, grades taught
2. Describe the events and opportunities that brought you to a career as a teacher.	What was school like for you? Other experiences? Previous experiences with SwIDs?
3. How would you characterize your personal literacy experiences?	How would you describe your personal reading? What was learning to read like for you? How do you characterize yourself as a writer? What ways do you communicate with others?
4. How do you define literacy/ content literacy?	What are literacy strategies/demands specific to your discipline?
5. Describe how literacy occurs or is used during/ in your class.	What literacy expectations do you have of your students? for SwIDs? What strategies do you utilize to increase/support student literacy? How is literacy built into your lessons? Describe how you plan your lessons... (co-planning, staff support?)
6. Describe the culture in your classroom.	Include your routines, typical practices, beliefs, expectations of your students
7. Describe the social and academic expectations you have for SwIDs in your course.	What expectations do you have for yourself regarding the SwIDs? How do you interpret and integrate SwIDs' IEP goals?
8. Describe literacy expectations from your students' families.	

Note. Questions may change during study.

## **APPENDIX C: ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## Administrator Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Questions	Probes
1. Please describe your teaching and administrative background.	Including age, areas of certification, level and focus of schooling, and years, and teacher education. content, grades taught, and administrative positions held.
2. How would you characterize your own literacy?	How would you describe your personal and professional reading? What was learning to read like for you? How do you characterize yourself as a writer? How do you best communicate with others?
3. Describe the social and academic expectations you have for SwIDs in your school.	What expectations do you have for general education teachers?
4. Describe the literacy culture in your school.	Include the school's literacy routines, typical literacy practices, beliefs, and literacy expectations of students.
5. Describe how literacy is enacted in the target teacher's class.	What are the literacy expectations for students? SwIDs? What strategies/supports does the teacher utilize to increase student literacy? How does the teacher measure progress for SwIDs?
6. Discuss the supports and professional development available or taken advantage of by the target teacher.	What are the collaborative expectations of the target teacher regarding literacy? What supports are in place for the teacher regarding the SwIDs? How do you support the teacher regarding the literacy of the SwIDs? What professional development has occurred regarding literacy or SwIDs for the general education teacher?
7. Describe the literacy expectations of students' families in the target class.	

Note. These questions may change and evolve as the interview progresses.



## **APPENDIX D: SUPPORT STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## Support Staff Interview Questions

Questions	Probes
1. Please describe your professional background.	Including age, areas of certification, level of schooling, and years, content, grades taught, and administrative positions held.
2. How would you characterize your own literacy?	How would you describe yourself as a reader? What was learning to read like for you? How do you characterize yourself as a writer? How do you best communicate with others? Describe your use of literacy during your day.
3. Describe literacy in the target school.	Include the school's literacy routines, typical literacy practices, beliefs, and literacy expectations of students.
4. Describe how literacy is enacted in the target teacher's class.	How do you define literacy? Content literacy? What are the literacy expectations of students? What are the literacy expectations of SwIDs? How is literacy built into the lessons?
5. Describe the academic expectations for SwIDs in your school.	How do you support the content literacy for SwIDs? How does the teacher support the content literacy for SwIDs in the target class?
6. How do you measure progress for SwIDs in the target teacher's class?	

Note: These questions could change and evolve as the interview progresses

## **APPENDIX E: PARENT & PEER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## Parents of SwIDs Interview Questions

Question	Probe
1. Please describe your background.	Including age, profession, level of schooling, and years, degrees, and professional and volunteer positions held. .
2. Please describe your child.	Interests, strengths, hobbies, characteristics, support needs,
3. Describe literacy in your home.	How do you define literacy?
4. Describe the role literacy plays in your child's life.	How is literacy a part of your child's home routines? What kind of reading/writing does your child engage in and how often? Routines, expectations, practices.
5. Please describe your literacy expectations and goals for your child.	How do you expect them to use literacy in school, home, and at work?
6. Describe academic and literacy expectations you have for your child in the target class.	What are your expectations of the content teacher? How do you measure your child's success in school?

Note. These questions may change and evolve as the interview progresses.

## Peer Interview Questions

Question	Probe
1. Tell me about yourself.	How old are you? What chores do you do at home? What do you like to do in your spare time? Hobbies? Interests?
2. Tell me about your school and class.	How long have you attended this school, this class? What are you good at? What is difficult for you What do you like best about this class? How do students learn and participate in class? Activities?
3. Tell me about (SwIDs' name)	What kind of assignments does he/she have? Do you ever work with him/her? Who teaches him/her?

Note. These questions may change and evolve as the interview progresses.

## **APPENDIX F: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL**

# Observation Protocol

Classroom:

Time: Start/End	Lesson Description	Follow Up Questions
Time/ Literacy Practices	Time /Literacy Events	

**Considerations:** Environment: shared/isolated; Membership: member/visitor; Lesson Content: academic, functional, social, personal; Outcomes: shared/individual (IEP goals)

**APPENDIX G: IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS PERMISSION**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

## Approval of Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: Kathleen M. Becht

Date: January 20, 2015

Dear Researcher:

On 1/20/2015, the IRB approved the following human participant research until 01/19/2016 inclusive:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form  
Project Title: The Culture of Literacy in Inclusive Core Content Middle  
School Classrooms and Students with Intellectual Disabilities  
Investigator: Kathleen M. Becht  
IRB Number: SBE-14-10852  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

The scientific merit of the research was considered during the IRB review. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30 days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <https://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 01/19/2016, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data, including signed consent forms if applicable, must be retained and secured per protocol for a minimum of five years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained and secured per protocol. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewska, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

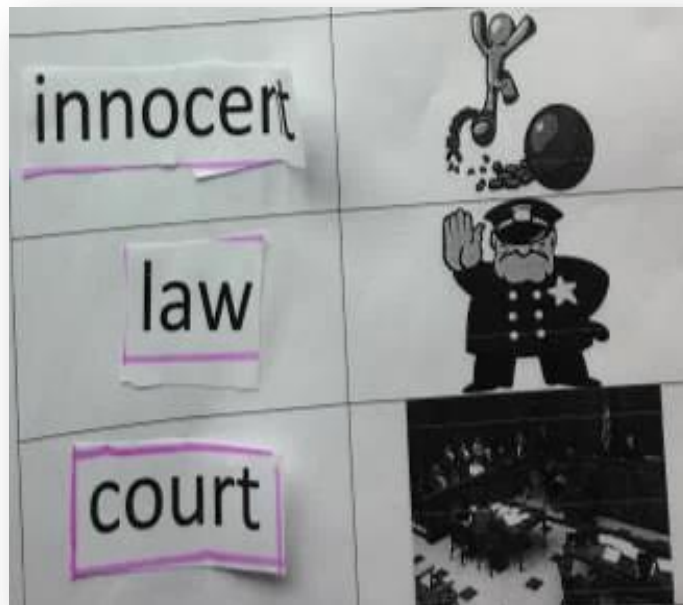
Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 01/20/2015 10:57:31 AM EST

IRB Manager

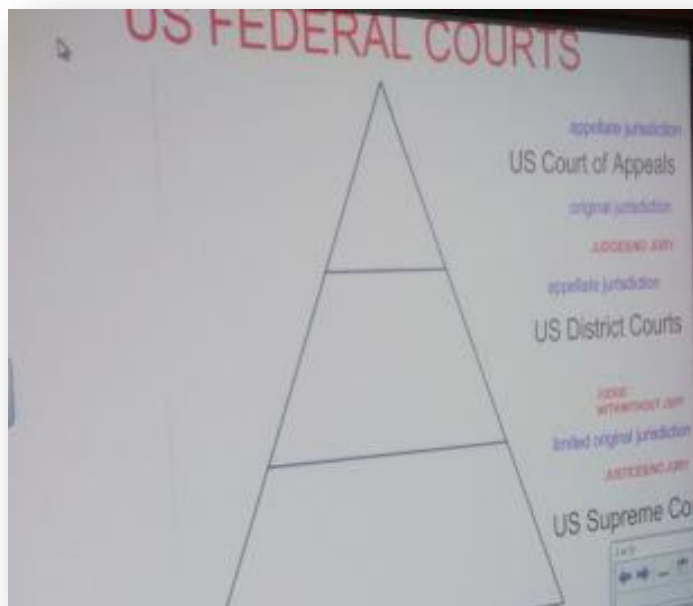


## **APPENDIX H: ARTIFACT EXAMPLES**

### Individualized Instruction in T1's Class



### Individualized Instruction In T2's Class



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