PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION TEACHERS WORKING IN AN INCLUSIVE SETTING

by

DESTINY PACHA
B.S. University of Central Florida, 2004
M.A. University of Central Florida, 2007

A dissertation in practice submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the College of Education and Human Performance
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Fall Term
2015

Major Professor: Carolyn Walker Hopp

ABSTRACT

This dissertation in practice addresses the continuous underperformance of students with disabilities (SWD) on standardized assessments when compared to their non-disabled peers. This dissertation on the complex problem of practice investigates secondary education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities and their ability to be included in the general education classroom. The purpose of this research is to develop a professional development framework to enhance inclusive practices. Students with disabilities nationwide are increasingly taught in the general education classroom in order to provide them access to their least restrictive environment and instruction of the general education curriculum. The beliefs held by teachers about students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom is one key variable to the successful inclusion as measured by student outcomes. To provide necessary support, it is imperative to understand teachers' attitude towards students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom. Based on the survey results and relevant research, the professional development framework to enhance inclusive practices was developed and will focus on three elements: (a) school culture and understanding of inclusion, (b) effective inclusive teaching strategies, and (c) collaboration models and techniques. The goal of the professional development framework is for administrators and other school leaders to provide appropriate learning opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding of inclusion and to provide them strategies and techniques to improve student outcomes in an effort to close the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities.

This dissertation in practice is lovingly dedicated to my daddy, Howard Andrew Pacha. His unwavering support in all my endeavors, unconditional love, and encouragement to always make a difference in the lives of my students every day have sustained me throughout my personal and professional life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADDM	Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CAST	Center for Applied Special Technology
CDC	Center for Disease Control
CPI	Crisis Prevention and Intervention
DSM-IV	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition
EAHCA	Education for All Handicapped Children Act
EBD	Emotional/Behavioral Disorders
EP	Education Plan
EPT	Educational Planning Team
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
FAA	Florida Alternative Assessment
FAPE	Free and Appropriate Public Education
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
FL-DOE	Florida Department of Education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan

LEA	Local Educational Agency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MTSS	Multi-tiered System of Supports
MYP	Middle Years Program
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
PD	Professional Development
SMS	Suburban Middle School
SSS	Sunshine State Standards
SWD	Students with Disabilities
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

This dissertation in practice will address the continuous underperformance of students with disabilities (SWD) on standardized assessments when compared to their non-disabled peers. This dissertation on the complex problem of practice will investigate secondary education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities and their ability to be included in the general education classroom. The purpose of this research is to develop a professional development framework to enhance inclusive practices. The beliefs held by teachers about students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom is one key variable to successful inclusion as measured by student outcomes (Stanovich & Jordan, 2002).

Students with disabilities nationwide are increasingly taught in the general education classroom and it becomes critical to provide them access to the general curriculum in the least restrictive environment. Between 1990 and 2008, there was an increase of 166% in the percentage of students with learning disabilities educated in the general education classroom (McLeskey, Landers, Hoppey, & Williamson, 2011). In spite of these facts and that the majority of students with disabilities at Suburban Middle School (SMS) are taught in inclusive classrooms by highly qualified teachers, there continues to be an achievement gap when compared to their non-disabled peers. Consequently, it is important to understand teachers' current beliefs about inclusion and perceived self-efficacy in working with students with disabilities in the general education class. Information gained will assist in determining the appropriate training and necessary support to help teachers succeed in inclusive settings. Research questions that will support examination of the problem of practice:

- Do teachers at SMS have a positive attitude towards the inclusion of students with disabilities?
- Do teachers at SMS perceive themselves capable of adapting instruction for students with disabilities?
- Do teachers at SMS feel they have the resources and supports needed to successfully include students with disabilities?
- Do teachers at SMS perceive themselves knowledgeable of pertinent information required for teaching students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom?

National Context of Problem

The achievement gap between SWD and their non-disabled peers on standardized assessments is not one unique to Suburban Middle School or the state of Florida. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a representative sample of fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students. Beginning in 2002, the NAEP began to offer accommodations to all students who have been identified as having a disability. Test results for this sample depict that, in both reading and math, students with disabilities continue to significantly score lower than their non-disabled peers and the gap continues to increase.

During the 2013 assessment period, 45% of fourth graders without disabilities scored at the proficient or advance level in mathematics and 38% in reading. While only 18% of students with disabilities scored at the same level in mathematics and 11% in reading, a gap of 27% in both reading and math (See Table 1). By the eighth grade, students with disabilities and students without disabilities show a decrease in students scoring at or above proficient in

mathematics (Students with Disabilities=8%; Students without Disabilities=39%) with the achievement gap increasing to 31% between students with and without disabilities (See Table 2). In reading, students with disabilities dropped from 11% in fourth grade to 9% in eighth grade scoring at or above proficient, while students without disabilities increased to 40%, widening the achievement gap among eighth grade students (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Table 1: Percent of Fourth Grade Students Scoring Proficient and Advanced in Reading and Math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Testing Year	**Reading**			**Math**		
	Students with disabilities	Students without disabilities	Student Achievement Gap	Students with disabilities	Students without disabilities	Student Achievement Gap
2009	12%	35%	23%	19%	41%	22%
2011	12%	37%	25%	17%	43%	26%
2013	11%	38%	27%	18%	45%	27%

Note: Retrieved from http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/student-groups

Table 2: Percent of Eighth Grade Students Scoring Proficient and Advanced in Reading and Math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Testing Year	**Reading**			**Math**		
	Students with disabilities	Students without disabilities	Student Achievement Gap	Students with disabilities	Students without disabilities	Student Achievement Gap
2009	8%	35%	27%	9%	37%	28%
2011	8%	36%	28%	10%	38%	28%
2013	9%	40%	31%	8%	39%	31%

Note: Retrieved from http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/student-groups

Teacher Attitudes

Students have been increasingly included in the general education classroom since the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, which mandated students with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate public education. To provide necessary support, it is imperative to understand teachers' attitude towards students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom. It is also important to understand teachers' perception of their knowledge and ability to accommodate and adapt instruction for SWD. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1997) summarized the results of 28 previous surveys of teachers, in which over 10,000 teachers were surveyed from 1958-1995, to determine teachers' attitudes about teaching students with disabilities. Results described that teacher "attitudes had changed very little, if any, over the years" (p. 209). Data showed that although two-thirds of the teachers accepted the idea of teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms, only a little over half of them indicated willingness to do so. Furthermore, half of the teachers agreed that inclusion was beneficial to students, but the agreement declined substantially when asked about full-time inclusion. Only about one-fourth of the teachers surveyed believed they had the time, training, or assistance to implement inclusive practices (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1997).

Before the legislative mandates on inclusive practices, Silberman's (1969) analysis of teachers' descriptions of their students identified four attitudes held by educators toward their students: attachment, concern, indifference, and rejection. Silberman (1969, p. 402) defined each attitude as follows:

1. Attachment is defined as an affectionate tie to student which derives from the pleasure they bring to the teacher's work.
2. Concern signifies sympathy and support for students' academic and/or emotional problems.
3. Indifference refers to the lack of involvement in students because of their failure to excite or dismay their teacher.
4. Rejection indicates a refusal to consider students as worthy recipients of the teacher's professional energies.

It was also discovered through a series of observational studies that teacher-student interactions differed based on these attitudes (Silberman, 1969).

When investigating inclusive teachers' attitudes toward their students both with and without disabilities, teachers held different attitudes towards these populations. Based on Silberman's (1969) four levels of attachment, teachers were found to have a high rejection and low attachment of their students' with disabilities (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007; Cook, Cook, Tankersley, & Landrum, 2000). Students with disabilities were rated significantly higher than their non-disabled peers in the areas of concern, indifference, and rejection. Researchers believe that teachers' attitude of "concern" towards SWD is an encouraging sign because as defined it signifies support for students' academic and/or emotional problems. Consequently, it is expected that students will frequently interact with their teachers pertaining to academic issues and receive high levels of teacher praise and feedback (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007; Cook, Cook, Tankersley, & Landrum, 2000). However, researchers foresee that the

increase in rejection of these students may lead to negative teacher/student interactions (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007).

Inclusion Barriers at Secondary Level

Although many teachers surveyed found inclusion valuable and a helpful educational practice (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997), inclusion at the secondary level presented significant challenges (Scanlon & Baker, 2012; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Able, Sreckovic, Schultz, Garwood, and Sherman, 2015; Cole & McLeskey, 1997). Specifically issues of academic complexity, pace of instruction, teacher attitudes, and high stakes testing (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). One of the most obvious differences between elementary and secondary settings is the "heavy emphasis on content knowledge" required (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001, p. 267). Another hurdle for students with disabilities in the general education classroom at the secondary level is the pace at which the content is presented in order to cover required content within the school year. Although many of the included students could learn the expected content, they may experience difficulties learning it at the necessary pace of the secondary classroom (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001).

Cole and McLeskey (1997) identified several additional barriers for SWD in secondary inclusive settings, such as the (a) increased gap between the skill level of students with and without disabilities, (b) a broader range of curricular content that students are responsible for learning, and (c) that classrooms tend to be teacher-centered and infrequently differentiated. With these barriers, it is not surprising that inclusive practices have been slower to develop at the secondary level and could often be perceived as resistance on the teachers' part (Cole and

McLeskey, 1997). However, middle school teachers noted predominantly positive comments regarding how inclusion affected their students with learning disabilities. Learning disabled students academically increased their grades, socially gained leadership roles, and their attitudes improved increasing their effort and self-expectations (Ornelles, Cook, Jenkins, 2007).

In addition to the above mentioned barriers, general education teachers often do not have the training or expertise in working with students with disabilities. Results indicated that special education teachers use techniques and strategies for differentiation more frequently and appear more knowledgeable of inclusive practices than general education teachers (Blecker & Boakes, 2010). Consequently, the foundation of a successful inclusive program is the partnership between the general education and special education teachers (Cole & McLeskey, 1997). Data gathered in the proposed study will provide the administration with valuable information regarding teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom, as well as, their perceived knowledge and abilities to accommodate and adapt instruction for these students. In addition, information gathered in this study will include the teachers' current levels of collaboration and types of supports received in working with students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. This valuable information will enable school administrators to provide the necessary professional development opportunities to enable teachers to properly support students with disabilities in the general education classroom and thus narrow the existing achievement gap.

Action Research

This dissertation in practice is a form of action research conducted by a professional researcher. There is a tendency for action researchers to be "insiders" to their professional setting. This is particularly true in doctorate of education programs (Herr & Anderson, 2015). In some fields, including education, terms such as *teacher researcher* and/or *administrative researcher* have gained popularity because of the position the researcher holds in the setting/organization. These practitioners tend to want to study their own organizational contexts because they want to make a difference in their own setting (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Whereas traditional researchers tend to take a more distance approach to the setting.

The purpose of action research is to "transcend mere knowledge generation to include personal and professional growth" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 1) and therefore this dissertation in practice intends to improve instructional practice by understanding teacher's perceptions about students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education setting. In addition, professional researchers tend to involve the research participants in the study more than traditional research. Although there are many terms and definitions to describe this type of research, most agree that: "Action research is inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to* or *on* them. It is a reflective process, but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that it is deliberately and systematically undertaken, and generally requires that some form of evidence be presented to support assertions" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 3-4).

Organizational Context

The pilot survey that will inform this study will take place at Suburban Middle School (SMS), which is one of about 35 middle schools located in a large urban school district in the state of Florida. The county is the tenth largest school district in the United States and the fourth largest in the State of Florida. As of October 2014, the district had a total of about 180 schools with over 187,000 students. The district serves over 20,000 students with disabilities, which makes up about 11% of the total population. The mission of the county is to lead students to success with the support and involvement of families and the community with the vision to be the top producer of successful students in the nation.

The population of Suburban Middle School consists of about 1,400 students in grades six through eight. During the 2014-2015 school year, it was led by an administrative team that included a principal, two assistant principals, and two deans. Students were supported by three guidance counselors, two exceptional education staffing specialists, a reading/intervention coach, a curriculum compliance teacher overseeing students with limited English proficiency, and a curriculum resource teacher/IB coordinator. SMS is an International Baccalaureate World School. The school went through an authorization process from 2001-2004. It is the first Middle Years Program (MYP) authorized in the county and is one of 57 MYP programs in Florida. All students zoned for the school are a part of the MYP and take 8 subjects each year including Language Arts, Language B (Spanish or French), Mathematics, Art, Humanities, Technology, Science, and Physical Education.

In addition to MYP, Suburban Middle School is a cluster school for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder who demonstrate intensive behaviors and/or require specific supports and

staff with specialized training. When it is determined by a student's Individual Education Planning Team that a student's home school (zoned school) is not the most appropriate placement to meet his/her educational and/or behavioral needs, a student may need to attend a cluster school.

At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, sixteen students had previously been found to have a severe cognitive disability, and therefore, did not participate in the general statewide assessment, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), administered at the end of each school year. These students instead participated in Florida's Access Points curriculum and were assessed using the Florida Alternative Assessment (FAA). However, these scores were still part of the school's overall reporting under Florida's federally approved Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility plan. These students were in one of three separate (self-contained) classrooms for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other varying exceptionalities. Each of these classrooms was taught by an exceptional education teacher, who also had the support of paraprofessionals (aides) within the classroom. In addition, the school had two behavior specialists along with a behavior support paraprofessional to assist students, both in and out of the self-contained classrooms.

Outside of these separate classrooms, the school had a diverse exceptional education population. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year there were about 150 students (not including gifted only), making up 11% of the population who had been identified as having a primary exceptionality and required exceptional education services and supports. The school served students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Specific Learning Disabilities, Language

Impairments, Speech Impairments, Other Health Impairments, Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairments, and Intellectual Disabilities.

Most students with disabilities received their instruction with their general education peers for the majority of the day, along with various support services. Currently over 80% of the exceptional education population participates in the general education classroom for 80% or more of their day. During the 2014-2015 school year, there were five exceptional education teachers (one in sixth grade, two in seventh grade, and two in eighth grade). Direct services were provided through specialized instruction in learning strategies. At SMS, these services were often provided one period per day, five days per week by an exceptional education teacher. Strategies taught to students were not subject specific, but efficient ways to learn and remember a task or skill. Ultimately, helping students "learn how to learn, so they can be successful and independent learners" (Conderman, Koman, Schibelka, Higgin, Cooper, & Butler, 2013, p. 4). Depending on the individual student's needs, they may also have received instruction in organizational/study skills and self-advocacy during this time.

Students may also receive support facilitation in one or more of their core academic classrooms. This allowed students to receive instruction alongside their non-disabled peers, while still receiving support from an exceptional education teacher within the general education classroom. Other services included consultation and/or collaboration between the general education teachers and special education teachers. These teachers regularly scheduled meetings to discuss individual student's progress and any needs the student may have had. Exceptional education teachers kept documented consultation logs of these meetings and these were included in student's cumulative record.

Positionality

The professional researcher is as an *insider* at Suburban Middle School and holds the position of staffing specialists, Local Educational Agency (LEA) representative, and curriculum leader for the exceptional education department. The school-based staffing specialist is responsible for coordinating the staffing of exceptional education students and the educational planning process for students at the school level. Based on the district's job description, the school based staffing specialist serves as the designee of the Local Educational Agency in exceptional education meetings where special education eligibility, placement, dismissal, and program changes take place. In addition, the staffing specialist coordinates and convenes all Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Education Plans (EPs), and Education Planning Team (EPT) meetings. The district expects staffing specialists to possess knowledge of eligibility criteria, placement procedures, and exceptional education program options. Support is provided through district trainings focused on current trends, issues, and litigation which impact the education of gifted students and students with disabilities. Finally, the staffing specialist must ensure that all ESE paperwork is accurate and current for gifted students and students with disabilities served at the school.

As a previous classroom teacher and inclusion facilitator, the researcher has observed and experienced firsthand how teachers' attitudes and perceptions of students with disabilities can affect the students' inclusion in the general education classroom. Currently, as staffing specialist, the researcher meets with numerous general and special education teachers, along with exceptional education service providers throughout the year. During these meetings, teachers discuss student progress and their ability, or perceived lack of ability, to participate in

the general education classroom. The researcher has heard many positive attempts on the teachers' part to appropriately accommodate and engage students with disabilities. However, there are also teachers who comment that SWD are more of a distraction to the classroom environment and that they don't have the necessary skills to master the content material. It is this range of teachers' perceptions that led the researcher to further investigate secondary education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities and their ability to include them in the general education classroom in an effort to determine the appropriate support and training for teachers at Suburban Middle School. As the staffing specialist within the school, the researcher has the advantage of power within the organization to enact change through professional development and share information with the various stakeholders, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators.

History and Conceptualization

The education of students with special needs has changed dramatically over the past several decades. With the passage of PL 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), came funding and regulations for how and where children with disabilities should be educated. "It is the landmark legislation that grounds current special education practice" (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009, p. 190). This was the first standalone legislation to focus on educating students with disabilities. The act mandates that students with disabilities have available "a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs" (Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, 1975). In addition, the legislation assured that the rights of

children with disabilities and their parents are protected, assisted states to provide for the education of all children with disabilities, and assessed the effectiveness of these efforts (Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, 1975; US Department of Education, 2010).

Prior to Public Law 94-142, children with disabilities were often provided limited access to the education system, or excluded entirely. In the early 1970's only 20% of children with disabilities were educated in America's public schools (Yell, Katsiyannis, & Bradley, 2011). Historically, students with disabilities were provided an education in a separate special class with special curriculum focusing on social skills, self-help, communication skills, vocational and self-advocacy skills. This is thought to be because "early thinkers in special education found it difficult to conceive of delivering this special curriculum anywhere else" (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009, p. 189).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act emphasized not only that all students have the right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), it also outlined where students with disabilities should receive this education. For the first time, legislation outlined the right of students with disabilities to be taught in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and is now one of the basic principles of special education. In other words, students should be educated in the most "normal" setting to the maximum extent possible (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009). The *inclusion* of students with disabilities is not a legal term, but a philosophy based on the least restrictive environment (Carroll, Fulmer, Sobel, Garrison-Wade, Aragon, & Coval, 2011).

In 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA, replaced PL 94-142. This change in name was important in itself and it also replaced wording referencing handicapped

child with child or student with disability, showing a shift towards person first language (Yell, Katsiyannis, & Bradley, 2011). IDEA also extended eligibility to children with autism and traumatic brain injury. In 1997, IDEA was reauthorized again which continued to strengthen the rights of students with disabilities. Other changes included an extension to the least restrictive environment to ensure children with disabilities have access to the general curriculum (IDEA, 1997).

In addition, the reauthorization of IDEA (1997) required public agencies to provide a continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education. These placements included services being provided in an institution, the hospital or home, at a special school, in a special/separate class, or the regular class with resource room services, supplementary instruction, or consultative services provided in conjunction with regular class placement. The least restrictive being the general education classroom with consultation services provided while receiving their education alongside their non-disabled peers (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007). The placement, or "where", a student receives services has been at the center of debate concerning the needs of students with disabilities. Proponents of the continuum of services outlined in IDEA see full-inclusion as too much of a good thing and that placement in general education classrooms should not come at the expense of intense, individualized, and explicit instruction for students with disabilities (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009).

Historically, special education teachers provided content area instruction even though they were not content area specialists, which is no longer an option under the No Child Left Behind legislation which requires teachers to be highly qualified within the field they are

teaching (Carpenter & Dylan, 2007). Consequently, special education classes must be staffed with content specialists or students must be included in the general education classrooms taught by content specialists with support services provided by a special education teacher. How these services are delivered in the general education classroom can be done in a variety of ways and there is no one-size fits all model for inclusion (Cole & McLeskey, 1997).

Inclusion

The time spent in a general education classroom with services being provided is often referred to as inclusion, however, the term inclusion has many uses in literature and within the field of special education there is little consensus to its exact definition (Carroll, Fulmer, Sobel, Garrison-Wade, Aragon, & Coval, 2011). Ryndak, Jackson, and Billingsley (2000) examined how experts in the field defined the term inclusion. Through surveying experts in the field of school inclusion for students with moderate to severe disabilities, themes emerged. Of these, five related to the inclusion of students with disabilities and the remaining two themes related to inclusion as a systemic concept or philosophy. The researchers' working definition related to including students with disabilities encompassed: (1) placement in natural typical settings, (2) all students together for instruction and learning, (3) supports and modifications within general education to meet appropriate learner outcomes, (4) belongingness, equal membership, acceptance, and being valued, and (5) collaborative integrated services by education teams (Ryndak, Jackson, & Billingsley, 2000). Inclusion is a philosophy that does not start at the classroom level, but is much more global (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007). For purposes of this dissertation in practice, inclusion will be defined as the practice of having students with

disabilities participate in the general education classroom alongside their non-disabled peers, in order for them to have access to the general curriculum.

Student Placement

In an order to monitor the placement of students and their time spent in the general education setting, nationally and at the state level, the Office of Special Education Programs publishes an Annual Reports to Congress. In 2014, the 36th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was published. It describes the nation's progress in: (a) providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities and early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, (b) ensuring that the rights of these children with disabilities and their parents are protected, (c) assisting states and localities in providing for the education of all children with disabilities, and (d) assessing the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities. The report focuses on the children and students with disabilities being served under IDEA nationally and at the state level (Office of Special Education Programs, 2014).

The U.S. Department of Education defines placement settings based on the percent of the day a student spends in the general education setting including lunch, recess, and study periods (Office of Special Education Programs, 2014). For purposes of this dissertation in practice, additional descriptors have been added to match the district's classifications for student placement and are similar to those defined by McLeskey, Landers, Hoppey, and Williamson (2011). As seen in Table 3, 80% or more of the day in a general education classroom is called "general education", 40-79% in general education classroom is called "resource"

(McLeskey et al., 2011 named this placement “pull-out”), and less than 40% of the day is called “separate class” placement.

Table 3: Student Placement Setting Definitions

Setting	Definition
General Education	Includes students with disabilities who are educated in a general education classroom for 80 percent or more of the school day.
Resource	Includes students with disabilities who are educated in a general education classroom for 40-79 percent of the school day.
Separate Class	Includes students with disabilities who are educated in a general education classroom for less than 40 percent of the school day.

Note: These definitions were adapted from the Office of Special Education Programs, 2014, while setting terms were added by the researcher.

Data for the 36th Annual Report was obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s EDFacts Data Warehouse (EDW) along with other data sources. The Annual Report (2014) provides the number of students ages 6-21 served under IDEA in Fall 2012. Table 3 shows that in all states, 61.5% of students served under IDEA spent 80% or more of their day in the general education setting. Florida has a higher percentage rate, with 69.3% of students with disabilities participating 80% or more of their day in the general education setting indicating more students are included in general education classrooms for the majority of their day. However, as seen in Table 4, Florida did have a slightly higher rate (14.2%) as compared to the nation (13.8%) on

students who spend less than 40% of their day in a regular setting. This means there is a slightly higher rate of students in Florida participating in a "separate class" placement and not receiving instruction alongside their non-disabled peers.

Table 4: Percentage of Students Ages 6 through 21 Served Under IDEA by Educational Environment: Fall 2012

	Placement in General Education Classroom		
	80% or more of the day	40% to 79% of the day	Less than 40% of the day
All States	61.5	19.5	13.8
Florida	69.3	10.7	14.2

Note: Adapted from the 36th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2014, Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2014/parts-b-c/36th-idea-arc.pdf

As a result of the changes in federal legislation and beliefs about the best placement for students with disabilities, the data indicate that a large percent of the nation's and Florida's students identified under IDEA with disabilities are being educated in the general education classroom. So the general education teachers have been required to take on greater responsibility for educating students with varying degrees of disabilities alongside their students without disabilities (Cameron & Cook, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand teachers' beliefs on inclusion and their abilities to meet their students' needs. Blecker and Boakes (2010) found that both general education and special education teachers were in agreement that children with disabilities benefit from interactions with their non-disabled peers, but methods to achieve this were less consistent.

Educator Concerns

As students are increasingly included in the general education classroom, the school's culture is important, but adequate instruction is imperative (Carroll, Fulmer, Sobel, Garrison-Wade, Aragon, & Coval, 2011). When investigating general education teachers' goals and expectations for their included students with mild and severe disabilities, researchers were concerned with the lack of attention to academic goals for students with severe disabilities (Cameron & Cook, 2013). Students identified in the study as having severe disabilities were: (a) nominated by their teacher as having a severe disability, (b) had scores that fell in the severe range on the Basic Scale of Disability Severity, and (c) were categorized by schools as having a multiple disability or intellectual disability (Cameron & Cook, 2013, p. 21). Often it was the belief of teachers that academic goals were of less importance than goals related to social skills for this group of students (Cameron & Cook, 2013).

Overall, general education teachers' goal for students with mild disabilities centered on classroom and behavior skills. However, the fact that teachers set clear objectives and hold high expectations in academics for students with mild disabilities is a positive sign for the potential growth among included students (Cameron & Cook, 2013). Some teachers' responses to long-term goals for their included students with disabilities (mild and in general) comprised of goals surrounding students' perceptions of themselves and their abilities to improve (Cameron & Cook, 2013).

Regardless of these findings that teachers placed a lower emphasis on academic goals for students with severe disabilities, other researchers found that students with intellectual disabilities who were included in general education classrooms had a positive perception of

their own cognitive competence, although work samples were below, and mostly well below, that of their non-disabled peers (Huck, Kemp, & Carter, 2010). In addition, students had a positive perceived peer acceptance and ratings by their peers showed they were accepted. These results indicate that at an age when children begin to change their self-concept by comparing themselves with their peers, students with intellectual disabilities have an overall positive self-concept when in an inclusive environment (Huck, Kemp, & Carter, 2010).

Factors that Impact the Problem

In April 2013, the urban district commissioned an external evaluation of its Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program. Inclusion of students with disabilities was a priority for the district. This has been evident in the fact that placement of students with disabilities in regular class has increased from 57% in 2005-2006 to 77% in 2012-2013 (Evergreen Solutions, LLC., 2013). In addition, during that same time the rate of students placed in a resource setting has decreased from 17% to 7% and the rate of students being placed in a separate class for the majority of their day has decreased from 21% to 12% (Evergreen Solutions, LLC., 2013). Teachers noted when asked about the district's expectations regarding inclusion, "Students who are being instructed in the general standards and who are or may be pursuing a standard diploma should receive all, or at least the majority, of their instruction in the general education classroom" (Evergreen Solutions, LLC., 2013, p. 4-25).

During the 2014-2015 school year, Suburban Middle School served about 150 students with disabilities, which represented 11% of the total population. Of these students, 81% received instruction in a regular class for over 80% of their day. This was determined to be the

student's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) by the student's Individual Education Planning (IEP) team. A continuum of services and supports was available to students if determined necessary by the IEP team to provide the student with a free and appropriate public education. The school prides itself on continuing to be an inclusion school providing students with disabilities the majority of their instruction in the general education classroom alongside their non-disabled peers.

When asked if teachers feel they have the skills and knowledge needed to provide effective services to students with disabilities in their classrooms, general education teachers in the district had the lowest rate of positive responses and highest rate of negative responses (Evergreen Solutions, LLC., 2013). Teachers support the concept that children with disabilities benefit from interactions with their non-disabled peers (Blecker & Boakes, 2010), however, this requires teachers to take on greater responsibility for educating students with varying levels of disabilities alongside students without disabilities (Cameron & Cook, 2013). Teachers must change their teaching practices to meet the needs of their diverse students (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007). This is especially true for middle school teachers, as the demands of curricular material become more complex, increased gap in skill level among students, and broader range of curricular content come into place (Cole & McLeskey, 1997).

Achievement Gap

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states to be accountable for all students, including those with disabilities while "working toward the goal of narrowing the achievement gaps" (Section 1111.b.2.B). The state of Florida implemented a criterion referenced assessment

titled the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in 1998. When the FCAT was fully implemented, it assessed students in grades 3-11 in mathematics, reading, science, and writing which measured students' progress towards the Sunshine State Standards (SSS). Then in 2010-2011 school year, Florida began to transition to the FCAT 2.0 and Florida End-of-Course (EOC) exams. In Florida, students with disabilities may have accommodations for statewide assessments to meet their individual needs, as indicated on their Individual Education Plans (IEP). "The accommodations make it possible for students to work around the effect of their disabilities" and help SWD access information and show what they know and are able to do (Florida Department of Education [FL-DOE], 2010, p. 3).

The state of Florida and Suburban Middle School have struggled to close the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. Table 5 details the percent of students with disabilities compared to all students in Florida scoring at or above satisfactory in reading and math on the FCAT 2.0 (Florida Department of Education, 2014). The results indicate that there has not been any change in the achievement gap in reading between 2010 and 2014 and the gap has fluctuated slightly in math, but ultimately dropped 1% between 2010 and 2014.

Table 5: Percent of Students in Florida Scoring Satisfactory or Above on FCAT 2.0

School Year	Reading			Math		
	SWD	All Students	Gap	SWD	All Students	Gap
2010-2011	24%	57%	33%	24%	55%	31%
2011-2012	24%	57%	33%	23%	55%	32%
2012-2013	24%	57%	33%	24%	53%	29%
2013-2014	25%	58%	33%	23%	53%	30%

Note: Adapted from Florida Department of Education, FCAT 2.0, 2014, Retrieved from http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5668/urlt/0066933-2014fcat20_media.pdf

Table 6 details the percent of students with disabilities compared to all students at Suburban Middle School scoring at or above satisfactory in reading and math on the FCAT 2.0. Although SMS has almost twice the percent of students with disabilities scoring satisfactory or above on FCAT 2.0 as compared to the state, the achievement gap has exceeded the state of Florida (35% compared to 33%). This is due to the fact that during the 2013-2014 school year, the achievement gap between all students and those with disabilities at Suburban Middle School increased 10% from the 2010-2011 school year (25% to 35%). There was a similar increase in the achievement gap (9%) in math during the same time period.

Table 6: Percent of Students at SMS Scoring Satisfactory or Above on FCAT 2.0

School Year	Reading			Math		
	SWD	All Students	Gap	SWD	All Students	Gap
2010-2011	43%	68%	25%	35%	62%	27%
2011-2012	48%	71%	23%	44%	66%	22%
2012-2013	40%	73%	33%	37%	72%	35%
2013-2014	37%	72%	35%	30%	66%	36%

Note: Retrieved from http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/default.asp

While investigating possible causes for this increasing problem, it was discovered through informal conversation with the intervention coach (personal communication, October 27, 2014) and email correspondence with the curriculum resource teacher (personal communication, October 31, 2014) that there were no staff development opportunities offered to teachers focusing on meeting the unique academic needs of this population of students during the 2013-2014 school year. As the demands increase for the general education teacher, "it is essential that they be trained adequately, their concerns be elicited and addressed, and that their attitudes reflect a belief in and commitment to the success of all students" (Santoli, Sachs, Romey, & McClurg, 2008, p. 6).

The Framework

Professional development that prepares teachers to work in inclusive settings must be individually tailored to the unique qualities and needs of a given school (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). Therefore, this dissertation in practice will present a framework that addresses key elements that focus on improving secondary education teachers' perceptions about inclusion

and effective collaborative teaching practices in order to improve achievement among students with disabilities at Suburban Middle School. As general education teachers are increasingly responsible for educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom, schools must prepare teachers for the challenges present in today's inclusive settings (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007). Therefore, the stakeholders that will be imperative to the successful implementation of the framework are the school's administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other support staff that provide instruction and/or services to students at SMS.

It is important to include the general education teachers' "voices" in guiding decisions for how to best support them (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009). In order to do this, teachers will be asked to participate in an electronic survey in order to investigate their attitude towards inclusion, their perception towards adapting instruction for students with disabilities, availability of resources and supports needed in inclusive classrooms, and if participants perceive themselves knowledgeable in specific exceptional education areas. The second part of the survey consists of questions to determine the frequency that teachers work collaboratively, as well as, collecting basic demographic information and professional development interests of the teachers. The final questions are open ended and will not be addressed in this dissertation in practice. They focus on the teachers' perceived areas of need when working with students with disabilities. A summary of these findings will be provided to the principal and exceptional education faculty for the purposes of improving the current exceptional education service delivery model. The information gathered from this survey will support the development of a professional development framework to enhance inclusive practices at SMS.

Chapter two of this dissertation in practice will provide details of the administration of the survey and discuss the results that will inform the design of the professional development framework. Chapter three will provide details on the essential elements of the design of the professional development framework and how it is intended to be implemented. The details of the framework will include supporting research literature. Chapter four will discuss the intended outcomes of the framework including, measurement tools, procedures and activities planned in order to achieve the framework goals, specific indicators that demonstrate the goals were achieved, and the anticipated impact of the framework. Finally, chapter five of this dissertation in practice will include implications of the framework on the problem of practice and recommendations for further work or research based on its design. In addition, an explanation of how the Ed.D. program and course work supported the completion of this dissertation in practice.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH PROCESS AND RESULTS

This chapter will describe the process used by the researcher to determine teacher attitudes related to students with disabilities included in general education classrooms including information on the school site, participants, and description of the teacher survey, for which permission for use was received by the author. Results of the survey are described and used to develop a professional development framework.

Overview

Suburban Middle School (SMS) has about 1,400 students in grades six through eight. As an autism cluster school located in a large urban school district in the state of Florida, SMS serves a wide range of students with disabilities who need support and/or services to access the general education curriculum. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, SMS served about 150 students with disabilities who had an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Of these students, the majority of them spent over 80% of their day in the general education classroom alongside their non-disabled peers. The complex problem of practice is that students with disabilities (SWD) continue to underperform on standardized assessments, as compared to their non-disabled peers.

Student placement is important because students with disabilities have shown a greater success when instructed in inclusive settings versus being pulled out of classes for services. Rea, McLaughlin, and Walter-Thomas (2002) investigated the relationship between students with learning disabilities and their placement in inclusive vs. pullout special education programs and their academic and behavior outcomes at the middle school level. Two schools were included in

the study. One provided inclusion services based on a team teaching approach and collaborative planning. The other school provided no instructional support in the general education classroom for students with disabilities but instead provided a pullout program where students would receive their exceptional education services during one or both elective periods. This course focused on providing remediation and assistance with assignments. Results indicated that students in the inclusion model received significantly higher grades in language arts, math, science, and social studies. On the state's proficiency test, there were no significant differences in mean scores between the two groups. However, on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), which is a nationally standardized test that measures student achievement in specific skills, a significant difference was found on the language and math subtests between the two groups with the inclusive group scoring higher (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walter-Thomas, 2002).

Behavior and attendance were also analyzed for the two models (inclusive vs. pullout). Students who received inclusive support had no in-school suspensions and only one student received out-of-school suspension days. Whereas six students in the pull-out model were placed in in-school suspension (total of 25 days) and six students were suspended from school for a total of 17 days. However, this did not reflect a significant difference between the schools when it came to in-school suspensions (mean difference = -1.364, $t = -1.73$, $p = .098$) or out-of-school suspensions (mean difference = .5783, $t = -1.64$, $p = .109$). On the other hand, attendance data from both schools revealed that students in inclusive classrooms attended significantly more days of school than those in the pullout program (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walter-Thomas, 2002).

Research Site

As a school with a high percent of students with disabilities, Suburban Middle School prides itself on its ability to include these students in the general education classroom while also providing supports and services as determined necessary by the students' IEP team. Therefore, SMS utilizes a continuum of services allowing for a combination of the two models described above. Students can receive supports in the general education classroom and if necessary, can receive additional instruction in a pullout instructional classroom. The majority of students with a disabilities (81%) received the majority (over 80%) of their instruction in the general education classroom taught by content area specialists. In order to support students in the general education classroom, exceptional education teachers may consult with teachers and/or support facilitate within the general education classroom. Support facilitation is the title given to the model for inclusion utilized throughout the school district in which exceptional education teachers go into the general education classroom to support students with disabilities. The title given to the exceptional education teacher who provides such support varies throughout the literature and in practice (Carpenter & Dyle, 2007). The practice in which there are two or more professionals delivering instruction to a blended group of students in a single physical space is most frequently referred to in the literature as *co-teaching* (Cook & Friend, 1995).

In addition to support in the general education classroom at SMS, students may also receive instruction in learning strategies in a smaller group setting taught by an exceptional education teacher. The Learning Strategies course is not designed to teach specific content, but focuses on teaching students skills which are critical for learning, solving problems, and

completing tasks independently in the general education classroom (Cole & McLeskey, 1997). At SMS, this course takes the place of one elective course per day, similar in style to the pullout program described in the study above, however the difference is that it is often in addition to support provided within the general education classroom. Based on individual student needs, additional services may include but are not limited to speech therapy, language therapy, social/emotional skills, occupational therapy, and/or physical therapy. However, even with this level of support there continues to be an achievement gap between students with and without disabilities as assessed on the statewide assessment.

In order for inclusion to be successful, teachers must have an acceptance for students with disabilities, know strategies for working with students with disabilities, and effectively collaborate with each other. There is an "urgent need" to examine how teachers can be supported as students with disabilities will continue to remain in the general education classroom and is expected to increase in the future (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009). "Efforts to bolster general education teachers' knowledge and skills and enable them to more effectively meet the needs of all students may be best served by providing systematic and sustained in-service supports that target self-identified areas of need" (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009, p. 652). Therefore, this dissertation in practice intends to design a professional development framework to support the inclusion of students with disabilities at SMS with the goal of increasing student achievement through the use of research based practices. In order to identify areas of need and understand the teachers' current attitudes towards inclusion and perceptions of students with disabilities at Suburban Middle School, teachers were asked to participate in an electronic survey.

Procedure and Participants

The targeted population included both the general education and special education teachers at Suburban Middle School (about 90 teachers). Following approval of the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the school district, and Suburban Middle School's principal the researcher presented to the faculty at a pre-scheduled staff meeting. Background information, purpose of the study, and procedures were reviewed with the faculty. Teachers were given the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher during and following the meeting.

After the presentation, all instructional personnel were sent an email with the district's approval letter to conduct research and the IRB adult consent documentation. The email also provided participants an anonymous electronic link to a Qualtrics on-line survey. No identifying information such as name or email address were collected through the survey. In addition, participation was voluntary and participants were able to skip questions and had the opportunity to exit the study at any time prior and during the survey. After one week, a follow-up email was sent to all possible participants reminding them of the purpose and again an anonymous link to the survey was provided. The survey was open for two weeks and closed on the last day of the teacher's contracted school year.

Survey Instrument

Prior to its use in this dissertation in practice, the researcher contacted Dr. Luseno, the author of the survey, by email in order to obtain written permission to use and adapt the instrument in the current study. The instrument is a two-part questionnaire that was utilized to gather teacher demographic information and attitudes towards students with disabilities and

inclusion. The survey also identified the participants' perceived capability of adapting instruction for students with special needs and areas of training need in working with students with disabilities in an inclusive setting (Luseno, 2001).

Luseno (2001) classified the survey statements into four factors designed to identify information as described below:

- Factor 1: Attitudes Towards Inclusion consisted of fifteen statements designed to identify the participants' attitudes towards inclusion and students with disabilities.
- Factor 2: Perception Towards Adapting Instruction for Students with Disabilities was composed of four positively worded statements designed to identify the subjects' perception towards their ability to adapt instruction for students with disabilities.
- Factor 3: Availability of Resources and Support Needed in Inclusive Classrooms was comprised of nine statements designed to identify the respondents' perceptions about the availability of resources (i.e. instructional material, teacher's aide, and time) and administrative and parental support needed in inclusive classrooms.
- Factor 4: Knowledge of Pertinent Information consisted of eight statements designed to identify whether the participants perceived themselves knowledgeable of the following: strategies for teaching students with disabilities; characteristics of students with disabilities; special education law; collaborative strategies; behavioral management strategies; and the individualized education program (p. 15).

The original instrument was reviewed and field tested by Luseno (2001) prior to its dissemination. Ten secondary teachers (5 general education and 5 special education) were

interviewed and feedback was collected to rewrite the final questionnaire developed by Luseno (2001). The first part of the survey consists of 36 Likert-type statements adapted from the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), The Adaptation Evaluation Instrument Scale (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991), and The Special Education Teacher-General Education Teacher Interaction Scale (Voltz, Elliott, & Cobb, 1994).

Gibson and Dembo (1984) set out to develop an instrument to measure teacher efficacy, provide construct validation support, and examine the relationship between teacher efficacy and observable behaviors. Internal consistency reliability of The Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) was evident with an alpha coefficient of 0.79. The researcher's preliminary observation data suggested that teacher efficacy may influence certain patterns of classroom behaviors known to yield achievement gains in students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

The Adaptation Evaluation Instrument Scale (AEI) was originally designed to examine teachers' attitudes about the desirability and feasibility of making adaptations for special education students included in the general education classroom. Internal consistency reliability alpha for the instrument was of 0.97 for the desirability subscale and 0.95 for the feasibility subscale. Items were derived from a review of the literature and transcripts of focus group interviews. Results indicated a statistically significant difference between the desirability and feasibility ratings, with all adaptations perceived as more desirable than feasible (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991).

Voltz, Elliott, and Cobb (1994) wanted to analyze and compare the perceptions of resource teachers (special education) and general education teachers in regard to actual and ideal performance of collaborative roles. The Special Education Teacher-General Education

Teacher Interaction Scale (SET-GETIS) was developed and reliability alpha was 0.87 for the actual scale and 0.92 for the ideal scale. Results indicated that although responses on the ideal scale indicated that the teachers believed the majority of the collaborative roles should be performed often or always, the actual scale indicated modest levels of performance for both the special and general education teacher collaborative roles (Voltz, Elliott, & Cobb, 1994).

The second part of the survey is adapted from Luseno's (2001) original questionnaire pertaining to background information regarding the extent to which the special and general education teachers work collaboratively, as well as, collecting demographic information pertaining to teaching experience, degree earned, and training received in working with students with disabilities. The final questions pertain to support received, areas of need, and professional development interests of the teachers.

The survey was adapted for electronic use with changes to fit the needs of this dissertation in practice. The change made to the first part of the survey, included the addition of Autism Spectrum Disorder to the list of exceptionalities presented in question seven. In addition, in the second part of the survey demographic questions were removed that did not fit the need of this study to limit identification of the participants. Also, additional time frames, specifically "quarterly" and "annually", were added to the respondent's choices for the frequency in which they work collaboratively with the special education teacher. Finally, specific special education topics were included and participants were asked to rate their current knowledge of each topic and their interest in learning more about the topics. Participants were given the opportunity to list any additional exceptional education topics that they would be interested in learning more about. The adapted survey, titled Inclusive Teacher Survey Scale to

Guide Professional Development, was customized and utilized by the researcher as part of this dissertation in practice to investigate secondary education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities and their ability to be included in the general education classroom. The information gathered will contribute to a professional development framework to enhance inclusive practices.

Results

In this section, the demographic information and return rate will be reviewed, along with a description of the responses to the Likert statements in part one of the survey. Finally, a review of the teachers' collaboration rates from part two of the survey will be discussed.

Return Rate and Demographic Information

The anonymous survey link was sent out to all faculty in a distribution list provided by the principal coded as "instructional". When administrators, paraprofessionals, and staffing specialists were removed from the total, 88 instructional staff remained. Following the two weeks the survey was open, a total of 53 responses were completed, which is a 60% return rate. It is important to note, that as part of the consent procedure, participants had the opportunity to not answer all questions and still submit their survey. Therefore, not all questions have 53 total responses (responses vary from 48 to 53 for all questions).

As seen in Figure 1, 42 participants noted they were general education teachers (86%) and 7 noted they were primarily special education teachers (14%). Sixteen percent (N=17) specified they have a Special Education Certificate, which indicates that one of the general

education teachers also holds a Florida Certification in Special Education as part of their teaching license. Years of experience was pretty evenly distributed (See Figure 2), with the highest responses falling in the 0 (first year) to 5 years category and 21 or more years of teaching experience category. At Suburban Middle School, 43% of the teacher participants (N=21) have earned a Master's Degree showing a commitment to personal growth and continued education.

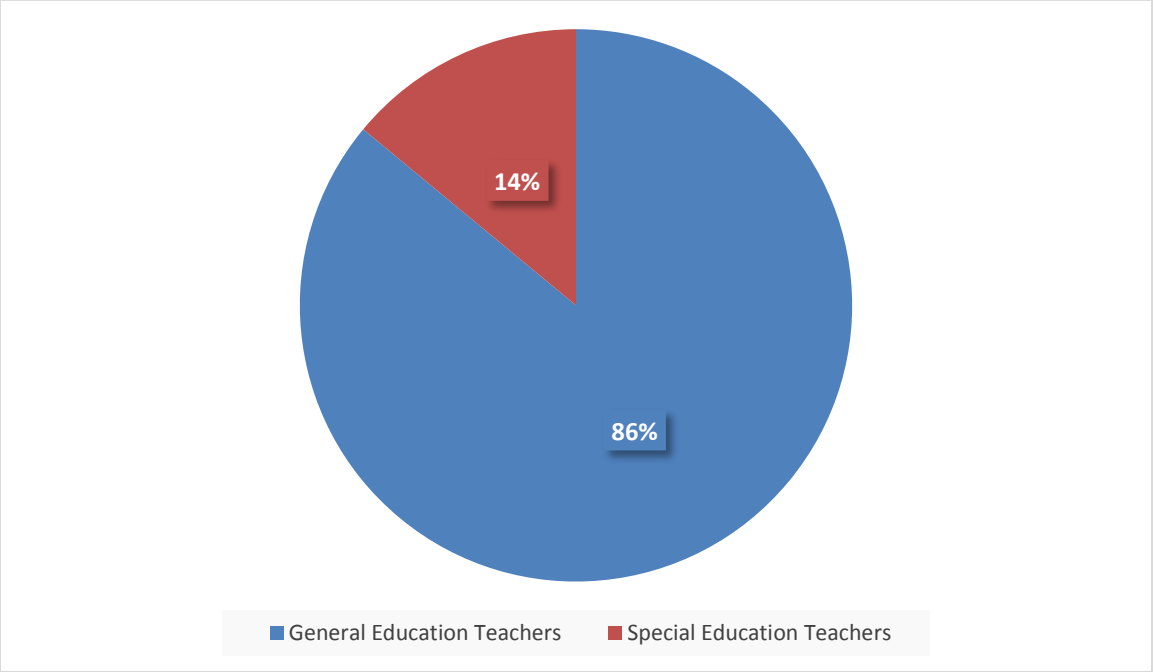

Figure 1: Teacher Classification at Suburban Middle School

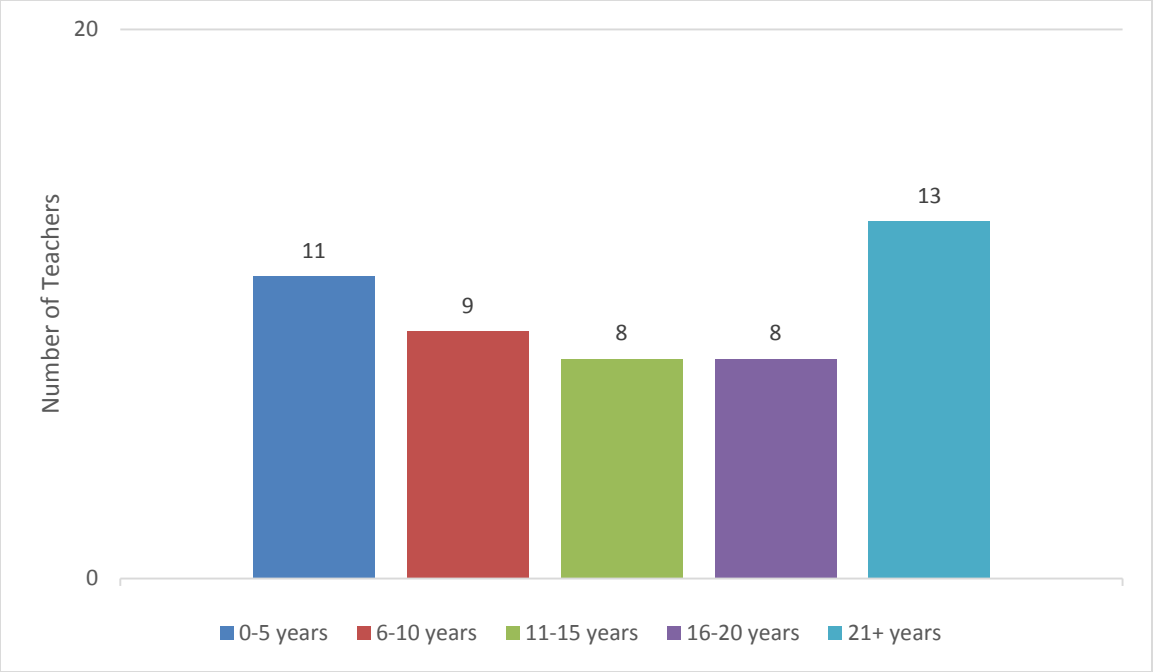

Figure 2: Years of Experience of Teachers at Suburban Middle School

Participants were also asked if they had received any training on teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Of the 49 responses, 18 (37%) noted they have not had any training on teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Of the 31 that noted they have had training, the majority (68%) reported their most recent training was through in-service or staff development. Suburban Middle School offered two staff development sessions during the 2014-2015 school year focusing on exceptional education, which is an increase from zero the previous year. One of them was during pre-planning in which all teachers who were not already certified completed training on the verbal de-escalation strategies used by the county as part of the Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI) program. The other training was offered in the spring led by current exceptional education teachers at SMS, which reviewed accommodations that are appropriate for the classroom setting.

Perceptions Towards Working in Inclusive Classrooms

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 36 statements (question 7 had nine subcategories) originally categorized by Luseno (2001) into four factors. These factors consisted of statements designed to determine whether the respondents had: Factor 1) a positive attitude towards inclusion and students with disabilities; Factor 2) perceived themselves capable of adapting instruction for students with disabilities; Factor 3) had resources and support needed in inclusive classrooms; and Factor 4) perceived themselves knowledgeable of information needed for working in inclusive classrooms. Responses were recorded using a four-choice Likert response scale: 1= Disagree; 2= Tend to Disagree; 3= Tend to Agree; and 4= Agree.

Attitude Towards Inclusion and Students with Disabilities (Factor 1)

Table 7 summarizes the results for the 15 items that make-up Factor 1. These items were originally designed to identify the respondent's attitude toward inclusion (items 1 – 6) and toward educating students with specific identified disabilities in the regular classroom (item 7 with nine subcategories).

Overall, teachers reported being willing to make needed instruction adaptations for students with disabilities (91% Agree; 9% Tend to Agree) and 83% of teachers reported that they believed that inclusion is a desirable educational practice. However, 36% of teachers noted that they disagree or tend to disagree that most students with disabilities can be educated in the regular classroom. This may be because 62% of the teachers agree or tend to agree that many students with disabilities lack skills needed to master the regular course content

(Question 4) and 43% believe educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom is disruptive to other students (Question 6). Santoli, Sachs, Romey, and McClurg (2008) found similar results which the researchers noted as an area of great concern, seeing that the willingness is there, but the belief that special education students can be successfully accommodated in a regular classroom setting is not.

When asked about specific disability categories and their belief that students can be educated in the regular classroom, as seen in Table 7, teacher responses were the lowest (averages below 3.0) for Intellectual Disabilities (Mean= 2.42), Behavioral Disorders (Mean= 2.50), and Autism Spectrum Disorder (Mean= 2.83). These findings are similar to those found by Santoli, Sachs, Romey, and McClurg (2008), in which teachers' responses were lowest for behavior and intellectual disabilities. It is important to note that Autism Spectrum Disorder was not a category in their research survey.

The fact that Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) fell in the lowest three is a concern for the inclusion program at Suburban Middle School because SMS is one of nine autism cluster middle schools in the county. Although enrollment fluctuated throughout the year, at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, SMS served 27 students whose primary exceptionality was Autism Spectrum Disorder and 18 of those received the majority of their instruction included in the general education classroom. In addition, students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are educated, for the most part, in the general education classroom at their home school. There is not a middle school cluster for students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders in the district. Therefore, teachers are likely to have students with ASD or EBD in their

classrooms, yet teachers at SMS have the lowest ratings that students with these disabilities can be educated in the general education classroom.

The disability category which scored the highest average response of teachers agreeing that the students can be educated in the regular education classroom was those identified with Physical Disabilities (Mean= 3.69). These findings suggest that teachers at SMS are more willing to include students with mild disabilities than students with more severe disabilities. These findings are in agreement with Santoli, Sachs, Romey, and McClurg (2008). The following section will describe teachers' perceptions towards their ability to adapt instruction for students with disabilities.

Table 7: Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusion and Students with Disabilities (Factor 1)

Factor Statements	Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Tend to Agree	Agree	Total Responses	Mean
I am willing to make needed instructional adaptations for my students with disabilities.	0	0	5	48	53	3.91
I believe inclusion is a desirable educational practice.	1	8	22	22	53	3.23
I believe most students with disabilities (regardless of the level of their disability) can be educated in the regular classroom.	6	13	25	9	53	2.7
I believe many students with disabilities lack skills needed to master the regular classroom course content.	3	17	22	11	53	2.77
I believe in an academic program where all students are held to similar standards.	5	16	20	12	53	2.74
Educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom is disruptive to other students.	9	21	20	3	53	2.32
In my view, most students with the following disabilities CAN be educated in regular classrooms:						
Learning Disabilities (SLD)	3	2	15	32	52	3.46
Behavioral Disorders (EBD)	7	17	23	5	52	2.50
Physical Disabilities (Orthopedically Impaired)	0	1	14	37	52	3.69
Hearing Impairments (DHH)	1	3	14	34	52	3.56

Factor Statements	Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Tend to Agree	Agree	Total Responses	Mean
Visual Impairments	1	5	17	29	52	3.42
Communication Disorders (Speech/ Language Impaired)	1	2	23	26	52	3.42
Other Health Impairments (OHI)	1	4	25	22	52	3.31
Mental Impairments/ Intellectual Disabilities	5	26	15	6	52	2.42
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	1	14	30	7	52	2.83

Note: Rating Scale Range: 1= disagree; 2= tend to disagree; 3= tend to agree; 4= agree

Perception Towards Adapting Instruction for Students with Disabilities (Factor 2)

Table 8 presents the response data that make up Factor 2, consisting of four items designed to identify the participants' perception towards their ability to adapt instruction for students with disabilities. Overall, teachers reported averages above 3.0 on all four statements. The majority of teachers agree or tend to agree (98%) that they are able to adjust assignments when students with disabilities are having difficulty and 82% believe they have the skills to make instructional adaptations for students with disabilities. This is interesting to the researcher because during an informal conversation with the inclusive exceptional education team of teachers, they note that the majority of the general education teachers they support use direct instruction (lecturing) regardless of the students' needs in the classroom, which doesn't indicate adaptations to the instructional method (personal communication, May 29, 2015). In addition, based on the exceptional education teachers' observations, the accommodation most widely provided to students is extended time, which is only one of many adaptations/accommodations that could be utilized to help students be successful on assignments and assessments. Similar findings were found by Crawford and Ketterlin-Geller (2013), in which teachers most frequently cited the use of 5 accommodations in the classroom: (a) extended time, (b) separate setting, (c) small group, (d) directions and/or items read aloud, and (e) frequent breaks.

Based on the survey results teachers at SMS believe they can adapt their instruction and assignments for students with disabilities, but observations do not support that this is actually taking place on a regular basis. This might indicate that teachers don't truly understand what it

means to make adaptations/accommodations to their instructional method and/or assignments. Students with disabilities may use accommodations during instruction and assessment to meet their individual needs and are defined on the student's Individual Education Plan. In order for inclusion to be successful, general education teachers must change their teaching practices to meet the needs of all students (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007).

Table 8: Perception Towards Adapting Instruction (Factor 2)

Factor Statements	Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Tend to Agree	Agree	Total Responses	Mean
When my students with disabilities are experiencing difficulties with an assignment, I am able to adjust it to their level of need.	0	1	30	20	51	3.37
When my students with disabilities encounter problems with their assignments, I can assess whether it is appropriate for their ability.	0	3	26	22	51	3.37
If one of my students with disabilities is unable to remember information given in a lesson, I know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	0	11	26	14	51	3.06
I have the skills needed to make instructional adaptations for my students with disabilities.	0	9	24	18	51	3.18

Note: Rating Scale Range: 1= disagree; 2= tend to disagree; 3= tend to agree; 4= agree

Availability of Resources and Support Needed in Inclusive Classrooms (Factor 3)

Table 9 presents the results for Factor 3, which consists of nine items originally designed to identify the teacher participants' perceptions towards the availability of resources and support needed in inclusive classrooms. Teachers' responses indicate that the majority of teachers (82% tend to agree or agree) feel they have appropriate instructional materials needed for educating students with disabilities and 63% agree or tend to agree that a special educator is available when needed in the classroom. Teachers indicated a strong positive response (96%) that they receive support from the school principal and the majority (76%) feel that the parents of students with disabilities support them. However, 43% tend to feel they do not have sufficient time to consult with other teachers and 57% tend to believe they do not have sufficient time to undertake the responsibility of educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Most alarming is that 86% of the respondents agreed or tended to agree that the large teaching load in the regular classroom makes it difficult to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities. Overall, although teachers at SMS feel supported by their principal and parents, there are strong concerns that additional time is needed to allow for them to consult and collaborate with teachers and specialists working with students with disabilities. Similar results were found by Santoli, Sachs, Romey, and McClurg (2008) where time was the most significant area of concern for teachers working in a large middle school district in the Southeast.

Table 9: Availability of Resources and Support Needed in Inclusive Classrooms (Factor 3)

Factor Statements	Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Tend to Agree	Agree	Total Responses	Mean
A special educator is available for my classroom when needed.	6	13	16	16	51	2.82
Appropriate instructional materials needed for educating students with disabilities are available to my classroom.	3	11	22	15	51	2.96
I have a paraprofessional in my classroom when needed.	10	11	16	12	49	2.61
The parents of my students with disabilities support me.	2	10	24	13	49	2.98
I get support pertaining to my students with disabilities from my school principal.	0	2	21	25	48	3.48
I have sufficient time to consult with other teachers and specialist working with my students with disabilities.	8	13	19	9	49	2.59
I have sufficient time to go to meetings pertaining to my students with disabilities.	7	17	17	8	49	2.53
I have sufficient time to undertake the responsibility of educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom.	8	20	17	4	49	2.35
The large teaching load in the regular classroom makes it hard to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities.	3	4	19	23	49	3.27

Note: Rating Scale Range: 1= disagree; 2= tend to disagree; 3= tend to agree; 4= agree

Knowledge of Pertinent Information for Working in Inclusive Classrooms (Factor 4)

Table 10 presents the response data to Factor 4, which consists of eight items originally designed to identify the respondent's knowledge of information needed to work with special education students. Overwhelmingly teachers at Suburban Middle School felt strongly (100%) that they know characteristics of students with disabilities and 86% agree/tend to agree that they know various teaching strategies for helping students with disabilities master new concepts. In addition, 90% feel that if a student becomes disruptive they know techniques to redirect his/her behavior and 94% know behavior management strategies needed for controlling student's classroom behavior. These strong results could be an indicator of effective professional development training led by the school's behavior support team, along with district support, during preplanning of the 2014-2015 school-year focusing on verbal de-escalation strategies through Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI).

Table 10: Knowledge of Pertinent Information for Working in Inclusive Classrooms (Factor 4)

Factor Statements	Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Tend to Agree	Agree	Total Responses	Mean
I know various teaching strategies for helping students with disabilities master new concepts.	1	6	25	17	49	3.18
I know characteristics of students with disabilities.	0	0	28	21	49	3.43
I know special education law.	3	9	22	15	49	3.00
I know collaborative strategies needed for working with other colleagues in inclusive classrooms.	2	7	24	16	49	3.10
If any student becomes disruptive in my classroom, I feel assured I know some techniques to redirect his/her behavior.	0	5	23	21	49	3.33
I know behavior management strategies needed for controlling students' classroom behavior.	0	3	23	23	49	3.41
I try to help all my students find appropriate ways to deal with their feelings.	0	4	20	25	49	3.43
I usually participate in IEP meetings.	3	7	18	21	49	3.16

Note: Rating Scale Range: 1= disagree; 2= tend to disagree; 3= tend to agree; 4= agree

Collaboration Rates between Special Education and General Education Teachers

Table 11 presents the results of six items originally designed to identify the extent to which teachers collaborate to support students in their inclusive classrooms. Teachers were specifically asked to indicate the frequency (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, or never) in which they collaborate and/or provide support. Seven teachers responded that they team-teach daily, while 30 never do so. This is not unusual as special education teachers are usually assigned to specific classes to provide in-class or "team teaching" support. At SMS this is most often provided through the support facilitation model, in which, the exceptional education teacher will "push-in" to the general education classroom and provide support to students with disabilities. This may be weekly or on a daily basis, as needed by the student(s) and in accordance with their Individual Education Plans (IEP). Additional comments and concerns regarding the implementation of the support facilitation model will be discussed later.

Teachers noted that they exchange information regarding student progress for the most part weekly (31%) or monthly (31%). The highest frequency was seen in regards to teachers providing assistance to each other regarding students with disabilities (daily= 18%; weekly= 29%; monthly= 22%). However, 14% still reported never providing assistance to each other. Also, one-third (33%) of the teachers reported never collaborating to develop instructional plans and 18% noted they never share information on effective teaching practices. This lack of collaboration between teachers sharing information on effective teaching practices and providing assistance to one another, as well as not collaborating to develop instructional lesson plans, will be discussed later and addressed through the professional development framework.

Table 11: Collaboration Rates between Teachers at Suburban Middle School

Factor Statements	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually	Never	Total	Mean
Please indicate the frequency which you work collaboratively with the special education or general education teacher.								
Develop you instructional plans	3	9	6	6	9	16	49	4.16
Exchange student progress information	3	15	15	6	5	5	49	3.20
Conduct joint parent/teacher conferences	2	3	15	11	12	5	48	3.90
Team-teach in the regular classroom	7	5	1	3	3	30	49	4.63
Share information on effective teaching strategies	4	16	6	8	6	9	49	3.47
Provide assistance to each other regarding students with disabilities	9	14	11	5	3	7	49	3.00

Note: Rating Scale Range: 1= daily; 2= weekly; 3= monthly; 4= quarterly; 5= annually; 6= never

Summary and Implications that Impact the Professional Development Framework

Instructional teachers at Suburban Middle School were asked to participate in an anonymous survey in order to understand their perceptions about inclusion and students with disabilities. A total of 53 responses were completed, which is a 60% return rate. Of the participants, 42 were general education teachers and 7 identified themselves as special education teachers.

Encouragingly, overall teachers at SMS believed that inclusion is a desirable educational practice and reported being willing to make needed instructional adaptations for students with disabilities. However, in contrast 36% of teachers reported that they disagree or tend to disagree that most students with disabilities can be educated in the regular classroom. In addition, over half (62%) of the teachers agree or tend to agree that many students with disabilities lack skills needed to master the regular course content.

Participants were also asked if they believe that specific disability categories can be educated in the regular classroom. The two categories with the lowest average responses were Intellectual Disabilities and Behavioral Disorders. However, 90% of the teachers noted they know techniques to redirect a student's behavior if he/she becomes disruptive and 94% believe they know behavior management strategies needed for controlling student's classroom behavior. These results indicate a discrepancy in teacher beliefs, since a high percent indicated they know behavior management strategies but continue to believe students with Behavioral Disorders cannot be educated in the regular classroom. Although teachers were provided a one-day training on verbal de-escalation strategies, further research is needed to determine if

teachers are utilizing the strategies presented and the amount of time students are spending out of the classroom for behavioral concerns. The third lowest rated disability category by teachers was Autism Spectrum Disorder. This is of high concern since SMS is an autism cluster school and many students who have been found eligible for the ASD program are included in general education classrooms.

Although the majority of teachers believe they know various teaching strategies for helping students with disabilities master new concepts, over half tend to believe they do not have sufficient time to undertake the responsibility of educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom and don't feel there is sufficient time to consult with other teachers and specialists working with students with disabilities. This is evident in the fact 18% of the participants noted they never share information on effective teaching practices and 14% reported never providing assistance to each other regarding students with disabilities. In addition, one-third (33%) of the teachers reported never collaborating to develop instructional plans. Collaboration is a key ingredient in creating a successful inclusion model, especially in the secondary classroom (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007). Furthermore, shared planning for the content area teachers and special education teachers allowing for meaningful time to plan for the individual needs of all students is essential (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007) and the fact this is not consistently happening at SMS is a concern and will be addressed further through the framework.

Based on the results, although teachers believe that inclusion is a desirable educational practice, almost half of them believe educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom is disruptive to other students. Teachers must provide necessary accommodations,

as well as differentiate instruction and assignments to meet the unique needs of SWD. Teachers reported that they believe they have the necessary skills to adapt their instruction and adjust assignments to meet the needs of students with disabilities, but they strongly feel that the large teaching load in the regular classroom makes it hard to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities. This could be improved through effective collaboration and partnering with exceptional education teachers in order to share responsibilities and roles in and out of the classroom.

These results indicate that on the surface teachers at SMS support the idea of inclusion, but have underlying concerns with including some students and meeting the needs of all students. Of the 49 responses, 37% noted they have not had any training on teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings, which is alarming. Therefore, it is believed that through targeted professional development, teachers will increase their understanding of inclusion and learn strategies to support SWD in the general education classroom to increase student performance.

Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices

Researchers have noted that professional development (PD) is necessary to ensure teachers are well prepared to successfully implement inclusive programs (Blecker & Boakes, 2010; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009; Santoli, Sachs, Romey, & McClurg, 2008; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon, & Rothlein, 1994; Kahn & Lewis, 2014; Able, Sreckovic, Schultz, Garwood, & Sherman, 2015) and has been shown to improve teacher perceptions about students with disabilities and their ability to successfully include them in their classroom

(Royster, Reglin, Losike-Sedimo, 2014; Kosko & Wilkins, 2009). Bull and Buechler (1997) made recommendations regarding effective professional development and suggest that it should be school based, use coaching and other follow up procedures, is collaborative, and is embedded in the daily lives of teachers, providing for continuous growth (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). In addition, professional development that prepare teachers to work in inclusive settings must be individually tailored to the unique qualities and needs of a given school (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002) and it is essential to elicit and address the general education teachers' concerns (Santoli, Sachs, Romey, & McClurg, 2008).

Based on the survey results and relevant research, three essential elements of the Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices (Figure 3) were developed including: (a) school culture and understanding of inclusion, (b) effective inclusive teaching strategies, and (c) collaboration models and techniques. The goal of the professional development framework is for teachers to understand the positive effects of inclusion on the performance of students with disabilities and to provide them strategies and techniques to improve student outcomes. Through improved performance in class, it is expected that students will make adequate gains in order to close the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities at Suburban Middle School.

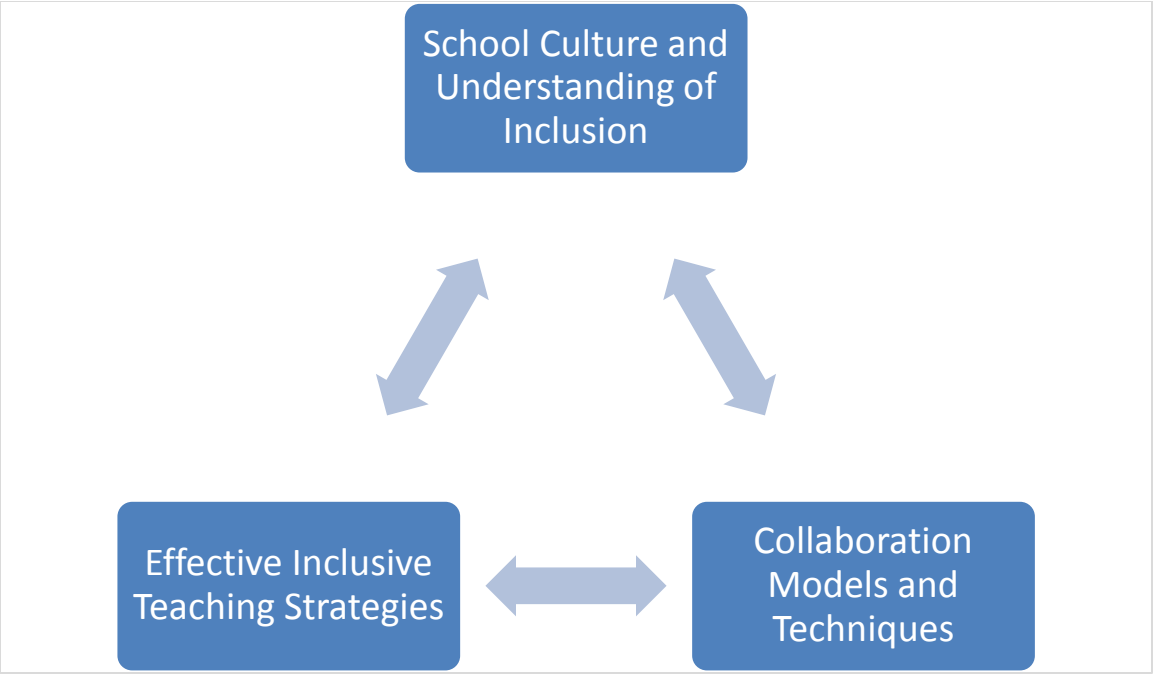

Figure 3: Essential Elements of the Professional Development Framework

CHAPTER 3: ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

This dissertation in practice set out to investigate secondary education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities and their ability to be included in the general education classroom in order to develop a professional development framework to enhance inclusive practices. The positive attitude of teachers toward special education students is a critical factor to the success of inclusion (Santoli, Sachs, Romey, McClurg, 2008; Luseno, 2001). Through proactive professional development and collaboration the often overwhelming feeling teachers get when trying to work with students with special needs can be eliminated (Costley, 2013).

Suburban Middle School (SMS) is a large school located in the tenth largest school district in the country with over 187,000 students. SMS has approximately 1,400 students, of which about 11% receive services and supports as a student with a disability (SWD) under IDEA. The majority of these students are educated for the majority of their school day in the general education classroom. For purposes of this dissertation in practice, inclusion will be defined as the practice of students with disabilities participating in the general education classroom alongside their non-disabled peers, affording them access to the general curriculum. In order to investigate the teachers' perception of SWD and their inclusion in the general education classroom, a survey was sent out electronically to all instructional staff at Suburban Middle School.

The results indicate that teachers at SMS for the most part believe that inclusion is a desirable educational practice, although 14% alarmingly do not agree. In addition, 36% of teachers noted that they disagree or tend to disagree that most students with disabilities can

be educated in the regular classroom and almost half of the teachers believe educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom is disruptive to other students. When asked about specific disability categories, teachers reported lower belief ratings that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder can be educated in the regular classroom. This is concerning as SMS is one of only nine autism cluster schools in the district. Teachers also reported that they believe they have the necessary skills to adapt their instruction and adjust assignments to meet the needs of students with disabilities, but they strongly feel that the large teaching load in the regular classroom makes it difficult to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities. In addition, general education and special education teachers are not frequently, if ever, collaborating on the development of instructional plans. These results indicate that on the surface teachers at SMS support the idea of inclusion, but they have underlying concerns with including some students and meeting the needs of all students in the general education setting. The following section reviews characteristics of successful inclusion at the secondary level that were taken into account when developing the professional development framework.

Characteristics of Successful Inclusive Classrooms at the Secondary Level

It has been noted that inclusion at the secondary level presents significant and unique challenges (Scanlon & Baker, 2012; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Able, Sreckovic, Schultz, Garwood, and Sherman, 2015; Cole & McLeskey, 1997). Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) identified seven variables that appear to be meaningfully associated with successful inclusion at the elementary and secondary levels. First, there must be administrative support at the district and building level. This support includes positive attitudes and resource allocation. Fortunately,

at Suburban Middle School, teachers overwhelmingly indicated a strong positive response that they receive support from the school's principal.

The second variable for successful inclusion is that there must be support from special education personnel (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). This support includes assistance with planning, instructional adaptations, co-teaching, and classroom assistance from paraprofessionals. At SMS, 63% of the teachers agree or tend to agree that a special educator is available when needed in the classroom and over half reported that they have a paraprofessional in the classroom when needed. Assistance with planning and need for co-teaching strategies will be addressed through the Collaboration Models and Techniques element of the framework.

The next variable noted by Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) is the importance of an accepting and positive atmosphere, an area of need found through the research completed for this dissertation in practice. This is due to the fact that 36% of teachers noted that they disagree or tend to disagree that most students with disabilities can be educated in the regular classroom and almost half of the teachers believe educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom is disruptive to other student. It is intended that this variable will be addressed through the School Culture and Understanding of Inclusion element of the framework.

The next two variables outlined by Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) are the need for appropriate curriculum, allowing for a variety of diverse learning needs and effective general teaching skills. At SMS, the majority of teachers (82% tend to agree or agree) feel they have appropriate instructional materials needed for educating students with disabilities.

The use of effective teaching strategies and skills is the next variable found to be associated with successful inclusion (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Unfortunately at SMS, 57% of teachers tend to believe they do not have sufficient time to undertake the responsibility of educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Strategies that teachers can use in their classroom to meet the needs of all their students, especially those with disabilities, will be addressed through the Effective Inclusive Teaching Strategies element of the framework.

The final variable identified by Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) is the use of peer assistance. Researchers note that peers can be helpful in supporting the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Teacher Interest in Professional Development

It is important to include the general education teachers' "voices" in guiding decisions for how to best support them (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009; Santoli, Sachs, Romey, & McClurg, 2008). Therefore, as part of the survey given to teachers at SMS a list of exceptional education topics were included and teachers were asked to rate their level of interest in learning more about each topic. As seen in Table 12, the three topics with the highest mean were: (a) instructional methods and differentiated instruction (M=3.23); (b) positive behavioral interventions and supports (M=3.14); and (c) best practices for inclusive settings (M=3.08). The next two topics with the highest means (both M=3.0) were understanding and implementing IEP accommodations and consultation and collaboration with ESE teachers. All of these topics were taken into account when developing the PD framework discussed further in the following sections.

Table 12: Teacher Interests for Professional Development

Exceptional Education Topic	No Interest	Little Interest	Moderate Interest	Strong Interest	Total Responses	Mean
IDEA and general understanding of exceptional education	8	10	20	10	48	2.67
Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)	6	9	23	10	48	2.77
Understanding of student plans (IEP, 504, EP)	5	7	20	16	48	2.98
Implementing IEP accommodations	3	9	21	15	48	3.00
Implementing positive behavioral interventions and supports	2	7	22	18	49	3.14
Instructional methods and differentiated instruction	1	7	20	20	48	3.23
Progress monitoring and formative assessment	3	11	20	14	48	2.94
Consultation and collaboration with ESE teachers	2	11	20	15	48	3.00
Best practices for inclusive settings	2	9	20	17	48	3.08
Universal design for learning	4	10	20	13	47	2.89
Developing co-teaching strategies and opportunities	2	13	18	15	48	2.96

Note: Rating Scale Range: 1= no interest; 2= little interest; 3= moderate interest; 4= strong interest

Teacher Conceptions of Effective Professional Development

To effectively implement professional development (PD), it is imperative to understand the characteristics of PD that are considered fundamental by teachers because only teachers can actually change their instructional practice. Therefore, if PD is to have an impact on instruction, "it must be delivered—and received—in ways that teachers find meaningful and relevant" (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009, p. 50).

When researching school staff's conceptions of effective professional development, defined as qualities that facilitate improvements in teacher knowledge and practice, Quick, Holtzman, and Chaney (2009) found five key characteristics that emerged as fundamental to teachers: (a) provides time for collaboration within grade levels or across grade levels; (b) provides opportunities for modeling, practice, and feedback; (c) is based on the needs of the teachers; (d) is provided in a safe, trusting environment; and (d) is connected to broader school goals and to other professional learning opportunities (p.53).

One of the most important aspects of effective professional development noted by teachers and leadership team members is having time for teachers to collaborate with each other because teachers value the perspectives of other teachers, often above expert opinion (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009). Several leadership team members in the study also stressed the importance of providing PD that allows teachers within or across grades to plan together and discuss concepts students may find difficult to grasp (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009). They noted that these opportunities are often more effective than the large staff

meetings because learning is more individualized to the needs of the teachers (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009).

In addition, the opportunity to observe models of instructional strategies, practice new techniques, and receive feedback were important features of effective professional development noted by teachers and leadership team members. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to observe the demonstration of a lesson, a new technique, or instructional strategy, and have the chance to practice, followed by immediate feedback. Leadership team members also cited the importance of teachers having the opportunity to practice new skills before being evaluated on them (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009).

Both teachers and leadership team members reported that effective professional learning is responsive, addressing the identified needs of teachers, especially with respect to understanding how to address particular student needs (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009). Professional development should also be differentiated based on individual teacher's knowledge and specific areas of need, rather than general for all teachers. Therefore, effective professional development should address topics that are relevant to the teachers' background, current situation, and classroom needs (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009).

Finally, teachers noted the importance of professional development being provided in a safe and trusting environment and connected to broader school goals and other professional learning opportunities. Teachers noted that in order for professional development to be effective, they must feel they can ask questions and engage in collaborative discussions in a non-evaluative environment (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009). Also, teachers felt that professional development experiences should be connected to one another and to the overall

vision for the school. This allows for continuity and coherence, with the ultimate goal being to improve student progress.

Taking the findings of Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney (2009) into account, along with other current research on effective professional development, Hunzicker (2010) developed the *Characteristics of Effective Professional Development: A Checklist*. The checklist is broken down into five areas focusing on PD being supportive, job-embedded, instructional in focus, collaborative, and ongoing. The checklist can be utilized by the administration and other school leaders implementing the professional development lessons in order to maximize the value teachers place on the information presented in an effort to impact instructional practices.

Time spent in professional development is another important factor that effects teachers' beliefs that they can adapt instruction for students with disabilities. Although Kosko and Wilkins (2009) note that some professional development is better than none, they found that having eight hours or more of professional development is more than twice as effective as less than eight hours in improving teachers' self-perceived ability to adapt instruction. Therefore, professional development on specific teaching strategies for students with IEPs should be conducted periodically and more than once a year (Kosko & Wilkins, 2009).

Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices

"High-quality professional development is of critical importance in ensuring that teachers and other school professionals have the necessary skills to implement and sustain new practices that are needed to support inclusive programs" (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010, p. 62). For inclusion to work in practice, substantial commitments of resources, personnel, and training

are essential (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997). Table 13 outlines the professional development framework components that support the areas of need as found through the teacher survey. The following sections will further develop each component of the framework and provide research based strategies and techniques for including students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Table 13: Professional Development Framework to Meet Teacher Needs

Framework Component	Noted Areas of Need
School Culture and Understanding of Inclusion	Belief that students with disabilities cannot be educated in the regular classroom
School Culture and Understanding of Inclusion	Low beliefs by teachers that students with ASD can be educated in the regular education classroom
Effective Inclusive Teaching Strategies	Lack of varied strategies to support students with disabilities in the classroom
Effective Inclusive Teaching Strategies	Belief that many students with disabilities lack skills needed to master regular course content
Collaboration Models and Techniques	Lack of sharing information on effective teaching strategies for students with disabilities
Collaboration Models and Techniques	Limited planning between special education and general education teachers

The following sections will focus on each element of the framework as outlined in Table 13, including school culture and understanding of inclusion, effective inclusive teaching strategies, and collaboration models and techniques. The goal of the professional development framework is for administrators and other school leaders to provide appropriate learning

opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding of inclusion and to provide them strategies and techniques to improve student outcomes in an effort to close the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities at Suburban Middle School.

Element 1: School Culture and Understanding of Inclusion

"Inclusion is a philosophy that begins, not at the classroom level, but at a much more global level. A school for all students begins with each administrator, faculty, and staff embracing and celebrating diversity as well as the determination to meet the unique needs of each student" (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007, p. 345). Therefore, inclusion does not simply refer to the physical placement of students with disabilities (SWD), but refers to a condition or state of being (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). The concept of inclusion implies a sense of belonging and acceptance (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001), which goes beyond merely the classroom. "Successful inclusive schools emit a feeling that the school is a community working toward common goals" (Carpenter & Dyle, 2007, p. 346).

The Supporting Effective Teaching project's purpose was to build a framework that describes the relationships between key variables that are important for developing effective inclusive settings (Stanovich & Jordan, 2002). The research has demonstrated that there are three major teacher variables and one school variable that provide the key to successful inclusion as measured by student outcomes. The "school norm" variable is a composite measure of the beliefs held by the principal and the other teachers in the school, which parallels the teacher beliefs about students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general

education classroom (Stanovich & Jordan, 2002). This is important, as it shows the connection between the school's cultural norm and improved student outcomes.

The development and implementation of inclusion programs at the secondary level have been much slower than at the elementary level due to various barriers which have likely contributed to the perceived resistance toward inclusive programs on the part of the teacher and administrators (Cole & McLeskey, 1997). These barriers include complex curricular material, larger gap between skill level and classroom demands, a broader range of curricular content, teacher centered classrooms, teachers as content specialists, students transitioning through adolescents, and there are greater accountability pressures from outside agencies at the secondary level. Regardless of such barriers, all faculty must accept responsibility for nurturing the development of all students in an inclusive school and they must work together as a team to make sure that the needs of all students are met (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). Some important questions posed by Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) in regard to this element include:

- When discussing students, are words like *our* or *we* used more often than words like *your, you, they*, or *their*?
- Are students with disabilities included in any school accountability system that may be used?
- When problems arise involving students with disabilities, are these challenges shared by general and special education teachers, or is the special education teacher viewed as being solely responsible for "dealing with it?" When problems arise involving non-

disabled students, do special education teachers take an active part in resolving the issue?

- Are the success of students with disabilities celebrated by general as well as special education teachers? What about the successes of nondisabled students?

When speaking with teachers and other school personnel at SMS, it is common for the researcher to hear students with disabilities referred to as one of "their" students, implying special education teachers. Cameron and Cook (2013) note that it is important that the sentiments indicating that general education teachers do not consider themselves primarily responsible for educating students with severe disabilities be addressed. Through the professional development framework and the support of the administration, it is hoped that the culture that currently exists of "their students" will become more about "our students."

Topics to Enhance School Culture for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

"One key variable for the success of students with ASD in inclusive settings is the overall school environment" (Crosland & Dunlap, 2012, p. 258). As Suburban Middle School is one of only nine middle schools in the entire district to be a cluster school for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it is of high concern that teachers reported lower belief ratings that students with ASD can be educated in the regular classroom. Therefore, in order to improve the school climate and culture concerning these students in particular, it is imperative that teachers have a better understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder. As the prevalence rate of ASD is now 1 in 68 children (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014) and given that SMS is an autism cluster school, it is very likely that teachers will have a student with ASD in their

classroom and need to have a positive perception of their ability to be educated in the general education classroom.

The prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder increased twentyfold to thirtyfold since the earliest epidemiologic studies were conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Due to this increase in reported number of children receiving services for ASD, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) established the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network (ADDM) to collect data to provide estimates of the prevalence of ASD, as well as other developmental disabilities, in the United States. Table 14 shows the upward trend in the number of children with ASD.

Table 14: Identified Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder

Surveillance Year	Number of ADDM sites reporting	Prevalence per 1,000 children	Approximately 1 in XX children
2002	6	6.7	1 in 150
2004	14	6.6	1 in 150
2004	8	8.0	1 in 125
2006	11	9.0	1 in 110
2008	14	11.3	1 in 88
2010	11	14.7	1 in 68

Note: Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder—Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network Report, 2014, Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6302.pdf

As a result of the increasing number of children with ASD entering regular classrooms, teachers are being asked to provide suitable educational programs for this specific group

(Higginson & Chatfiled, 2012). It is important for teachers and all staff members to understand Autism Spectrum Disorder and common characteristics in order to effectively support these students. Able, Sreckovic, Schultz, Garwood, and Sherman (2015) found that general education teachers strongly expressed their need to know more about ASD and how to accommodate students with ASD in the classroom. Knowledge about specific disability characteristics is important in order for teachers to actively participate in the IEP process (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009). The America Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition (DSM-5, 2013) provides standardized criteria for the medical diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. These disorders include deficits in varying degrees in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors.

Deficits in social interactions can include a limited understanding of body language, gestures, and/or facial expressions, as well as restricted eye contact. This impacts students' ability to develop, maintain, and understand relationships, making it difficult sometimes for them to make friends and may appear to not be interested in their peers. Repetitive and restricted behaviors can include motor movements such as flapping hands or echolalia. Students with ASD may also favor sameness and have an inflexible adherence to routines or ritualized patterns. It is also common for children with ASD to have differences in sensory input; that may include adverse response to specific sounds, touch, or textures.

In addition to the deficits in communication and social interactions, the secondary school setting over the elementary setting, can be more difficult for students with ASD who struggle with transitions and lack of structure (Able et al., 2015). These additional challenges include the fact that students have multiple teachers, changing schedules, and unstructured

times such as lunch and time before and after school. Unfortunately, research suggests that students with ASD in inclusive settings have fewer friendships than their typically developing peers (Able et al., 2015), although not surprising with their social deficits. At the middle school level, Campbell (2007) found that providing descriptive and explanatory information about students with ASD to students without disabilities results in more positive attitudes toward students with ASD (as cited in Able et al., 2015).

Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, and Thomson (2014) investigated teachers' perceptions of successful strategies for the inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Findings revealed several recommended strategies. "Building a climate of acceptance and social inclusion for children with ASD is essential" (Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, & Thomson, 2014, p. 116). This is accomplished by minimizing opportunities for exclusion. A critical element of inclusion is the active participation of students with disabilities in the everyday functioning of the classroom and engaging them in meaningful ways (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). One strategy is to use a variety of grouping methods to support all students' learning (Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, & Thomson, 2014). These flexible groups encourage students to make personal connections with different members of their class and build a supportive classroom community for students with disabilities (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005).

"Disability awareness is an important curricular goal in creating a warm and supportive classroom community" (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005, p. 198). In order to increase disability awareness, it is important to provide all students with information about ASD, with an emphasis on accepting differences and finding ways to include them in all lessons and activities (Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, & Thomson, 2014). This can be accomplished through disability

awareness and/or sensitivity lessons and activities for the class to help increase the inclusion of the student with ASD. There is a "need for building a school community of acceptance and tolerance" for the successful inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Able et al., 2015, p. 50). "Thus, teaching about diversity—race, class, ethnicity, ability, etc.—should be an integral part of the curriculum in inclusive classrooms" (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005, p. 198). Differences among students should be viewed as something to be valued, rather than something to be eliminated (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). Therefore, it is imperative for teachers and students to understand common characteristics of ASD and to build a culture of acceptance by focusing on abilities, minimizing differences, and enhancing children's knowledge about ASD (Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, & Thomson, 2014).

Although there can be challenges to working with children with ASD in the general education setting, research findings revealed several recommended strategies that were successful for including children with ASD. These included: (a) providing proper training and resources for teachers and supports for students, (b) utilizing relevant colleagues and working collaboratively to optimize the best strategies for including SWD, (c) having teaching methods that align with the student's interests and abilities, (d) having an open communication system with parents and child, and (e) building a climate of acceptance through disability awareness and sensitivity training (Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, & Thomson, 2014).

Through professional development focusing on teaching children with ASD, general education teachers became more knowledgeable about ASD and their attitudes became more tolerant and accepting (Higginson & Chatfield, 2012). Teachers were also less likely to make judgements about unusual behaviors that students with ASD exhibited in the classroom.

"Addressing attitudes towards ASD is a major key to changing teacher practice" (Higginson & Chatfield, 2012, p. 34). Through professional development opportunities, teachers were able to share success stories which led to a better understanding of children with ASD and teachers understood the necessity of using recommended strategies to better include children with ASD (Higginson & Chatfield, 2012).

Topics to Enhance Teachers' Understanding of Inclusion and Students with Disabilities

Based on the fact that almost half of the teachers at Suburban Middle School believe educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom is disruptive to other students and 17% don't believe inclusion is a desirable educational practice, it is important for them to understand the history and concept of inclusion. Jenkins and Ornelles (2009) found that teachers reported less confidence in knowledge of areas related to special education legislation, policies, and current information. This level of confidence is of concern due to the legal responsibilities of general education teachers to be an active member of the educational team and meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classroom (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009).

"Students tend to take cues from the teacher and so the teacher's attitudes toward disability will greatly influence how students treat difference" (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005, p. 198). In order to improve teacher's perceptions about students with disabilities being included in their classrooms, teachers need to have an understanding of their legal responsibilities for including SWD in the general education classroom. Therefore, the initial topics that will be addressed through professional development lessons include a history of

exceptional student education including the federal legislation (IDEA) mandating that students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and opportunity to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The concept of LRE leads to the foundation behind the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

In addition, for teachers to better understand the rational for students' Individual Education Plans (IEP), it is important for them to know their students' history including evaluations completed and prior assessment data. As well as, the student's academic goals and data needed to support progress, or lack of, towards meeting individual benchmarks as laid out in the student's IEP. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have the opportunity to review the various parts of an IEP and the impact it has on their instruction, assignments, and assessments. Although many teachers at SMS participate in IEP meetings and the majority provide written input when they are not in attendance, as an insider in the organization and LEA representative, the researcher has never had a general education teacher ask to see a student's cumulative file. It is important to take into account that some exceptional education teachers do provide the general education teachers with either electronic or paper copies of all current IEPs and oversee they are being implemented. However, in an effort to move away from the often perceived mentality that IEPs and their implementation are the exceptional education teacher's responsibility, the general education teachers need to take a more active role in knowing and understanding what each student's individual plan states.

Able et al. (2015) suggest making IEPs more accessible and useful for the classroom teacher. Teachers specifically noted that IEPs were too long to go through to understand

student's needs and characteristics (Able et al., 2015). Teachers recommended brief information outlining each student's needs with corresponding classroom accommodations. Therefore, following Quick, Holtzman, and Chaney's (2009) findings on effective PD, an example lesson would be to separate teachers into teams within each grade level (collaboration) and give them an IEP of a student they currently teach (relevance). Using the *IEP Overview Worksheet* developed by the researcher, teachers will develop essentially an IEP "cheat-sheet" for themselves on each student they serve with an IEP. This will give teachers the opportunity to investigate the student's needs and goals as it pertains to their classroom, as well as better understand the IEP document itself to aide in their active participation in future planning meetings (relevance). This lesson is also aligned to the school and district's goal to improve student achievement and reduce the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities, providing a broader connection for the teachers. The lessons would be led by an exceptional education teacher, who is not an evaluator, in order to provide a safe and trusting environment, to allow for open and honest communication. This lesson would be most effective during the week of pre-planning provided by the district, so teachers are prepared for the first day of school. Follow-up sessions could take place during daily planning times, professional learning community meetings, and/or grade-level meetings with guidance from an exceptional education teacher.

Element 2: Effective Inclusive Teaching Strategies

As teachers are tasked with teaching a more diverse group of students with various backgrounds and abilities, it is imperative that they know and utilize strategies to support their

students, especially those with disabilities, in the general education classroom. At Suburban Middle School, 36% of teachers noted that they disagree or tend to disagree that most students with disabilities can be educated in the regular classroom and 62% of the teachers agree or tend to agree that many students with disabilities lack skills needed to master the regular course content. Cole and McLeskey (1997) note that secondary education classrooms tend to be more teacher-centered and infrequently differentiate for varying students' needs and that the deficits of students with disabilities could be addressed best by changing the general education classroom and assisting SWD within these settings to gain the skills necessary to succeed. The perspective of teachers that students with disabilities must attempt to "fit" into the general education classroom must change, to one where the focus turns to making sure the general education classroom better meets the needs of ALL students (Cole & McLeskey, 1997).

Jenkins and Ornelles (2009) found that teachers have an awareness that students with disabilities learn differently and require strategies and supports beyond those needed by students without disabilities and that this awareness is the precursor to the actual practice of implementing these strategies. Therefore, teachers must have both confidence and ability to implement inclusive practices (Jenkins & Ornelles, 2009).

Researchers have found that special educators tend to use techniques and strategies for differentiation more frequently than regular education teachers (Blecker & Boakes, 2010). These results indicate the need for training of general educators on various instructional strategies to support students with disabilities. Therefore, these strategies are an integral part of the professional development framework developed as part of this dissertation in practice. In the following sections, these strategies will be discussed and examples provided.

Research Based Strategies

Researchers are continuously studying teaching strategies that positively affect student learning. As part of the professional development framework, teachers will be exposed to multiple research-based strategies. As part of Quick, Holtzman, and Chaney's (2009) research on teacher's conception of effective professional development, teachers at SMS will be given the opportunity to observe a demonstration or model of the instructional strategy, and have the chance to practice. Follow-up sessions will provide teachers a chance to share with their colleagues any successes and/or challenges they may have faced in an effort to allow for collaborative learning.

Rosenshine (2012) developed a list of ten research-based principles of instruction from research in cognitive science, research on master teachers, and research on cognitive supports. These strategies are not exclusively for students with disabilities, but instead are strategies to support all learners.

First, teachers should begin a lesson with a short review of previous learning. Research shows that effective teachers began their lessons with a five to eight minute review of previously learned concepts. In addition, teachers provided additional practice on facts and skills in an effort to have them become automatic. It is also important to review knowledge and concepts that will be relevant for that day's lesson to limit the necessity of recalling old information while trying to learn new information.

Next, teachers should present new material in small steps, followed by practice. Due to the fact that working memory can only handle small amounts of information at once, presenting too much material at once may confuse students. Successful teachers present only a

small amount of new material at one time, and they taught in such a way that each point was mastered prior to moving to the next point. It is also necessary to frequently check for understanding and reteach material when necessary.

This leads to the next strategy, effective teachers ask a large number of questions and check the responses of all students. The most effective teachers also ask students to explain the process they used to find the answer. In addition, it is important to provide students with explanations, give examples, and supervise students as they practice new material.

Effective teachers also model and "think aloud" while demonstrating how to solve a problem. In the classroom, many skills can be conveyed by providing prompts, modeling, and then guiding students as they develop independence of the skill. Worked examples is also a form of modeling, often used in math and science, to provide a step-by-step demonstration of how to perform a task or solve a problem.

Effective teachers guide their students' practice of new material. Students need to spend additional time rephrasing, elaborating, and summarizing new material in order to store it in long-term memory. The most successful teachers spent more time in guided practice, which led to higher rates of student engagement during individual work because they are better prepared and make less errors.

Effective teachers frequently stop and check for student understanding throughout a lesson. This can be done by asking questions, asking students to summarize the lesson, or ask if they agree or disagree with another student's answers. An ineffective way to check for understanding is to simply ask if there are any questions. Checking for students understanding in a meaningful way can help limit the development of misconceptions.

The most effective teachers obtain high success rates during classroom instruction. This is because they complete the previously discussed strategies (teaching in small steps, guiding practice, and checking for understanding). The optimal success rate for fostering student achievement appears to be about 80%. This level shows students are learning the material but also being challenged. If students are not showing a high rate of success during classroom instruction, then it is likely they will make errors during independent practice which can lead to learned errors.

Providing scaffolds for difficult tasks is an effective teaching strategy. These scaffolds can then be withdrawn as students become more competent. Scaffolds are considered a form of guided practice. Although scaffolds may include modeling or thinking aloud, they may also be tools, such as cue cards or checklists. Effective teachers also are able to anticipate their students' errors and warn them ahead of time.

Following guided practice, is often independent practice. More practice is necessary in order for students to become fluent and automatic in a skill. It is important that independent practice involve the same material that was covered during guided practice. Research has found that students were more engaged when their teacher circulated the room and monitored independent worktime.

Finally, effective teachers engage students in weekly and monthly review of skills and lessons taught. Allowing for such reviews helps students organize information into patterns and chunks for long retrieval. Researchers found that at the secondary level, classes that had weekly quizzes scored better on final exams than did classes with only one or two quizzes during the term. These allow for students to review the material and teachers to assess their mastery.

Accommodations, Modifications, and Interventions

A student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) lists the special education services and supports determined necessary by the IEP team to meet the student's educational needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act also mandates the consideration and implementation of accommodations or modifications, however legislation does not provide a clear definition of these terms. Clarification of terminology is important as general and special educators are expected to provide these strategies to meet the student's needs.

Harrison, Bunford, Evans, and Owens (2013) followed a four-step process to appropriately define modifications, accommodations, and interventions. These steps included: (a) surveying the literature and summarizing definitions, (b) identifying components of definitions most often (>70%) proposed by authors, (c) identifying components that were included in a small number of authors and compared them, and (d) comparing the resulting definitions to trends in the field. The following sections will provide a working definition and examples that can be utilized in the classroom.

Accommodations

"Accommodations are an important part of effective educational programs for students with disabilities" (Florida Department of Education [FL-DOE], 2010, p. 19). Harrison, Bunford, Evans, and Owens' (2013) definition states that, "Accommodations are changes to practice in schools that hold a student to the same standard as students without disabilities but provide differential boost to mediate the impact of the disability on access to the general education curriculum" (p. 556). It is important to note that "accommodations do not reduce the learning

expectations" for students with disabilities (FL-DOE, 2010, p. 15) but are "intended to mediate the impact of a given disability" (Harrison, Bunford, Evans, & Owens, 2013, p. 557). Crawford and Ketterlin-Geller (2013) note that good professional development should move teachers beyond knowledge of the state's allowable accommodations, and empower them to make appropriate decisions for each student. It is expected that through the professional development framework presented in this dissertation in practice, teachers will gain an understanding of the purpose of accommodations and how to effectively implement them in their classroom because it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide accommodations to students with disabilities.

Accommodations are often sorted into four categories as outlined by the Florida Department of Education (2010). *Presentation* accommodations focus on how the student will access information. *Response* accommodations focus on how the student will demonstrate competence. *Setting* accommodations focus on where the student will be instructed and assessed. Finally, *scheduling* accommodations focus on when the student will be instructed and assessed. As seen in Table 15, examples of accommodations in each category are provided. It is important to note this is not an exhaustive list but provides various examples to show the different accommodations that can be used to meet individual student's educational needs based on the effect of their disability.

Table 15: Accommodations

Accommodation Category	Effect of Disability	Accommodation(s)
Presentation	Unable to see standard print	• Large print material
	Loses place while reading	• Card with cut-out window (Reading Tracker)
	Unable to recognize or decode printed words	• Read aloud by person • Recorded books • Screen reader software (text-to-speech)
Response	Unable to use handwriting	• Scribe to record dictated response • Word processor or computer
	Lack of coordination, weakness	• Pencil or pen grip • Writing utensils of different diameters
	Difficulty with computation fluency	• Concrete materials and manipulatives • Chart of math facts
Setting	Has sensory limitations	• Specialized lighting • Acoustical treatment
	Difficulty maintaining attention	• Reduced distractions • Preferential seating • Small group setting

Accommodation Category	Effect of Disability	Accommodation(s)
Scheduling	Works slowly	• Extended time • Breaks • Preferential time of day
	Difficulty staying on task until completion Difficulty remembering what to do	• Assignments separated into parts • Visual schedule • Checklists • Assignment planner

Note: Adapted from the Florida Department of Education, Accommodations: Assisting Students with Disabilities, 2010, Retrieved from www.fldoe.org/core/filesparse.php/7690/urlt/0070069-accomm-educator.pdf

Modifications

When a student with a significant cognitive disability, s/he is unable to meet the grade-level expectations even with accommodations, and requires intensive, direct instruction for learning may require modified expectations (FL-DOE, 2010). Harrison, Bunford, Evans, and Owens' (2013) definition states that, "Modifications are changes to practices in schools that alter, lower, or reduce expectations to compensate for disability" (p. 556).

At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, sixteen students at Suburban Middle School had been found to have a severe cognitive disability. These students do not participate in the general statewide assessment administered at the end of each school year. These students instead participate in Florida's Access Points curriculum and are assessed using the Florida Alternative Assessment (FAA) in place of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). When students with this level of disability participate in the general education setting it is most often with the continuous support of an exceptional education teacher and/or paraprofessional. For the majority of students at Suburban Middle School, modifications are not appropriate, even if a student is working multiple grade levels below their same age peers.

Interventions

Harrison, Bunford, Evans, and Owens' (2013) definition states that, "Interventions are changes made through a systematic process to develop or improve knowledge, skills, behaviors, cognitions, or emotions" (p. 556). Interventions are appropriate for any student who is struggling in one of the above mentioned areas, they are not exclusive to students with disabilities. For example, a student who is struggling in reading may receive remedial reading

instruction in addition to the grade-level curriculum. At Suburban Middle School, students who are in need of interventions, may participate in an intensive reading or math class and/or may receive behavior support. These students' progress is monitored frequently to determine if changes and/or additional support is necessary through the Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

Differentiated Instruction

Many teachers are told they should simply differentiate their classroom and/or instruction, but what is differentiation and what does it look like? The mainstreaming and inclusive movements challenge the effectiveness of whole class instruction (George, 2005). There is no single learning template for the general middle school class (Tomlinson & ERIC Clearinghouse, 1995) and in today's diverse classrooms, teaching "the same lesson to all makes no sense" and the assumption that there is a "norm" or "standard" instructional approach that will be effective with most students is a problem (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005, p. 199). Good teachers are responsive to all learners' needs and expect students to bring a variety of experiences, abilities, interests, and styles to their learning (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005). How can teachers meet these students' varying needs? Differentiated instruction (DI) is part of the answer, it is a way of doing business in a class based on the belief that all students can learn and succeed (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005).

Differentiation is a philosophy or way of thinking about teaching and learning rather than a single instructional strategy that is based on a set of beliefs (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 6-7):

- Students who are the same age differ in their readiness to learn, their interests, their styles of learning, their experiences, and their life circumstances.
- The differences in students re significant enough to make a major impact on what students need to learn, the pace at which they need to learn it, and the support they need from teachers and others to learn it well.
- Students will learn best when supportive adults push them slightly beyond where they can work without assistance.
- Students will learn best whey they can make a connection between the curriculum and their interests and life experiences.
- Students will learn best when learning opportunities are natural.
- Students are more effective learners when classrooms and schools create a sense of community in which students feel significant and respected.
- The central job of schools is to maximize the capacity of each student.

Teachers who utilize differentiated instruction "address this natural diversity when planning and delivering rigorous and relevant, yet flexible and responsive, instruction" (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005, p. 196). It is not expected that teachers modify the standards or curriculum, but that they prepare for the wide variety of aptitudes, needs, and interests of their students (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005). Curriculum tells teachers *what* to teach, but differentiation tells them *how* to teach (Tomlinson, 2000). Differentiation is not simply varying the difficulty of questions for some students, grading some students harder,

or letting those who finish early play games for enrichment (Tomlinson & ERIC Clearinghouse, 1995).

Teachers in a differentiated classroom use assessment data to tailor the content, process, product, or learning environment. Tomlinson (2014) defines each of these as follows (p.20):

- *Content* is the information and ideas students grapple with to reach the learning goals.
- *Process* is how students take in and make sense of the content
- *Product* is how students show what they know, understand, and can do.
- *Affect/ Environment* is the climate or tone of the classroom.

Therefore, a differentiated classroom is, by design, student centered. Table 16 provides some instructional strategies that teachers can utilize to differentiate the content, process, and product in their classroom. Differentiated instruction supports the "purpose and intent of accommodations" and many teachers will find these instructional strategies/ accommodations benefit many students, not just those with a disability (FL-DOE, 2010, p. 54).

Table 16: Instructional Strategies for Differentiation

Content	Process	Product
• Multiple texts and supplementary print resources Varied internet resources • Varied support mechanisms for reading • Modeling/ demonstration • Varied time allotments • Interest-based materials • Small-group instruction • Mini-workshops • Multiple teaching modes • Etc.	• Tiered assignments • Learning centers • Interest centers • Graphic organizers • Tri-mind options • Models of student work at different degrees of complexity • Varied modes of exploration and expression • Varied working arrangements • Learning contracts • Simulations • Complex instruction tasks • RAFT assignments • Literature or discussion circles • Web quests/ web inquiry • Etc.	• Complex instruction products • Tri-mind options • Varied working arrangements • Varied resource options • Community-based products • Mentorships • Independent study • Orbital studies • Graduated rubrics • Varied modes of expression • Use of varied media • Tiered product assignments • Varied scaffolding • Web quests/ web inquiry • Etc.

Note: From The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners, p. 185, by Tomlinson, 2014, Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

"In inclusive classrooms, it is important for teachers to understand how to differentiate instruction to ensure maximum learning experiences for all students" (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014, p. 12). Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, and Hardin (2014) found that teachers who had more professional development in differentiation felt more confident in differentiating instruction in the classrooms. Their results indicated that the more professional development hours a teacher participated in predicted more efficacy, suggesting schools with inclusive settings should offer more PD in the strategies of differentiation. Similarly, Blecker and Boakes (2010) found a need for skill training focusing on developing centers, learning contracts, tiered lessons, and performance-based assessments, all of which are strategies for differentiation. Based on the results of Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, and Hardin (2014), schools should offer PD that allows teachers to practice writing leveled or tiered lessons collaboratively, provides time to observe each other implementing differentiation, and includes feedback about the lesson observed. These recommendations will be taken into account when developing specific lesson designs as part of the framework developed as part of this dissertation in practice.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) addresses "learner variability by suggesting flexible goals, methods, materials, and assessments that empower educators to meet these varied needs" (Center for Applied Special Technology [CAST], 2011, p. 4). This framework aligns with the philosophy of differentiated instruction and is based on three guiding principles:

- Principle I: Provide Multiple Means of Representation
- Principle II: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression

- Principle III: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement

CAST (2011) has provided learning guidelines for each principle, including checkpoints and examples, which ideally can be utilized by teachers to evaluate and plan their daily lessons (goals, methods, materials, and assessments) to optimize levels of challenge and support to meet the needs of *all* students.

Element 3: Collaboration Models and Techniques

Historically, much attention was placed on having students with and without disabilities educated together in the general education class setting, whereas relatively little emphasis was placed on helping general and special educators work together (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). "Educational collaboration [between general education and special education teachers] is important to the success of inclusive classrooms" (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001, p. 27). This collaboration promotes shared ownership and supports the sense of belonging of students with disabilities (Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). Cole and McLeskey (1997) found that as these partnerships developed in an inclusive setting, teachers worked together to "transform the general education classroom to better meet the needs of all students" which included significant changes in the instructional delivery methods. Classes often became more student-centered and less teacher or content-centered.

As students with disabilities are increasingly receiving content area instruction in the general education classroom, there has been an increased need for special education teachers to provide support as a consultative teacher, renamed by some as the "inclusion" teacher (Carpenter & Dylan, 2007). These special education teachers provide services within the general

education classroom. For this to work, teachers, both general and special education, emphasized a need for collaboration to make inclusion successful (Able et al., 2014). Having two adults, rather than one, responsible for instructing and managing the class most obviously changes the student-teacher ratio by cutting it in half. This reduction in ratio allows for: (a) more individual or small group instruction; (b) more opportunities to respond; (c) more feedback to students, both positive and corrective; and (d) closer monitoring of student behavior, including praise and redirections (Sweigart & Landrum, 2015).

Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) examined professional development opportunities on co-teaching and their associations with teacher outcome variables of confidence, interest, and attitudes on co-teaching. The results indicated that professional development on co-teaching was significantly associated with each teacher outcome. Teachers who reported more frequent opportunities to learn about co-teaching were more confident in the practice and demonstrated higher interest and more positive attitudes about co-teaching (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013). Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) found that the most common theme across many investigations on co-teaching is the need for teacher training, which is the focus of this element in the professional development framework.

Inclusive Service Delivery Models

The Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) outlines the different Models of Support for Students with Disabilities: Continuum of Services. There are several methods available to provide students with disabilities supports and services within the general education classroom. The least restrictive, which provides no direct in-class supports is consultation. This is when a

general education and exceptional education teacher either meet face-to-face, conference calls, or use other virtual technologies to meet regularly to plan, implement, and monitor instructional methods to ensure the success of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Florida Inclusion Network, n.d.). Teachers are required to keep a detailed record of these meetings.

The next level of support provides students with disabilities direct services within the general education classroom. These models are support facilitation and co-teaching. Support facilitation, defined by the Florida Inclusion Network, is when an exceptional education teacher provides direct support for students with disabilities in the general education classroom and may work and move among two or more classrooms in a given class period to assist multiple students. The frequency and intensity of support varies based upon the students' needs and/or general education teachers' need for assistance. Stainback, Stainback, and Harris (1989) recognized the development of this new role for special educators early on and defined the role stating that support facilitators must know the structure, how to implement, and the effectiveness of various support options to support students with disabilities.

Co-teaching, as defined by the Florida Inclusion Network, is when two teachers, one exceptional education and one general education, share responsibilities for planning, delivering, and assessing learning for all students, with and without disabilities. This requires that the co-teachers work together for the entire period and the exceptional education teacher is required to be dually certified in exceptional education and the content area being taught.

Suburban Middle School utilizes all the above models to provide support to students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The most common method is through

support facilitation, as this allows teachers to work within a variety general education classrooms to support multiple students in a given class period. However, this means that special education teachers may be working with multiple general education teachers and finding the time to collaborate to plan instruction to meet the needs of the students can be difficult. Unfortunately, it was discovered through the teacher survey that a third of the teachers at Suburban Middle School are never meeting to develop instructional plans. This is a common concern for teachers working together in an inclusive setting. Therefore, different planning options and co-teaching approaches are discussed in the next sections.

Co-teaching Approaches

Friend (2014) describes co-teaching as a service delivery option that provides services to students with disabilities within the context of the general education classroom instead of going to a separate setting for purpose. The most commonly expressed benefit of co-teaching is the additional attention provided to students with disabilities (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Friend notes five critical characteristics of co-teaching:

- Implemented by two professionals with equivalent licensure but in different areas of expertise (i.e. general education teacher and special education teacher)
- The goal of co-teaching is the provision of specialized instruction needed by identified students within the general education setting
- Co-teachers have a reciprocal relationship and share instructional responsibilities. Both teachers have ownership of all students and work together to effectively maximize their learning.

- Instruction takes place in a single shared classroom, exceptions occur when students have alternative accommodations such as testing in a separate setting.
- Co-teachers negotiate their roles. The intent is to take advantage of their expertise each professional brings to the partnership.

Cook and Friend (1995) acknowledge that the practice in which there are two or more professionals delivering instruction to a blended group of students in a single physical space is most frequently referred to in the literature as *co-teaching*. Although Suburban Middle School also uses the support facilitation model to provide services to students, this still meets Cook and Friend's definition of co-teaching. Therefore, for purposes of this dissertation in practice, the models and strategies discussed that refer to co-teaching, can also be utilized in a support facilitation model. The differences, as defined earlier, mainly focus on the frequency and duration of time teachers are in the general education classrooms.

There are six models or approaches to co-teaching used in classrooms. Friend (2014) describes each approach, along with examples and variations. A brief overview of each of these approaches is shown in Table 17. The most predominate model reported in the research is the "one teach, one assist" (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). The subordinate role the exceptional education teacher takes, appeared to reflect the relatively greater content knowledge of the general education teacher. Friend (2014) notes that this method of delivering instruction in a co-taught setting should be primarily a start-up technique as teachers become accustomed to working together in the same classroom.

Table 17: Co-teaching Approaches

Approach	Structure	Variations	Recommended Use
One teach, one observe	While one teacher is leading the instruction, the other is collecting data. This data collection has many purposes in a co-taught classroom, including designing instruction, grouping students, responding to inappropriate behavior, and monitoring student progress.	• If comfortable, teachers can gather data about each other to improve practices.	Frequent, for brief periods of time
Station teaching	Each teacher leads a group of students, while a third group works independently. The students rotate from group to groups so that each teacher eventually interacts with all students.	• If necessary, the third independent group may be eliminated. • More than three groups can be created to provide additional independent stations. • Student groups can be heterogeneous, but it may be appropriate to group students by skill levels. • Some students may need to stay at a teacher led station more than once in order to get further assistance.	Frequent

Approach	Structure	Variations	Recommended Use
Parallel teaching	Each teacher leads half of the class, teaching the same content or addressing specific instructional objectives. Distinction from station teaching is that the groups do not switch.	• The two groups are addressing the same content, but at different levels of complexity. • Teachers instruct their groups on different approaches or points of view. Then the class comes back together and students are partnered, and then teach each other what they have learned.	Frequent
Alternative teaching	One teacher works with a small group. The purpose for this small group may include the need for remediation or re-teaching, extensions or enrichment, pre-teaching, or assessment of student progress.	• Students may be placed in a small group related to social or behavioral needs. A small group may be employed to maintain the student in the classroom but provides more intensive support.	Occasional
Teaming	Teachers interchangeably contribute to instruction and it is very fluid. It requires teachers to have a very comfortable relationship.	• Creative co-teachers may utilize costumes to help students understand characters in a piece of literature. This may help students remember confusing concepts through their attire.	Occasional

Approach	Structure	Variations	Recommended Use
One teach, one assist	Most often and least effective approach. One teacher leads instruction while the other serves in an assisting role.	• Utilized when an informal observation is warranted, such as when completing a lab or experiment • This approach should serve primarily as a start-up technique	Seldom

Note: Adapted from Co-teaching: Strategies to Improve Student Outcomes by Friend, 2014, Port Chester, NY: Dude Publishing.

Planning

In order for a consultative or co-teaching approach in secondary classrooms to work, it requires shared planning time so that content area specialists and special education teachers can have meaningful time to plan for the individual needs of all students (Carpenter & Dylan, 2007). Through a metasynthesis of research on co-teaching, a frequently noted issue was the importance of planning time and was noted in nearly all investigations reviewed (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007). Friend and Cook (2003) present three options for providing solutions to creating planning time for teachers working in collaborative partnerships (as cited in Carpenter & Dylan, 2007).

The first idea presented by Friend and Cook (2003) is early release/late arrival (as cited in Carpenter & Dylan, 2007). This allows students to either arrive late or leave early on a regular schedule, creating time for teachers to meet, attend professional development activities, plan instruction, and complete other necessary duties. This approach requires extensive commitment on the part of the district. Fortunately, Suburban Middle School is in a district that currently uses this method to provide adequate time for teachers to plan and participate in professional development opportunities. Every Wednesday, students are released an hour early. For purposes of the professional development framework, this is the time that will be utilized to provide the PD sessions.

The second recommendation to create shared planning is using substitute teachers. Friend and Cook (2003) recommend that in the secondary education setting substitute teachers can be utilized to provide both the general and special education teachers time for planning (as

cited in Carpenter & Dylan, 2007). This method can be costly for the principal, as he/she would be the one who would need to approve and pay for this option. Finally, an approach of "last resort" requires no extra time on the part of either educator. Friend and Cook (2003) describe a way that the general education teacher incorporates instructional strategies that facilitate planning (as cited in Carpenter & Dylan, 2007). An example of this method is that when the special educator enters the classroom, the general education teacher would give an overview of the lesson and includes how each teacher will be working with students.

Carpenter and Dylan (2007) offer an additional approach that is less expensive. Special education teachers would have a day, at least once a week, where they would rotate their planning period. This would allow the special education teacher to meet with each group of teachers throughout the day to provide planning support. This approach seems to be one that may be effective for Suburban Middle School and will be presented to the principal as a way to give teachers the opportunity to meet and share ideas because successful inclusion requires collaboration (Carpenter & Dylan, 2007).

Techniques and Tools to Enhance Collaboration

Co-teaching requires a commitment on part of the administration for scheduling purposes, but more importantly the teachers. They will need to develop new strategies for teaching in a co-taught classroom. Based on research, Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, and Blanks (2010) describe practical techniques in the areas of communication, preparation, instruction, and conflict resolution to increase the effectiveness of co-teaching.

Communication

To improve communication, Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, and Blanks (2010) recommend partners in a co-taught classroom should conduct honest self-examination either through journaling, self-assessments, or conversations with colleagues. These are the first steps toward improving communication skills. Completing and analyzing belief surveys and a responsibilities checklist are other ways co-teaching partners can utilize effective communication skills.

Brown, Howerter, and Morgan (2013) developed examples of each that teaching partners can utilize. When completing the beliefs survey, the teachers reflect individually on critical concepts that must be in place to deliver high-quality instruction. Once they have completed the survey, the teachers compare responses and identify any areas where they have a unified philosophy, as well as any discrepancies in views. Following the belief survey, teachers should complete the responsibilities checklist. The responsibility chart "lays the foundation for the equal contribution of each member of the co-teaching team, ensuring that both individuals take responsibility for the classroom environment" (Brown, Howerter, & Morgan, 2013, p. 85).

Preparation

As discussed earlier, planning is essential for the success of any lesson in a collaborative teaching arrangement. Teachers should map out the goals for specific units, months, marking periods, or semesters (Brown, Howerter, & Morgan, 2013). Team teachers should refer regularly to these goals and make adjustments as necessary. It may be helpful to use a visual organizer to help coordinate instruction including timelines, which also creates a record of benchmarks that can be used to track student progress.

When developing lesson plans, it is important for co-teachers to decide which model (as seen in Table 17) meets the objectives of the lesson (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010; Brown, Howerter, & Morgan, 2013). When developing lesson plans, it is important for teachers to consider the different models they may use to deliver the instruction. Lesson plans should provide an area to denote the co-teaching model that will be implemented and the responsibilities of both co-teachers. Although there are many different co-teaching lesson plan formats available, Brown, Howerter, and Morgan (2013) provide an example that captures the information necessary for an explicit lesson plan and incorporates co-teaching methods and strategies.

Instruction

To optimize student learning in a co-taught classroom, teachers in a co-taught classroom should teach together and monitor student progress (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010). As planning time is scarce, it is important that teachers do not over rely on the "one teach, one assist" model of instruction. The goal should be for both teachers to provide quality instruction to the class. Although, when one teacher is teaching, it is appropriate for one teacher to observe and collect performance data in order to monitor student progress, as described in the "one teach, one observe" model. Based on the data collected, co-teachers can work together to determine appropriate grouping, accommodations, and lesson adaptations that students need.

It is also important for teachers to reflect on co-taught lessons (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010). Partners need to focus on discussion in two areas: student

achievement and teacher satisfaction. Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, and Blanks (2010) recommend trying to reflect on teacher satisfaction in data-informed ways by using a co-teaching assessment tool. These tools can help partners evaluate and reflect on their interactions with accuracy and objectivity. Regardless of tools used, teachers should use three questions to guide their joint reflection (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010, p. 165): What went well during the lesson? What did not go well during the lesson? What are the goals for the next lesson?

Conflict Resolution

When two people work together as co-teachers, "the idea is not to avoid all potential conflict but to use situations where opinions differ to strengthen and improve the co-teaching interaction" (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010, p. 165). To do this, it is important for teachers to respect cultural differences. Teachers should make time to share personal stories, which helps partners understand each other's values and belief systems. Also, it is important for co-teachers to discuss minor issues before they escalate.

Since conflict is unavoidable, teachers need to turn differences into learning opportunities (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, & Blanks, 2010). One way to reduce the impact of these conflicts, teachers should develop a process for conflict resolution that they both agree to and put it into writing. Brown, Howerter, and Morgan (2013) developed an outline of a conflict resolution plan that co-teachers can utilize. As a team, the teachers would complete the outline as a way to reflect and develop alternative courses of action. Through this process, teachers can evaluate the effectiveness of the course of action they chose and both partners are part of the decision making process.

Implementation of the Professional Development Framework at Suburban Middle School

The Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices was developed as part of this dissertation in practice to meet identified areas of need at Suburban Middle School. When developing the PD sessions, the researcher took into account teacher conceptions of effective professional development. These include: (a) providing time for collaboration; (b) providing opportunities for modeling, practice, and feedback; (c) is based on the needs of the teachers; (d) is provided in a safe, trusting environment; and (e) is connected to broader school goals and to other professional learning opportunities (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009). The number of sessions developed is based on Kosko and Wilkins (2009) research findings that eight hours or more of professional development is more than twice as effective at improving teachers' self-perceived ability to adapt. Therefore, the framework includes a total of eight one-hour sessions to be completed in one-school year. Each session will be held on a Wednesday afternoon when students are released an hour early. Table 18 provides a timeline, topics to be covered, objectives, and activities for the first year's implementation of the framework at Suburban Middle School. Plan for modifications will be discussed in the following chapter.

Table 18: Professional Development Framework Timeline with Objectives and Activities

Session	Objective	Topics	Materials	Activity
1	Improve teachers' understanding and rationale inclusive education	Inclusion History Legal Mandates IDEA FAPE and LRE	• Willowbrook Documentary • Celebrating 35 Years of IDEA- YouTube Video	Teacher discussion of videos and reflection on why students are included and the legal provisions granted to SWD
2	Improve teachers' understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder	ASD Criteria Statistics Characteristics Learning Styles	• Understanding Autism: A Guide for Secondary School Teachers- YouTube Video	Reflection Questions on characteristics of autism, difficulties of the secondary setting, and learning styles
3	Improve Teachers' Understanding of Individual Education Plans (IEP)	Parts of an IEP Student Exceptionalities	• Students' IEPs • IEP Overview Worksheet	Teachers would complete their own IEP "cheat-sheets" with guidance from an ESE teacher
4	Improve teachers understanding of accommodations and modifications and their appropriate uses	Accommodations Modifications Differentiated Instruction	• List of accommodations sorted by student needs • Sample Accommodation Documentation (spreadsheet)	Teachers compare and contrast accommodations vs. modifications

Session	Objective	Topics	Materials	Activity
5	Improve teachers' efficacy to differentiate instruction to meet students' needs	Differentiation Strategies	• Chart of differentiation in content, process, and products • Content area lesson plan	Teachers will utilize one of their own lesson plans to identify ways to provide differentiation
6	Improve teachers' efficacy to differentiate instruction to meet students' needs	Review Differentiation Strategies	• Lesson plan indicating differentiation in content, process, or products for varying levels of students	Teachers reflect and collaborate on successes and difficulties when differentiating to problem solve
7	Improve collaboration methods by establishing effective shared planning	Collaboration and Shared Planning	• Monthly Calendar of PLC meetings • Planned consultation dates	Teachers will utilize upcoming meetings to establish opportunities for shared planning
8	Improve teachers' efficacy to collaborate in co-taught classrooms	Co-teach Models Collaboration Techniques	• Complete Co-teaching belief survey • Complete co-teaching responsibilities checklist	Two teachers working in the same classroom (co-teach or support facilitation) will share results of survey and discuss effective models

CHAPTER 4: FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Goals of the Framework

The purpose of this dissertation in practice was to investigate a solution to the continued achievement gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers on state-wide standardized assessments at Suburban Middle School (SMS). It was determined that a possible cause was based on teacher perceptions of students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom. In order to provide students instruction in their least restrictive environment, most students with disabilities at Suburban Middle School are instructed in the general education classroom for the majority of their day (over 80%).

In order to determine the perceptions of teachers at SMS, teachers were invited to participate in an on-line, anonymous survey. Teachers were asked to note the level that they agreed or disagreed with statements related to four factors including their attitudes towards inclusion, perception towards adapting instruction, availability of resources and support, and knowledge pertinent to exceptional education. Additional data was collected on basic demographic information, frequency of collaboration, and interests in professional development topics.

From the data that was collected, areas of weakness were discovered in teachers' perceptions and collaboration rates between general education and special education teachers. Based on research, it was determined that an effective way to address these concerns and improve teachers' knowledge and perception is through professional development. Therefore, this dissertation in practice designed a PD framework that addresses school culture and

understanding of inclusion, effective inclusive teaching strategies, and collaboration models and techniques. It is believed that through effective professional development that follows the framework outlined in this dissertation in practice that teachers' knowledge and perceptions about students with disabilities and strategies to effectively include them in the classroom will improve. Through this improvement, students will be more engaged and provided necessary accommodations to better master the skills taught in the classroom. This will then improve their scores on standardized assessments, and therefore narrowing the achievement gap.

Target Audience

The target audience of the professional development framework is all of the stakeholders who work with students with disabilities at Suburban Middle School. These stakeholders included the administration, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other support personnel. Although the framework is based on research conducted at Suburban Middle School, it is the belief of the researcher that it can be utilized at other schools. Students with disabilities are now, more than ever, being taught in the general education classroom. These teachers need to be given the necessary training to work with this population of students

The framework presented in this dissertation in practice also includes an element that focuses on the school's culture. Although the principal strongly supports students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom, through the survey it was discovered that 36% of teachers do not agree that students with disabilities, regardless of the level of their disability, can be educated in the regular classroom. In addition, 17% do not believe inclusion is a desirable educational practice. Although this percent is not the majority,

the fact that almost a fifth of those surveyed feel this way is a concern. Therefore, by improving teachers' understanding and acceptance of students with disabilities in their classroom, the overall culture of the school will also improve.

Anticipated Changes

The overall anticipated change will be the narrowing of the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities at Suburban Middle School. Although this is a lofty goal, and one many face around the country, one component believed to effect this difference in achievement, is the perceptions of teachers. How teachers perceive their students and their ability to utilize strategies within the classroom effect their overall achievement. Therefore, in order for the achievement gap to narrow, other changes must first take place within the school.

The framework developed is comprised of three elements including school culture and understanding of inclusion, effective inclusive teaching strategies, and collaboration models and techniques. The anticipated change that is expected to happen based on the implementation of the professional development framework is for teachers to gain knowledge about the legislation supporting inclusion, understand characteristics of students with disabilities, and to provide teachers strategies and techniques to improve student outcomes through inclusive practices and collaboration techniques.

Knowledge and Skills Acquired

Although the ultimate goal of the framework is to close the achievement gap, which is indicative of the knowledge and skills students acquire, the direct impact will be on the

teachers' perceptions and knowledge. Through the Inclusive Teacher Survey Scale to Guide Professional Development completed by teachers at Suburban Middle School, the researcher identified specific areas of need. These areas became the basis for the elements of the Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices.

Through the implementation of the first element, teachers will learn about the legislative history leading to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom and the benefits for both students with and without disabilities. In addition, through increased disability awareness, teachers and students will gain knowledge about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and common characteristics. This is important because Suburban Middle School is a cluster school for students with ASD and it is imperative that teachers and students understand and acknowledge commonalities and accept differences within the school community. All teachers need to increase meaningful participation of SWD within the general education setting and accept responsibility for all students.

Through the second element, teachers will learn the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of their students with disabilities, as well as all students. This will be done through lesson studies, observations, and collaborative feedback on various accommodations that can be made to the content, process, and product of each lesson. Through these accommodations, students with disabilities are able to demonstrate mastery on a level "playing field" as their non-disabled peers. Additionally, teachers can implement various research based strategies to improve students' understanding, recall, and utilization of skills being taught.

The final element provides teachers with an understanding of various "co-teaching" models that can be beneficial when a general education and special education teacher are working together in the same classroom to meet the needs of all their students. Although Suburban Middle School most frequently uses the support facilitation model to provide support to students in the general education classroom, it is important to note that the strategies remain the same. It is important to also note that, through the implementation of the framework, teachers will be provided the opportunity to collaborate with their grade level team, content area team, and with special educators to develop lesson plans that are differentiated and allow for tiered assessments.

Steps, Procedures, Activities, and Evaluation Methods

The problem of practice being investigated is the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. Through research and results of a survey completed by teachers at a large suburban school, areas of improvement were identified. These areas were combined into three essential elements that became part of the professional development framework. Each element was supported by research and outlined topics to be covered, procedures, activities, and measurement tools.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the PD framework, multiple data will be collected. At each professional development session offered at Suburban Middle School, teachers will be asked to sign in to document their participation. At the end of each session, teachers will be asked to complete an exit ticket having them reflect on the new knowledge or

skill(s) they learned during that session, how they plan to utilize the information, and follow-up questions they may have.

Each component of the framework, as seen in Table 19, includes tangible evidence to measure the implementation of the lessons being covered. Although it is difficult to measure school culture, a possible way to evaluate the expected change is through a school culture and climate survey. This survey can be given to teachers and/or parents to monitor their perceptions about the school's culture and perceptions of students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom. From the results, further professional development can be implemented. In addition, teachers can be asked to participate in a pre/post survey following each professional development session to provide information on the knowledge they gained and the effectiveness of each lesson.

To monitor the use of effective teaching strategies introduced and discussed during the professional development sessions, teachers' lesson plans can be reviewed. Through this review, it can be identified if teachers have adequately planned to meet the needs of all their students, including those with disabilities. This would be evident through lessons that are differentiated and provide appropriate accommodations. In addition, logs can be kept of the accommodations provided to the students on various assignments and assessments. This data is also helpful when the student's planning team develops the Individual Education Plan as part of the annual review process. Work samples can also be collected showing accommodations needed and used by the students. As previously noted, teachers need the opportunity to practice and receive feedback when implementing new strategies, therefore classroom observations would be an appropriate way to monitor and provide support to teachers.

In order to monitor collaboration between general education and special education teachers, the administration can review consultation logs kept on students receiving this service as part of their Individual Education Plan. Sign-in sheets can also be kept for each Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting where teachers plan upcoming lessons/units, prepare for differentiation, and make the necessary accommodations for students with disabilities. It is important that exceptional education teachers participate in grade level and content area meetings to provide support as they plan upcoming lessons. Observations are also a useful method to collect data on the collaboration techniques being used in the classroom to support students with disabilities.

Table 19: Professional Development Framework and Evaluation Methods

Framework Component	Noted Areas of Need	Lesson Topics	Evaluation Methods
School Culture and Understanding of Inclusion	Belief that students with disabilities cannot be educated in the regular classroom	• Inclusion History • Legal Mandates • IDEA • FAPE and LRE	• School Climate Survey • Teacher Comments • Behavior Reports
School Culture and Understanding of Inclusion	Low beliefs by teachers that students with ASD can be educated in the regular education classroom	• ASD Criteria • Statistics • Characteristics • Strategies	• Pre/Post Questionnaires • Home and School Surveys • Interviews
Effective Inclusive Teaching Strategies	Lack of varied strategies to support students with disabilities in the classroom	• Research Based Strategies • Universal Design for Learning	• Teacher logs • Work samples • Lesson Plans • Observations
Effective Inclusive Teaching Strategies	Belief that students with disabilities lack the necessary skills to be successful	• Accommodations • Modifications • Differentiated Instruction	• Teacher logs • Work samples • Lesson Plans
Collaboration Models and Techniques	Lack of sharing information on effective teaching strategies and providing assistance regarding SWD	• Collaboration Techniques • Co-teach Models	• Observations • Shared Lesson Plans • Interviews
Collaboration Models and Techniques	Lack of time to consult and limited planning between special education and general education teachers	• Shared Planning • Collaboration Techniques	• Shared Lesson Plans • Meeting Logs

Plan for Modifications

As professional development is most effective when it includes teacher input and is relevant to current needs, it is important that data continue to be collected through the above mentioned methods. This way, future professional development can be implemented that is appropriate for the teachers' and students' current needs as they evolve. The framework presented in this dissertation in practice was developed to be flexible. School culture, teaching strategies, and collaboration are all imperative to support students with disabilities in inclusive settings. However, the specific strategies and skills presented to the teachers can be adjusted to meet their specific needs. Through the development of the Inclusive Teacher Survey Scale to Guide Professional Development and survey results, along with relevant research on inclusive practices, the Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices was designed (See Figure 4). Each essential element includes topics that support the inclusion of students with disabilities and their access and participation in the general education classroom.

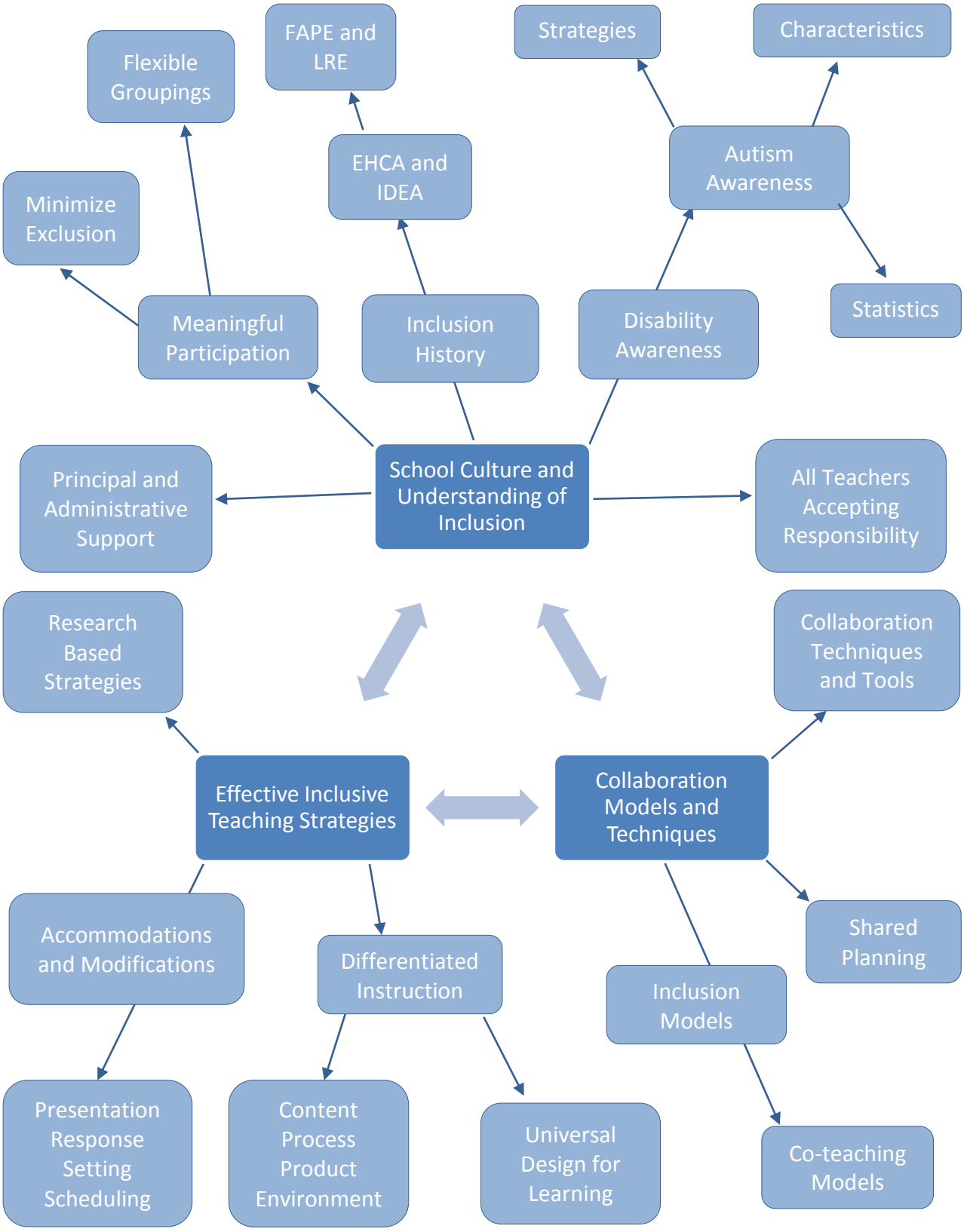

Figure 4: Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices

Although this framework focuses on a specific subgroup of students with disabilities—students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, this can also be adjusted to meet various school's needs. For example, if a school is a cluster for students with Intellectual Disabilities, the sessions could be tailored to meet this specific subgroup. Strategies necessary to provide inclusion opportunities may look different as these students would need modifications, not just accommodations. Collaboration would need to focus on modifying the lessons, assignments, and assessments to meet the Florida Access Point standards.

Anticipated Impact

The overreaching goal of this dissertation in practice is to decrease the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities at Suburban Middle School. Through a teacher survey, areas of need were identified. The Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices was developed to address these areas of need including the school culture and teacher understanding of inclusion, effective inclusive teaching practices, and collaboration models and techniques.

It is anticipated, that through effective professional development teachers will improve their perceptions about students with disabilities, implement instructional strategies that support students with disabilities, and improve collaboration among general and special education teachers. These improvements will then lead to students being more accepted by their teachers and peers and allow them to access the classroom and curriculum in a way that improves their level of engagement and understanding of the material being taught, which will then lead to improved standardized assessment scores for students with disabilities. Although

the focus is on improving student achievement among students with disabilities, it is the belief of the researcher that these strategies and techniques will also prove effective at meeting the needs of all students.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications on the Organization

For inclusion to work in practice, substantial commitments of resources, personnel, and training are essential (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997). This dissertation in practice developed the Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices. Professional development requires teachers to dedicate their time, have a desire to learn new strategies/skills, and the effort to implement them. To provide a classroom that is differentiated to meet the needs of all students also requires teachers to have a better understanding of their students and their needs, which can be accomplished through reading and utilizing students' Individual Education Plans. They must also collaborate with special education teachers to provide the necessary individualized support students may need to be successful in the general education classroom.

Suburban Middle School's administration will need to provide the instructional leader(s) in charge of implementing the professional development time to prepare and the necessary technology and equipment for each hour long session. This framework outlines eight individual sessions, presenting them two per grading cycle (two every nine weeks). Through these sessions, teachers will gain knowledge and an understanding of inclusion and effective strategies for working with students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Although collaboration models and techniques will be covered, teachers will have the opportunity to collaborate throughout all the sessions.

Although the proposed professional development framework was created to meet identified areas of need at Suburban Middle School, it is believed that it can be implemented at other schools. The achievement gap between students with and without disabilities is not unique to SMS, in fact it is a national problem identified through the National Assessment of Educational Progress. There is an obvious problem that has been acknowledged, but strategies to fix the problem are not being implemented. That is the goal for this professional development framework.

School culture, understanding inclusion, effective teaching strategies, and collaborative techniques are elements that can be the focus of professional development at any school. Although the proposed framework has a focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder, it can be utilized to help teachers meet the needs of any disability subgroup that might be more prevalent at other schools. Implications are that by improving upon the elements of the professional development framework, the desired outcomes will be improvement in the overall school culture and acceptance of students with disabilities, with a focus on students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The professional development sessions will lead to the implementation of effective inclusive practices and collaborative techniques in the general education classroom to improve the achievement of students with disabilities at Suburban Middle School.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research needs to be done to evaluate if the intended outcomes of the Professional Development Framework to Enhance Inclusive Practices are achieved at Suburban Middle School. In addition, since professional development should be ongoing, Suburban

Middle School should continue to self-assess to find areas of need, as they may change year to year. Additional research is needed to discover the co-teaching model(s) being utilized for inclusive purposes at Suburban Middle School. Research shows that the "one teach, one assist" approach is the most commonly used co-teach model, but it is not known if this is the case at SMS. This data would be helpful in tailoring future professional development.

Students with disabilities are being included at a higher rate nationally and the rates of students identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder have significantly increased over the years. Although areas of need were discovered at Suburban Middle School when it comes to teachers' perceptions about including students with disabilities in the general education classroom, it is the belief of the researcher that this is not an isolated situation. Therefore, further research should be done to assess the perceptions of teachers towards students with disabilities and their inclusion in the general education classroom at various schools in the district and at varying levels. If differences are discovered between elementary, middle, and high school teachers, further research is recommended to investigate the possible causes, including if teachers receive different amounts of training on working with students with disabilities during their pre-service education.

The fact that there is a discrepancy in teacher beliefs, as it pertains to behavioral concerns should be investigated further. A high percent of the participants indicated they know behavior management strategies, yet teachers reported high interest in staff development opportunities focusing on positive behavioral interventions and supports and ranked students with behavioral disorders low on their ability to be included in the general education classroom. It is believed that the higher rate of self-efficacy in relationship to behavior management

techniques and interests may be attributed to prior staff development on the topic. However, if teachers feel they can manage behaviors in their classroom, it would be expected that students with behavioral disorders would not be rated so low and there would be a lower interest in further staff development on the topic. In addition, further research should be done to identify the actual rates of behavior referrals and suspension of students with disabilities at Suburban Middle School. Ultimately, the time spent out of the classroom results in missed instructional time which can impede the performance of any student, but especially those with disabilities who may already be struggling.

Finally, this dissertation in practice set out to discover teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities in an effort to close the achievement gap, but additional research should be conducted to investigate the administration's role as it relates to inclusion at Suburban Middle School. One of the seven variables associated with successful inclusion reported by Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) is administrative support. Teachers overwhelmingly (96%) responded that they receive support pertaining to their students with disabilities from the school principal. Further research is recommended to determine what characteristics the principal embodies and the specific supports provided to the teachers working at Suburban Middle School resulting in such high ratings of the principal.

Program Preparation for Dissertation in Practice

Leading up to this dissertation in practice, I completed scholarly coursework that focused on a variety of educational and leadership topics. Several courses were most useful to me and my desire to identify areas of need and improving achievement of students with

disabilities. Specifically, the course on data analysis gave me the opportunity to review actual school assessment data and identify areas of need. As well as calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), in which students with disabilities was a subgroup monitored for growth. Through historical data I was able to identify a trend in which students with disabilities continued to underperform, and in some cases significantly underperform as compared to their non-disabled peers. This achievement gap became the complex problem of practice I wanted to further investigate and develop a plan for improvement.

The course on identifying complex problems of practice, laid the foundation for this dissertation in practice. Through the course, students investigated various research procedures and data collection methods including interviews and surveys. In addition, students learned how to critique published research and be able to develop a literature review. Finally, students also had to complete the Collaborative IRB Training (CITI) and complete an Institutional Review Board proposal. All of these assignments and topics of study laid the foundation for the completion of this dissertation in practice.

During the organizational theory course, students studied organizational composition and leadership styles through Boleman and Deal's (2008) four frames which include structural, political, symbolic/cultural, and human resource. Through each frame, students had to analyze a current problem of practice within their organization. Students also rated themselves and other leaders in their organization to identify their leadership orientation. Through this course, I was able to identify leadership qualities that I embody and areas that I can focus on for personal growth.

Outside of the core courses necessary for the Education Doctorate program, students are required to take coursework in their identified concentration. My concentration was on exceptional education. Therefore, I took a course on the assessment, diagnosis, and curriculum prescriptions for students with autism. This course laid the foundation for my understanding of working with this special population, especially since both schools I have worked at are autism cluster schools. In addition, I took a course on current issues and trends in special education, as well as, a course on organization and collaboration in special education. It is through these courses I learned the importance of collaboration between general and special educators to support students with disabilities, which became a part of the framework presented in this dissertation in practice.

In addition to coursework, as part of the Education Doctorate program, I had the opportunity to apply the knowledge I gained in the classroom to the real world through two Lab of Practices. For the first Lab of Practice (LoP), I had the opportunity to work with the principal at a large suburban elementary school. My purpose for the LoP was to gain a better understanding of the responsibilities necessary to lead a school and prepare for the upcoming school year. During this time I analyzed the previous year's FCAT data, determined the lowest areas according to Annual Yearly Progress, created the master schedule to include intervention time for struggling students, attended educational conferences, and created a presentation for the faculty on inclusion and accommodations.

For the second Lab of Practice, I was an instructor and behavioral support for the Secret Social Spy Academy presented by UCF- Center for Autism and Related Disorders and PALS- Providing Autism Links and Supports. The Spy Academy is a social skills intervention program

that teaches students ages 5-14 with autism and/or other social communication deficits how to be flexible thinkers, problems solvers, and effective perspective takers. I was able to work closely with students, families, and other service providers (speech pathologist and behavior specialist) to support students develop and practice appropriate social skills with their peers and teachers.

As a self-proclaimed “lifelong learner” it is not surprising that I decided to take on the challenge of becoming a better student, better teacher, and better leader through earning my Education Doctorate. I constantly want to learn new and better ways to serve and support students with disabilities, while giving them their right to be taught in their least restrictive environment. This program has given me the opportunity to collaborate with many amazing educators and experts which has been invaluable. The program has allowed me to further investigate a problem and develop a solution. It has been challenging at times, but I believe with hard work and dedication, anything is possible. I look forward to using the skills and knowledge I have gained to continue to grow as a leader and educator.

APPENDIX A: INCLUSIVE TEACHER SURVEY SCALE TO GUIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Please choose the level that best describes your agreement/disagreement with the following statements.

1. I am willing to make needed instructional adaptations for my students with disabilities.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

2. I believe inclusion is a desirable educational practice.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

3. I believe most students with disabilities (regardless of the level of their disability) can be educated in the regular classroom.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

4. I believe many students with disabilities lack skills needed to master the regular classroom course content.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

5. I believe in an academic program where all students are held to similar standards.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

6. Educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom is disruptive to other students.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

7. In my view, most students with the following disabilities CAN be educated in regular classrooms:

	Disagree	**Tend to Disagree**	**Tend to Agree**	**Agree**
Learning Disabilities (SLD)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Behavioral Disorders (EBD)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Physical Disabilities (Orthopedically Impaired)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Hearing Impairments (DHH)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Visual Impairments	❍	❍	❍	❍
Communication Disorders (Speech/Language Impaired)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Other Health Impairments (OHI)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Mental Impairments/ Intellectual Disabilities (InD)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please choose the level that best describes your agreement/disagreement with the following statements.

8. When my students with disabilities are experiencing difficulties with an assignment, I am able to adjust it to their level of need.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

9. When my students with disabilities encounter problems with their assignments, I can assess whether it is appropriate for their ability.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

10. If one of my students with disabilities is unable to remember information given in a lesson, I know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

11. I have the skills needed to make instructional adaptations for my students with disabilities.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

12. A special educator is available for my classroom when needed.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

13. Appropriate instructional materials needed for educating students with disabilities are available to my classroom.

❍ Disagree
❍ Tend to Disagree
❍ Tend to Agree
❍ Agree

14. I have a paraprofessional in my classroom when needed.
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

15. The parents of my students with disabilities support me.
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

16. I get support pertaining to my students with disabilities from my school principal.
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

17. I have sufficient time to consult with other teachers and specialists working with my students with disabilities.
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

18. I have sufficient time to go to meetings pertaining to my students with disabilities.
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

19. I have sufficient time to undertake the responsibility of educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom.
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

20. The large teaching load in the regular classroom makes it hard to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

21. I know various teaching strategies for helping students with disabilities master new concepts.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

22. I know characteristics of students with disabilities.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

23. I know special education law.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

24. I know collaborative strategies needed for working with other colleagues in inclusive classrooms.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

25. If any student becomes disruptive in my classroom, I feel assured I know some techniques to redirect his/her behavior.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

26. I know behavior management strategies needed for controlling student's classroom behavior.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

27. I try to help all my students find appropriate ways to deal with their feelings.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

28. I usually participate in IEP meetings.

- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Disagree
- ❍ Tend to Agree
- ❍ Agree

29. Please indicate the frequency which you work collaboratively with the special education or general education teacher.

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually	Never
Develop your instructional plans	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Exchange student progress information	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Conduct joint parent/teacher conferences	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Team-teach in the regular classroom	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Share information on effective teaching strategies	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Provide assistance to each other regarding students with disabilities	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

30. How many years have you been teaching?

❍ 0 (first year)-5 years
❍ 6-10 years
❍ 11-15 years
❍ 16-20 years
❍ 21+ years

31. Are you currently a:

❍ General Education Teacher
❍ Special Education Teacher

32. Do you have Special Education Certification?

❍ Yes
❍ No

33. What is your highest degree earned?

❍ Bachelors
❍ Masters
❍ Specialist
❍ Doctorate

34. Have you had training on teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings?

❍ Yes

❍ No

If Yes:

- What type of training did you most recently receive?

❍ In-service/Staff Development

❍ Workshop/Conference

❍ College/University Course

❍ Other: _____

- How long ago was your training?

❍ 0-6 months ago

❍ 7-12 months ago

❍ Over a year ago

❍ I can't remember, it was so long ago

35. For each of the same items, please indicate your interest in learning more about each topic.

	No Interest	Little Interest	Moderate Interest	Strong Interest
IDEA and General Understanding of Exceptional Education	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understanding Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS Process)	❍	❍	❍	❍
General Understanding of Student Plans (IEP, 504, EP)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understanding and Implementing IEP Accommodations	❍	❍	❍	❍
Implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports	❍	❍	❍	❍
Instructional Methods and Differentiated Instruction	❍	❍	❍	❍
Progress Monitoring and Formative Assessment	❍	❍	❍	❍
Consultation and Collaboration with ESE Teachers	❍	❍	❍	❍
Best Practices for Inclusive Settings	❍	❍	❍	❍
Universal Design for Learning	❍	❍	❍	❍
Developing Co-teaching Strategies and Opportunities	❍	❍	❍	❍

36. Are there other Exceptional Education topics, not listed above, you would be interested in learning more about?

❍ No

❍ Yes _____

37. Please list the support(s) that you currently receive in working with students with disabilities in the regular/general education classroom that you find beneficial.

38. Briefly list and describe five areas of need you have in working with students with disabilities in the regular/general education classroom.

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE SURVEY

From: Florah Luseno [mailto:fluseno@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2015 1:34 PM
To: Pacha, Destiny L.
Subject: Re: Permission to Reproduce Survey Request

Hi Destiny,
You have permission to use my survey as long as my work is clearly acknowledged.

I wish you the best with your study.

Dr. Florah Luseno
Chairperson, Department of Graduate Programs in Education (G.P.E.D), and Faculty Member in the Special Education Program,
Chicago State University, 9501 S. King Drive, Chicago, IL 60628
773-995-2086

On Monday, March 9, 2015 10:22 AM, "Pacha, Destiny L." wrote:

Dr. Luseno, I just left you a phone message in reference to my email below. I am requesting your permission to reproduce the survey you developed as part of your dissertation. If this is acceptable, please reply to this email noting your consent. I greatly appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Destiny Pacha, M.Ed.

From: Pacha, Destiny L.
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2015 3:11 PM
To: 'fluseno@csu.edu'
Subject: Permission to Reproduce Survey Request

Dear Dr. Luseno,

I am a student at the University of Central Florida (UCF) working towards my Education Doctorate (Ed.D.) and preparing for my Dissertation in Practice under the direction of my dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Hopp.

I would like your permission to reproduce the survey instrument you developed as part of your dissertation. I have made some minor changes, to include the addition of Autism Spectrum Disorder to the list of exceptionalities, as well as, modified the background information and interest section to meet my research and organizational needs.

I intend to reproduce the survey in electronic format for email distribution via Qualtrics. Please know, I will only use the survey for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensation.

If this is acceptable, please indicate so by replying to this email. Thank you.

Destiny Pacha, M.Ed.

APPENDIX C: UCF IRB

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

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Destiny Pacha**

Date: **March 27, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 03/27/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	The Perceptions of Secondary Education Teachers Working in Inclusive Settings
Investigator:	Destiny Pacha
IRB Number:	SBE-15-11167
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

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

Joanne Muratori

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/27/2015 09:00:04 AM EDT

IRB Manager

LIST OF REFERENCES

Able, H., Sreckovic, M. A., Schultz, T. R., Garwood, J. D., & Sherman, J. (2015). Views from the trenches: Teacher and student supports needed for full inclusion of students with ASD. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 38*(1), 44-57. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1050081&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0888406414558096

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

Blecker, N. S., & Boakes, N. J. (2010). Creating a learning environment for all children: Are teachers able and willing? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14*(5), 435-447. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ892178&site=ehost-live; http://www.informaworld.com/openurl?genre=article&id=doi:10.1080/13603110802504937

Broderick, A., Mehta-Parekh, H., & Reid, D. K. (2005). Differentiating instruction for disabled students in inclusive classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 44*(3), 194-202. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ692312&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4403_3

Brown, N. B., Howerter, C. S., & Morgan, J. J. (2013). Tools and strategies for making co-teaching work. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 49*(2), 84-91. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1019889&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1053451213493174

Cameron, D. L., & Cook, B. G. (2013). General education teachers' goals and expectations for their included students with mild and severe disabilities. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 48*(1), 18-30. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1016471&site=ehost-live; http://daddcec.org/Publications/ETADDJournal/ETDDDetailsPage/tabid/80/ArticleID/661/General-Education-Teachers%E2%80%99-Goals-and-Expectations-for-their-Included-Students-with-Mild-and-Severe-Disabilities.aspx

Carpenter, L. B., & Dyal, A. (2007). Secondary inclusion: Strategies for implementing the consultative teacher model. *Education, 127*(3), 344-350. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ790099&site=ehost-live; http://www.projectinnovation.biz/education.html

Carroll, D., Fulmer, C., Sobel, D., Garrison-Wade, D., Aragon, L., & Coval, L. (2011). School culture for students with significant support needs: Belonging is not enough. *International Journal of Special Education, 26*(2), 120-127. Retrieved from

https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ937180&site=ehost-live

Center for Applied Special Technology. (2011). *Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.0.* Wakefield, MA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2014). *Prevalence of autism spectrum disorder among children aged 8 years—Autism and developmental disabilities monitoring network, 11 sites, United States, 2010.* MMWR 2014; 63(No. SS2): 1-21. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6302.pdf

Cole, C. M., & McLeskey, J. (1997). Secondary inclusion programs for students with mild disabilities. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 29*(6), 1-15. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ545949&site=ehost-live

Conderman, G., Koman, K., Schibelka, M., Higgin, K., Cooper, C., & Butler, J. (2013). *Learning strategies for adolescents with mild disabilities.* Online Submission. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED545373&site=ehost-live

Cook, B. G., Cameron, D. L., & Tankersley, M. (2007). Inclusive teachers' attitudinal ratings of their students with disabilities. *Journal of Special Education, 40*(4), 230-238. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ758193&site=ehost-live;

http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/proedcw/jse/2007/00000040/00000004/art00004

Cook, B. G., Tankersley, M., Cook, L., & Landrum, T. J. (2000). Teachers' attitudes toward their included students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 67*(1), 115-35. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ613005&site=ehost-live

Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1995). Co-teaching: Guidelines for creating effective practices. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 28*(3), 1-16. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ545936&site=ehost-live

Costley, K. C. (2013). *Ongoing professional development: The prerequisite for and continuation of successful inclusion meeting the academic needs of special students in public schools*. Online Submission. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED541075&site=ehost-live

Crawford, L., & Ketterlin-Geller, L. (2013). Middle school teachers' assignment of test accommodations. *Teacher Educator, 48*(1), 29-45. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ995079&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2012.740152

Crosland, K., & Dunlap, G. (2012). Effective strategies for the inclusion of children with autism in general education classrooms. *Behavior Modification, 36*(3), 251-269. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ970115&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0145445512442682

Dixon, F. A., Yssel, N., McConnell, J. M., & Hardin, T. (2014). Differentiated instruction, professional development, and teacher efficacy. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted,* doi:10.1177/0162353214529042

Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.

Evergreen Solutions, LLC. (2013). *An evaluation of the exceptional student education program in Orange County Public Schools.* Tallahassee, FL.

Florida Department of Education. (2010). *Accommodations: Assisting students with disabilities* (3rd ed.). Retrieved from http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070069-accomm-educator.pdf

Florida Department of Education. (n.d.). *Florida school grades: School accountability reports 1999-2014*. Retrieved from http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/default.asp

Florida Department of Education. (2014). *FCAT 2.0: Reading Grades 3-10, Mathematics Grades 3-8, Science Grades 5 and 8.* Retrieved from http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5668/urlt/0066933-2014fcat20_media.pdf

Florida Inclusion Network. (n.d.*). Models of support for students with disabilities: Continuum of services*. Retrieved from

http://www.palmbeachschools.org/ese/documents/ModelsofSupportforStudentswithDisabilities.pdf

Friend, M. (2014). *Co-teaching: Strategies to improve student outcomes*. Port Chester, NY: Dude Publishing.

George, P. S. (2005). A rationale for differentiating instruction in the regular classroom. *Theory into Practice, 44*(3), 185-193. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ692310&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4403_2

Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*(4), 569-82. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ306050&site=ehost-live

Harrison, J. R., Bunford, N., Evans, S. W., & Owens, J. S. (2013). Educational accommodations for students with behavioral challenges: A systematic review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 83*(4), 551-597. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1019714&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0034654313497517

Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2015). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452226644

Higginson, R., & Chatfield, M. (2012). Together we can do it: A professional development project for regular teachers' of children with autism spectrum disorder. *Kairaranga, 13*(2), 29-40. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ994983&site=ehost-live

Huck, S., Kemp, C., & Carter, M. (2010). Self-concept of children with intellectual disability in mainstream settings. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, 35*(3), 141-154. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ961774&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2010.489226

Hunzicker, J. (2010). Characteristics of effective professional development: A checklist. Online Submission. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED510366&site=ehost-live

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.

Jenkins, A., & Ornelles, C. (2009). Determining professional development needs of general educators in teaching students with disabilities in Hawai'i. *Professional Development in Education, 35*(4), 635-654. Retrieved from

https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ863464&site=ehost-live; http://www.informaworld.com/openurl?genre=article&id=doi:10.1080/13674580802568930

Kosko, K. W., & Wilkins, J. L. M. (2009). General educators' in-service training and their self-perceived ability to adapt instruction for students with IEPs. *Professional Educator*, 33(2). Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ988196&site=ehost-live

Lindsay, S., Proulx, M., Scott, H., & Thomson, N. (2014). Exploring teachers' strategies for including children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream classrooms. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 18*(2), 101-122. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1029923&site=eds-live&scope=site; http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.758320

Luseno, F. K. (2001). *An Assessment of the Perceptions of Secondary Special and General Education Teachers Working in Inclusive Settings in the Commonwealth of Virginia* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Digital library and archives. (etd-02132001-003827)

Mastropieri, M. A., & Scruggs, T. E. (1997). What's special about special education? A cautious view toward full inclusion. *Educational Forum, 61*(3), 206-11. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ542171&site=ehost-live

Mastropieri, M. A., & Scruggs, T. E. (2001). Promoting inclusion in secondary classrooms. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 24*(4), 265-274. doi:10.2307/1511115

McLeskey, J., Landers, E., Hoppey, D., & Williamson, P. (2011). Learning disabilities and the LRE mandate: An examination of national and state trends. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 26*(2), 60-66. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ928118&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5826.2011.00326.x

McLeskey, J., & Waldron, N. (2002). Professional development and inclusive schools: Reflections on effective practice. *Teacher Educator, 37*(3), 159-72. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ652975&site=ehost-live

Office of Special Education Programs. (2014). *36th annual report to Congress on the implementation of the individuals with disabilities education act, 2014.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2014/parts-b-c/36th-idea-arc.pdf

Ornelles, C., Cook, L., & Jenkins, A. (2007). Middle school general education teachers' perspectives on including students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 14*(3), 145-154. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ803304&site=ehost-live; http://www.ldanatl.org/journal.asp

Pancsofar, N., & Petroff, J. G. (2013). Professional development experiences in co-teaching: Associations with teacher confidence, interests, and attitudes. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 36*(2), 83-96. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ999858&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0888406412474996

Ploessl, D. M., Rock, M. L., Schoenfeld, N., & Blanks, B. (2010). On the same page: Practical techniques to enhance co-teaching interactions. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 45*(3), 158-168. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ874396&site=ehost-live; http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1053451209349529

Quick, H. E.., Holtzman, D. J., & Chaney, K. R. (2009). Professional development and instructional practice: Conceptions and evidence of effectiveness. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(1), 45-71. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ827863&site=ehost-live; http://www.informaworld.com/openurl?genre=article&id=doi:10.1080/10824660802715429

Rea, P. J., McLaughlin, V. L., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2002). Outcomes for students with learning disabilities in inclusive and pullout programs. *Exceptional Children, 68*(2), 203-22.

Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ641009&site=ehost-live

Rosenshine, B. (2012). Principles of instruction: Research-based strategies that all teachers should know. *American Educator, 36*(1), 12-19. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ971753&site=ehost-live

Royster, O., Reglin, G. L., & Losike-Sedimo, N. (2014). Inclusion professional development model and regular middle school educators. *Journal of at-Risk Issues*, 18(1), 1-10. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1029754&site=ehost-live

Ryndak, D. L., Jackson, L., & Billingsley, F. (2000). Defining school inclusion for students with moderate to severe disabilities: What do experts say? *Exceptionality, 8*(2), 101-16. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ614683&site=eds-live&scope=site

Santoli, S. P., Sachs, J., Romey, E. A., & McClurg, S. (2008). A successful formula for middle school inclusion: Collaboration, time, and administrative support. *RMLE Online: Research in Middle Level Education, 32*(2), 1-13. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ827006&site=eds-live&scope=site

Schumm, J. S., Vaughn, S., Gordon, J., & Rothlein, L. (1994). General education teachers' beliefs, skills, and practices in planning for mainstreamed students with learning disabilities. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 17*(1), 22-37. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ489461&site=ehost-live

Schumm, J. S., & Vaughn, S. (1991). Making adaptations for mainstreamed students: General classroom teachers' perspectives. *Remedial and Special Education (RASE), 12*(4), 18-27. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ431356&site=ehost-live

Scruggs, T. E., Mastropieri, M. A., & McDuffie, K. A. (2007). Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms: A metasynthesis of qualitative research. *Exceptional Children, 73*(4), 392-416. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ817512&site=ehost-live; http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Publications2/ExceptionalChildren/

Silberman, M. L. (1969). Behavioral expression of teachers' attitudes toward elementary school students. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 60*(5), 402-407. doi:10.1037/h0028315

Stainback, S. B., Stainback, W. C., & Harris, K. C. (1989). Support facilitation: An emerging role for special educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, *12*(4), 148-153.

Stanovich, P. J., & Jordan, A. (2002). Preparing general educators to teach in inclusive classrooms: Some food for thought. *Teacher Educator, 37*(3), 173-85. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ652976&site=ehost-live

Sweigart, C. A., & Landrum, T. J. (2015). The impact of number of adults on instruction: Implications for co-teaching. *Preventing School Failure, 59*(1), 22-29. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1038671&site=ehost-live; http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1045988X.2014.919139

Tomlinson, C. A. (2000). Reconcilable differences: Standards-based teaching and differentiation. *Educational Leadership, 58*(1), 6-11. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ614602&site=ehost-live

Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tomlinson, C. A., & ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education. (1995). *Differentiating instruction for advanced learners in the mixed-ability middle school classroom. ERIC digest E536.* Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED389141&site=ehost-live

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). Thirty-five years of progress in educating children with disabilities through IDEA. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/idea35/history/index.html

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). (2013). The nation's report card: Mathematics and reading assessments various years 1990–2013. Retrieved from http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/student-groups

Voltz, D. L., Brazil, N., & Ford, A. (2001). What matters most in inclusive education: A practical guide for moving forward. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 37*(1), 23-30. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ632513&site=ehost-live

Voltz, D. L., Elliott, R. N., & Cobb, H.B. (1994). Collaborative teacher roles: Special and general educators. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 27*(8), 527-35. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ491151&site=ehost-live

Waldron, N. L., & McLeskey, J. (2010). Establishing a collaborative school culture through comprehensive school reform. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation, 20*(1), 58-74. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ879671&site=ehost-live; http://www.informaworld.com/openurl?genre=article&id=doi:10.1080/10474410903535364

Yell, M. A., Katsiyannis, A., & Bradley, M. R. (2011). The Individuals with disabilities education act. In J. M. Kauffman & D. P. Hallahan (Eds.), Handbook of special education (pp. 61-76). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Zigmond, N., Kloo, A., & Volonino, V. (2009). What, where, and how? Special education in the climate of full inclusion. *Exceptionality, 17*(4), 189-204. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ870487&site=ehost-live; http://www.informaworld.com/openurl?genre=article&id=doi:10.1080/09362830903231986