

Exploring the Benefits and Challenges of Inclusion
Through the Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators at the Elementary Level in a Large
Florida School District
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband and children whose love, unselfish support, and encouragement made this whole process possible and to the teachers whose allegiance helps develop the academic outcomes for students with disabilities to increase their capability of educational success.

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Abstract

In the early twentieth century, parents began forming advocacy groups to help bring educational needs of students with disabilities to the public eye. These groups rallied together and by the early 1970's, a number of students with disabilities were being educated in the public school. Finally, in 1975, the United States Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) then the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and ultimately, EHA was absorbed in the IDEA law and provisions. The provisions of IDEA establish a right to public education for all children regardless of disability and requires schools provide individualized or special education for children with qualifying disabilities. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. Inclusive education is about how educators develop and design schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Inclusion expresses a commitment to educate each student, to the maximum degree appropriate in the regular classroom. This method involves bringing support services to the child instead of moving the child to the services. However, rather than having to keep up academically with the other students, they can receive accommodations based on their disability in the regular education environment.

Situated in an elementary education setting, this study explored the perceptions of regular education teachers, ESE teachers, and administrators on the effectiveness of inclusion programs for special education to better understand the benefits and challenges of the learning environment

for students with disabilities. The purpose of this case study, further, was to explore methods, practices, and approaches teachers use and support provided by administrators. My research questions that guided this study were:

1. What support is provided by educational leaders to regular education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
2. What methods, practices, and approaches are identified by regular education and ESE teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
3. What are the benefits and challenges identified by teachers and administrators in an elementary inclusion setting?

The theoretical framework of this study was social constructionism. This theory stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition, and how the community plays a central role in the process of making meaning. Employing qualitative research methodology, this researcher conducted interviews with eight decisively selected participants.

The findings reported from this study and the literature reviewed explored the benefits and challenges of inclusion that the regular education and ESE teachers are faced with on a daily basis. The perceptions of principals, regular education, and ESE teachers were shared based on their personal, overall experiences. Educational experience, training, and administrative support for teaching students with disabilities play an essential role in the successful implementation of inclusion. Teachers' preparedness plays a significant role in the success of the implementation of inclusion as well as collaboration among the regular education and the ESE teacher.

Inclusion is important because it is constructed on the principle that students with disabilities should be valued for their exceptional abilities and included as important members of

the regular education classroom just as the regular education students. Inclusion enables these students to be educated with their peers in the least restrictive environment with instructional strategies such as cooperative learning and differentiation being used to deliver instruction.

Chapter One

Introduction

In the early twentieth century, parents began forming advocacy groups to help bring educational needs of students with disabilities (SWD) to the public eye. These groups rallied together and by the early 1970's, a number of SWD were being educated in the public school (Special Education News, 2009). Finally, in 1975, the United States Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) then the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and ultimately, EHA was absorbed in the IDEA law and provisions. The provisions of IDEA establish a right to public education for all children regardless of disability and requires schools provide individualized or special education for children with qualifying disabilities (Special Education News, 2009). IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2017).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013), changes were made to IDEA that defined the scope of early intervention, services for SWD, and special education. The legal provisions of IDEA describe how the state and the public schools are required to deliver appropriate education from ages three to twenty-one for children with diagnoses. The purpose of IDEA evolved from EHA as case law on the federal level that tackled the problem of public schools providing those with disabilities similar opportunities to learn and achieve as their peers.

Since December 2004, additional amendments of significance have been added. Regulatory language was introduced further into the IDEA statutes, and congress detailed the intentions of the law to provide each child with a disability the Free Appropriate Public

Education (FAPE) that provides students the foundation they need to become employed and live an independent life (United States Department of Education, 2013).

Background

Under IDEA, school districts that accept public funds for education must provide special education to qualifying SWD (Special Education News, 2009). IDEA provides specific guidelines regarding Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). FAPE is available to all SWD residing in the state between the ages three to twenty-one, including SWD who have been suspended or expelled from school (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The IDEA guidelines require education to be tailored to meet the needs of the individual student with a disability. The guidelines also require that students with disabilities receive their instruction in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and require schools to take the student's disability into account when enforcing discipline (Special Education News, 2009). LRE gives SWD the right to be included to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not disabled. Separate schooling or other removal of SWD occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Prior to passage of these acts, parents of students with disabilities had few educational choices for their children (Special Education News, 2009).

At the practitioner's level, IDEA has provided a set of guidelines so that each student has an individual and specific education plan in place. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is created by a team of educators, parents, consultants, and administrators for the SWD (Hadadian & Chiang, 2007). The IEP, therefore, is designed to meet the needs of SWD in educational and

social areas with focused support from not only the regular education teacher, but also from the special education teachers (Savich, 2008).

Inclusion. Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. Inclusive education is about how educators develop and design schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together (Inclusion BC, 2012-2017). Inclusion expresses a commitment to educate each student, to the maximum degree appropriate in the regular classroom (Hadadian & Chiang, 2007). This method involves bringing support services to the child instead of moving the child to the services. However, rather than having to keep up academically with the other students, they can receive accommodations based on their disability in the regular education environment (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2001).

IDEA does not use the term inclusion within the language of the law, but it does require school districts to place students in the LRE. Also, a student's IEP specifies the unique educational needs of the SWD determining the range of services and support that are needed (Wrights Law, 1998-2017). The most recent amendments were passed by Congress in December 2004, with final regulations published in August 2006 for Part B for school-aged children and in September 2011 for Part C, for babies and toddlers (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2017).

Inclusion is a contentious provision of the IDEA act because it relates to the educational and social values of students who have disabilities, as well as their sense of individual worth (Obiakor, Harris, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2010). Inclusion is built on the principle that students should be valued for their exceptional abilities and included as important members of the school

community. Singh (2007), however, suggests that not all SWD belong in a regular education classroom while others feel that effective teachers can meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Regardless of the personal beliefs of stakeholders, the law requires schools to provide opportunities to help ensure equity, accountability and excellence in education for SWD. The inclusion classroom is designed for SWD to be educated with their peers in a LRE with the same curriculum as the non-disabled peers using differentiation to deliver instruction (Giangreco, 2007; Singh, 2007).

Implementation of Inclusion. Districts are required by IDEA to provide services to SWD, as well as any students that are at-risk in order for school districts to accommodate the inclusive method of teaching (Villa & Thousand, 2003) Implementation of inclusion is more than reconfiguring special education services. It can involve an overhaul of an entire educational system at the district or school level. Special education and regular education faculty roles and relationships change as teachers become more involved in the process and invested in the success of SWD. Allowing teachers to have the time and support needed to prepare for their SWD helps organize the resources needed to provide appropriate instruction (Villa & Thousand, 2003). Differentiated instruction ensures that what a student learns, how he/she learns it, and how the student demonstrates what he/she has learned is a match for that student's readiness level, interests, and preferred mode of learning (Tomlinson, 2003).

Problem Statement

Based on how inclusion is managed at the school level, the effectiveness of inclusion is debated among the regular education teachers, Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers, and administrators (Campbell, 2010). An overriding problem focuses on the partnerships between regular education teachers and special education teachers. The contentious issues also

include time to collaborate, instructional methodology, and support from staff and administration (Padilla, 2009).

Purpose of Study

This study explores the perceptions of regular education teachers, ESE teachers, and administrators on the effectiveness of inclusion programs for special education to better understand the benefits and challenges of the learning environment for SWD. The purpose of this case study, further, will be to explore methods, practices, and approaches teachers use and support provided by administrators.

Research Design

This is a qualitative case study designed to explore methods, practices, and approaches used with SWD who are educated in an inclusion setting through perceptions of regular education teachers, ESE teachers, and administrators. A phenomenological case study approach will be used for this study. A phenomenological case study approach describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). This approach uses the perceptions of teachers and administrators to explore the benefits and challenges of inclusion. The qualitative design explores a case within a real-life, contemporary context, or setting. Case study research is an object of study and a product of inquiry and the findings will consist of descriptions and themed developments of each case (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). Interviews will be conducted to explore the perspectives of the regular education teachers, ESE teachers, and administrators about the learning experiences of SWD who are educated in an inclusion setting. The research methods, practices, and approaches will be generally defined as inclusion in this study.

Inclusion classroom teachers at each of the participant schools were identified by their principals as flexible and willing to take part in the study. Therefore, an ESE teacher and two regular education teachers were chosen for an interview at each school. The researcher interviewed school leaders at each school site to better understand how inclusion is supported. Conducting the observations and interviews allowed the researcher to better understand the perspectives of teachers collaborating together when planning the curriculum and instruction for the students in an inclusive classroom. The researcher explored the current methods and strategies of teaching in the inclusion classroom and the methods being used to create a positive learning environment for these students.

Research Questions

The research questions that will guide this study are:

1. What support is provided by educational leaders to regular education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
2. What methods, practices, and approaches are identified by regular education and ESE teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
3. What are the benefits and challenges identified by teachers and administrators in an elementary inclusion setting?

Setting

The study takes place in one of the largest school districts in the country (United States Department of Education, 2013). The district consists of 295 schools which include 43 elementary, 49 middle, 35 high school, and 68 other types of schools. The district employs 16,788 teachers and is densely populated with more than 245,086 students. The researcher has

permission to visit two of the elementary schools within the county to conduct research through observations and interviews (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013).

The participating schools have been identified by the district ESE staff as inclusive schools where ESE students are being served. Assistance was provided for the implementation of inclusion in the schools by the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN). This organization collaborates with all districts and schools to provide customized services and supports ensuring all students with disabilities have the same educational, social, and future opportunities as their peers. In partnership with districts, FIN facilitates the implementation of inclusive best practices through data-driven, student-focused planning and problem-solving across districts and schools. The schools are provided data-driven professional development and technical assistance to increase knowledge and skills for district and school personnel. Coaching and sharing information to build collaborative relationships between families, schools, and districts for school personnel to sustain inclusive best practices are also provided. (Florida Inclusion Network, 2017).

As provided by the district, the two schools included in the study will be identified as Luminous Elementary and Radiant Elementary. Luminous is located in a suburban/urban part of the county. The school opened in 2009, and has earned a school grade of A every year and serves more than one thousand students. Radiant Elementary is located in a suburban/urban part of the county. This school opened in 2001, and earned a school grade of an A, B, or C since opening serving over six hundred students.

Theoretical Framework – Social Constructivism

The work of Lev Vygotsky (1934) has become the foundation of research and theory in cognitive development over the past several decades, particularly of what has become known as

Social Development Theory. Vygotsky's theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (1978), as he believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of making meaning. Vygotsky's social constructionist view on disability is applied and its practical implementation in contemporary inclusive education is pragmatic (Simply Psychology, 2017). He formulated the theory of social constructivism. There is quite a wide range of perspectives on and approaches to Vygotsky's theories and methodology concerning upbringing, education, and evaluation of children with disabilities (Rodina, 2006). The zone of proximal development (ZPD) also has implication for inclusive classrooms. According to Lev Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development states that students learn when guided by an adult or when working with more capable peers (Lamport, Graves, & Ward, 2012, p. 57).

The ZPD provides an important understanding of learning, but the implications for teachers are often unclear or limited and could be further explored (Wass and Golding, 2014). By using ZPD in the classroom, teachers can increase learning gains by providing learning environments that enable students to do harder tasks. This idea provides a sharp and useful tool for supporting learning across all curriculum areas (Wass and Golding, 2014).

The theoretical framework of social constructivism provides a frame for exploring the methods, practices, and approaches being used in inclusive classrooms. The social constructivist theory states that a person's knowledge is shaped through social experiences, influences, and interactions within the environment (McGarrigle, 2013). The regular education teacher in an inclusive classroom is required to make the appropriate accommodations for the SWD to meet the needs of the students required by IDEA. For the regular education teacher to make the appropriate accommodations, they need support and collaboration with administration,

counselors, and special education teachers (Gehrke, Cocchiarella, Harris, & Puckett, 2014). The social constructivist theory supports how the regular education teacher views their inclusive classroom as a place to learn, grow, interact, and form relationships. This theory provides teachers with the support necessary to create the LRE for an inclusion classroom.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it explores perceptions of regular education teachers, ESE teachers, and administrators in an inclusive environment. This study can add to the literature on special education and inclusion by exploring the benefits and challenges of the inclusive environment in the public school setting.

Definition of Terms

The subsequent terms are used throughout the study. Definitions of these terms were derived from the review of literature in Chapter Two and will help in understanding the content of the study:

Inclusion: providing opportunities for students with disabilities to attend school with their non-disabled peers and to participate as fully in the educational process within the regular education classroom (Department of Education, 2013).

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): an individualized education plan is designed to meet the educational needs of one child. The IEP is accommodated to the SWD's needs that are identified by evaluations and the IEP helps teachers and related stake holders understand the student's disability and how the disability affects the learning process. The IEP should describe how the SWD learns, how the student best demonstrates that learning and what teachers and stake holders will do to help the student learn more effectively in the classroom (Department of Education, 2013).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA): is a United States federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide special education and related services to children with disabilities (Department of Education, 2013).

Collaboration: members of an inclusive learning community work together as equals to assist students to succeed in the classroom. This may be in the form of lesson planning with the special needs child in mind, or co-teaching a group or class. Collaboration can take place among teachers, students, and administration (Florida Inclusion Network, 2017).

Co-teaching: is when two teachers work together in a classroom or with groups of students. These teachers share the planning, organization, delivery, and assessment of the curriculum while working together in one classroom (Florida Inclusion Network, 2017).

Students with Disabilities (SWD): students who require special education because of: autism; communication disorders; deafness; blindness; emotional disturbances; hearing impairments, including deafness; intellectual disability; orthopedic impairments; other health impairments (Department of Education, 2013).

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): is an educational right of children with disabilities in the United States that is guaranteed by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Department of Education, 2013).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): students who have a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate (Department of Education, 2013).

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including

jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public (ADA National Network, 2017).

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom (RTI Action Network, 2017).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the American legislation that guarantees certain rights to people with disabilities. It was the first U.S. federal civil rights protection for people with disabilities. Section 504 states that “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Title II prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities by public entities. Title II is similar to other civil rights statutes in that it ensures equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities. There are two main protections within Title II (ADA National Network, 2017).

Title III prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the activities of places of public accommodations. Businesses that are generally open to the public and that fall into one of 12 categories listed in the ADA, such as restaurants, movie theaters, schools, day care facilities, recreation facilities, etc (ADA National Network, 2017).

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), is a United States law designed to provide privacy standards to protect patients' medical records and other health information provided to health plans, doctors, hospitals and other health care providers. Student medical and treatment records in K-12 schools receiving federal funding are typically not

protected under HIPAA but rather under FERPA (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), is a federal legislation in the United States that protects the privacy of students' personally identifiable information (PII) and education records maintained by the school. Typically, health records in K-12 schools receiving federal funds are protected under FERPA rather than HIPAA (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHA) - ensures handicapped children in public schools will get one free meal each school day and will have access to an education (Special Education News, 2009).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) - the difference between what learners can do without help and what he or she can do with help. It is a concept introduced, yet not fully developed, by Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) during the last ten years of his life (Simply Psychology, 2017).

Social constructivism - a sociological theory of knowledge according to which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others (Simply Psychology, 2017).

Differentiation - instruction being provided to meet the individual needs of each student.

Teachers modify the content, the process of how the information is delivered, and the product or how students demonstrate their learning (Florida Inclusion Network, 2017).

Assumptions

The schools chosen for the research are examples of inclusion within a chosen school district. The administrators chosen for this research represent model schools with successful

inclusion programs as reported by the administrators and the district. The individuals chosen are examples of model inclusion teachers that are flexible, reliable, dependable, and willing to do whatever it takes to ensure the success of the students reported by the administrators and the district.

Limitations

The researcher chose to observe and interview teachers from the schools that have been identified as model schools for successful implementation of inclusion. The researcher is only viewing two schools within the school district and elementary schools. Both the schools have similar demographics and surrounding neighborhoods.

Scope and Delimitations

The researcher chose only two schools within the school district to observe and interview teachers. The number of teachers chosen for this study could also be a delimitation factor because there were six teachers and two administrators within the scope of the study.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter describes the context and purpose of the study that includes exploring methods, practices, and approaches teachers use and their perspectives on inclusion. Interviews will be conducted to explore the perspectives of the teachers in an inclusion atmosphere as well as the benefits and challenges. The chapter also explains the research questions that will be explored throughout the study as well as the theoretical framework, social constructivism. The method of collecting this information was discussed in this chapter. Chapter Two will evaluate, analyze, and critique the literature relative to teachers' benefits and challenges for inclusion students and their perspectives on inclusion. The categories for review of related literature in Chapter Two include:

- Models of Inclusion
- Support for Inclusion
- Classroom Culture
- Curriculum and Strategies
- Teacher Training
- Implementation of Inclusion
- Teacher Leadership and Preparedness
- Student Perceptions of the Inclusive Classroom
- Parent Involvement in the Inclusive Classroom
- Leadership Attitudes and Behaviors of the Inclusive Classroom
- Barriers and Challenges to Inclusion
- Theoretical Framework – Social Constructivist

The chapter will also identify any gaps in the literature on inclusion that were evident in the research. Chapter Three will describe the methods used in this study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This study explores the perceptions of teachers and administrators on the effectiveness of inclusion programs for special education to better understand the benefits and challenges of the learning environment for SWD. The purpose of this case study, further, will be to explore methods, practices, and approaches teachers use and support provided by administrators.

The research questions that will guide this study are:

1. What support is provided by educational leaders to regular education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
2. What methods, practices, and approaches are being used by regular education and ESE teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
3. What are the benefits and challenges identified by teachers and administrators in an elementary inclusion setting?

Inclusion is based on the theory of social constructivism proposing that students can be fully integrated into a regular education classroom (Singh, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). Integration of SWD into regular education classrooms consists of physical, social, emotional, and instructional components. In the early nineties, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) required schools to create Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for students with a variety of disabilities (Smoot, 2011). The plans provided accommodations to meet the needs of SWD and to determine how to include students in the regular classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The current IDEA law suggests that the majority of students that are eligible for services for learning disabilities and other related services are able to participate within the regular education classroom to varying degrees. Isherwood & Barger-Anderson (2008) identify factors that had to

be considered under the law for the success of the integration of these students, both academically and socially. These factors include co-teaching models, resources, teacher personalities, style of teaching, collaboration with team members, and classroom management methods of inclusion teachers (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008).

Singh (2007) suggests that some regular education teachers are willing and confident in their professional readiness for implementation of inclusion while others feel unprepared to make the transition. Therefore, professional development assists regular education teachers in knowledge, practices, and strategies needed for teaching SWD in an inclusive classroom. The author further suggests that regular education teachers were not adequately trained or supported for teaching SWD (Singh, 2007). Creating and sustaining cultures where teachers feel collectively confident to implement inclusion can empower the learning environment (Kugelmass, 2006).

Models of Inclusion

Creating an inclusive environment that exposes other students to SWD is a means to provide natural social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Inclusion contributes to the creation of a caring school environment. The intention of inclusive practice is the modification of the classroom environment so all students receive the maximum educational services (Watnick & Sacks, 2006). When SWD are in regular education classrooms, it helps them develop language, observe model behavior, and build self-esteem. Watnick & Sacks (2006) discuss three models for the practice of inclusion which include the external support model, in class (internal) support model, and the specialized support model.

The external support model provides accommodations to the SWD but does not provide direct services to the students. Students in this model are monitored and provided teacher

consultations as necessary. The internal support model or push-in is a co-teaching model which connects to the collaborative aspect of the theory of social constructionism (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the collaborative method of co-teaching centers around a team that consists of a regular education teacher and a special education teacher. These teachers work together to collaborate and facilitate the learning in the classroom and both provide instruction to the SWD. This model allows the inclusion teacher to provide support in the regular education classroom rather than separately. The specialized support model establishes a resource room where SWD can receive specific and specialized instruction based on academic needs. This model allows the special education teachers to provide services for the SWD and provide the differentiated instruction needed to work towards IEP goals (Watnick & Sacks, 2006).

Universal Design. According to Izzo, Murray, & Novak (2008), the universal design movement is the design of physical environments usable by all to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized instruction. This method represents a cohesive approach to promoting inclusion on an ongoing basis with curriculum and instruction designed to meet the learning needs of all students (Izzo, Murray, & Novak, 2008). In the regular education classroom, universal design as a learning model is an effective approach for SWD. This approach ensures that students with a wide range of abilities can access the curriculum. According to Johnson-Harris & Mundschenk (2014), this approach encompasses a style ensuring instruction is designed to be accessible to all potential learners. Universal design helps teachers differentiate instruction from the one-size-fits-all curriculum to individualized instruction for learners. This approach provides teachers the opportunity to engage learners by peaking their specific interests and challenging them in the inclusive environment. This model also provides students with a wide range of opportunities so students can succeed in the regular education classroom (Izzo,

Murray, & Novak, 2008). Teachers can individualize the curriculum for SWD more directly and has the potential to reduce barriers that prevent SWD from being academically successful.

Co-teaching. Co-teaching is the process of two equally-qualified teachers with similar expertise jointly delivering instruction to students within the classroom. Isherwood & Barger-Anderson (2008) states co-teaching relationships have been shown to provide regular education teachers and special education teachers assistance in development, delivery, and evaluation of effective instructional programs most likely to benefit SWD. This type of learning community diligently works to establish an atmosphere where students develop and make decisions to reach out to their classmates independent of the adult instruction. Co-teaching is designed to benefit the learning of the SWD as well as their acceptance, respect, and equity with the regular education students. Teachers find that when engaged in the co-teaching model, meeting the needs of the SWD is more obtainable due to the dual role of the teachers.

Several co-teaching models exist in inclusive settings. Schools that have adopted the co-teaching model have increased inclusive classrooms and reduced special education segregation. Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie (2007) identify some co-teaching variations which include a one teach, one assist model. This model encompasses one teacher assuming teaching responsibility and the other teacher providing individual support as needed. Another form of co-teaching is station teaching where various learning stations are created and the co-teachers provide individual support at the different stations. Parallel teaching exists when the teachers instruct the same content in different classroom groupings. Alternative teaching consists of one teacher taking a smaller group of students to a different location for a limited period of time for specialized instruction. Team teaching is when both co-teachers share teaching responsibilities equally and are equally involved in leading instructional activities.

Collaboration as a theme in social constructionism is an important component of the inclusive environment as is evident in co-teaching models (Vygotsky, 1978). Co-teaching enables collaboration between the regular education and special education teacher to share the responsibility of all students (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012). In an investigation of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms conducted by Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie (2007), upon placing teachers into co-teaching partnerships, it is beneficial to recognize personalities and teaching styles. Partnerships did not work as well when teaching styles and personalities were not considered. Allowing teachers to collaborate and invest in planning and implementation increased the effectiveness of the co-teaching model.

Campbell (2010) believes the service delivery model is the most effective model to provide education for SWD. Integrating SWD creates an increase in student interaction but administrators need to be mindful and help teachers generate an environment where SWD and regular education students are able to nurture such relationships. Dusty & Dinnesen (2012) used the co-teaching method to individualize interventions for the success of the SWD. Collaborative and reflective planning through co-teaching is a successful strategy for an inclusion environment. Focusing on the importance of planning collaboratively is crucial for the benefits to be evident. These co-teaching partnerships work collaboratively as well as co-assess the students. Everything in a co-teaching environment is divided equitably, and students can see both teachers as equitable partners in the classroom. “Planning, co-teaching proficiency, and team buy-in are all factors that contribute to how well and how often co-teachers will teach using multiple strategies for co-teaching” (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012, p. 42).

Regular reflective planning among co-teacher partnerships is important to the effectiveness of inclusion. The teachers involved needed to take time to discuss what worked.

This allowed teachers to make the changes necessary and to make the partnership more effective for the students involved. Planning is a key element for effective co-teaching and has significant impact on the teaching practices developed in the classroom (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008). Dusty & Dinnesen (2012) found co-teaching partnerships who planned more frequently were able to implement new teaching strategies more frequently with little problems. Making the time for planning seemed to be a vital element needed to make co-teaching a success.

According to Isherwood & Barger-Anderson (2008), implementing co-teaching proved to be a complex process. Ultimately, the teachers found they were learning from each other and the students were also learning from them. This is an example of the social constructivist nature of the inclusive classroom. Teachers involved in this model felt that one of the greatest benefits to co-teaching was having the extra person in the classroom, knowing exactly which students needed the extra attention, and being able to give them the extra attention needed.

Administrative support was found to be essential to implementing co-teaching. Teachers who wanted to participate in the co-teaching model volunteered and were willing to implement this model. If a teacher was assigned but did not believe in this teaching style, it would be a struggle all year between the teachers and the students (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008). Students recognize conflicts between the teachers and results would not be as effective if the two teachers committed to the co-teaching model (Padilla, 2009).

In a study conducted by Shogren, et al (2015), co-teaching was positively mentioned by students who were interviewed. This model helped meet the needs of the SWD who were confident when two adults were in the room. The students felt empowered to receive the help they needed in this kind of co-teaching model for inclusion. Students defined the culture of their

school, the attitudes of their teachers, and students in an inclusion classroom as spending time together.

Instructional Strategies in Co-teaching. Cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are among strategies used to help with implementing inclusion. Teachers need time to become familiar with new instructional strategies that help the students adapt to new ways of learning. According to Giangreco (2007), cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are often beneficial for general education students too, creating a win-win situation. Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer (2009) found that promoting cooperative learning in the inclusion classroom created an atmosphere with an increase in students' motivation, peer acceptance, academic achievement, and social skills of the SWD.

Collaboration. Teacher collaboration has been defined broadly as a style of direct interaction between at least two equal parties engaged in shared decision making working toward a common goal (Lingo, Barton-Arwood & Jolivette, 2011). It is helpful for teachers to collaborate with one another to facilitate the success of integration, acceptance, and academic learning gains in the classroom. It is important for educators to understand their role in facilitating and creating the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all students. Educators, administrators, and teachers need to understand their role in facilitating the inclusive environment for students to learn (Padilla, 2009). According to Lingo, Barton-Arwood, & Jolivette (2011), collaboration between regular education and special education teachers is more important than ever.

Collaboration is essential in planning and being prepared for teaching SWD. Teachers encounter many obstacles when planning to meet the needs of SWD. The regular education teacher and the ESE teacher work together to provide the curriculum and instruction for SWD

through collaboration. Teachers find the time to work together to provide the LRE and opportunity for them to be successful based on their instructional needs (Padilla, 2009). Obiakor, Harris, Rotatori, & Algozzine (2010) states that students need to feel safe and comfortable in the learning environment to make progress. Collaboration among the teachers in the learning process enables them to ensure the success of an inclusive environment. If such an environment is not allowing the student to grow academically and socially, change needs to be made. Teachers assist students adapting to the regular education classroom, and seek guidance from stakeholders to help make adjustments, accommodations, and modifications to warrant comfortable integration.

Support for Inclusion

Providing support for a diversity of learners and the development of relationships with parents is beneficial to implementation of inclusion (Crockett, 2002). Preparing for the diversity of learners and families requires support from the administration. Also, teachers assist in building strong relationships with the parents and encourage them to have durable support systems at home and school to help ensure success for all students. As learning communities become part of the inclusive classroom, schools need responsive leaders who are knowledgeable and committed to supportive learning of each and every student (Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren, 2015).

Another source of supportive leadership is the special education teachers who provide knowledge and practices of instruction for SWD. The development of effective relationships is important to help aide in the progression of the student's academic learning gains. "Preparation is based on the concept of prospective leaders with an understanding of SWD and ensure students are receiving meaningful instruction based on the leadership model being practiced in the classroom" (Crockett, 2002, p. 159).

Family Support. According to Michael (2013), involving families by sharing reading strategies and sending home books with children to read with their families promotes literacy strategies. Leaders recognize the importance of family involvement in the role of early literacy development especially for SWD. According to McCarthy (2000), connecting home and school shows promise that collaborative efforts are paying off. Working collaboratively with parents of SWD enables the students to practice strategies with their parents that they learned at school (Ben-Yosef, 2003). “Teachers have much to learn from the child’s first teachers – the parents. Parents continuing to support their children as they advance through school by learning about the school’s expectations help enhance their literacy learning” (McCarthy, 2000, p. 151).

Classroom Culture

Obiakor, Harris, Rotatori, & Algozzine (2010) examined the impact inclusion had on regular education students in their environment. Educating SWD enables the opportunity for maximizing an equitable learning experience. However, a matter of entitlement does not mean automatic acceptance from peers. Students connect to their teachers and peers for meaningful and rigorous learning opportunities. Therefore, inclusive administration practice is rooted in values of equity, and teachers work to accommodate students based on their individual needs (Riehl, 2000). “Inclusion is built on the principle that all students should be valued for their exceptional abilities and included as important members of the school community” (Obiakor, Harris, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2010, p. 141).

Teachers cognizant of the learning culture in order to successfully use a strategy will help obtain the goal of learning for that particular lesson. According to Giangreco (2007), planning requires time, collaboration, and creativity, but the reward is the authentic inclusion of students who function substantially below grade level. “Approaching inclusive education this way

contributes to a positive classroom culture, acknowledges differences, promotes acceptance, and provides opportunities for real-life problem solving” (Giangreco, 2007, p. 37). SWD challenge educators to make teaching practices inclusive and meeting the challenge customarily improves the way teachers teach and extends the abilities of SWD (Riehl, 2000).

The Children, Young Persons & their Families Act, 1989 (Section 141) provides for children who are severely disabled either mentally or physically, to be provided the care of an approved organization (McLaren, 2013, p. 30). However, the needs of some children cannot be met in the regular education classroom due to the severity of the disabilities. When non-disabled students are being put into situations where the SWD could cause harm, then a different learning environment is recommended (McLaren, 2013). The experiences of SWD support that students do better in inclusive environments. There are exceptional cases of children with highly complex disabilities and challenging behaviors who may not benefit from an inclusive classroom. Therefore, the administration should be mindful when creating the inclusion environment and recognize that it might not be the best atmosphere for some students (Riehl, 2000). The fostering of a safe learning environment where diversity and differences are valued is the foremost success of an inclusion community (Savich, 2008).

Curriculum and Strategies

Curriculum. According to Kuhn and Rundle-Thiele (2009), curriculum is designed so that learning activities and assessment tasks are aligned in order to support students by attaining the goals intended for them individually. Curriculum used in an inclusive classroom is chosen by district, leaders, and a team of teachers. Leaders foster conditions where teachers can critically reflect upon curriculum and practice (Riehl, 2000).

Curriculum modifications are often necessary in order to assist the SWD in participating meaningfully in class amongst their peers. A student working below grade level needs modifications of the curriculum and individualized support. Giangreco (2007) suggests that when curriculum content is over the students' heads, teachers must adjust the curriculum to an appropriate level of difficulty. At the same time, students may surprise the teacher with their learning capabilities. One strategy suggested to avoid confusion for the students is curriculum overlapping. This strategy allows for SWD and nondisabled students to participate together in an activity, but they pursue learning outcomes from different curriculum areas.

Although SWD are being educated in the regular education classrooms, teachers in inclusive education use strategies to assure the needs of the SWD are based on their academic levels, developmental necessities, and individual needs. The aim for teachers of SWD is to increase students' participation and learning in the regular education classroom and decrease their feelings of vulnerability. When students are struggling, teachers depend on consistent, supportive leadership to enable an immediate and collective response among the staff. This supportive leadership allows the teachers of inclusive classrooms to have the assistance necessary to feel competent and capable in teaching the SWD. A cohesive environment contributes to sustainability of inclusive classrooms where the teachers feel successful. Collaborative activities reflect upon teachers who build a shared vision and an unyielding commitment to supporting student diversity. Teachers and school administrators in this kind of environment impact the learning of SWD because of their shared vision. Also, building a school with these collective relationships empowers the students to have a shared vision of their academic success (Giangreco, 2007).

Teacher Training

Many teacher-preparation programs and pathways focus on preparing teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners (Cochran-Smith & Power, 2010). Leaders and teachers bring information back to the teachers to create a LRE where empathy for inclusion is evident. Therefore, teachers learn strategies for working with SWD to ensure success. According to Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis (2016), leaders providing training assistance allow teachers to be receptive of the inclusive classroom. These leaders can provide training to help prepare teachers for the inclusion environment (Crockett, 2002). According to Riehl (2000), providing teachers training for SWD help promote the inclusive classroom culture.

Hadadian & Chiang (2007) examined the implementation of inclusion with training and preparedness. Teachers implementing inclusion into their classrooms need tools for instructional practices that will benefit the students. Therefore, providing training for teachers enables staff members to reflect on strategies to implement differentiated instruction and design accommodations to meet the needs of students. This training for special education teachers will assist them to work effectively and collaboratively with the regular education teacher. The training assists teachers effectively and collaboratively in providing services for the SWD (Hadadian & Chiang, 2007).

Teachers in inclusion classrooms are trained to differentiate their lesson plans to accommodate the students in the classroom and systematically measure academic progress. Teachers are given hands-on training and practice to teach students how to interact socially, facilitate learning outcomes, and maximize learning experiences (Fisher, Roach, & Fry, 2002). The inclusive classroom gives students the opportunity to practice their social skills within the classroom. Teachers measure the academic and social progress of students and document

progress in understanding the curriculum. Depending on whether teaching in a full inclusion, partial inclusion, or mainstreaming atmosphere, teachers should be equipped with tools to help students show positive learning gains. Teachers who are proficient in teaching SWD are able to create a positive learning environment where students mirror the attitude of the teacher and feel more confident to excel (Mintz, 2007).

Training Concerns. Fuchs (2010) designed a study to get teachers to be candid about their feelings of inclusion and the daily challenges that arise. After the teachers were interviewed, there were three common areas of concern. Each teacher felt there was a lack of support from the administration, a lack of support between the regular education teacher and the special education teacher, and a lack of sufficient planning time. For programs like inclusion of SWD, having a supportive administration and extra planning time to work together with the special education teacher so the transition is easy for the student and the regular education teacher. The teachers were provided time to talk and plan for the students. The extra time gave teachers the support from administration and each other. Common planning time given to the teachers reduced the lack of preparation time (Fuchs, 2010).

Some teachers did not know how to differentiate instruction, make accommodations, or work with students with support staff. “The lack of training and guidance has a negative effect on the teacher’s abilities to meet the educational needs of the SWD” (Fuchs, 2010, p. 34).

Working towards providing teachers with more opportunity to collaborate and diversify the experiences in the regular education classroom are important concerns that were voiced by the teachers (Hadadian & Chiang, 2007). Giving the teachers opportunities to seek training to feel competent is an important administrative challenge. According to Kavale (2002), acknowledging the validity of the regular education classroom teachers’ daily challenges and giving them the

opportunity to seek training will boost the motivation for teachers to volunteer as inclusion teachers in the future. When teachers work together, effective collaboration and planning for the instruction of SWD creating a successful inclusion environment (Kavale, 2002).

Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham (2001) examined how educators moved away from segregating SWD in special education classrooms and toward inclusion classrooms where students are in the regular education classroom. This movement raised numerous questions, concerns, and responsibilities of those involved to provide the appropriate educational environment for the SWD. Having the support and guidance of the administration for the inclusion model is necessary to be successful. The teachers expressed concerns about the need for collaboration between the regular education and the special education teachers in order to successfully instruct the SWD on the independent instructional levels. The collaborative efforts were successful in the implementation of inclusion using team teaching. "Collaboration appeared to be taking place between the special education and regular education teachers which positively affected the learning of the SWD as well as the students in the regular education classroom" (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Smith, 2001, p. 333). There were social benefits of including SWD in the regular education classroom, but also serious concerns about the academic success of the included students. Having the support of the administration can be imperative for SWD to grow academically, have positive experiences in the regular education classroom, and teachers to provide effective instructional strategies while in the inclusion classroom. Adapting, modifying curriculum, and instruction for the SWD requires time for planning (Savich, 2008).

Teachers are not always given sufficient inclusion training in order to be able to create a successful inclusion learning environment. Ko and Boswell (2013) examined teachers' learning needs, challenges, and teaching practices in order to focus on the success of the SWD. They

identified frameworks of issues that needed to be addressed with inclusion classrooms. The first stage of the framework focuses on the teacher's preparedness for teaching SWD. This stage is concerned with the connectivity between the inclusion teachers and the SWD. The next stage was the development of professional identity and practice. This is an important stage for teachers who teach SWD to develop their teaching practices and become mentors among their colleagues. The next stage discusses the importance of continuing meaningful learning experiences throughout the career of the teacher.

Implementation of Inclusion

According to Smoot (2011), inclusion is practiced in many schools and can be exercised in several different ways. Students receive full inclusion, partial inclusion, or mainstreaming. Full inclusion provides SWD with the special education services in the regular education classroom. Partial inclusion encompasses the student being removed from the regular education classroom for special education or related services. Mainstreaming incorporates a student being in a self-contained special education setting and joining a regular education class for parts of the day.

It is important for teachers to promote social skill development within their inclusion classroom because according to Smoot (2011), children with disabilities need both academic and social skills. Therefore, effective implementation of inclusion requires commitment, creative thinking, and classroom strategies. Teachers appreciate learning differences that are natural and positive, but commitment to student diversity is also needed. Villa & Thousand (2003) further suggest that successful implementation of inclusive education requires connection with organizational best practices, visionary leadership, administrative support, redefined roles and relationships among adults and students, and collaboration. Creating a connection with best

practices includes facilitating inclusion as a means for educating all students. This will help the school community understand inclusion is not an add-on but a natural extension of effective teaching and learning for students.

Teacher Leadership & Preparedness

Experiences. The teaching profession values autonomy and discards the belief that teachers can use their own adaptive strategies (Coggins & Diffenbaugh, 2013). However, inexperienced teachers are often placed into difficult schools and charged with tasks that exceed their capabilities, but teachers who are passionate will improve their skills, practices, knowledge, and strategies to meet students' need. Giving teachers frequent and effective feedback will allow new teachers to improve on their abilities and will, hopefully, inspire them to continue to teach. In order for teachers to be able to climb the ladder of opportunity in education, time in the classroom is an important factor that will contribute to their ability to become proficient (Coggins & Diffenbaugh, 2013).

Teacher Leaders. Teacher leadership is an approach based on the components of distributed leadership model which focuses on interactions between leaders and sparks interaction among teachers working in an inclusion environment. According to Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis (2016), teacher leadership is as an essential part of effective school leadership, because one person cannot meet the changing needs in education. Effective leaders are open-minded, willing to listen and learn from others. Being able to make hard decisions and delegate responsibility in an inclusion setting requires an effective leader. Margolis & Huggins (2012) found that teacher leadership has shifted to include roles in which teacher leaders use their skills to train their peers. Working within the classrooms, teacher leaders are constantly mentoring, coaching, and mediating with one another.

Teacher leaders work toward growing in organizational knowledge, instructional practices, and engagement with their peers and students. These are leadership strategies and styles that when fostered and nurtured, allow teachers to both lead and teach. Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis (2016) believe that several years of experience in the classroom should be a prerequisite for becoming an inclusion teacher. Experienced teachers acquire a repertoire of instructional strategies and the ability to differentiate instruction based on the student's needs which provide credibility as leaders (Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis, 2016).

Regular education teachers are often leaders in the classroom and have a solid understanding of the SWD challenges (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004). Teacher leaders are proactive enabling them the best way possible to ensure student learning gains. Recognizing the importance of teacher leadership, Crockett (2002) suggests that special education programs take the lead in developing responsive teacher leadership preparation. Leadership is essential in guiding special education planning designed around the student needs, what is most beneficial for students to learn, and how to help students make learning gains. The SWD becomes part of a community where the leader takes a visionary approach and sets goals, and striving to increase the learning gains of students is a goal that is shared with everyone involved. The leader works toward getting the students vested in their learning to help increase these gains and help make the students responsible for their own goals. According to Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis (2016), successful leaders need to be committed, innovative, organized, and ethical. Leaders should discuss commitment to become lifelong learners by being creativity and innovation to envision new ways for successful inclusion; therefore, organization is necessary for time management, managing materials, and multitasking. Showing support for teachers establishes a solid foundation for the leader in the inclusion environment (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004).

Teacher Preparedness. Teacher's gain knowledge and strategies to implement instruction for working with SWD through training and best practices. New methods and strategies are being generated through staff development to help with teaching SWD. Due to the challenges to inclusion and concerns about the limited learning opportunities, teachers need an ongoing process of sharing, collaboration, and training with other teachers about inclusion practices (Ko & Boswell, 2013). According to Gehrke, Cocchiarella, Harris, & Puckett (2014) a lack of clearly pronounced policies, lack of knowledge on inclusion, and inconsistencies across teacher preparation programs are posing barriers to the successful creation of inclusive settings. Teacher preparation focuses on pre-service teachers and how they acquire knowledge and the most useful aspect of preparation programs regarding SWD was having hands-on practical experiences.

Teacher preparedness, sufficient planning time, accommodating SWD, and knowing limitations were particular challenges to the success of the co-teaching model. Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie (2007) recommended proactive communication, varied instructional practices, teacher training, use of a variety of co-teaching models, common planning, and flexibility. One of the more essential elements needed to help make co-teaching a success is collaborative planning. Teachers involved in the co-teaching model felt they benefited professionally from this common planning time and learned to adapt lessons for their students, be open-minded, and flexible (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

Attitudes to Preparedness. Teachers will recognize the barriers and limitations to inclusion and understand how to meet the needs of the SWD and their attitudes towards inclusion are important in effective implementation (Ross-Hill, 2009). Teachers become the driving force behind the success and creation of the LRE for SWD. Also, the attitudes of the regular education

teacher in regard to inclusion is important and can help facilitate an easy transition (Ross-Hill, 2009, p. 189). According to Mintz (2007), the importance of developing positive attitudes to the SWD and their teachers is imperative to the success of the learning environment. The attitudes of the inclusion teachers are mirrored in the SWD and create a positive impact on the student's and their attitudes as well (Mintz, 2007). For example, teachers that are flexible within their classroom create students who are flexible with each other. Also, teachers that view inclusion from a positive perspective found that their students showed remarkable accomplishments in their social interaction and academics (Padilla, 2009).

Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer (2009) collected in-depth descriptive information from four specific teachers on issues surrounding inclusion. The information was used to explore the teacher's views, opinions, and teaching practices regarding the inclusion of SWD in the regular education classroom. From the information collected, the teachers with the positive attitudes had consistent increases in the achievement of their students. The researchers also concluded, teachers with the negative attitudes toward inclusive education were in classrooms where the SWD were not adjusting or being receptive to the inclusive atmosphere. The results of the study supported building the confidence and motivation of the SWD which allowed the students to overcome many of their academic and social challenges. In this study, creating the LRE for these students and having teachers with positive attitudes in these classrooms was found to have the highest amount of success (Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer, 2009).

Chidindi (2012) identified teacher attitudes toward inclusion as an ingredient for success for SWD. Teachers who welcomed the idea of the SWD joined the regular education students in the classroom showing learning gains. Negative attitudes toward inclusion were often reflected in severity of the student's disability. These students displayed disruptions and behavior

problems. The SWD can at times display behavior that is uncontrollable and teachers need to be understanding regarding this issue. Positive teacher attitudes were reflected in success in higher grades and fewer behavioral issues. In the classroom, teachers examined each student individually with exceptional potential, familiarities, abilities, points of view, and needs for guidance. The inclusive classroom enables students to be treated as a unique individual (Chidindi, 2012).

Using the IEP as a guide for instruction, the regular education teacher considers the individuality of each student which requires time, collaboration, and planning. Giving the regular education classroom teacher the time needed to prepare and collaborate is imperative for the inclusion of SWD. Therefore, inclusion programs need supporting mechanisms which create the LRE and ensures the development of specific teacher strategies into the classroom (Padilla, 2009).

Models. Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren (2015) described the practices of schools that support the inclusion of SWD. These practices included the following teaching arrangements;

1. Type of engagement demonstrated during instruction.
2. What type of support was given to the regular education teacher?
3. What support was given to the SWD?
4. Interactions the SWD had with others.
5. What type of choices were being provided to the SWD?

Therefore, when educators are able to find a school with success in implementing inclusion, it is important to evaluate the program using the Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren (2015) model. Inclusive education for SWD and peer support helps create the LRE for students and their

learning. Schools that are trying to be successful in the implementation find that having support is challenging and collaboration is difficult to manage.

One benefit of inclusion is that it allows for the societal integration of SWD. In the inclusion model, the SWD are less isolated from the regular education classroom which is a benefit (Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer, 2009). In the inclusive classroom, Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren (2015) found that some students were engaged in activities while others were not. Active engagement involved students participating during lessons. However, the researchers found that there was a range of classroom support to all students including teachers, classroom volunteers, para-educators, and administration (Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren, 2015). Collaboration between these support systems provides a model to learn and assist in the success of the SWD (Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren, 2015). Researchers also found that students were working on a variety of tasks with elements of differentiation to complete the particular assignment and found that high levels of active participation among the SWD fostered engagement and self-reliance (Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren, 2015).

Student Perceptions of the Inclusive Classroom

In a study by Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton (2011), the teacher's role was to support and facilitate students' autonomy and academic engagement. Students were able to express their opinions, and the teachers were able to make modifications to correct the direction of the students learning based on the students' concerns. The majority of the teachers would take the information received from the interviews and work towards making the changes or concerns expressed in the interviews (Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011). "Giving students a voice for active participation in decision-making about their learning environment has great potential

for increased engagement and motivation for learning” (Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011, p. 55).

According to Sapon-Shevin (2003), students can learn to be accepting, understanding, and learn to work together in a democratic community. Giving students the opportunity to discuss their feelings about issues around inclusion, alleviates academic and behavioral problems, and will help create the LRE for the SWD. Inclusive classrooms provide opportunities for students to take powerful stances against oppression and recognize their own ability to change the world (Sapon-Shevin, 2003, Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011).

The perceptions of students within the inclusion classroom is an important factor in determining their outlook on the environment. In Shogren’s, et al, (2015) study, students were in focus groups and interviewed on their perspectives of being involved in an inclusive classroom. Three major themes that emerged from the focus groups including a sense of belonging in their school culture, inclusion and its impact on students, and school and classroom practices. Based on the responses of the students in the focus groups, the teachers began promoting equality and excellence within the integrated and inclusive classrooms. “Students are the primary stakeholders in inclusive schoolwide transformation and have unique insights that can inform implementation” (Shogren, et al, 2015, p. 244).

Students with and without disabilities benefit academically and socially from effective inclusion practices (Ryndak, Jackson, & White, 2013). Students who share diverse perspectives on inclusion were the students who worked with their teacher and peers showing learning gains. According to Mintz (2008), when students had a strong sense of belonging in their classroom, their attitude towards school was positive. Students felt connected to the administrators and their teachers who made them feel safe and supported at school (Mintz, 2007). Examining their sense

of belonging, the students felt their teachers had patience with them and were able to give help when needed or asked.

Parent Involvement in the Inclusive Classroom

Savich (2008) found that parents need to take active roles to ensure their students are being given the appropriate accommodations and modifications as laid out within their individual education plan (IEP). The parents have to be knowledgeable about their student's disabilities in order for the student to obtain the services they require. "Parental involvement is the best way to ensure that students with learning disabilities receive the services guaranteed according to the law" (Savich, 2008, p. 8).

Leadership Attitudes and Behaviors of the Inclusive Classroom

Campbell (2010) states that educational leaders have mixed emotions on the matter of inclusion because some believe inclusion is an option for maximizing the learning and others believe inclusion is not the best alternative for SWD. The majority of peer-reviewed research demonstrates classroom inclusion serves as an effective way to provide SWD an equitable education. However, inclusion may improve peer acceptance but placement is not the only solution for positive interaction between SWD and regular education students (Campbell, 2010). Therefore, leadership is an essential part of effective inclusion because it takes the support of the leader to meet the needs of the students and teachers (Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis, 2016). Leaders are building inclusive classrooms based on educators having flexibility, support, and collaboration with peers. Students without disabilities and SWD can benefit academically and socially, help each other, and be understanding of learning differences if leaders provide the necessary support and flexibility (Chidindi, 2012).

Leadership Experiences. Crockett (2002) states leadership helps to promote teaching and learning of students and allows them to succeed by molding their school culture for students to embrace and support. Effective leadership within a school is able to buffer the distractions from teaching, provide feedback to teachers, and organize training that will allow teachers to improve their skills and strategies in the classroom. Participating in a leadership model where positive motivation fosters and encourages effective criticism improves learning outcomes and nurtures the relationships among the staff. The author finds the appropriate leadership model will allow educators to get the best results with students.

Leadership Styles. Leaders have an ongoing commitment to defend the needs and interests of teachers and students. Therefore, it is important to have an effective leadership model that will produce the best results. Combining several leadership models as needed would be ideal. According to Pepper (2010), a skillful balance of transformational and transactional leadership styles is an effective way to meet the needs of SWD. Transformational leadership is a style where the needs of the students are the most important to reach academic success, whereas transactional leadership provides an effective oversight of daily management and organizational needs of the school (Pepper, 2010).

Transactional leadership comprises the leader taking action and issuing orders. However, transformational leadership combines other leadership styles and uses the best qualities to provide motivation. According to Quin, Deris, Bischoff, & Johnson (2015), a transformational leader's practices make exemplary changes in an organization. This type of leadership requires educators to use accountability and achievement data to drive instruction. The increasing demands of programs require leadership to make changes in the curriculum to meet the needs of the SWD (Quin, Deris, Bischoff, & Johnson, 2015). Leaders in education respond constantly to

changing circumstances and contexts. Transformational leadership is characterized by the ability to sustain relationships while employing the framework of enthusiasm, energy, and hope throughout the organization (Padilla, 2009).

Leadership styles are both developed and selected by the teacher and educational leaders in promoting positive transformations within a school (Sternberg, 2013). Strong leadership skills are vital to implement change throughout the school year. Since teachers are the leader in the classroom, adapting a leadership style that fits the learning methods embraced is significant. Ultimately, teachers begin to change and mold a leadership style into a personal teaching style. Also, teachers tend to take control of their classroom situations in a collective form of leadership by collaborating with colleagues to complete tasks (Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003).

Leaders create specific conditions and practices in schools that address the needs of the students (Sternberg, 2013). There is an existing debate on the impact of principal's leadership on student achievement. Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger (2003) conducted a study that endorsed the findings of the direct effects approach that linked to leadership, curriculum, and student achievement. The direct effects approach is a model that conceptualizes the phenomenon of educational leadership. Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger (2003) found the direct effects approach of instructional leadership was linked to positive student outcomes and achievement. Educational leadership is related to school organization and the culture of the school as well as to the teacher behavior and classroom practices. When the leaders were straight forward with the students, the results of student achievement were higher. Being an indirect leader tends to indicate lower student achievement, and the students were less interested in performing well as the students with a leader that took the direct effect model approach (Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003).

Leadership Support. Observing and evaluating teachers on their teaching abilities builds teacher confidence (Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis, 2016). Therefore, leaders who provide guidance encourage teachers to become highly effective in their profession and promotes teacher learning. Giving new teachers the confidence and strategies to be successful inspires them to stay in the profession and continue teaching for years (Bogotch, 2014). Administrators build relationships with their teachers to create positive, inclusive cultures and practices within the school environment (Riehl, 2000). Leaders who build these more positive and supportive environments create LRE for SWD. Administrations allowing teachers the opportunities to practice their skills will help ensure the success of SWD in an inclusive environment (Riehl, 2000).

Villa & Thousand (2003) believe in choosing the correct leadership role for inclusive education. For the inclusive education classroom to succeed, administrators need to articulate publically the vision of the specific learning environment and ensure positive implementation. “Visionary leaders recognize changing any organization, including a school, is a complex act” (Villa & Thousand, 2003, p. 21). Such transformation requires ongoing attention to build the inclusive atmosphere that allows skill development of SWD. Leaders guide and trust teachers to have the appropriate knowledge for implementing instruction of SWD into the regular education classroom. Hadadian & Chiang (2007) suggests that inclusion expresses commitment to educate each child to the maximum extent appropriate with a supportive leadership.

Leadership Collaboration. Schools use collective leadership roles allowing stakeholders to work together collectively to get the best results (Padilla, 2009). Teacher leaders work collaboratively with coworkers, are flexible, open to change, and listen to new ideas. Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis (2016) suggests all teachers have the opportunity to exercise informal leadership in a variety of situations.

Educational leaders may be unsure if inclusive education is the best fit for all SWD. According to Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer (2009), the debate is whether inclusion and resources surrounding inclusion always provide the best atmosphere to facilitate learning. The severity of learning disabilities determine whether SWD can be educated in the regular education classroom. Educational leaders, teachers, parents, and students have the right to be involved in the determination of the best atmosphere for the child (Savich, 2008). Crockett (2002) suggests that students perform better academically in an inclusive classrooms because everyone benefits from the changes needed for teachers to work successfully with a mixed group of students.

Different leadership models show evidence of the tensions between student autonomy and accountability (Bogotch, 2014). Autonomy relates to student decisions about their learning and accountability relates to SWD performance on testing. Tests cause anxiety for the stakeholders and students, and inclusion is crucial to ensure equality and nondiscrimination on the basis of learning struggles (Sternberg, 2013). Bogotch (2014) found that autonomy and accountability are both needed but the proper measure or degree of how much is inconclusive.

The role of leaders in responding to the needs of the SWD is pertinent to their progress. School effectiveness studies of leadership have been criticized for focusing on cognitive student outcomes only (Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). The framework mentioned by Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger (2003) implies the working conditions of the students are directly tied to the leadership behavior of the administrator.

Challenges and Solutions to Inclusion

Training. According to Fisher, Roach, & Fry (2002), teachers believe with the appropriate training, administrative support, and the ability to collaborate with other teachers, problems can be solved in the inclusive classroom. Therefore, teachers should be provided

appropriate training to accommodate SWD prior to inclusion. Pre-service teachers should receive classes, professional development, and in-service training to teach appropriate skills and strategies to work with SWD. According to Mintz (2007), the special education and inclusion teachers who had positive attitudes were more responsive to the training. The teachers with positive attitudes were able to process the information provided during training and apply the strategies in their inclusion classroom. Training helped teachers to work collaboratively and effectively in welcoming the SWD (Hadadian & Chiang, 2007).

Training prepares teachers to differentiate instruction, design accommodations, and create modifications to meet the needs of the students in inclusive classroom. Many teacher training programs do not have adequate special education courses in their programs; however, in-service training for special education teachers will also assist them in working effectively with the regular education teachers (Hadadian & Chiang, 2007). Collaboration between the regular education and special education teachers is a key factor in the effective implementation of inclusion (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

Experiences. Teacher preparation programs are integrating more hands-on experiences in inclusive classrooms. Pre-service educators who receive instruction on implementing inclusion also received positive aspects of inclusion and support services for SWD (Fruth & Woods, 2015). Pre-service educators receive instruction that identifies positive aspects of inclusion and support for SWD. “Enhancing pre-service educators’ ability to recognize and implement inclusion in their field experience settings has the potential to better prepare future special educators to successfully support the education of SWD in the regular education classroom” (Gehrke, Cocchiarella, Harris, & Puckett, 2014, p. 91). Providing field experiences for pre-service educators allows for an easier transition into the inclusive classroom.

According to Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, (2011) working to address problems created a classroom community where exclusion was unacceptable. Teachers in this environment use strategies to teach students how to discuss their feelings with classmates. If teachers see inclusive classrooms as important, students would accept the SWD as equals. Also, encouraging students to be advocates for their learning will help them to participate fully in the classroom (VanSciver & Conover, 2009). Teachers can create an environment where students are committed to their own learning paths and treat everyone equitably (Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011).

In a study by Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton (2011), interviews were conducted and teachers agreed to dialogue with their students to understand their feelings about group work and allow them to participate in class discussions to resolve issues that may arise. Teachers' shared mixed feelings about this information as some results was reassuring and uplifting while others were upsetting and frustrating. At the end of the study, the teachers involved emphasized the teacher to student feedback. Giving students the opportunity to have a voice was empowering to the students and built their confidence. Students were honest in their responses which allowed the teachers to modify and adjust to whatever concerns were voiced (Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011).

Savich (2008) found that SWD in the regular classroom had trouble keeping up academically and on grade level. These students need accommodations or modifications for specific assignments but are then able to keep up with the pace in the regular education classroom. Inclusion strives for the full integration of students which allows for social cohesion, a sense of empathy, and a sense of diversity (Savich, 2008). Having the SWD become part of the

regular education classroom where independence is attempted, builds their confidence and social skills in a LRE (Fruth & Woods, 2015).

Challenges. Challenges related to inclusion are centered on insufficient preservice learning, as well as, lack of support from the administration (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). When incorporating inclusion, teachers redefine the roles in the classroom and they facilitate, develop, and collaborate on shared responsibility for educating SWD (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). When general education teachers become aware of their responsibilities to meet the needs of SWD within a safe, secure learning environment, a supportive administration will help to ensure a positive integration for the SWD. Collaboration is a necessary component in the effective implementation of inclusion (Lingo, Barton-Arwood & Jolivet, 2011). Being given time to plan with the teachers involved with the SWD allows for effective assessment of the student's individual academic needs. Therefore, promoting inclusion in the classroom creates a balanced approach to the development and acceptance of students and their differences (Longo, Barton-Arwood & Jolivet, 2011).

Theoretical Framework – Social Constructivism

The social constructivist theory supports how regular education teachers view their inclusive classrooms as places to learn, grow, interact, and form relationships. Creswell states “In social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Inclusion is important because it allows students of all different learning abilities to be included in a regular classroom among their peers. All children deserve to be treated equally and inclusion allows for the SWD to be exposed to the normalcy of regular classroom routines and procedures where they are also asked to follow the same rules as all the other students (Stroet, Opdenakker, & Minnaert, 2016). The goal of inclusion is achieved when a

child is participating in the activities of the class, as a member who belongs. Inclusion is not a trade-off of support for placement in the regular education classroom because it allows the regular education teacher and the special education teacher to collaborate together to find the best methods of practice for each SWD individually (Campbell, 2010).

Social constructivist theory suggests knowledge is actively constructed through dialogue (McGarrigle, 2013). This is a theory of knowledge with communication that examines the jointly constructed understandings of the world that form the basis for shared reality. Understanding the concepts and changes that are evident in the classroom create environments to assist in incorporating the constructivist approach into the classroom. Many classrooms are moving toward creating environments that allow students to be social constructivists (Campbell, 2010). The following table provides a visual representation of how social constructionism is connected through several theorists who attempt to define how students learn and what is the best learning environment for all students:

Table 1

Theoretical Framework – Social Constructionism

Characters of Social Constructionism	Description	Lev Vygotsky	Jean Piaget	Albert Bandura	Malcom Knowles
Collaborative	Requires everyone to be actively collaborating	Enables students to complete harder tasks	Influence development	Cognitive & social factors of learning	Life centered learning related to real world problems
Inclusion	SWD being immersed into the LRE	Zone of Proximal Development	Interacting, reasoning, & action	Provides rational for inclusion	Background knowledge
Flexible	Purposeful and happens when necessary		Spontaneous speech & interactions		Learn as the need arises internally motivated

Knowledge constructed	Requires everyone to be informed	Increase learning gains	Embrace understanding	Believe everyone is similar	Self-directed learners
Interactive	SWD working with their peers	Supports learning across all curriculum		People learn from one another	

The social constructionist theory connects to the inclusion classroom because teachers examine their knowledge of inclusion and how it meets the needs of SWD. The social constructionist theory provides understanding of how teacher collaboration in the classroom promotes student collaboration with student diversity. “Social constructivist theorists tend to identify qualitative educational research as discovering meaning and understanding by the researcher’s active involvement in the construction of meaning” (Kim, 2014, p. 538). The theory of social constructivism is widely influenced by Vygotsky’s social constructivist approach. “Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning reconsiders ways of conducting qualitative research through the emphasis of interactive and creative elements” (Kim, 2014, p. 548). Vygotsky’s theories are being merged into part of the social constructivist approach that states individuals seek to understand the world in which we live and work. Kim (2014) found that in order to create a social constructivist environment, a creative and transformative activity should be conducted as well as an affective cognitive and embodied activity. The social constructivist must deal with the empathetic and aesthetic aspects while conducting these activities. Social interactions within the theory of social constructivist are essential to human development (Kim, 2014).

Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) has implications for inclusive classrooms. ZPD states that students learn when guided by an adult or when working with more capable peers (Lampton, Graves, & Ward, 2012, p. 57). The ZPD provides an important understanding of learning, but the implications for teachers are often unclear or limited and could

be further explored (Wass and Golding, 2014). By understanding ZPD in the classroom, teachers can increase learning gains by providing learning environments that enable students to do harder tasks.

Piaget's theory encompasses social constructionism based on the capability of communicating, reasoning, and the perspectives of action (Fox & Risconscente, 2008). As the theory strives to influence the development through communication among adults and students, it also embraces the theory of understanding how we live. Piaget's (2008) theory of cognitive development is built on evidence obtained from observations of children's spontaneous speech and interactions. The behaviors observed and explanations offered during these situations reveal the signature characteristics of different stages of development (Fox & Risconscente, 2008). Progress through Piaget's developmental stages consists of awareness of, interaction with, and attempts to control the environment.

Effective inclusive classrooms are built on social constructivism because of collaboration among the adults, responsiveness to events and flexibility based on the needs of the students, differentiation in the way they apply their knowledge, skills, and pedagogy. According to Malcom Knowles, collaboration among adults is important for the students (Harper & Ross, 2011). Adults need to know why collaboration is important and provide opportunities for collaborating with significance. Flexibility and responsiveness is imperious for teachers of inclusion students. When teaching SWD, these strategies allow the teacher to apply their knowledge and skills to accurately differentiate instruction adapting methods when necessary. In an inclusive classroom, these are things you would see in a social constructivist classroom.

Another theory similar to social constructionism is the social learning theory which suggests that people learn from one another (Bandura, 1977). This theory has a powerful

connection to the inclusive classroom because it explains how students believe that other students in the classroom are similar to themselves (Deeming & Johnson, 2009). Creating behavioral plans for SWD, according to Bandura, are important but influenced by cognitive and social factors of learning. Bandura's social learning theory is applicable to SWD and provides a rational for inclusion (Zambo, 2006).

Malcom Knowles' theory of andragogy is best known in the world of adult education as a conceptualization of how and why adults learn (Harper & Ross, 2011). The mission of adult learning is to impart knowledge and skills to the students so learning can take place. There are six assumptions of andragogy:

1. Adults need to know the reason for learning
2. Experience provides the basis for learning
3. They are responsible for their own education
4. They are interested in learning things with immediate relevance
5. Problem-centered rather than content-oriented
6. They respond better to internal versus external motivators (Harper & Ross, 2011).

These motivations relate to how teachers improve their life in the inclusive classroom by being responsible for their own learning, recognizing why inclusion is important, and understanding the relevance. Teachers learn what is important and create activities that are problem-centered rather than content-oriented. Teachers of the inclusion classroom are practitioners that implement their experiences by connecting their learning to the inclusion environment (Harper & Ross, 2011).

Leatherman (2007), examined teachers' perceptions of their inclusion classrooms. The social constructivist theory of teaching inclusion helped meet the needs of the SWD in the

inclusion environment. Teachers provided with additional education, support from administration, and positive experiences were able to foster successful inclusion classrooms. SWD in an inclusion classroom were provided specialized strategies to participate. It is the role of the inclusion teacher to make accommodations while being given support from peer teachers and administration to help create the LRE (Leatherman, 2007). Overall teachers felt that having an inclusion classroom was positive. The teachers expressed about being challenged but never wished the SWD were not in their classrooms. The teachers felt that learning from the stakeholders was taking place in the classroom (Leatherman, 2007).

SWD grow and develop alongside their peers when immersed in an inclusion environment. Encouraging SWD to be included in the regular education classroom allows them to have social, emotional, and academic opportunities they have not experienced before (Savich, 2008). The inclusion environment is an environment where everyone learns from each other. Teachers were found to have an overwhelming response to the importance of creating a positive environment for SWD to foster their attitudes and feelings of success towards their learning experiences. When teachers were given the support necessary to ensure success, the regular education classroom of inclusion students were the most successful (Villa & Thousand, 2003). The inclusion classroom is an optimal environment for children with and without learning difficulties. Teachers of inclusion classrooms identified that the social constructivist theory requires the teacher to be capable of learning about children and assembling knowledge to meet the needs of SWD (Leatherman, 2007).

Schools have adapted social constructivism with the aim of enhancing students' motivation. Educational philosophies that encompass social constructivist views represent traditions that can be contrasted on aspects of learning and instruction (Stroet, Opdenakker, &

Minnaert, 2016). Teachers can apply this theory to the classroom or even into the leadership aspect of teaching. Teachers use traditional methods but also need to incorporate new methods and strategies to keep students motivated to learn and grow. Social constructivists view learning as a social, cultural, and interpersonal process that is governed by many different situational factors (McGarrigle, 2013).

Social Justice. Social justice is a central ingredient of inclusion, and students should be encouraged to accept one another no matter what differences there may be. Social justice promotes respect, care, recognition, and empathy. Also, this theory challenges marginalization and exclusionary practices in society and in the classroom (Theoharris, 2007). According to Obiakor, Harris, Rotatori, & Algozzine (2010) effective leaders establish strategies to mobilize problems of inclusion, require teachers to hold themselves accountable, and access changes when necessary to optimize the learning within the classroom. “It is going to take effective leaders to move educational reform of social justice forward” (p. 150).

Summary of the Chapter

Inclusion allows the SWD and the regular education students to have unique experiences with each other fostering adaptation for students. The goal of inclusion is achieved when a child is participating in the activities of the class, as a member who belongs. Inclusion is not a trade-off of support for placement in the regular class and is not a trade-off of achievement of individual goals (Giangreco, 2007).

Inclusion has both positive and negative impact on teachers. As a teacher, adapting teaching styles, learning environments, classroom management, and activities within the classroom is constantly evolving. The atmosphere in the classroom is always changing but adding a SWD in a classroom causes changes to become more important. Depending on the

severity of the needs of the inclusion student, everything in the classroom could have to be altered when this child is brought into the class. On the negative side, teachers feel there is a lack of support from the administration and time to prepare for the children being mainstreamed. On the positive side, inclusion has helped the SWD feel accepted more by their peers (Smoot, 2011).

In order to be successful with inclusion, training and preparedness is needed. Teachers that will be implementing inclusion in their classrooms need instructional practices that will benefit the students. Providing training for teachers will encourage staff members to reflect on how they will differentiate instruction and design accommodations to meet the needs for all students. Differentiated instruction and creativity are among some strategies that can be used to help with implementing inclusion. Teachers need time to become familiar with the new instructional strategies that will help the students adapt to this way of learning (Padilla, 2009).

Leadership styles and support is important for factor needed to provide teachers with strategies to promote learning and positive motivation. Leadership provides knowledge to the teachers of SWD and is an essential part of an effective school. Leaders provides teachers with strategies and preparation to enable opportunities in which the development of the skills is evident in the classroom. Providing teachers with supportive leadership will stimulate the successful implementation of an inclusive environment for the SWD.

Chapter 3

Methods Used in this Study

Introduction

The inclusion environment provides SWD the opportunities to learn alongside non-disabled peers. The inclusion support system prepares the SWD for the LRE in the regular education classroom. Therefore, inclusion gives SWD the opportunity to receive the same quality of education as others. This is a result of the IDEA revision of 1997, which requires children with disabilities be educated to the maximum extent appropriate in the LRE. Educators have found that children in inclusive environments are able to develop natural friendships within their own home community. Segregation fosters ostracism, whereas integration fosters acceptance. Inclusion has changed the roles of teachers, and they are encouraged to adapt to the new accommodations, modifications, and expectations (Savich, 2008, p. 17).

The purpose of this case study is to explore methods, practices, and approaches teachers use and their perspectives on inclusion. Interviews will be conducted to examine the perspectives of the teachers and how that impacts the learning of SWD who are educated in an inclusive setting. Observations were conducted to identify practices used in the inclusion classroom.

The inclusion environment allows SWD to be educated with their peers and receive instruction that promotes their learning. Inclusion provides SWD the right to be treated equitably and to receive the same quality of education as others. In 1997, the implementation of IDEA created a trend towards educating SWD in the regular education classroom. IDEA necessitates SWD to be educated to the utmost extent appropriate in the LRE. Subsequently, educators found co-teaching partnerships between the regular education and special education teachers provide assistance in the development, delivery, and evaluation to benefit SWD (Isherwood & Barger-

Anderson, 2008). Co-teaching along with careful planning, collaboration, and support helped SWD to adapt to the new accommodations and expectations in their learning environment.

Research Techniques for this Study

This study will describe and explain the methods, practices, and approaches used while teaching in an inclusion setting using a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible (Creswell, 2013, p. 43). This approach is a series of representations, including interviews, conversations, and observations. It begins with assumptions and a specific theoretical framework that informs the study of research problems and addresses the problems. Interviewing is a powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues (Seidman, 2013, p. 13).

The choice of qualitative techniques is based on the nature of this study, as well as underlying assumptions and beliefs. The topic of inclusion is one of debate within the education field and needs to be explored through the perspective of teachers. Educators have reservations about how inclusion works in the classroom and how well students are served. The defining features of this case study include an exploration, philosophical discussion, data collection, data analysis, and an essence of the experience (Creswell, 2013, p. 79). Choosing qualitative research allows perspectives of teachers working in inclusion settings to be described and explored through interviews and observations. This method required interviewing individuals about their experience of working in an inclusion classroom and their beliefs on inclusion for SWD. The same set of teachers that were interviewed were also observed to witness a typical day as an inclusion teacher. In addition, leaders were interviewed to explore ways that inclusion is supported. The combination of interviews and observations yielded a more complete picture of

the benefits and challenges of an inclusive classroom as perceived through the eyes of an educator.

Rationale for Methodology

Creswell (2013), states that we conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored (p. 47). This exploration is needed in order to discover and describe the perspectives of teachers working effectively in inclusion settings. This method will allow the researcher to better understand the perspectives of teachers collaborating together when planning the curriculum and instruction for the students in an inclusive classroom. The current methods of teaching in the inclusion classroom and the methods being used to create a positive learning environment will be explored. Interviewing leaders provides insight into how inclusion is supported in schools.

When seeking to explore how regular education teachers and special education teachers work together to serve SWD, interviews and observations are the means for collecting this data. An ESE and two regular education teachers were observed and interviewed at two different elementary schools in different grade levels who work together in an inclusion classroom. The collaboration and planning time were observed for these teachers as well as the lesson delivery in the classroom to better understand the inclusive learning environment. Leaders were interviewed to understand their perspectives on inclusion and how they support inclusion in their schools. Using these methods allowed the exploration of what is working and what is needed for the success of including SWD. Observations provided an opportunity to witness strategies, methods and planning being used in the inclusion classroom. The protocols for interviews and observation tools are included in the appendices; Appendix A contains the teacher interview questions, Appendix B contains the follow-up questions to the teacher interview questions, Appendix C

contains the principal interview questions, and Appendix D contains the instrument used. When working to explore methods for accommodating SWD in the inclusion setting, the same two schools were used and examined the teachers with different teaching methods like cooperative learning, mixed-ability grouping, and differentiation throughout a specific time period.

Interviews and observations were conducted to collect the information needed to understand the perspectives of teachers and their attitudes toward the inclusion of SWD in the regular education classroom.

The theoretical framework of social constructivism focuses this study on exploring the methods, practices, and approaches being used to successfully implement inclusion. Social constructivism states that a person's knowledge is shaped through social experiences, influences, and interactions within the environment (McGarrigle, 2013). The regular education teacher must make the appropriate accommodations for SWD to meet their needs and have a successful inclusion classroom. For the regular education teacher to make the appropriate accommodations, they need support and collaboration with administration, counselors, and special education teachers. The social constructivist theory supports how the regular education teacher views the inclusive classroom as a place to learn, grow, interact, and form relationships.

According to Creswell (2013), "Researchers recognize their own background shapes their interpretation, and position themselves in the research to acknowledge how the interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (p. 25). Inclusion allows students with different needs to be included in a regular classroom with their peers. SWD are exposed to the normalcy of regular classroom routines and procedures where they share experiences with the non-disabled students. According to Villa & Thousand (2005), "It is difficult for students to get the message that they belong when they are sent down the hall or to a

different environment to develop their skills” (p. 43). The goal of inclusion is achieved when a child is participating in the activities of the class, as a member who belongs. Inclusion is not a trade-off for support or placement in the regular education classroom. It allows the regular education teacher and the ESE teacher to collaborate to find the best methods to teach each student individually.

Inclusion is happening in classrooms and schools all across the nation, and regular education teachers are required to teach SWD without adequate support from special education teachers (Hadadian & Chiang, 2007). Teachers today are working to include SWD in the regular education classroom environment but there are many factors that contribute to the success. “As soon as we take away students’ sense of belonging, we completely undermine their capacity to learn the skills that will enable them to belong” (Kunc, 2000, p. 43). The observations enabled me to observe the environment and the interviews allowed me to understand the environment from the teachers’ perspectives. The interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy and transcribed for analysis. This helped to preserve the words of the participants and allow me the use of their original quotes. The interviews were transcribed to provide visual access to the information gathered during the interviews. According to Seidman (2013), “Each interviewing relationship is individually crafted” (p. 97). A skilled interviewer will make the participants feel at ease allowing them to be comfortable and respond naturally, even when being recorded.

Participant Selection

The subjects for this study include elementary school teachers who are working with both regular education students and SWD in an inclusion setting. Elementary teachers were used because of the relationship between the ESE and regular education teacher which requires collaboration and planning time. District staff identified schools with models of inclusion. I

observed and interviewed one ESE teacher and two regular education co-teachers in different grade levels at two different schools. Studying exemplary models of inclusion help to identify successful strategies for overcoming barriers along with the benefits and challenges of inclusion. The schools participating have been identified by the district ESE staff as inclusive schools where ESE students are being served well. The teachers were chosen based on the recommendation of the principals. I observed the collaboration and planning time for these teachers, as well as the strategies and methods being used in the classroom to implement an inclusive learning environment for SWD. Using these methods allowed the exploration and analysis of teachers' perspectives. I conducted interviews and observations in the classroom of the teachers participating. I observed and interviewed each set of teachers two times and interviewed the school principals at each site once to better understand how inclusion is supported.

Data Collection

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about working in an inclusion setting were analyzed. The data were collected through interviews and observations with each set of ESE and regular education co-teachers as well as school leaders. I interviewed the selected participants individually taking notes while also recording the interviews. I conducted two interviews, two months apart, with the same selected participants. The information obtained from the interviews was transcribed and then analyzed. The information collected through these mechanisms was useful to help understand teachers' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of inclusion.

I began by scheduling a time to observe the participants in the classroom and interview each of the participants one-on-one. I used a Sony Recorder to record audio during the interviews. I took notes during the interviews. Once the interviews were complete, I sent the

audio recordings to a transcription service to have the information transcribed. I then compared the notes against the transcription to check for accuracy and clarify the responses written down during the interview. I examined the transcription and notes for statements or phrases that were relevant about the topic of the research. After analyzing the information gathered from the first set of interviews, I then scheduled a second round of observations and interviews with the same participants. The second interview and observation sessions allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives of teaching SWD in an inclusion setting. After the second set of interviews, I repeated the same steps of transcription and comparing the field notes after the interviews and observations.

Interview Protocol. Interviewing is suitable for a phenomenological case study, and was the primary method used for data collection. A phenomenological case study approach gives descriptions of each participant's perspective on the benefits and challenges of inclusion using the data sources listed. "A phenomenological case study approach describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). This approach uses the perceptions of teachers and administrators to explore the benefits and challenges of inclusion. The qualitative design explores a case within a real-life, contemporary context, or setting. Case study research is an object of study and a product of inquiry and the findings will consist of descriptions and themed developments of each case (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). Interviews allowed me to explore the perspectives of the participants about their learning experiences of SWD in an inclusion setting. The research methods, practices, and approaches will be generally described as inclusion in this study. The protocol for interviews (see Appendix A & B) was developed from the review of relevant literature. The planned questions and possible follow-up questions for the interviews are below:

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. How many years of experience do you have teaching inclusion students?
 - a. Possible follow-up question (PFQ): What is your degree in specifically?
3. How do your SWD fare/perform in an inclusive regular education classrooms?
(Ko & Boswell, 2013; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
4. What are the academic outcomes in inclusive regular education classrooms?
(Michael, 2013; Tomlinson, 2003, Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
5. What roles do paraprofessionals fill in your classroom? (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)
6. How do your students without learning disabilities receive appropriately challenging education in an inclusive regular education classroom? (Savich, 2008; Sapon-Sherin, 2003, Campbell, 2010; Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer, 2009)
7. How does SWD in the inclusion classroom, work compared to their classmates without disabilities? (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; Smoot, 2011; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
8. How do your students with disabilities and students without disabilities receive equal access to the same curriculum? (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; Ross-Hill, 2009; Smoot, 2011)
9. How do your SWD actively participate in the classroom activities with their peers in the regular education classroom? (Chidindi, 2012; Ross-Hill, 2009)
 - a. PFQ: How do you feel that your SWD are treated among their peers?
(Chidindi, 2012; Ross-Hill, 2009)

10. How do the instructional strategies and teaching style you use help to meet the needs of the SWD? (Crockett, 2002; Hadadian & Chiang, 2007)
 - a. How do you believe that your teaching style helps to meet the needs of the SWD? (Crockett, 2002; Hadadian & Chiang, 2007)
11. How do sufficient, relevant, and available resources help to implement inclusion in your classroom effectively? (Fisher, Roach, & Fry, 2002; Fuchs, 2010)
 - a. PFQ: Do you believe that you have adequate resources help to implement inclusion in your classroom effectively? Why or why not? (Fisher, Roach, & Fry, 2002; Fuchs, 2010)
12. How is your input in the development of the best interests of your inclusion students valued in your school? (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2001; Villa & Thousand, 2005)
 - a. PFQ: Do you believe that your input within the development of the SWD is valued in your school? Why or why not? (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2001; Villa & Thousand, 2005)
13. How do you manage your time to individualize instruction for your SWD? (Singh, 2007; O'Meara, 2010)
 - a. PFQ: Can you explain how you manage your time to individualize instruction for your SWD? (Singh, 2007; O'Meara, 2010)
14. How do you cooperate and assist your colleagues to implement inclusion successfully in your classroom? (Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Smoot, 2011; Villa & Thousand, 2005)

- a. PFQ: Can you explain how you work collaboratively with your colleagues to implement inclusion successfully in your classroom? (Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Smoot, 2011; Villa & Thousand, 2005)
15. How do you provide the information on accommodations for SWD? (Kavale, Spaulding, & Beam, 2009; Villa & Thousand, 2005)

The protocol for interviews for the principals (see Appendix C) was developed from the review of relevant literature. The planned questions for the principal interviews were:

1. How many years have you been a principal?
2. How many years have you been the principal of your current school?
3. How do you choose your teachers for inclusive classrooms? (Ko & Boswell, 2013; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
4. How do you support the co-planning model? (Singh, 2007; O'Meara, 2010)
5. How do you support the co-teaching model? (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)
6. What do you expect to see when you walk into a co-teaching model? (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)
7. How do the students in the inclusive classroom receive an appropriately challenging education? (Savich, 2008; Sapon-Sherin, 2003; Campbell, 2010; Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer, 2009)
8. Do you believe your teachers are provided with appropriate resources to help implement inclusion effectively? (Fisher, Roach, & Fry, 2002; Fuchs, 2010)

9. How does creating the master schedule work in your school? (Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; O'Meara, 2010)

Observation Protocol. The protocol for the observation instrument that was used was something I created. The observations categories (see Appendix D) were developed based on the research and information that was collected about inclusion. The observation categories were:

1. Co-teaching (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)
2. Differentiation (O'Meara, 2010)
3. Teacher collaboration with students (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2001; Padilla, 2009)
4. Teacher collaboration with peers (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2001; Padilla, 2009)
5. Accommodations/Modifications (Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Tomlinson, 2003; O'Meara, 2010)
6. Instructional Strategies (Crocket, 2002; Hadadian, 2007)

Data Analysis

I ultimately identified major and minor themes within the transcribed interviews and observations. The themes were discovered through analysis of the information collected through the interviews. I used the themes to get to the meaning without reducing the connotation of the information collected. The information collected was placed into initial categories and then themes were identified based on the responses of the participants both teachers and principals. I then differentiated between major and minor themes. This was an ongoing process throughout

data collection and analysis. The themes allowed me to better understand teachers' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of inclusive education. The data collected was analyzed to further understand the participants' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of inclusion.

Role of the Researcher

When conducting qualitative research, I took the primary role of data collection and analysis. "Listening is the most important skill in interviewing" (Seidman, 2013, p. 81). As the interviewer, it is the researcher's job to listen more and talk less. I concentrated on the information being conveyed and took notes. I took notes on my computer during the interviews to reflect upon their responses. I also recorded the interviews so that a script of the conversation was made to recall all the information collected during the time of the interview.

To begin, I scheduled interviews with each participant at the school sites where the participants work in order to achieve a greater understanding of their work lives. I used a Sony Recorder to record audio during the interviews. I also took notes on my computer while the participants were answering the interview questions. Rather than transcribing the interviews myself, I utilized Transcripity transcription service. I used this service previously for assignments throughout my doctoral coursework. Initially, I analyzed each transcript holistically. Then I analyzed each transcript for responses that seemed essential or revealing. After that I looked at each participants responses to discern what it revealed about the phenomenon. I had the transcripts printed out and used different color highlighters to identify common themes or categories. After evaluating the transcripts and observation notes from the first round of interviews, I scheduled a second interview with each participant to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives. I repeated the steps for analysis for the second interviews just like I completed for the first interviews.

Conclusion

Inclusion is a contentious issue in education because it relates to the educational and social values of students who have disabilities, as well as their sense of individual self-worth. Stakeholders believe that not all SWD belong in a regular education classroom and others feel that good teachers can meet the needs of all students, regardless of their disabilities (Giangreco, 2007). Despite the beliefs, the law requires schools to provide opportunities to help ensure equity, accountability, and excellence in education for SWD. Inclusion is when SWD spend most or all of their time in a regular education classroom with students who do not have disabilities.

In the next chapter, I will address the issues around inclusion, support from the administration, ESE teachers, and peer teachers. Teachers in inclusion classrooms need time to prepare, work with the special education teachers, and collect resources in order to ensure the success of the SWD. “The importance of dedicated planning time to consider curriculum content and process of encouraging learning is imperative” (Halvorsen & Neary, 2001, p. 133). In the research, no solution was mentioned of how to help teachers adapt to the inclusion environment but collaboration was considered to be important. The regular education and the ESE teachers need time for working collaboratively in order to contribute to the success of SWD. Evaluating the methods and strategies being used to ensure the success of SWD is an area that was explored through this research.

Students need to be treated individually and independently because they have different needs, struggles, and areas of concern. Allowing teachers to get the appropriate training necessary to feel successful in teaching SWD was also an area of exploration. Preservice teachers are not graduating with the tools necessary to entertain SWD in the regular education classroom (Riehl, 2000). According to Fuchs (2010), regular education teachers occasionally feel

inadequately prepared to successfully meet the needs of diverse students in the LRE. How can educators ensure teachers are receiving the best training and strategies for successful teaching of students with learning disabilities? How can educators create an environment where time is available for planning with the regular education and special education teachers? How can educators ensure the support from the administration staff in the implementation of an inclusion classroom to warrant the success of the students with learning disabilities? Hadadian & Chiang (2007) state in-service training for ESE teachers can contribute to them working effectively with regular education teachers. Encouraging both parties to take ownership of educating themselves and SWD will help to promote the success of inclusive classrooms.

Chapter 4

Presentation of the Data

The purpose of the case study was to explore methods, practices, strategies, and approaches teachers use and their perspectives on inclusion. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What support is provided by educational leaders to regular education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
2. What methods, practices, and approaches are being used by regular education and ESE teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
3. What are the benefits and challenges identified by teachers and administrators in an elementary inclusion setting?

As described in Chapter 3, the techniques of data collection included two interviews (transcribed) with each purposefully selected participant and field notes taken during the interviews and observations. There was one ESE teacher, two regular education teachers, and one administrator interviewed from two different schools. I interviewed a total of eight participants for the study.

This chapter presents demographical information for each school and the work environment for each participant. The phenomenological descriptions of each participant's perspective were included on the benefits and challenges of inclusion using the data sources listed. "A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). I have chosen to communicate each school and their specific participants as individual case studies while highlighting some common themes expressed by all participants. Themes that emerged include: performance and academic outcomes of SWD; collaboration with peers and paraprofessionals; challenging curriculum and

classroom environment; equal access to curriculum; active participation with peers; instructional strategies/teaching style; resources and administrative support; and time management. These common themes emerged from the interviews and observations. The phenomenological descriptions contained in the interviews, field notes, and observations serve to deepen the understanding of the benefits and challenges of the inclusion setting.

Each school and case presented begins with an introduction based on the data collected during the interviews and field notes. Quotations from the transcripts illustrate the perspectives of the participants. The information collected from the participants are tools for providing evidence relevant to the benefits and challenges of inclusion. The perspectives of the participants are most accurately expressed through their own voices. Therefore, I have made every effort to preserve the voices of each participant by quoting them directly. Shorter quotes appear in quotation marks, while longer quotes appear in block format. Additional data from the field notes will be included to complement and add to the quotations, as well as provide an epilogue at the end of each case.

Luminous Elementary School

As explained in Chapter Three, the schools were purposefully selected and met the following criteria:

1. Schools with exemplary models of inclusion as identified by district staff.
2. Schools participating have been identified by the district ESE staff as inclusive schools where ESE students are being served well.
3. Principals who support inclusion.

Basic demographic information for Luminous Elementary School is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Luminous Elementary School Demographic Information

Demographic Information	Luminous Elementary
Total Enrollment	1104 students
Asian	4.62%
Black	8.33%
Hispanic	19.02%
Indian	0.27%
Multi	7.43%
White	60.33%
ESE	10.37%

Luminous Elementary School and Principal. Luminous Elementary is located in an urban part of this large county. The school open in 2009 and has earned a school grade of an A every year. This school takes pride and has earned the following accolades: Florida Department of Education State Grade "A", Five Star Award, Attendance Award, Special Events and Activities, Science Olympics, Stem Fair, Math Bowl, Battle of the Books, Fairy Tale Bowl, Florida Reading Association (F.R.A.) Bowl, PTA Reflections Program, Art Corral, Recycling Program, Junior Deputy, and an Extended Learning Program (ELP). According to the website Great Schools (1998-2017), Luminous Elementary received a score of nine out of ten. One parent wrote, “Excellent school. We had a great experience here with both principal and teachers. Several of the best teachers our kids have had were and are at this school” (Great Schools, 1998-2017).

The principal has been in her position for thirteen years, eight at this school. She reports she was lucky to be the principal opening this school. Therefore, she was explicit in the message when hiring teachers for the school. She was able to be clear when interviewing candidates letting them know that the school would be committed to providing inclusive

experiences to SWD. She explained that if they came to teach at Luminous Elementary, she wanted teachers who share in that philosophy.

She supports her ESE specialist by providing support and resources, but also providing peer professional support when needed. Peer professional support provides proximity and support to the SWD being immersed into the regular education classroom. The ESE specialist is hands on with the scheduling of peer professional support and making sure the kids are supported in a way that ensures success when they are included in the regular education classroom.

Participants from Luminous Elementary

As explained in Chapter Three, the participants were purposefully selected and met the following criteria:

1. Elementary school teachers who are working with both regular education students and SWD in an inclusion setting.
2. Teachers were chosen based on the recommendation of the principal and willing to participate in the study.

Basic demographic information, years of teaching, years of experience with SWD, grade level for each participant is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Participants' Demographic Data			
Data Gathered	Felix Fischer	Josie Jackson	Madison Meller
Approximate Age	Early 30's	Late 30's	Early 40's
Years of Teaching Experience	6	12	11
Years of experience with SWD	6	12	11
Grade level presently teaching	ESE inclusion	2 nd	4 th

Two interviews were conducted with each participant in their classrooms or offices at their school sites. The second interviews were either face-to-face or phone interviews. Open and honest conversations with each participant were facilitated by the assurance of confidentiality. During the interviews, they showed an ability to transition from their teaching role into speaking on a personal level. Therefore, I decided to name them after chameleons. Chameleons require specialized habitats, move their eyes independent of one another, and change their colors in limited ways depending on the temperature or emotional changes. Teachers are a lot like chameleons because of the many hats that must be worn throughout the day. Like chameleons, these six participants remain positive and flexible adapting to their environment despite the many benefits and challenges they face on a daily basis with their SWD.

Felix Fischer

Meet Felix. I initially reached out to Felix through email. He responded quickly, stating that he was willing to participate in the study and had several regular education teachers in mind that he felt would be willing to participate as well. We interacted through email and scheduled our first interview. We did not meet in person until the day of the first interview. Before the first interview I did not know how successful our conversational partnership would be, since I had never personally spoken with Felix. When we met, Felix was welcoming and friendly. During the interview, it was evident that Felix's experience and passion for teaching would illustrate a colorful picture of his compassion for his work. Felix presented as a pleasant, articulate man who described his teaching career in the ESE spectrum as highly rewarding on a personal level. Our second interview was conducted via phone interview because we could not get our schedules aligned accordingly to be able to meet again face-to-face.

Felix has his Bachelor's degree in Classic Civilizations, ancient Rome and ancient Greece and his Master's degree in Special Education, high incidents. He is the ESE inclusion teacher for second and third grades at Luminous Elementary and shares his office with three other teachers. He travels around the school throughout the day providing inclusion services to SWD. Since he doesn't have a classroom, his day consists of working in the regular education classroom, using other teachers classrooms, and even conducting one small group session in the hallway at a rectangular table. He is optimistic with his students and they make the best of the situation by working within the classroom, borrowing other teacher's classrooms, or even working in the hallway. He carries around the materials needed in two backpacks. Our first interview, I was able to interview him before his day began and then shadowed him throughout the day. I observed each ESE small group he pulled and how he worked with them independently on their specific needs. At the conclusion of the day, Felix and I debriefed and discussed some of the things I observed to provide some clarification about what I saw. Watching him throughout the day, I could see his passion for working with SWD and helping them make the most of their educational experience.

Josie Jackson

Meet Josie. I met Josie through Felix. She is a teacher that he had personally emailed and asked if she would be willing to participate in the study. She responded to Felix that she would be willing and he emailed me her contact information. I contacted her through email and set up a time to interview and observe in her classroom. I was able to observe her during the time that Felix was working in her classroom. Therefore, my observation was of her and Felix. Felix worked with the SWD and Josie with the regular education students. We met for our interviews during her planning time in the middle of the school day. She is part of a 2nd grade co-teaching

classroom. There are twenty-nine students in her classroom and two certified teachers. Josie teaches language arts while her co-teacher teaches math and science. Josie says, “We’re kind of departmentalized and co-teach at the same time.” One teacher teaches while the other teacher monitors, guides, and helps students who are confused or struggling. The teacher who is not teaching is able to grade papers, work on lesson plans, call parents, or even have conferences. Both teachers do not have to be in the room constantly while the other is teaching. Since the number of students is higher than allowed based on the student to teacher ratio, the teacher cannot always be alone with the students but can be left for short periods of time. Josie feels that this is beneficial to help get ahead on grading, planning, or making phone calls. When working in the classroom, she is available to help when necessary and also able to work on things when she is not needed.

Josie has her Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education. She has been teaching for twelve years. She has twelve years of experience with inclusion students. The inclusion teacher uses a push-in model to work with SWD throughout the day. This model allows the inclusion teacher to work with the SWD in their regular education classroom environment.

Madison Meller

Meet Madison. I also met Madison through Felix in the same way as I met Josie. I contacted her through email and set up a time to interview and observe in her classroom. I observed her during the time Felix was working in her classroom. My observation was of her and Felix working collaboratively during reading instruction. Felix was working with the SWD and Madison with the regular education students. She has twenty-two fourth graders in her classroom. She has been teaching for eleven years and has had experience with SWD in an inclusion setting every year she has been teaching. We met for our interviews during her

planning time while her students were at P.E. Since the interview was during her planning period, we were on a time constraint. She answered all my questions but we were rushing to get through before her time was up and she had to go pick her students up from P.E.

Benefits and Challenges of Inclusion for Luminous Elementary

After interviewing and observing the teachers at Luminous Elementary there were benefits and challenges of inclusion reflected among the information provided. Using the questions from the interviews, I was able to find common themes among the teachers interviewed. Felix responded as the ESE inclusion teacher, Josie and Madison responded as the regular education classroom teacher of the inclusion students. The common themes are reflected below.

Performance and Academic Outcomes. Being able to show academic gains with the SWD in their performance can sometimes be challenging. Felix was asked how his SWD perform in the inclusion regular education classroom, he stated,

What we try to do is make sure we don't have more than thirty percent of students in a homeroom that have a disability. We try to keep that number low. That means I work with a lot of different classrooms, but it's beneficial because the students get pure interactions with regular education students. Sometimes, I feel like I don't get enough time with them, but I have a lot of faith in the teachers and I make sure whenever I can get a chance to talk to them about things, we share ideas.

Felix is able to spend approximately thirty minutes with each group depending on the needs of the students. He has many different roles that require his support throughout the day. He is the ESE inclusion teacher, the writing support teacher, and also helps students with emotional/social issues.

Josie is the regular education classroom teacher. I wanted to know how she felt about SWD working within the classroom when the inclusion teacher is not there to help with instruction. She is in a co-teaching model classroom, which benefits the students because it allows for more help when needed even though the classroom size is larger than an average classroom. When comparing the SWD performance levels in comparison to their peers, Josie says,

The SWD typically perform lower. However, I have seen students who have difficulty in language arts perform at or above where their peers are in mathematics or science. I feel pretty confident in saying the majority of the time, SWD need support in order to meet the same standards as their peers.

The co-teaching model allows for morning meetings. This group meeting has both teachers present and all the students. Josie says, “The meeting allows for social and emotional well-being and shows the students that we are a unit.” This is the only time that both teachers are with the students throughout the day. After the morning meeting, one teacher is teaching while the other there for support.

The inclusion co-teaching model has some advantages and disadvantages related to academic outcomes. Josie feels that some advantages are,

I can work with another teacher that is an expert or has more expertise than I do in different specific learning disabilities. They have more expertise or knowledge in how to help support me to add in things that might be missing and could be helpful. Whether it be a behavioral support or extra scaffolding that we might need to help the students academically.

She also mentioned struggles that she finds within the academic outcomes of inclusion in the co-teaching model. She says,

A struggle would be knowing and understanding appropriate growth and progress with students that are below grade level. Often times, the measures ESE teachers are using are not the same measures a regular education teacher are using. How do all of those measures line up to know that we are seeing progress? It may not be at the rate of their peers progressing, but it is satisfactory progress.

Luminous Elementary has a form they created called IEP – At a glance. This form is used to convey the goals, accommodations, and modifications the students should receive according to their IEP. This form allows the teachers to have a quick glance and/or reference of the students' goals. Felix attempts to update these forms for each student once a month to help the regular education teachers and allow the teachers to provide input to him of whether these goals, accommodations, and modifications are working or need to be changed. Working with Felix and the IEP – At a glance has really helped the teachers have a quick reference to the student's goals, accommodations, and modifications as listed on their IEP's.

Madison is a regular education classroom teacher with twenty-two fourth grade students. Her response about the SWD performance within the classroom was,

The SWD definitely perform lower depending on what we are working on within the classroom. They work below level, need extra time, but can complete their work with accommodations. It is helpful when Felix comes into the classroom to pull the SWD and helps them personally on their struggles.

Madison believes the academic outcomes are beneficial to SWD. She personally works with her students' one-on-one or in a small group setting. The SWD get extra assistance from her and other teachers throughout the day to help them where they are having trouble.

Collaboration with Peers and Paraprofessionals. Working together with peers is a challenging feat. The regular education teacher and ESE teacher look closely at the standards for reading, writing, and/or math depending on the student's IEP. Collaborating with the regular education teachers helps Felix formulate the lessons he prepares for his ESE groups. Felix states,

I work on remedial things based on my collaboration with the regular education teacher and my small group instruction. If a particular group is struggling with problem solving, then I go back to the basics of problem solving, working on determining what the type of problem it is, and how to figure out what operations you need to solve the problem.

Working with colleagues takes discussion, flexibility, skill, and encouragement. Many conversations take place about what accommodations can be tried and what needs to be done to help the students.

During our second interview, Felix spoke about working collaboratively with his colleagues to implement inclusion successfully and he said,

When I'm working collaboratively with them it's a lot of in the moment planning. If I'm planning to do this, how can you help the kids during this time? If I have time after school, I'll just walk down and check on some of my teachers, especially for those inclusion kids that need a little bit more support. When I'm in the room, I can pick up on what I need to do with the SWD, but sometimes when I'm out of the room, that's where they're not sure of what to do. So I want to make sure that I provide information on strategies or ideas that we can differentiate for those students.

Working collaboratively at Luminous Elementary seems to be a high priority among the teachers, other staff members, and administration. Felix spoke in depth about the working relationships he has with the teachers, which is a big part of the success of his students. Since Josie works in a co-teaching classroom, there is little collaboration within her personal classroom since they each teach different subjects. There is more collaboration between her and the other second grade teachers about planning the instruction for the students. Josie works with Felix to plan for the instruction for the SWD. She says,

I am thankful to work in a school where our mission and vision is not looked to as an option, it's what would be best for the child. The decision should always be what is best for the students and not the teacher. Including the SWD in the regular education classroom with the least restrictive environment. If you can find another student that has similar issues, then the teachers can work together towards helping the students with academic support.

When working with SWD, collaboration and differentiation is constant. Madison works with Felix and paraprofessionals to plan the instruction for the SWD. Madison says,

We have informal conversations or email letting the ESE teacher and paraprofessionals know where they need help. The teachers use the IEP – At a Glance for conferences to document what we worked on, how the student did with the concept, and whether they struggled. This information is helpful in ensuring the goals, accommodations, and modifications are being met for each individual student. My school has an abundant support system that allows the teachers to have information from each student's IEP on a piece of paper that is easily accessible.

Luminous Elementary school has paraprofessionals that work in different classrooms throughout the day with students. The paraprofessionals are in the classroom at different times than Felix which allows the students to receive additional help other than the help they receive from him. According to Felix, “We try to schedule it so they’re getting additional support when I’m not in there because I should be teaching and helping them. They don’t need a paraprofessional in there at the same time as me.” They are additional support in the classroom for the regular education teacher with the SWD who need extra assistance on the instruction. The paraprofessionals do not typically work with non-disabled students in the classroom.

The paraprofessionals working in the school are limited. Administration tries to utilize the few they have available in the most productive ways. They are occasionally used as escorts, helping get the students to places like the library making sure they are checking out appropriate books. Josie responded by saying,

We can use them in any way that we see fit. It’s really at the discretion of the teacher. In my case, a paraprofessional comes in for twenty minutes. It’s during our independent reading time, so I’m pulling small groups. She helps to support the students in need. She’s monitoring independent working time.

Madison has one paraprofessional that comes into her classroom each morning. Hoping the teachers receive help will enable them to utilize paraprofessionals to their fullest potential while in their classrooms. Madison says,

The paraprofessional that comes into my classroom each morning works with one student. She works with the student for approximately forty minutes four times a week. She and I collaborate together to be able to make this time the most productive and show progress with the student’s academic understanding of the concepts being presented.

Since the school has such a limited resource of paraprofessionals, not all teachers get the luxury of having a paraprofessional come into their classroom to give extra support for the SWD. Some teachers only get the support of the ESE teacher, which sometimes is not enough, especially for those SWD who really struggle. Getting the extra one-on-one help from the paraprofessional can really make a difference.

Challenging Curriculum and Classroom Environment. Felix, being the ESE inclusion teacher, doesn't typically work with students without disabilities. When in the classroom, he is able to provide help to the nondisabled students but primarily his focus is on the SWD. The SWD are taught through core instruction, which is aligned to the standards. The students that need more help are assisted through multi-tier systems of support that Luminous Elementary provides. Felix says,

What I Need (WIN) time is for the struggling students. These students have been put on tier 3 of the RTI process through our triangulation process. We take different data sources and figure out what tier they need. Those students aren't yet eligible but I pull different resources to work with them.

The classroom environment at Luminous Elementary does not allow Felix and the teacher to teach side by side in a co-teaching model. He says,

I try to organize my day by pulling students when they would be getting reading rotations, when they would be doing independent reading, or meeting with the teacher. This helps to make sure the SWD get that core instruction.

The ESE students within Luminous Elementary get group instruction with the regular education teacher where they are being instructed on the standards. Felix uses his time to build on top of the instruction that has been provided by the regular education teacher. He provides

remedial instruction while the other students in the classroom are working with the regular education teacher or working independently.

Josie believes she works hard to differentiate the instruction for her students. Since Josie is the regular education classroom where the SWD spend most of their time, she has created the LRE where the students feel safe and secure. She says,

My instruction is based on the standards that need to be taught and differentiated for their needs as well. If they need enrichment, then I provide time for enrichment. If they need support, they may or may not be pulled with an ESE student to receive support. The support would be from me, not the ESE teacher. Felix would never pull them though for a resource if they weren't on his caseload. I use informal and formal assessments to let me know whether or not students should be or are in need of enrichment or support.

The students in Josie's classroom receive instruction based on the standards that are differentiated for their success. Working in a co-teaching classroom, both teachers, as well as the ESE teacher and the paraprofessional, work towards ensuring the environment is restrictive, inviting, and engaging to all students in the classroom.

Madison feels that the SWD receive appropriately challenging education. She makes sure to differentiate the instruction for her students especially the SWD. With Madison being the regular education classroom teacher where the SWD spend most of their time, she says,

I believe that I challenge the students, more so during guided reading. Giving the students comprehension questions, students pick something they are interested in, do research, and decide how they want to present the information. The higher students are able to be challenged.

Madison's classroom has SWD and therefore her classroom environment accommodates all students. She has created an environment where all students feel safe and secure when it comes to learning, collaborating with their peers, and having respect for one another.

Equal Access to Curriculum. The ESE students at Luminous Elementary are being taught the same curriculum as the regular education students. When Felix pulls these students working on their goals based on their IEP, he is using supplementary materials. He says,

The Early Interventions in Reading is a supplementary program that is closely aligned to what all students are getting, but it is more systematic and explicit. I enjoy structure with knowing where the curriculum is going, where we are in the process, and what we be working on.

The SWD are exposed to all the curriculum and Felix uses the supplementary resources to help students master or attempt to master the skills where they struggle. SWD are always being pulled for some type of service and it is challenging to find time where they are not missing direct instruction while being pulled from the classroom. Josie responded about equal access by saying,

Yes, they're all still held to the same standards, but no because some of our ESE students need other services and supports that remove them from the room. I do feel like they're not getting what the other students are getting, but at the same time, they're getting what they need. I have students that are pulled out twice a week during writing time to get language support, but the language support is supporting their writing. It is the best time, but they missing some of the core subject that I'm teaching at that time. If we're talking about total inclusion and not a time when a student is removed from the room for a resource service, then yes. I feel like they receive the same instruction.

Providing curriculum to SWD and the regular education students cannot always be delivered in the same fashion. Therefore, Josie must work constantly to differentiate the instruction to ensure her students are understanding and learning.

An inclusion classroom can be challenging because the SWD are being pulled for services. This service could take place within the classroom or take them out of the classroom but either way, they are being pulled from what the rest of the class is doing. Madison says,

I present the information to them and there might be other ways the information is presented to them. After I have taught the lesson, the students will ask questions when they don't understand. The students will conference with the teacher that gave the instruction to help ensure understanding.

The curriculum is presented to the SWD in the same manner as the regular education students. When the SWD are pulled for their specific services, "we collaborate to help make sure they are understanding the curriculum that is being presented in the regular education classroom." This can be challenging to find the time to talk about what is happening in the classroom, because Felix has his own agenda when he pulls the students. Madison and Felix work constantly collaborating on the curriculum for the SWD to help with clarifying the information for understanding."

Actively Participates with Peers. Since Felix only works with the SWD, he did not feel that he was able to paint an appropriate picture of how actively the SWD participate with their peers. Since his time in the classroom is limited to approximately thirty minutes and the students come directly over or leave the room with him to get their instructional time, he does not have the opportunity to observe the students during direct instructional time with their regular

education teacher that would allow them to either actively participate or not with their peers.

Felix felt that this was a question better suited for the regular education teacher.

As a follow-up question during our second interview, I asked Felix about the SWD being treated fairly among their peers. He responded,

At the age that I teach, I think that they're pretty much treated the same as their peers. I don't think that students without IEP look at them differently, because there's just so many teachers that come in and rotate with all the students, especially here at our school, we have a lot of the classes, they have a teacher for math and science, and then a teacher for reading and writing. They're used to sort of seeing switches in teachers. Also, we have a RTI block, where additional teachers they don't see for the rest of their day come in, and do interventions with those students.

Having SWD feel they are part of the regular education classroom is a huge part of the inclusion model. Based on the response from Felix, I believe that this is the environment that has been created for the students he is servicing.

Being the teacher of fourth graders can be challenging enough but when you add SWD that can cause even more challenges depending on the disabilities in the classroom. Keeping students actively engaged in the instruction and getting along with one another is a challenge in itself. Madison says,

I do not feel that SWD participate within the classroom as much as the others. I believe that they feel they might not know so they don't even raise their hand to answer. The students might feel intimidated and not answer and are less likely to participate. At least this is what I see within my classroom.

Working toward building SWD confidence to want to participate can be challenging. Madison feels that sometimes her students need a little push to work together. She says, “Sometimes I choose for them or sometimes the students will pick who they get to work with. The students are all part of the class and no one is treated differently.” When the time comes and the SWD feel confident, it is so rewarding to witness and see the results happen. Madison would contribute this to building a strong, safe environment where SWD feel they are an equal to the regular education students.

Instructional Strategies/Teaching Style. When observing Felix working with the SWD, he was patient, kind, understanding, and compassionate with his students. When interviewing him, I asked about his instructional strategies and teaching style. He responded,

I think it’s more explicit and systematic than what is being able to be provided through general education alone. I like the programs because they’re scripted. I’m not going to sit there and read the whole script but I see the rewards and benefits for my students using these types of programs.

As I observed Felix throughout the day, he used a multisensory approach to teaching. He had the students read out loud while following along with their finger. This uses all four multisensory approaches where the students use the visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic methods. He used this method for most of his groups throughout the day depending on what subject he was working on.

On our follow-up interview, I asked Felix to explain his teaching style and how it helps meet the needs of his SWD. This was his response,

My teaching style, like I definitely do a lot of, is overlearning. Teaching it over, and over, judicious review of things that we’ve already covered. I think that helps with

those kids that you can't just depend on teaching them once and they'll have it, for the rest of their days. I think that's what really helps, and I try to also include a lot of opportunities for responding. I try to keep my questions short and give them lots of opportunities to respond, or do something for me.

Felix works hard with his students, trying to prepare them for situations when he is not in the room. He gives his students the tools to incorporate into their learning when he is not there working with them. He practices overlearning with them, which will allow the students to be given the information multiple times to help ensure they have mastered the skills being taught.

When observing Josie I noticed that even though she had twenty-nine students, her voice remained quiet and calm. She spoke in a soft spoken voice where the students really had to listen. This helped keep the noise level down in the room because the students were also speaking using the same type of voice when they were in groups. When specifically asked about her teaching style, Josie says,

I think that I try to not point out differences. It's very important to me that other students don't necessarily know that things are different even though they are. At the same time, I also want students to know that fair isn't always everybody getting the same thing. Fair is everybody getting what they need. So, I have been open with students before because kids are curious and ask well, why does he get to use the slant board when he writes? Why do his lines have highlighter on them? Why does he get to use the phonics phone when he's reading independently and not me? So, being open with the students and saying, is that something you need? Do you think it is something you need? That way it is not blatant difference in student, especially in primary grades. I guess that would be more

of my style to share with students that everybody is different, we all need different things and that's okay.

After observing Josie in her classroom, I was able to witness her demeanor in this specific manner. The students were respectful of her while she was teaching. They may not all have been specifically paying attention but they definitely were not talking or being disruptive while she was presenting the lesson and their duties for the assignment.

When observing Madison, I noticed that the noise level within the classroom was extremely quiet, as well, for having twenty-two students. While I was observing, she was giving directions for centers and after explaining what they would be doing, the students were dismissed to their center. Felix was in the classroom with her during this time and he pulled his small group. As I was observing, the students were all working within their center and seemed to be on task. When asked about her teaching style, she says,

I do whatever the students need. I present the information or use instructional strategies I feel would best benefit all the students in my classroom. If I do something they don't know then I teach it differently so that they can get it. If I choose a passage that might be too hard, then I find one that is not too hard. I use different materials to differentiate instruction depending on the skill that is being taught.

Madison was also a soft spoken teacher. Being in a classroom with a teacher who has a soft voice requires the students to really stop and listen which helps with the noise level within the classroom of the students and their voice levels. Students were listening to their teacher and mimicking her voice level while in their center.

Resources and Administrative Support. Felix uses the resources provided to him by the county as well as supplemental resources. He discussed several different supplemental

resources that he uses and has gained access to over his time as a teacher. He explained the supplemental resources by saying,

Early Interventions Reading is more for in the classroom. I like it because it pulls in a lot more comprehension components that you don't get with other programs. You are able to go at your own pace according to the students. I also pull in different resources where I see fit depending on the group needs. If it goes too slow a pace, we're going to still be working on other skills so we can keep the pace moving towards their goals.

Felix carries all the supplemental materials around with him during the day because he does not have a specific classroom to work with his students. He carries around two backpacks filled with the supplemental materials that he needs for each group throughout the day. As a follow-up question, I asked Felix his opinion about having adequate resources to implement inclusion effectively and this was his response,

I feel that I have resources at my school, sort of. I have my ESE specialist, administration help, and then outside resources. If I felt like I wasn't being effective in what I was doing, then I could reach out to the Florida Inclusion Network. If I needed additional support, I would get in contact with them. I feel like I have very strong relationships with all the teachers I work with, and that if I come up with an idea or, I want to talk to them, I don't feel hesitant in doing that. Now, if it was a situation where I had more difficulty getting teachers on board, I might reach out to the Florida Inclusion Network, to help me build that relationship where it's seen as a positive thing for the students.

Felix spoke highly of the Florida Inclusion Network and their support that has been extended to him when he has called upon them for guidance. His administration is also supportive and help him effectively implement inclusion to the best of his abilities.

With Josie being the regular education classroom teacher and having such a large class size, she is constantly having to differentiate instruction more than the average teacher. When asked about resources, she says,

I think my biggest resource is Felix or the case manager for my ESE students. The fact that I see them on a daily basis and can use them, but also having an ESE specialist here to go in and talk to and see what other resources I could be using if something is not working for students to brainstorm and implement in the classroom.

Josie believes that the support of the ESE facilitator and the administration at the school are high within Luminous Elementary. She feels many of the people would find the time or make time to talk about the students in the classroom where there are problems. They would even come to the classroom to observe such behavior and help to find a solution to the problem. She feels totally supported within her school and able to go to her superiors to speak with them about concerns or problems within her classroom or any specific student.

Madison is in need of additional resources other than the materials adopted by the county as their curriculum. Instruction needs to be differentiated for all the needs within the classroom. When asked about resources, she says,

I am constantly asking or seeking out resources that I pull from. I have to create it, find it, or adapt it for my use. I use the website “Teachers’ Pay Teachers” as a resource to get something to help the students who are frustrated.

When asked about administrative support in our first interview, Felix said he feels that his input is valued a lot at his school. He is part of the instructional leadership team and an RTI leader. Many of the teachers throughout the school will ask him questions about the curriculum. Felix was quoted saying, “I helped set the goal for the school to develop the holistic child and not just worrying about the child.” Felix is eager to help his fellow colleagues and administration for the betterment of the children. During our second interview, I asked Felix about the depth of his opinion being valued and this was his response,

Oh yes, absolutely! I have teachers asking all the time, what to do with my students, but also what to do with students that are having problems that maybe aren’t as severe, but are similar. I feel that my input is being asked from administration on down. It’s with the teachers I work with, or even teachers I don’t work with, or I’ve worked with previously.

Felix spoke highly of the valued support he receives from his peer teachers and administration to help him in implementing inclusion instruction for his SWD. He feels his opinion is valued because of the number of teachers that come to him asking for his advice and guidance in helping some of their students within their classrooms that need extra support.

Madison believes that her input is valued through the help of creating or changing goals for her students on their IEP’s. She feels that her opinion is valued based on the performance of her students. If she has a problem, she feels that she can go to her administration and voice her concerns and action will be taken.

Time Management. Managing time is an important factor when being an ESE inclusion teacher. Felix is dependent on data collection and believes that this information is helpful when establishing his student groups. He says,

I am very thoughtful in how I put together my groups. I will look at which students will work best together, what skills they need to work on most, and will those students work well together. I think the data collection helps me individualize for the students. I progress monitor throughout the year, if I find that a student is flat, I am willing to make adjustments. I am willing to scaffold instruction to help meet the needs of the students to help show progress. Repetition is sometimes a key when student's needs are that individualized instruction.

Felix stated that he works long hours, before and after school, and always takes things home with him to work and prepare for the following day. There is never enough time to get everything done that needs to get done in a typical school day so coming in early, staying late, or taking things home are necessary in order for things to run smoothly for Felix.

As a follow-up question during our second interview, I asked him to explain how he manages his time to individualize instruction for his students. He responded by saying,

Well, it does take a lot of time. After school is spent in meetings, meeting with teachers, of doing IEPs. I'm usually here until about 6 o'clock at night and come to work early. I have to have things in place before I go home at night, so that I'm ready in the morning. So it does take a lot of planning, especially when you have 7 or 8 groups of students with their different needs, but I try to get that done beforehand so I have all the materials I need, and also pack in some things where I might need them for small groups. It does take time, and it can be overwhelming at times, but I feel like, this is something I'm passionate about so it's not work. It's not rigorous work, it's something I want to do for the benefit of my students.

Felix spends a lot of his personal time working on getting copies, materials, and supplies ready for his students to make sure he is prepared with all the things he will need to implement his lessons effectively and sufficiently.

Time is always such a factor when speaking with teachers about being prepared and ready for the day. When talking with Josie about her time management, she says, “I stay late and work long hours. I spend time continuously researching and talking to other teachers.” Talking to other teachers is helpful because you do not want to reinvent to wheel if it is not necessary. Sharing ideas, worksheets, power point presentation, and even smart board activities is helpful and time saving. When another teacher shares something of this nature, all you have to do is tweak it to your specific needs.

Preparing for the following day or next week, there is always something to be done, papers to be graded, copies to be made. When interviewing Madison, I asked her about how she manages her time and she responded by saying,

I do a lot of planning at home or after school because there is not enough time to do it during the day. There is a need to have lots of things prepared just in case the students don't get the concept. This takes lots of preparation and time to have these resources readily available.

Managing time is essential for teachers because there is always something to be done to prepare for the next lesson, day, or week. Using resources to help to get things copied or prepared for students will help to take that load off the teacher but he/she will know that it is getting done. When teachers struggle with time management, things can pile quickly leaving them feeling overwhelmed. Madison believes that she has a good handle on her time and making sure she is prepared and ready for her students every day.

Felix Fischer – Summary. Examining the transcripts from the interviews and observations with Felix, I identified similarities between Felix and Padilla's (2009) findings on the attitudes toward inclusion. He was passionate about his job and how he feels about inclusion, which was evident by the amount of time he spent talking with me. Several days after our interview, Felix emailed me stating that he had been thinking more about some of the questions that I had asked. He says,

Your questions were very thought provoking! I wanted to share that I think inclusion is important for SWD I work with because it ensures student learning is held to high standards/expectations. I know how these high standards/expectations can be frustrating for teachers, students, and parents; however, I have also seen the reverse through my graduate school work/observations of classrooms where students similar to mine spent most of the day in a separate classroom. Teaching in these classrooms did not push students towards their zone of proximal development; therefore, I felt students were not reaching their full potential.

Felix is an enthusiastic, positive teacher who personally sees the benefits and challenges of inclusion but feels that the benefits outweigh the challenges. He is a teacher who students migrate towards because of his uplifting personality and encouraging attitude. During the time that I spent with Felix, he was never negative or aggravated with the outcomes or behaviors of his students. He was upbeat and inspiring with the students he worked with, which gave the students the same outlook and attitude. He helped his students feel successful and encouraged greatness. He was an inspiration and a welcoming role model to students who need some encouragement and motivation when it comes to being academically successful.

Reflections on the Conversations with Felix Fischer. Felix and I met for the first interview in his office. He shares his office with three other inclusion teachers. He said, “We call this our cloffice, short for closet/office.” Since he only has a small space that he shares with other teachers there was a limited amount of personal items. Felix has his planning period first thing in the morning so as soon as school began; the other teachers were pulling their inclusion students so we had the office to ourselves. Felix was thorough in his responses to the questions being asked and even would add to the previous question after answering the new question being asked. During the interviews, it was evident Felix was passionate about his role in inclusion and working with SWD. Considering the demands of his role as an inclusion teacher for a school that houses over one thousand students, his attitude was quite positive. Also, considering that he did not have a classroom to work with his students and he had to meet in other teacher’s classrooms, he was never negative with any of his responses. Felix emailed me several days after our first interview and wanted to elaborate on a few of his responses. This was just another sign of his dedication to his inclusion students and how he contributed to their success.

For the second interview, we were unable to coordinate our schedules to be able to meet again for a face-to-face interview. The second interview was conducted on the phone and was recorded just as if I were sitting next to him asking him the questions. His responses were thorough and passionate because of his love for his job. Felix is a role model inclusion teacher and others could benefit for shadowing him for a day and observing his teaching.

Josie Jackson – Summary. Working through the transcripts from my interviews and observation with Josie, I identified similarities between Josie and Isherwood & Barger-Anderson’s (2008) findings on teachers’ perspectives toward inclusion. There are many factors that come into play when creating that safe, secure, LRE for SWD and your regular education

students. Josie had a positive attitude with a soft-spoken voice that creates an environment where learning is fostered. She is avid about creating such an environment where the students want to learn no matter what obstacles they have when it comes to learning. She believes in the inclusion environment and that is what makes her classroom a successful inclusion model. The conversation during our interview was smooth and pleasant. Josie was kind and receptive to the questions being asked and answered with no hesitation or concern for how the information would be presented. She was truthful and honest with her responses and we had a personal connection of fellow teachers of inclusion students. Reflecting on the interview, it was apparent Josie feels there are benefits and challenges of inclusion but in the end the benefits are about the students being successful which makes the challenging ones worth undertaking.

Reflections on the Conversations with Josie Jackson. Josie and I met for the first interview in her office. She shares her office with her co-teacher. We were able to meet while the other teacher was in the classroom so it was just us in her office during the interview. Since Josie is part of a co-teaching model, she is able to work during her part of the day when her partner is teaching. Josie was a soft-spoken person during the interview and while teaching. She was thorough with her responses to the questions being asked. It was apparent, during the interviews, that Josie is fervent about her role as an inclusion teacher working with SWD.

Madison Meller – Summary. The time that I spent with Madison was quick but beneficial. I was able to witness her love for teaching and her compassion for her students. From the transcripts of the interviews and observation of Madison, it is clear that she spoke highly about her colleagues and the challenges but feels that in the end they are worth the results. Having administrative and ESE support is essential to the success of an inclusion classroom. When there is a problem, educators need to know that the administration will support you when

you come to them with a problem or concern. They are there to help and not point fingers. Being able to work closely with the ESE teachers to maximize the learning of the SWD is also a key factor in the success of their performance. Working collaboratively with peers also helps relieve some of the work load on all of those involved. Sharing ideas, creations, and concepts for easier delivery is beneficial to the teachers and the students as well. Finding resources online instead of having to create them can save a lot of time. The level of confidence Madison had with time management as a teacher of an inclusion classroom of twenty-two fourth graders was positive. She was confident and assured in herself, knowing that what she was doing in her classroom was making a difference for all students.

Reflections on the Conversations with Madison Meller. Madison and I met for the first interview during her planning period in her office and our second interview was conducted over the phone. Madison has her planning period about mid-way through the day so it took her a few minutes to get ready for me to interview her. Madison was kind, receptive of my questions, and positive with her responses. Based on the interviews, it was expressed through her responses of her empathy for SWD and how she was determined to help in their academic success.

Principal of Luminous Elementary

Luminous Elementary opened in 2009, where Macey has been the principal for eight years. When choosing teachers for an inclusive classroom, Macey is looking for teachers that are flexible, prepared, and their interaction with students. The co-teaching model is a factor that is implemented into each inclusion classroom. These classrooms do not look different than other classrooms but that there is co-teaching happening within this environment. The regular education students are not aware who is receiving services because it is not evident and the SWD do not stand out to their peers. The inclusion students receive appropriately challenging

education in their classroom through differentiation and support that is provided by the regular education teacher, ESE teacher, or the paraprofessionals. Collaboration is essential in order to have successful inclusion and the school to have a collaborative culture. Everyone works together utilizing their resources where inclusion can be implemented successfully. Creating a school schedule based on the individual teachers and the students needs. The social piece, the same-age peers, make sure that the teachers are really good at working with the students and working with their teachers. Encompassing all this information, resources, and data helps Luminous Elementary create an inclusive environment where SWD are able to make learning gains and successfully socially interact with their peers.

Overview of Luminous Elementary

Luminous Elementary school has only been open since 2009. This is a fairly new school with successful things happening. The district feels this school is serving the inclusion population of students well. The students are showing progress and academic growth as well as confidence and higher self-esteem. Upon the conclusion of the interviews and observations, the operation of the school was professional. The ESE teacher transitioned into classrooms throughout the day without interruptions and the students knew what to do when he arrived into the classroom. There was no down time when Felix entered the rooms. The students came over to their work space and began working. This was remarkable.

The school was positive and receptive to visitors. Felix, Josie, and Madison were all pleasant, informative, and revealing with their responses to the interview questions. Josie and Madison both spoke of Felix and how he was a resource they both used for their SWD. Benefits and challenges of working with SWD were identified by all three members of this school, but they all see more benefits for the students and the challenges being ones to overcome to help

with their success. All three of these teachers have been working with SWD throughout their teaching careers and believe inclusion is more beneficial for the students than being put into a resource room. SWD should be surrounded by their peers which will help them be successful.

All three teachers provided a lot of information. Time seemed to be the factor that was the most frustrating. All three teachers spoke about working long hours and during their personal time. The teachers are working whether they are actually working or thinking about working or what needs to be done. Luminous Elementary believes in providing meaningful, engaging instruction and experience that promote the development of well-rounded students. This is their school mission statement and goals they wish to accomplish.

The benefits of inclusion as well as the challenges identified in Luminous Elementary are summarized in Figure 1.

Benefits of Inclusion		
SWD engaged in the LRE	Collaboration among Teachers	Administrative Support
Challenges of Inclusion		
SWD actively engaged with Peers	Resources	Time

Figure 1. Luminous Elementary School's Benefits and Challenges of Inclusion

Radiant Elementary School

This school met the following criteria:

1. Schools with exemplary models of inclusion as identified by district staff.
2. Schools participating have been identified by the district ESE staff as inclusive schools where ESE students are being served well.
3. Principals who support inclusion.

Basic demographic information for Radiant Elementary School is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Radiant Elementary School Demographic Information	
Demographic Information	Radiant Elementary
Total Enrollment	634 students
Asian	3.47%
Black	14.35%
Hispanic	28.23%
Indian	0.16%
Multi	10.41%
White	43.38%
ESE	11.39%

Radiant Elementary School and Principal. Radiant Elementary is also located in an urban part of the county. The school opened in 2001 and has earned a school grade of an A, B, or C since opening. The school provides after school programs, clubs, and tutoring. According to the website Great Schools (1998-2017), School B received a score of seven out of ten. One parent wrote a comment that says, “I have to say I am impressed with the dedication this school has with getting the kids to and from school. Rain or shine, the entire staff it seems is outside morning and afternoon marshalling them for the busses, parent walk-ups, or the automobile pick-up line. It's a pretty precise/flawless process from what I have experienced so far, and I applaud their dedication!” (Great Schools, 1998-2017).

The principal has been in her position for two years. When choosing inclusion teachers, she is looking for the strongest teachers for instructional delivery. The teachers need to have a knack for openness and willingness to teach inclusion students. With scheduling for the ESE students, they look at the SWD and schedule them first based on their IEP goals, and the teachers that will best support them. Once their schedules are set, then everything else is built around those students. Since becoming principal, creating the LRE for the SWD has been a learning experience. It takes many people to endorse this process.

She is supportive to her staff by personalizing their learning. The teachers know the academic background of the SWD to gear the instruction for their independent level. Rigorous curriculum on their ability level is development for the SWD. Learning is personalized for the students which allows for academic learning gains. The principal strives to meet the students' needs based on academic ability. The staff strives to meet the students where they are performing academically and challenge them to move up to grade level expectations, not by lowering the standards for SWD.

Table 5

Radiant Elementary Demographic Information			
Data Gathered	Paige Parson	Shelby Senegal	Olivia Oustalet
Approximate Age	Late 20's	Late 20's	Early 30's
Years of Teaching Experience	5	3	9
Years of experience with SWD	5	3	3
Grade level presently teaching	ESE inclusion	5 th	2 nd

Paige Parson

Meet Paige. I reached out to Paige through email asking if she would be willing to participate in my study. We corresponded several times back and forth working out a date and time to meet. She also put me in touch with several regular education teachers that had corresponded with her and said they would also be willing to participate. We did not meet in person until the day of our first interview. I had already spent time at Luminous Elementary with Felix, Josie, and Madison so I was confident that this experience at Radiant Elementary would be just as successful. Paige was welcoming, friendly, and eager to get started. I began the day with Paige by observing her in action for several sessions before we were able to conduct the interview. During the interview, I quickly realized Paige's desire for teaching SWD was strong

and she was willing to do everything possible to help make her students successful in the regular education classroom. Paige has been teaching for five years and has been the ESE inclusion teacher for all five years. She is the ESE inclusion teacher for third through fifth grades. She has her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership but does not feel that she has been teaching long enough or has enough experience to be an educational leader at this time.

Shelby Senegal

Meet Shelby. I was introduced to Shelby through Paige by email. Shelby contacted me through email and we set up a time to conduct the interviews and observe in her classroom. During my time observing Paige, I was able to observe Shelby when Paige was working in her classroom. I was able to observe Paige and Shelby working simultaneously. Paige was working with the SWD and Shelby with the regular education students in her fifth grade class. We met for our interviews during Shelby's planning time. She has twenty-one fifth graders in her classroom. She has been teaching for three years and has been a regular education inclusion teacher for all three years. The time for our interview was during her planning period, which meant that we were on a time constraint. She answered all my questions but she was watching her watch because she had to go pick her students up from their physical education class. The conversations during the interviews were forthcoming even though she was watching the time.

Olivia Oustalet

Meet Olivia. I was introduced to Olivia through email. We scheduled a time to conduct the interview. I was able to meet with Olivia on the same day that I observed and interviewed Paige. We met for our interviews once when I had a break while observing and shadowing Paige during Olivia's planning time and our second interview was conducted after school on a different day.

Olivia has been teaching for nine years. She began her teaching career in New Jersey as an English as a Second Language (ESOL) teacher for adults at a private adult night school. She and her family moved to Florida three years ago and she began teaching in the public school system. Since entering the public school system, Olivia has been an inclusion teacher. She is bilingual and Radiant Elementary has a population of bilingual students. Since she is bilingual, her classroom not only has SWD, she also has the ESOL students. She has the majority of the bilingual students in second grade in her class because she is able to communicate with them. She has twenty students in her classroom. Four are SWD and currently have IEP's and two students that are in the process of being identified using the RTI process. She has two students that constantly cause disruptions within the classroom due to their behavior. Olivia has many different dynamics within her classroom that must be considered when creating lesson plans.

Benefits and Challenges of Inclusion for Radiant Elementary

Performance and Academic Outcomes. Paige is the ESE inclusion teacher and works with students in third through fifth grade. She has the biggest group of students in third grade because of the stress of standardized testing in this grade. Radiant Elementary wants to do everything possible to help make the SWD successful in passing their standardized testing especially in third grade. Helping the SWD work towards making academic and performance growth can be challenging. Paige says,

I deal with a wide range of students. I have a group of students that really struggle with the on level material and how rigorous the standards make the content. It makes it difficult for a teacher to differentiate to a level where if they're behind, it's difficult for them to keep up with the pace of the class. I also have kids that are doing well with the regular education curriculum. They just need that extra prompting and queuing, they get

pulled into a small group and that's when my role as an ESE teacher tends to fade out. I limit my support systems and see how well they can do with just the regular education teacher's supports that are available in the classroom.

Paige works with her SWD and provides strategies that will help make them successful academically. The students use these strategies when she or their regular education teacher is not reminding them. She provides the students with approaches to recognize key words to help them determine the answer to specific questions. She says,

My goal is for my students to learn strategies that I teach in small groups, even if I'm just standing beside them. I want them to apply the strategies, interventions, accommodations into the on level curriculum. That is the academic outcome. In reading, highlighting key words, going back into the text and finding key words, and then rereading to find the answers. Even if the content is harder, they're able to find strategies to survive in the academic world.

Paige believes the SWD are able to change the outcome of their academic performance based on the amount of effort the students give. If the students work hard, then they can help themselves become better students academically. She tries to instill in her students that if they work hard, the hard work will pay off in the end. They must help themselves in order to see progress. No one can do it for them.

Shelby is a regular education classroom teacher with twenty-one fifth grade students. The interview began by asking Shelby how she felt about SWD performance within the classroom with and without the inclusion teacher. When comparing the performance levels of SWD in comparison to their peers, Shelby says,

When specifically looking at the SWD they work below grade level for the most part. They need extra time to complete assignments and sometimes need the assignment to be smaller in order for them to be able to complete it. Being a fifth grade teacher, the students are the oldest students in the school and because of their age it sometimes becomes a battle with authority. I have some difficult behavior students in my classroom this year which can make working with SWD extra challenging. When the ESE teacher comes into the classroom to assist them, it is helpful. I am not always able to give them the attention they need because of the class size.

The academic outcome for the SWD is helping to increase student achievement in the subjects where they have difficulty. Being able to work with Shelby and receive ESE support from Paige, allows the SWD to work toward meeting the goals that are listed on their IEP's. Shelby works personally with her students in a small group setting. Shelby feels that there are benefits for the students when they are able to work in the smaller group setting. It allows for them to feel successful. The students are expected to pass grade level tests and comprehend better when in a small group setting. The time they spend with Paige really helps with this aspect of their academic success.

Olivia is the regular education classroom teacher with regular education students, SWD, and ELL students. She works with several different teachers to help ensure her students are receiving the assistance and help deserved based on their academic needs. When comparing the regular education students to the performance of the SWD, Oliva says,

The students are assessed each week and I work with them on the skills where they are struggling. Our school participates in something we call Power Hour. During this time, the students go to centers with the skills they haven't mastered and need more help.

The academic outcomes for the SWD using the inclusion model is beneficial and results are evident in their progression. Olivia feels, “This extra time is definitely helping them. They have the quality of time where they can work where they really need help.” The students get more of the specific help from the ESE teacher when she comes into the classroom to work with her students.

Olivia works with the ESE teacher to discuss what is working and not working for the students. They choose a specific concept and work on that skill until the students have mastered it before moving on to a new concept. Working with the ESE teacher and the information on the IEP, Olivia created a spreadsheet with the accommodations and modifications that her students get according to their IEPs. This spreadsheet is for her use only and allows her to have an easy reminder of what the SWD should be receiving to help meet their IEP goals.

Collaboration with Peers and Paraprofessionals. Paige works closely with the regular education teachers of her SWD. Paige works in a county that has specific curriculum the teachers are instructed to follow. Collaborating with the regular education teachers helps Paige prepare her instruction for the ESE small group instruction. She states,

I am joined on one team because if I were to work with every single team, I would be busy every single day for a planning session. I choose third grade as my team planning because it is my mandated year and there’s a lot at stake. I want to ensure I do everything possible to make sure that my kids are not retained.

Paige works with a team of regular education teachers because she is the ESE resource teacher providing services to students in grades third through fifth with IEP’s. When asked about how the information from the IEP’s is conveyed to the teachers of the SWD, she responded by saying,

At the beginning of the year, I make a little cheat sheet and it's a sheet that has all the students names and it has all the accommodations listed on the side and I put a little X or a dot that shows the child has that accommodation. If the students are pulled into another group, the teachers have the accommodations for the student. I make a cheat sheet at the beginning of the year. It takes about two weeks to meet with the teachers, greet them, and make sure they know the student's needs and what needs to be done to ensure their success so they can transition to the new grade level goes smoothly.

Collaboration that takes place to make inclusion a successful model is incredible. All parties involved work continuously and consistently. This takes lots of communication whether it be in person or through email. The teachers have SWD and the ESE teacher are also in constant conversation to ensure the success of the students. Shelby says,

Paige provides us with a folders for each of our students with IEP's. In the folder, it has a copy of their IEP. She makes a spreadsheet for the students in our classroom and their testing accommodations that they should be receiving. I work hard in the classroom to work on making sure they are receiving the accommodations from the start. I use sticky labels that I put on their test to mark off what accommodations they used to help me remember which ones we have used. This helps me with which accommodations are helpful and which ones are not.

Olivia works with her grade level team collaboratively planning lessons. With Olivia having a higher population of bilingual students, she feels that her students migrate to students who are similar to them. She works with her class using cooperative learning strategies to blend the class using team and class building exercises. These exercises are designed to get the students

to mingle outside their familiar friends and get to know others within their classroom. Olivia says,

I try to accommodate the SWD in a way they can benefit from each other. Like, an ESE student, their only problem might be that they do not understand what is being asked of them. I try to make accommodations where they will understand exactly what I am asking of them and they can benefit from each other observing how others interpret the information.

Paige stated that Radiant Elementary has a small number of paraprofessionals in their school this year. There is a shortage and their school is in need of more. She says, “We have paras for our intellectually disabled students, those that need help with bathroom, feeding, but we do not have any paraprofessionals that are included in the regular education because we don’t have enough.” Therefore, the only help the SWD in the regular education classroom get would be from the ESE inclusion teacher and their regular education teacher. Sometimes that is not enough assistance to help the SWD be successful.

Shelby does not receive any assistance from paraprofessionals throughout her day. She does not have any students in her classroom that require their assistance. She says, “Our school have a limited number of paraprofessionals due to shortages. The only paraprofessionals we have are assigned to students who need help with writing, going to the bathroom, or feeding themselves.”

Olivia is fortunate enough to receive some help from a paraprofessional due to the number of bilingual students in her classroom. She says,

She comes to my classroom every day during Power Hour to help them with reading. The paraprofessional takes the students and works with them on sight words. They are reading

way below grade level. She is working on skills they have never mastered, so I have the extra time to concentrate on other things. Day by day, it's a different struggle, but they have the quality time where they really work on what they need.

The amount of time the students receive from the ESE teacher and paraprofessionals in the inclusion classroom, the regular education teachers see progress in their learning. Some of the students in Olivia's class received services from both of those teachers. The problem is that the students are missing some type of instruction from her when they are working with other teachers. In the end, since progress is being made academically, flexibility is important to the daily schedule to allow the SWD to miss as little direct instruction as possible.

Challenging Curriculum and Classroom Environment. Finding curriculum that is equitable for all students is perplexing. Paige works with the regular education teachers to align the curriculum as closely as possible to help SWD make academic gains. Curriculum has been adopted by the district that must be followed. Presenting challenging curriculum to the SWD based on the collaboration helps to create lessons for her students. Paige states,

Working with kids in the regular education, they need enrichment so we tend to use cooperative learning strategies to develop these skills. We also use higher level thinking questions and scenarios to enhance the content instead of just learning the basics. The student learn how to apply, create and examine the content more deeply.

The classroom environment is also an important factor. Paige goes into the classrooms to work with her students. Therefore, the students remain in their natural, comfortable, and safe surroundings with their peers in the LRE. Paige sees the benefits of working in the students' regular education classroom, which includes the familiar environment. The challenges with this

model is the distractions while she is working with the SWD. They can get distracted by the comings and goings of their peers while being pulled for their small group in the classroom.

Shelby believes her SWD receive appropriately challenging education within her classroom. She works hard to differentiate the instruction for her students especially SWD. Since Shelby is the regular education classroom teacher where the SWD spend most of their time, she says,

Having SWD, the instruction presented in my classroom must be challenging and differentiated in order for all students to be successful. We work in guided reading groups. This time allows me to work with students in small groups on their independent levels and I give them guidance and strategies for being successful.

Shelby is always working toward giving her students the accommodations and modifications they need to be successful. She feels her classroom environment makes the students feel safe, secure, and encouraged to speak. She allows her students to work together with their peers on most assignments. Sometimes she picks who they work with and other times she will allow them to choose. Giving the students this time to collaborate with their peers helps them learn to have respect for one another and that everyone has a right to an opinion. She believes these are life skills students in the fifth grade need to be aware of because they will going to middle school next year where they will be exposed to many different opinions. She tries to expose them to situations where they will know how to handle themselves appropriately.

Differentiating instruction for the students in Olivia's classroom is difficult because of the varying exceptionalities. Adapting the instruction and curriculum is something that is done on a subject by subject basis depending on the students' depth of knowledge on the particular concept. She says,

I try to scaffold what we are working on and break the concepts down for them until I take them to where they need to be. I do a lot of different things to scaffold the instruction to a level they can understand. I feel this is helping them.

The curriculum is differentiated by her, the ESE teacher, and the paraprofessional for their success. Working in a classroom with so many different levels of students can be perplexing at time but since they are able to receive outside services, she is able to see progress with their reading, writing, and/or math skills depending on the student's IEP. The environment Olivia has created within her classroom is inviting, encouraging, comfortable, and relaxed. Olivia spends time talking to the students about her expectations when it comes to the quality of work and their behavior.

Equal Access to Curriculum. The SWD at Radiant Elementary are being taught the same curriculum as the regular education students. When Paige pulls her students, she is working on their goals based on their IEP. She pulls supplementary resources to help with the presentation of the content. She says,

We do our best to schedule the times I come in to provide services when the students are not missing direct instruction. We make sure the students are exposed to the core instruction. We want to make sure they're getting the same curriculum presented in a fashion that is suitable for their learning.

Paige works with her students in the classroom; therefore, she leaves her materials in each classroom and does not have to carry them around with her throughout the day.

Teaching in an inclusion classroom can be challenging and stressful because the SWD are constantly being pulled by other teachers for services they are to receive. Some services are

provided in the regular education classroom and others take them out of the classroom, either way, they are being pulled from what the rest of the class is doing. Shelby says,

The kids with the IEP's get the accommodations that allow them to perform with students without disabilities in a better way. It just kind of helps them be able to do the same things their peers are doing, their non-disabled peers.

Shelby does not present the curriculum to the SWD in a different manner than her regular education students. She works with Paige and discusses the skills her SWD are struggling with that she has presented. They collaborate together to ensure the SWD are receiving the appropriate accommodations and modifications to obtain the goals listed on their IEP. Finding the time to communicate with Paige is challenging. Paige has goals she is working on when she pulls the students. She is working on skills where they and must be adapted into her session. Shelby and Paige communicate through email due to time but if something needs to be addressed, they will find time to speak face-to-face to address the concerns.

Olivia uses scaffolding techniques to present the curriculum to her students in the best possible way. The SWD receive exposure to different materials, strategies, or methods because they are being taught by different teachers. The curriculum is challenging for all students especially those who have difficulties. Olivia says,

I have so many needs in my classroom. I try to accommodate them all. I'm always trying to read and learn more about how to accommodate them and decide what I should use with them. There is not a one size fits all and all solution because I have so many different needs. There is not a single strategy that I use with them, I am always trying new and different ones to help with their learning.

The curriculum is the same for the SWD and the regular education students but it is not necessarily presented in the same manner. Olivia works consistently to differentiate the instruction in her classroom to make certain students are learning and comprehending what is being taught.

Actively Participates with Peers. Paige only works with the SWD; she sees a small amount of interaction between the students she works with and the regular education students while in the room. She is not able to spend time watching the SWD in their environment alongside their peers and how they participate within the classroom when she is not present. She did say,

Some do and some do not actively participate. My kids tend to use their disability as an excuse and they like to lean on other peers to do the work for them. A lot of them are self-conscious. Most of my kids have been retained at least once before they were identified as an ESE student, so it definitely puts a lot on their confidence when they have been retained before. They're hesitant. I believe the majority of my students are hesitant to participate in class because they're worried that they're going to say the wrong answer and be embarrassed. I think that's great when they're pulled into a small group, they tend to make a culture. What's great about that is they all can see that other peers struggle just like they do.

Being able to see the SWD interact within the classroom environment is a useful thing for the ESE teacher to witness or even hear about from the regular education teacher. Paige is encouraged and excited when the SWD volunteer to answer questions during instructional time from the regular education teacher. Paige works daily on encouraging her students to have the confidence to answer questions when they feel they know the answers.

Being the regular education, inclusion teacher of fifth graders can be challenging but with SWD there can be more challenges depending on the disabilities in the classroom. Keeping fifth graders actively engaged in the instruction and getting along with one another is a feat in itself.

She says,

I do not feel the SWD participate within the classroom as much as the others. They are not as confident as the regular education students and therefore they do not always engage in the conversations within the classroom. I believe the students that are being pulled for resource have a more difficult time. Resource pulls the students away from the regular instruction and they receive instruction separate from the ESE teacher. Students at this age are emotional and hormonal which can cause self-esteem issues because they feel they are being treated differently and the other students are not always as understanding and closed mouthed about seeing them being pulled by another teacher to receive instruction.

Building confidence in all students, especially SWD, can be an uphill battle. When they get to be in the intermediate level of elementary school, teachers are constantly having to work towards making sure the students do not feel they are being treated differently by teachers or their peers. Being treated differently is always a struggle and Shelby feels sometimes her students' need a positive push in the right direction to work together. She says,

When I ask the students to work together doing small group work, when allowed to choose their group members, sometimes I am surprised by the members some of them choose. Giving the students the opportunity to choose allows me to see who they would choose and whether all the work about being one big family is working. I am able to see if there are students being left out or included.

Watching the students within the regular classroom treat each other kindly, respectfully, and as though they are all one family, is amazing. While observing in Shelby's classroom, I witnessed such an environment. The students were collaborating together and no one was being treated any differently.

Having twenty second graders and keeping them actively engaged during instruction is an exhausting task. Keeping students attention while presenting a concept to the class entails the use of technology to help keep them engaged. Having a classroom of students who are on so many different levels academically, socially, and behaviorally, the teacher works on being creative to keep them actively participating and engaging in their learning. Olivia says, "The students in my classroom feel comfortable and participate in the classroom. I feel all my students participate in discussion and ask questions when things are presented and they don't understand."

Instructional Strategies/Teaching Style. During the time I observed Paige working with the SWD, she was patient, kind, understanding, and compassionate with her students. I witnessed her instructional strategies and teaching style throughout the day of observing. When I asked her about her teaching style and instructional strategies, she responded,

I do my best to work as a resource at their level, but we're still applying the same content. Finding time to give really good interventions is crucial. It's hard for me to implement good foundational skills these kids need in order to be successful in the regular education classroom. I pull out something on their level and we work on that concept before moving on to another. Finding time for that has been one of my biggest struggles as a teacher.

Paige talked more about the strategies she uses to help her students more than her teaching style. As I observed her throughout the day, I noticed that she, like Felix, uses the

multisensory approach to teaching. She has the students read out loud while following along with their finger and highlight important key words. The students use visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic methods when reading. She used the multisensory approach for the groups she was meeting with for reading.

Shelby is a fairly new teacher but she really has a hold on classroom management. The students show her respect and keep the noise level at a minimum. During the observation, the students were sitting in their seats and she gave directions for their small group time. After explaining what they would be doing, the students were dismissed to begin their group work. Paige was in the classroom with her during this time and her group came over when Shelby dismissed them. The students worked within their center and the noise in the classroom as low. When asked about her teaching style, she says,

I just try to learn what works best for each of my students and how they learn. Some are visual learners and some are auditory learners. It's very hard when you have such a mixture, but I just know my students and know what works best for them.

Shelby did not specifically talk about her teaching style but teaching to the students and what they need. If they need information presented visually or auditory, she will provide it in the most beneficial way to help the students understand. Being flexible in a classroom with a variety of leveled students who are not all the same type of learners allows for different teaching styles to be explored.

Learning different instructional strategies and ways to present information to students comes with years of experience. The students in the classroom learn differently and teachers learn to present using many different strategies. Olivia spoke about several ways she presents the curriculum to her students, she says,

I like to do more visual and keep everything for them where they have to focus. One thing I practice with them is the anchor charts. I can refer them so they can look at it and keep track. It's very visual. I have so many different needs in my classroom. I am always trying to accommodate students. I read a lot of research to try to give me strategies to help them. There is not one strategy that works best.

In Olivia's classroom, she has some challenging behavior students in addition to her SWD and ESOL students. The behavior students were taking more of her time and she could not focus on the lesson because she kept getting interrupted. She did not speak about her teaching style but based on the observation she has a relaxed personality and calmly dealt with the issues that surfaced during her lesson. She did not get frustrated or flustered because her lesson kept being interrupted. She would stop, deal with the problem, and get right back to the lesson. The remainder of the students were not being disruptive and were engaged in their learning.

Resources and Administrative Support. Paige is provided the resources adopted by the county and pulls supplemental resources as well. She did not name any specific supplemental resources but implied she occasionally uses the lower level reading material as supplemental resources for her lower achieving students. She explained her resources by saying,

I believe for reading, there's definitely more resources available. Math, we really don't have enough books. I have to use things I've bought at Barnes and Noble or things I found online because we just don't get enough materials. If a kid leaves, I get an extra book to make copies, but math is where I really struggle to find resources for my kids.

Since Paige is able to work with her students within their regular education classroom, she does not have to carry around materials with her to the classroom. She did pull around a cart

on wheels with supplies she needed while working with the students so she would not bother or interrupt the regular classroom teacher.

Shelby is the regular education classroom teacher and needs additional resources other than the materials adopted by the county as her curriculum. The instruction she presents in her classroom is differentiated for the needs within her classroom. When asked about resources, she says,

The coaches that we have at our school, they're good resources. A lot of times, I will talk to them, when it comes to incorporating the standards the students are working on. I create my own things and adapt them to how it would best work for my students. My grade level works together to create lesson plans and we share ideas or resources we find when doing so.

Since Olivia is the regular education classroom teacher and has many different levels within her class, every lesson she prepares is differentiated. Olivia has been teaching in the public school for three years and has limited resources. She says,

I have to pull other resources from the internet and websites. I make a lot of worksheets myself and will adjust them to benefit of my students. Making graphic organizers for the students to fill in details helps the students make connections of the concept being taught in the lesson.

Administrative support is crucial in the success of implementing a successful plan for inclusion. Support is needed in the areas of administration, teachers, and students. Radiant Elementary is a school identified by the district as having an ESE staff within an inclusive school where ESE students are being served well. Paige described her administrative support by saying,

I think my administration does value my input. I think our hands are tied in many ways. I would love to have more resource classes because I feel like it gives us a little bit more flexibility. I do try to put my input about what kid should be placed with who and what teachers I think would benefit just because of their personalities. I feel like administration does a good job of listening to me, how to group the kids, where to put the kids. I know administration has tried to place students appropriately but units are cut and our numbers are high. Whenever I have input about how we can make things flow better, they usually are pretty receptive. They believe I and the regular education teacher know the kids the best.

Being able to speak to the administration about concerns is valuable for implementation of inclusion. There will be bumps in the road and the teachers of the SWD need to know they have support from their administration and peer teachers. Shelby believes her input is valued by her administration, peer teachers, and other staff members. She feels her opinion is valued most on the performance of her students. If she has a problem, she feels she can go to her administration or a peer teacher to voice her concerns and ideas on how to help will be given. She says,

I think the administrative support at our school is good. I think the more you work with the teachers and administration collaboratively will help. What you have to say is valued. Even when things are not working, our administration will come to talk to us about what to do to help or fix the problem. They are supportive and that is important.

Olivia believes that she is supported by the ESE teacher, her peer teachers, and the administration at Radiant Elementary. She believes anyone of those people would make time to discuss with her any concerns or problems within her classroom. Olivia expressed to the

administration her concerns with a student and the assistant principal was helpful in giving her assistance with the student.

Time Management. Managing time as an ESE inclusion teacher to prepare for each group can be a strenuous process. Finding time to plan with the regular education teacher on the needs of the students is important. It is difficult to find the time, so teachers communicate through email on concerns. The teachers have face-to-face conversations whenever it is possible to speak about the SWD as well. She says,

I think time is definitely when planning with the regular education teacher comes in to play. I think we just look at the data and the biggest picture. We try to look at the bigger picture and ask teachers every other month or so, is what we're doing working? That's our biggest question and if it's something we could change, tweak or continue to do, we do that. I definitely look at what they need as a whole group majority and differentiate instruction.

Paige spends long hours working before and after school, and taking work home with her to prepare for her SWD. Paige feels in order to get all of her work complete she has to work longer hours than her contract time. There is not enough time in the day to get everything done that needs to get done. Working extra is what Paige feels it takes in order for her to feel prepared and ready for each day.

Organizational skills can determine how well someone can manage their time. Teachers are always working against the clock to get everything done within a given school day. When interviewing Shelby, I asked her about how she manages her time and she responded by saying,

I try to schedule as much as I can and think about my students that need different things.

For the week, what is it that I want to get out of my students? I try to do that because day

to day it changes. I work collaboratively planning with my grade level and the ESE teacher. I do a lot of planning on my personal time and ask my colleagues for ideas or resources. They are willing to share anything they have readily available or can point me in the right direction to get the resources that I could use.

Managing time is crucial for teachers because they are the one in charge of their time. There is always something that needs to be done to prepare for the next subject, the next day, or the next week. When time is not managed in the classroom, grading papers and entering grades can pile quickly leaving teachers feeling overwhelmed. Shelby feels because of all the extra time she works before school, after school, and in the evenings, she is on top of the situation and likes to keep it that way. Working this extra time essentially gives her piece of mind knowing the things she needs to the following day are prepared and ready and she does not have to stress about whether she has what she needs when she needs it.

The issue of time comes up frequently when speaking with teachers. When talking with Olivia about time management, she says,

I wake up at 4 a.m. every day to make time. From 4 to 6, I work on what I need to work for the following weeks. My grade level plans ahead. We have up to a month of lesson plans prepared just in case we have to change things. I go home and continue working.

That's how I manage my time. I don't manage time. I make time.

Working together collaboratively as a grade level helps with the time it takes to develop lesson plans. Olivia's grade level team splits up the plans and each takes a subject to prepare. This helps with the amount of time spent preparing lesson plans, but there are other tasks that should get completed throughout the day or week where time management is a factor.

Paige Parson – Summary. After interviewing and observing Paige, I reviewed the transcripts. I identified comparisons between Paige and Crockett's (2002) findings on the challenges and attitudes toward inclusion. She was zealous about her job, helping her students become better students, and her feelings on how the benefits outweigh the challenges. Challenges do not always mean something negative, they can mean something that needs to be overcome based on the needs of the SWD. Constantly working with her peers and the SWD to know what is working for them and what needs to be modified or changed in order to help with their success. She works hard to ensure her SWD are receiving the best education possible for them at this given time in their academic career. She is an energetic, upbeat teacher who strives for perfection from herself and her students. As I observed Paige, I noticed the students' attitudes and body language mirrored hers. They were positive and encouraging of one another. During the time with Paige, she was enthusiastic about her job and helping her students feel accomplished. When walking through the hallway of the school, students were constantly calling out to her to say hello. This indicated the students around the school really like Paige as a teacher and feel that she is someone to admire as a role model.

Reflections on the Conversations with Paige Parson. Paige and I met for both of our interviews in her classroom. She has her own classroom but she doesn't use it for students. She works with the students in their regular education classroom. As soon as I arrived, she had her first group right at eight o'clock. So, I began my day by observing her and we were able to conduct the interview during her planning period about midway through the day. During my observations, Paige would go into the classrooms with the materials she needed and her students would come right over. They would get started immediately and there was very little down time. Paige gave detailed responses, with passion, for what she is doing. From interviewing Paige, it

was evident she was committed to giving her SWD the tools they need to be successful academically and socially. Bearing in mind, the demands of her role as one of two inclusion teachers that are responsible for accommodating a large portion of SWD, Paige was considerably upbeat about her accomplishments.

Shelby Senegal – Summary. Shelby was a well-spoken individual for having only been teaching for three years, had lots of information and insight to share. She was thorough in her answers and it was evident through her responses the compassion for her students. As I worked through the transcripts from my interviews and observation with Shelby, I realized she spoke highly about her administration support and feels that inclusion is beneficial to the students and are worth the challenges. The grade level in which Shelby works, takes weekly time to work collaboratively preparing lesson plans, worksheets, and resources for one another.

Having the ESE support is necessary to the success of an inclusion classroom. Since Shelby has been teaching for only three years, having the resources needed to help guide her when her students struggle was an area where she needs more guidance. She does not always know where to look or who to talk to in order to get the information she would need to help her with presenting the information in the best possible fashion. Shelby exuded confidence when it came to time management as a teacher of an inclusion classroom of twenty-one fifth graders. She was assertive and confident in herself knowing that what she was doing in her classroom was making a difference for her students.

Working with SWD can be beneficial and challenging. The challenges can be obstacles in the right direction, which will benefit the learning for the SWD. Shelby works diligently to prepare the best possible instruction for her students. The two things she wished she had more of would be time to prepare for instruction and resources to pull from to help with the delivery of

the instruction to her students who struggle. Presenting instruction using a variety of methods is beneficial to the students. Shelby believes as a teacher, learning is always taking place and must be fostered in order to achieve success.

Reflection on the Conversations with Shelby Senegal. Shelby and I met for the first interview during her planning period in her office and our second interview was conducted over the phone. Shelby has her planning period first in the morning so we were able to get started on the interview right away. Shelby was caring, generous with her time, and responsive to the questions. Based on the interviews, it was expressed through her responses of her knowledge of how to work with SWD through small group instruction, differentiation, peer coaching, and collaboration with her teammates. She has been an inclusion teacher for all the years she has been teaching which is evident with the smooth transitioning, low noise level, and organization of small group activities.

Olivia Oustalet – Summary. The transcripts revealed similarities between Olivia and Hadadian & Chiang's (2007) findings on teachers' perspectives toward inclusion. Creating a safe, secure, least restrictive environment for SWD, ESOL, and regular education students is an important factor to the success of an inclusive classroom. Olivia has a positive attitude towards inclusion and speaks softly to her students which creates an atmosphere of motivated learning. She is persistently working towards the classroom environment being welcoming and inviting for students to learn. She believes an inclusive environment helps make students well-rounded individuals that are able to overlook differences and welcome challenges. This outlook helps to make her classroom a successful inclusion model.

Time was the factor where Olivia felt was the biggest obstacle in order to keep the dynamics of the classroom running smoothly. Olivia was positive with her responses but did

express concerns about having the resources necessary to help her students. Olivia has varying levels of academic independence and behaviors within her classroom so ensuring the differentiation is immersed in her lessons is important. Reflecting on the interview, Olivia felt strongly about the benefits of an inclusive classroom but had an overwhelming amount of challenges due to the underlying forces of the make-up of her student population.

Reflections on the Conversations with Olivia Oustalet. Olivia and I were introduced through email. Paige had put me in contact with her. We were able to have two face-to-face interviews in her office. The first interview was conducted during her planning time and the second one was after school. As soon as she dropped the students off to where they needed to go, we walked back to the classroom, got set up, and began the interview. The second interview was completed after the students were gone home for the day. Olivia is devoted to her students, gracious with her time, and open with her responses. Based on the interviews, it was evident through her responses of her knowledge of working with SWD. Since she has been an inclusion every year, she really works to provide her students with small group instruction as frequently as possible, differentiate and individualize instruction, and collaborate with her co-teachers for help when struggling with a specific student.

Principal of Radiant Elementary

Andrea has been the principal of Radiant Elementary for one and a half years. This is the total amount of time that she has been a principal. During our interview, Andrea stated that she looks for strong teachers who are willing to work collaboratively with other teachers and SWD to meet their IEP goals. Radiant Elementary is proactive in using the co-teaching model within their school which starts first with the scheduling of the ESE students. The remainder of the schedule is built around the SWD making sure their needs are met. Giving teachers common

planning time and allowing the inclusion teachers to use co-teaching while the ESE teachers use the push-in model. For Andrea, the co-teaching model consists of the teachers working collaboratively to meet the needs of the SWD. The students in the inclusive classroom receive appropriately challenging education in their classroom because their learning is personalized. The teachers look at each student and their specific levels where rigorous learning can happen and expose them to the curriculum on their grade level. Radiant Elementary utilizes the Florida Inclusion Network as a resource to help when teachers are feeling overwhelmed. Incorporating all of the above-mentioned criteria helps the school implement inclusion to the best of their ability and have seen growth in their SWD academically as well as socially.

Overview of Radiant Elementary

Radiant Elementary school has only been opened since 2001. The district recognized this school as serving the inclusion population of their students well. The population of SWD are showing academic growth and learning gains as well as buoyancy and higher self-respect for themselves. Upon the conclusion of the interviews and observations at this school, it was palpable how the ESE teacher came into the room and the SWD quietly moved to meet the teacher and begin working. There was very little downtime or time lost during these transitions. The transitions were non-disruptive and did not disturb the other students in the classroom.

The encouraging reception received while visiting this school made visitors feel welcomed. Paige, Shelby, and Olivia were all forthcoming, revealing, and enlightening with their replies to the interview questions. Shelby spoke of Paige and how she was someone she used as a resource. Olivia does not get to work specifically with Paige but has another ESE teacher that works with her grade level. There are many factors that come into play when working with SWD. These three teachers identified benefits and challenges related to working with such

students. All of these teachers' responses were overwhelmingly for inclusion and demonstrated how the students reap from the benefits in many different ways. These three teachers have been working with SWD throughout their teaching careers and visibly see how inclusion is more beneficial for the students than being put into a resource room where they have limited access to their peers.

All three of these teachers spoke about the support system within their school and how that helps to build a solid foundation for the inclusion setting. These teachers also spoke about the amount of time it takes working to prepare for their students but never once implied they did not want to be bothered with such tedious work. Radiant Elementary is committed in providing an education of excellence to a diverse community of learners, while providing a safe learning environment, conducive to student achievement. This is their school mission statement, which mirrors the benefits of inclusion as well as challenges identified by Radiant Elementary. These are summarized in Figure 2.

Benefits of Inclusion		
Academic Outcomes of SWD	Collaboration among Teachers	Administrative Support
Challenges of Inclusion		
Creating a LRE for the SWD	Resources	Time

Figure 2. Radiant Elementary School's Benefits and Challenges of Inclusion

Common Themes

Upon reviewing the data collected from both schools and the eight interviewees, the schools had common themes for the benefits and challenges with inclusion. Both schools spoke highly about the collaboration among their teachers, ESE teachers, and the administration. Both schools conveyed that strong relationships have been built among the ESE teacher and the regular education teacher. The communication needed in order to provide the best services for

the SWD is imperative to the growth of their students. Luminous and Radiant Elementary teachers both discussed the amount of support they receive from their administration and how they believe their opinions and beliefs on behalf of the SWD are acknowledged by the administration and taken into consideration when circumstances arise.

The schools also had related challenges of inclusion. Six teachers cited time as being one of the biggest challenges when it came to making sure they had everything prepared and ready for each day. All of them spoke of how they worked countless long hours before school, after school, and on their personal time in the evenings and on the weekends. Educators from both schools also spoke about the challenges of having the appropriate resources available to help serve their SWD. The schools discussed the lack of supplemental resources for their SWD.

Conclusion

Inclusive education gives SWD the opportunity to learn in the regular education classroom alongside their peers. There are benefits and challenges of inclusion through the teachers' eyes. The six teachers in this study all expressed different benefits and challenges that are evident in their daily routines with inclusion. The two ESE inclusion teachers see different benefits and challenges than the four regular education teachers. All the teachers expressed some valid benefits and challenges to the implementation of an inclusion environment such as time and collaboration. Many key factors were evident through the interviews. The common themes included performance and academic outcomes for the SWD, collaboration with peers, challenging and equal access to curriculum, classroom environment, SWD actively participating in the classroom, instructional strategies, teaching style, resources, administrative support, and time. All of these factors were explored throughout the chapter with each individual participant.

The inclusion teachers were receptive of their roles in teaching the SWD and the arrangements to provide services for these students. Both ESE teachers provided similar documentation to their regular education teachers outlining the accommodations, modifications and goals mentioned on the IEP's of the SWD in their classrooms. These teachers would go into the classrooms of the regular education teachers and provide the SWD services that enable them to help work towards meeting their goals and becoming confident in their academic endeavors. Both of these teachers expressed the benefits from using the inclusion models and how this model assists the SWD to feel equal to their peers.

The four regular education teachers were also receptive of their roles as the homeroom teacher for SWD. The regular education teachers are faced with the challenge of providing the students in their classroom with equal opportunities for learning to the best of their ability. These teachers are tasked with creating challenging, engaging, and differentiated lessons that will successfully expose the students to the curriculum within their grade level. The teachers must work towards providing instruction that is relevant and rigorous. The instruction should be meaningful and provide the students with the opportunity to develop the skills needed for success in that grade level.

This chapter described the working relationships between the regular education teachers and the ESE teachers, as well as, the benefits and challenges of working with SWD. Detailed accounts of the data collected from interviewing each participant twice and described the observations observed while in the classrooms was described. The data were summarized into descriptions of each case, highlighting common categories were evident within each one. In the next chapter, a presentation of the theoretical framework of social constructivism will explore the methods, practices, and approaches being used to successfully implement inclusion. The

information will be present as an analysis of each participant's responses including common themes. The commonalities and differences on the benefits and challenges of inclusion will be identified. A discussion on the implications for future research on examining the benefits and challenges of inclusion.

Chapter 5

Analysis, Interpretation, and Recommendations

The purpose of this case study was to explore methods, practices, and approaches teachers use during inclusion and support provided by administrators.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What support is provided by educational leaders to regular education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
2. What methods, practices, and approaches are being used by regular education and ESE teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
3. What are the benefits and challenges identified by teachers and administrators in an elementary inclusion setting?

Inclusion is based on the theory of social constructivism because the teachers and students in the classroom are constantly constructing meaning through their interactions (Singh, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). The integration of students through inclusion consists of physical, social, emotional, and instructional aspects. IDEA requires schools to develop an IEP which provides accommodations and modifications to meet the individual needs of SWD (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The SWD who are eligible for services are able to participate in the regular education classroom to varying degrees. The degrees to which the SWD participate in the regular education classroom are determined by teachers who are providing the services. Factors that are considered for the success of the integration of SWD, include co-teaching models, resources, teacher personalities, teaching styles, collaboration with team members, and classroom management ((Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Dusty & Dinnesen, 2008).

Personal Experience with Inclusion

I have experienced being the regular education and inclusion teacher for SWD. During my first several years of teaching, I only had regular education students in my classroom.

Around my fourth year of teaching, I was informed by administration that I would be one of the inclusion classrooms for second grade that year. I had no specific training or education classes on teaching SWD. I had no knowledge of what type of practices, accommodations, or modifications were necessary to help the SWD become part of the regular education classroom. I did not know what disabilities the students who would become part of my regular education classroom were diagnosed with or how I was supposed to accommodate them in my classroom.

At this point, I read their Individual Education Plans (IEP) to determine their learning needs and the accommodations they were to receive. I conducted personal research on how to accommodate them as outlined in their IEP. Since I had no professional training or education classes to teach me how to accommodate SWD, I was at a loss on how to help these students be successful in the inclusive classroom. Of the SWD that were going to be mainstreamed into my classroom, the disabilities included slow processing, mildly autistic, and other health impaired. During these first years of teaching in an inclusive classroom, I was not prepared or knowledgeable on the methods and strategies that should be used to help SWD be successful in the regular education classroom. During the following year, I began receiving training and taking college classes to better understand the learning disabilities and struggles of students with specific, identifiable disabilities.

In the past six years of teaching, I have been trained thoroughly on teaching students with dyslexia. Our staff continuously trains, tutors, and teaches students on a broad continuum that have been diagnosed with dyslexia. I have been teaching for seventeen years and do not have

ESE specific training. I have been trained thoroughly to accommodate students with dyslexia. The teachers at our school receive an enormous amount of training as our school specializes in teaching a method known as Orton-Gillingham. This method has been shown to help students with dyslexia become avid readers, writers, and spellers. I believe the Orton-Gillingham (1930) method could help any struggling SWD and also students without disabilities. My personal experience in working with SWD on a daily basis for the past six years kindled a passion for understanding the benefits and challenges of inclusion through the teachers' perceptions, perspectives, and attitudes towards inclusion. I believe that my personal experience in this area is what compelled me to want to explore the benefits and challenges of inclusion through the perceptions of teachers and administrators.

Research Question Findings

1. What support is provided by educational leaders to regular education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?

Support was provided by educational leaders to regular education and ESE teachers in the elementary inclusion setting through training diversity of learning and the development of relationships with parents. An example of the diversity of learning was described by the principal of Luminous Elementary. She said, "We want to put differentiation into whatever level of support the students need. Providing the support for inclusion, whether it is the regular education or ESE teacher, can be challenging but obtainable. We want to make sure that they are all receiving appropriately challenging education, so we would always be teaching to that highest level through differentiated instruction." Supportive educational leaders provide teachers the ability to maximize an equitable learning experience for SWD based on their individual needs. According to Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren (2015), building strong relationships with parents assists

the teacher in having support at school and home. Research supports the importance of schools building parent relationships to help with learning gains of the students. Having responsive leaders who are knowledgeable and committed to support learning in an inclusive classroom also assists the SWD. Olivia discussed the significance of building relationships with parents to help ensure the students are receiving the support at home to help them grow academically.

2. What methods, practices, and approaches are being used by regular education and ESE teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?

Methods, practices, and approaches that were being used by the regular education and ESE teachers in the elementary inclusion setting include universal design, co-teaching, collaboration, and instructional strategies. An example of universal design was in Luminous Elementary where Madison made accommodations and modifications for her SWD because they work below level and need extra time, but they can complete their work. Differentiating instruction allowed Madison's SWD to be successful with the classroom assignments. According to Rodina (2006), Vygotsky stressed the importance of social interaction in the upbringing and education of SWD. Inclusive education for SWD and peer support helps create the LRE for students and their learning.

The universal design approach helps teachers differentiate instruction for SWD and assists with individualizing instruction. Izzo, Murray, & Novak (2008), examined how the co-teaching model provided students with a wide range of opportunities to encourage success in the regular education classroom. Co-teaching is a method of two equally-qualified teachers with comparable expertise, jointly delivering instruction to students in the LRE. The co-teaching model was evident in Luminous Elementary during observations with Josie. Her classroom consisted of two regular education teachers co-teaching with twenty-nine students. Felix worked

with the SWD for reading, writing, and/or math instruction depending on the student's IEP, using a pull-out model due to the number of students in the classroom. Isherwood & Barger-Anderson (2008) established that co-teaching relationships have been shown to provide teachers assistance in the development, delivery, and evaluation of strategies to benefit SWD.

Collaboration was another important component used in the inclusion environment to ensure the success of SWD. Each school provided unique instances of the impact of collaboration. At Radiant Elementary, Paige and Shelby stated how collaboration takes place to make inclusion a successful model. All parties involved work continuously and consistently, whether it be in person or through email. They are in constant communication to ensure the success of the students. Collaboration between the regular education and ESE teacher enabled cooperation to share the responsibility of the SWD (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012). Cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are strategies used in the implementation of inclusion. According to Giangreco (2007), cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are beneficial for the regular education students as well. Utilizing these strategies in the inclusion environment created an atmosphere with increased student motivation, peer acceptance, academic achievement, and social skills of the SWD.

3. What are the benefits and challenges identified by teachers and administrators in an elementary inclusion setting?

Teachers and administrators that participated in this study identified benefits and challenges in the elementary inclusive setting. The challenges included creating the LRE for the SWD, resources, and time. Creating an environment where SWD feel safe and secure is challenging because of the lack of acceptance of the SWD by the regular education students. Creating an inclusive environment that exposes other students to SWD is a means to provide

natural social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Lamport, Graves, & Ward (2012), the effect of inclusive classes on academic achievement and social interaction for SWD continue to produce positive results.

The teachers did not always have the resources or instructional materials needed to implement inclusion. The county where these schools were located did not have the funding to purchase supplemental materials for the ESE teachers. These teachers were adapting the county-wide adopted curriculum to meet the needs of their SWD. Olivia stated that because of the lack of resources, she has to pull information from the internet and websites. She made worksheets herself and would adjust them to benefit her students.

The biggest challenge was time, due to the schedules of the teachers. Finding the opportunity to collaborate and plan for the SWD was challenging because of time constraints. The teachers mentioned working long hours and during their personal time to ensure they were prepared for their students. They believed in providing meaningful, engaging instruction and experiences that promote the development of well-rounded students, which involves many extra hours of planning. Managing time is crucial because they are the one in charge of their time. There is always something that needs to be done to prepare for the next subject, the next day, or the next week. At Radiant Elementary, Shelby felt because of all the extra time she works before school, after school, and in the evenings, she is on top of the situation and likes to keep it that way. Working this extra time essentially gives her piece of mind knowing the things she needs to do the following day are prepared and ready for her students.

The benefits of inclusion included academic outcomes of the SWD, collaboration among teachers, and administrative support. The participants in the study conveyed how an inclusive environment allowed the SWD to have academic success and learning gains in the regular

education classroom. Madison described the academic outcomes as beneficial to SWD. She personally worked with students one-on-one or in a small group setting. The SWD get extra assistance from her and other teachers throughout the day to help them when they are having trouble, which results in academic success. Productive relationships among the regular education and ESE teachers allowed for collaborative planning for the SWD. Having administrators who provide opportunities for teachers to plan, collaborate, and be recognized for their work created a positive work environment. According to Felix, the success of his SWD is because of the atmosphere in which his students are learning. At Luminous, he believed he had the support to create the LRE for the SWD, which enabled the students to make progress, show learning gains, and meet their individual education goals.

The social constructivist theory helped frame this study because throughout the process of researching, interviewing, and observing, the responses from the participants' assisted in gaining understanding of the inclusive environment. The participants developed meaning of their experiences through their responses during the interviews on the inclusive classroom, which is supportive of the social constructivist theory. According to Kim (2014), one of the cornerstones of the social constructivist paradigm is social interaction. Inclusive education allows for the regular education students and the SWD to develop relationships with one another where social interaction is fostered for learning and growing in a safe environment. The social constructivist theory nurtures the interactions and experiences of the SWD in the inclusive environment and helps meet the needs of each individual student.

Findings on Benefits and Challenges

The benefits and challenges of inclusion were studied in relation to the experiences and perspectives of regular education teachers, ESE teachers, and administration. Each person

interviewed gave specific information about the benefits to SWD academically, socially, and emotionally as well as the challenges that were evident in making inclusion successful for each student receiving the services.

Teachers involved in the process of inclusion need to be trained, educated, and qualified to teach SWD. For inclusion to be successful, educational practices need to be child-centered. This means the teachers determine where each of their students are academically and socially, then decide how best to facilitate learning in the LRE. Josie is the teacher in the regular education classroom where the SWD spend most of their time. She felt she created the LRE where the students feel safe and secure. She said,

My instruction is based on the standards that need to be taught and differentiated for SWD and their needs as well. If they need enrichment, then I provide time for enrichment. If they need support, they may or may not be pulled with an ESE teacher to receive support.

Taking this approach means the teachers need time to evaluate and individualize the learning for SWD. Inclusion places students in a regular education classroom with the assumption that their difficulties can be accommodated with relatively minimal changes to the curriculum. Integration into the regular education classroom involves placing the SWD in this environment to allow them the opportunity to interact with their peers. The teachers also provided instruction where SWD did not feel isolated or secluded from their fellow classmates. Inclusion entails an extensive amount of preparation for the regular education and the special education teacher as well as creating the LRE for the SWD. For example, Shelby felt her classroom environment made students feel safe, secure, and encouraged to speak. She allowed students to work together

with their peers. Giving the students time to collaborate with their peers helped them learn to have respect for one another and value others' opinions.

The teachers in the study engage in supporting inclusion of SWD through the co-teaching model. Isherwood & Barger-Anderson (2008) described co-teaching relationships and discussed the development, delivery, and evaluation of effective instructional programs most likely to benefit SWD. This type of learning community diligently worked to establish an atmosphere where students would develop empathy and reach out to their classmates, independent of the adult instruction. Co-teaching is designed to benefit the learning of the SWD as well as increase acceptance, respect, and equity. Teachers in this study expressed that when engaged in the co-teaching model with SWD, meeting the needs of the students was more obtainable due to the dual role of the teachers. As explained by Josie, co-teaching allowed her to work with another teacher that is an expert or has more expertise in specific learning disabilities. Having the expertise or knowledge of another teacher helped support Josie to make modifications or accommodations for her SWD. According to Dusty & Dinnesen (2012), using the co-teaching method allows for the individualized nature of the intervention for the success of the students with disabilities. Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie (2007) found that collaborative and reflective planning through co-teaching was a successful strategy for an inclusion environment.

Examination of Findings

This study examined the following questions:

1. What support is provided by educational leaders to regular education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?
2. What methods, practices, and approaches are being used by regular education and ESE teachers in an elementary inclusion setting?

3. What are the benefits and challenges identified by teachers and administrators in an elementary inclusion setting?

The theoretical framework of social constructivism provided a frame for exploring the methods, practices, and approaches being used in inclusive classrooms. The social constructivist theory states that a person's knowledge is shaped through social experiences, influences, and interactions within the environment (McGarrigle, 2013). The regular education teacher in an inclusive classroom makes the appropriate accommodations for the SWD based on the guidelines of IDEA. For the regular education teacher to make the appropriate accommodations, they need support and collaboration with administration, counselors, and special education teachers (Gehrke, Cocchiarella, Harris, Puckett, 2014). The social constructivist theory supports how the regular education teacher views their inclusive classroom as a place to learn, grow, interact, and form relationships. This theory provides teachers with the support necessary to create the LRE for an inclusion classroom. Social constructivism describes how adults work together. Malcom Knowles' theory of andragogy is best known in the world of adult education as a conceptualization of how and why adults learn (Harper & Ross, 2011). The mission of adult learning is to impart knowledge and skills to the students so learning can take place. Felix brings information to other adults to help with constructing meaning for the SWD within his school.

Chapter 4 presented the information gathered from interviewing two principals, two ESE teachers, and four regular education classroom teachers. The data were derived from interview transcripts and observations. One interview was conducted with each principal and two interviews with the ESE teachers and regular education teachers at the school sites where the participants work in order to achieve a greater understanding of their case load, work environment, and interaction with the inclusion students. Teachers were observed working with

the SWD in the regular education classroom and notes were taken during this time. Rather than transcribing the interviews myself, a transcription service (Transcripty) was utilized. The transcripts were each analyzed holistically and examined for statements or phrases that seemed essential or enlightening about the benefits and challenges of servicing SWD. After analyzing the first round of interviews, a second interview was scheduled with each participant to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives. The steps were repeated for analysis that was completed during the first round of interviews.

This chapter will cross-reference each school based on their similarities and differences established from the benefits and challenges that were described during the interviews. The questions will be addressed that guided this study. Recommendations will be provided for future research on inclusion of SWD.

Cross-Reference Analysis

Each school was presented as a phenomenological case study, while highlighting common themes by the participants from each school: performance and academic outcomes, collaboration with peers and paraprofessionals, challenging curriculum and classroom environment, equal access to curriculum, actively participates with peers, instructional strategies and teaching style, resources and administrative support, and time management. These common themes emerged from examining the transcripts. According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological case study approach describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (p. 76). This approach uses the perceptions of teachers and administrators to explore the benefits and challenges of inclusion. Case study research is an object of study and a product of inquiry and the findings will consist of descriptions and themed developments of each case (Creswell, 2013, p. 99).

The eight common themes were used as tools for organizing the data and reaching the true essence of the phenomenon. As the data were organized, it became evident that the participants interviewed saw similar benefits and challenges of inclusion. The benefits of inclusion were collaboration among teachers and administrative support. The challenges for the participants included resources and lack of time for implementation of inclusion. A summary of the schools' similarities with common themes is presented in Figure 3.

Benefits of Inclusion for both schools	
Collaboration among Teachers	Administrative Support
Challenges of Inclusion for both schools	
Resources	Lack of Time

Figure 3. Common Themes between schools

Benefits of Inclusion for both schools

Collaboration among Teachers. All six participants discussed the strong collaboration among teachers within their schools. In order for inclusion to be successful, there needs to be constant communication between the regular education and the ESE teachers. Both schools have solid foundations where the teachers have working relationships and are able to plan collaboratively to ensure the success of the SWD. According to Lingo, Barton-Arwood, & Jolivet (2011), collaboration among regular education and ESE teachers is important to the successful implementation of inclusion. This study and Lingo, Barton-Arwood & Jolivet (2011) found collaboration between all parties is necessary in planning and being prepared for teaching SWD.

Working collaboratively at Luminous Elementary and Radiant Elementary was evidently a high priority among the teachers, other staff members, and administration. Felix explained about the working relationships he has with the teachers, which is a big part of the success for his

students. The collaboration and communication among the teachers contributes to the success of the SWD. For the regular education teacher to make the appropriate accommodations, support and collaboration are imperative. The social constructivist theory supports how the regular education teacher views the inclusive classroom as a place to learn, grow, interact, and form relationships. Both schools showed evidence of the social constructivist theory as a framework for an inclusive environment.

The administrators' perspectives of their schools were similar to the teachers interviewed. The principal of Luminous stated that in order to have successful inclusion campus-wide, the school has to have a collaborative culture. She felt her school has a collaborative culture that states we are going to all work together to make sure we have what we need to implement inclusion successfully. This type of collaboration builds strong relationships and support among the staff. The principal of Radiant stated teachers who collaborate and personalize the learning for SWD, gain the support of their peers and build strong relationships with one another. Both principals mentioned time being a struggle since there is never enough time within the school day to prepare for their students. The principal of Luminous spoke highly of her ESE specialist and how she provides resources and ideas to help support the ESE students but did not mention physical resources like textbooks. The principal of Radiant discussed having resources but mentioned time as being the resource teachers are lacking the most. In summary, the administrators' perspectives were aligned with the teachers' perspectives on the common benefits and challenges between the schools.

Administration Support. All participants interviewed spoke highly of the administrative support they receive for the inclusion model at their schools. When teachers feel they have support from administration and each other, the inclusion model was found to be

successful. According to Fuchs (2010), successful implementation of inclusion through the support of administration allows for common planning time to be given to the teachers so they can prepare for their SWD. Luminous Elementary and Radiant Elementary have principals who are heavily invested in the inclusive environment for SWD. Both principals discussed the implementation of inclusion and how, when creating schedules, they determine which classroom environment would promote academic gains for the SWD. Once they decide where the SWD will be, then they build the rest of the school schedule around the inclusion students.

Administrator's support for inclusion is rooted in values of equity, and teachers should be prepared to accommodate students based on their individual needs (Riehl, 2000). Both schools are positive examples of having strong relationships with their staff while building the inclusion model for the success of all students.

Having a supportive administration was one of the benefits both schools experienced in their successful implementation of inclusion. The teachers at Luminous Elementary expressed they receive valued support from their peer teachers and administration to help in implementing inclusive instruction for the SWD. Being able to speak to the administration about any concerns is valuable for implementation of inclusion when problems arise. There will be challenges, and the teachers of the SWD need to know they have support from their administration and peer teachers. The teachers at Radiant Elementary revealed being able to discuss concerns with administration and how valuable that is for the implementation of inclusion.

The participants from both schools discussed they felt supported from their administration in some ways but not in others. Support is provided by educational leaders to the regular education and ESE teachers through time for collaboration and planning to help implement inclusion. The participants believed their opinions were valued, acknowledged, and

considered by the administration when circumstances arise. For example, Madison believed her input is valued through the help of creating or changing goals for her students on the IEP's. However, the participants felt they lacked support because there was not enough time to collaborate and plan for the SWD based on the amount of time provided by the administrators.

Another way the participants did not feel supported was with supplemental resources for the SWD. The administration was not able to provide the teachers with supplemental resources to help with differentiating instruction for the SWD. Shelby is the regular education classroom teacher and mentioned needing additional resources other than the materials adopted by the county. The instruction she presented in her classroom is differentiated for the needs within her classroom and she has not been provided additional resources to help with the implementation of differentiating the instruction for the SWD. The administration mentioned resources as being people like the ESE specialist and not physical materials. The resources the participants stated they needed are actual supplemental resources which are lacking from both of these schools.

Challenges of Inclusion for both schools

Resources. All six participants mentioned the lack of resources that were available to them for the implementation of inclusion. Finding resources to help their struggling students was definitely a challenge. Both ESE teachers discussed using supplemental resources to help with the implementation of instruction necessary for the specific needs of the SWD. The four regular education teachers stated they occasionally make their own materials to help with differentiating instruction to the SWD for mastery of the skills being taught. The participants seemed frustrated their resources were limited and not always appropriate for their SWD. If the students are reading below grade level, then supplemental materials could be used. The ESE teachers conveyed how they had no access to materials that were not on the grade level in which they

were working. Teachers on other grade levels did not have extra materials to supply them for use with the SWD. The participants mentioned spending their own money on resources because their schools did not always have the resources needed to implement instruction on the level appropriate for the SWD to be successful. Olivia said because of the lack of resources, she has to pull information from the internet. She also makes worksheets and adapts them to benefit her students. The lack of supplemental resources also falls back on the challenge of time because the teachers are having to spend time locating resources for their students in order to differentiate the instruction.

Lack of Time. The lack of time is a challenge and an issue all participants mentioned during the interviews due to time constraints during the school day. Administrators gave time for the teachers to collaborate, plan, and prepare for SWD but the time given was not always adequate for the completion of such tasks. The regular education teacher participants at both schools discussed how they planned the curriculum with their grade level team once a week. This collaboration allowed for the team to divide up the work of creating lesson plans. The ESE teachers at both schools mentioned how they will plan with the teachers collaboratively on a monthly basis but through email weekly to ensure the SWD are receiving the appropriate accommodations needed to meet their IEP goals. Planning collaboratively allowed the teachers to work cooperatively to minimize the amount of time needed for preparing instruction independently.

All six participants mentioned not having time during the school day to be prepared and ready for the following day. They all discussed having to spend extra time before school, after school, evenings, and weekends to make sure they felt prepared and ready to teach. The common concern was the lack of time to get everything done that needed to get done during the typical

school day. According to the participants, in order to feel ready to teach it was necessary to come in early, stay late, or take work home. This was a frustration and challenge mentioned by all participants in the study.

Managing their time was not the concern so much as having the time to get materials prepared. The ESE teachers expressed feelings of stress with their time due to the number of students in which they differentiate instruction. Since they are servicing all students with IEP's, which will all have specific individual goals, they have to make sure they are accommodating all their students' specific learning difficulties. The regular education teachers work toward making accommodations and modifications for assignments for the SWD and the regular education students for all to be academically successful.

Managing time is crucial for teachers to help with the implementation of instruction and delivery to the students. There is no time to waste so every minute is important for ensuring the SWD are making academic and learning gains towards their IEP goals. The biggest challenge for the participants is being able to utilize the time given for collaboration with their peers to the fullest extent. In elementary schools, teachers walk their students where they need to go and pick them up, therefore, that takes away from their collaboration time. Figuring out how to maximize the time given by administration to plan for their SWD with all the appropriate members included is the challenge. Felix explained there is never enough time to get everything done that needs to get done in a typical day so coming in early, staying late, or taking things home are necessary in order for things to run smoothly for him.

Differences between schools

In visiting both of these schools, there were differences. At Luminous Elementary, Felix did not have his own space. He shared his office with three other teachers and did not have a

classroom for himself. He had to find places either in the classroom or elsewhere to provide instruction for his SWD. Felix carried his resources in two book bags. At Radiant Elementary, Paige had her own classroom but she did not use it for any type of instruction for her SWD. She was able to work with her students within the confines of their regular education classroom. Paige was able to leave her materials in the regular education teacher's classroom where she held her instruction. Luminous Elementary seemed to have more supplemental resources for the SWD than Radiant Elementary. A summary of the schools' differences is presented in Figure 4.

Luminous Elementary	Radiant Elementary
Benefit – SWD engaged in the LRE	Benefit – Academic Outcomes of SWD
Challenge – SWD actively engaged with Peers	Challenge – Creating a LRE for the SWD

Figure 4. Differences between schools

One difference the study revealed was Luminous Elementary found their SWD were engaged in the LRE because of the co-teaching model observed in the regular education classrooms. They use the co-teaching model in some classrooms where two regular education teachers work collaboratively in one classroom and Felix pulls the SWD out of the classroom for instruction in reading, writing, and/or math depending on the student's IEP. The SWD get group instruction with the regular education teacher and Felix uses his time to build on top of the instruction that has been provided. Since Luminous' student population is twice the size of Radiant, this method of inclusion works best for their school. Observations did not show evidence of the co-teaching model at Radiant. The regular education and ESE teacher worked individually with their students. Therefore, these teachers did not find engagement of the SWD to be a benefit for their school. According to Shelby, she does not feel the SWD participate within the classroom as much as the regular education students. She felt they are not as confident

and therefore, did not always engage in the conversations within the classroom. The development of Luminous' LRE may be promoting engagement that Radiant potentially could be missing.

The participants at Radiant identified their academic outcomes of the SWD to be a benefit because their school is able to have the ESE teacher work directly with the students in the regular education classroom. These students are not pulled out of the classroom and are encouraged to give input about their learning strategies. Paige demonstrates to her students that working hard will pay off in the end. The student population at Radiant is half the size of Luminous, therefore, Paige is able to work directly in the regular education classroom with her students. When Paige is pulling her SWD, she is getting them from one to two classrooms. At Luminous, Felix is not able to work directly in the classroom with the SWD because of the population of students in their school. He is pulling students for instruction from three or four different classrooms and meets with his students in different locations throughout the school because of the overcrowding. Therefore, some groups meet in classrooms where students are out of the room or he meets at a table in the hallway. Luminous is serving double the amount of students as Radiant. Therefore, the students are being encouraged to be actively involved with their learning, but the outcome is not the same.

The teachers interviewed at Luminous recognized having the SWD actively engaged with their peers as a challenge because of the size of the school. The student population at Luminous is double the size of Radiant. The student-to-teacher ratio is higher which makes it more difficult to keep them actively engaged with their peers. Madison said she believed the SWD might feel intimidated and are less likely to participate in classroom conversations. Radiant did not identify

this factor as being a challenge for their school. These teachers spoke about their students treating each other kindly, respectfully, and like they are one big family.

Another difference revealed from the participants of Radiant was that creating the LRE for the SWD was a challenge. Even though the students are able to stay in the classroom for instruction, creating a natural, comfortable, and safe environment is challenging. When the students are being pulled within their regular education classroom, they are sometimes more insecure because their peers are watching and know they are receiving help from another teacher. Paige said this can create problems with teasing from the regular education students. Radiant has a population of students with physical impairments where Luminous does not. Therefore, the participants from Luminous did not find this to be a challenge because of the way they are able to pull their SWD. They did not identify problems with creating the LRE for their students. Each school operationally described the LRE a little differently and that could be why one found it more challenging than the other.

Limitations

The current study is limited in size. Two schools with similar characteristics from one district participated in the study. The schools were purposefully selected based on the inclusion model being implemented and their partnership with the Florida Inclusion Network. It would be valuable to have more schools participate in the research. Being able to compare schools with successful models of inclusion, as well as schools with unsuccessful models of inclusion would allow for more data to be analyzed and evaluated. A school with a successful model of inclusion would have documentation of students showing learning gains, meeting their IEP goals, and evidence with the overall school grade. A school with an unsuccessful model of inclusion would have SWD not meeting their IEP goals and be lacking one or more of the success factors.

It would also be favorable to have more than one district participate in the research. The district where the data were collected was large, therefore, choosing a district that was smaller in size could provide different results. Choosing multiple districts of the same size to compare how inclusion is incorporated for the SWD would allow for more data to be compared. Collecting data in a district that was larger than the one chosen would also provide more data to examine and compare. Observing and interviewing only one district did not allow for the comparison of two or more districts, on what was working, and what was not with inclusion for SWD.

Another limitation found was it could be constructive to interview additional teachers within each school on the benefits and challenges of inclusion. Being able to interview further teachers would allow for a wider range of perspectives from the participants. Interviewing more than three teachers from each school would provide a broader collection of perspectives on the benefits and challenges of inclusion for the SWD. This information would allow for added data to be examined and compared.

Extending the study to middle schools and high schools could generate comparative data on the benefits and challenges within all schools, not just elementary schools. Since the challenge in the elementary schools seem to be time when teachers have common planning time, it would be interesting to examine how the middle school and high school teachers find the time to plan collaboratively when they have no common planning time. Observing and interviewing middle school and high school teachers about how they find time to work collaboratively to meet the IEP goals of the SWD, would allow for the middle and high school teachers perspectives to be explored.

Implications

The ability to create the LRE for the regular education students and the SWD is needed for equal access to educational opportunities. Provisions of inclusion include benefits and challenges discussed throughout this study. This study provided a detailed account of exploring the benefits and challenges of inclusion from the lived experiences of the principals, regular education, and ESE teachers. The information gained in this study will help improve teachers' preparedness on teaching SWD in the LRE in the regular education classroom as well as expand the educational experiences of the students. Giving teachers training, methods, practices, and approaches will allow inclusion to be implemented to enhance academic growth of SWD.

Implications for Teachers. Information gained in this study will help improve teachers' preparedness on teaching SWD in the LRE and expand the educational experience of the students by providing training, time for planning, and collaboration. The ability to create the LRE for the regular education students and the SWD is needed for equal access to educational opportunities. For example, providing curriculum to SWD and regular education students cannot always be delivered in the same fashion. Josie discussed constantly working to differentiate the instruction to ensure her students were understanding and learning. This study shows that good teachers go "over and beyond" to make inclusion successful. Teachers cannot be effective unless they go over and beyond to be successful by putting in extra time before school, after school, and collaborating to differentiate instruction for the SWD.

Detailed accounts on the benefits and challenges of inclusion from the lived experiences of the principals, regular education, and ESE teachers were evident throughout the interviews from the participants. Olivia spoke about the difficulty of differentiating instruction because of the varying exceptionalities within her classroom, but has tremendous support from her peers,

which can help with this task. The information gained in this study can provide guidance on the benefits and challenges of teaching SWD in an inclusive setting as well as expand their educational experiences. Providing training, methods, strategies, and approaches will permit inclusion to be implemented successfully to foster academic success of the SWD.

As evidenced through this study, ensuring education for all students necessitates teachers being appropriately prepared to teach SWD in the regular education classroom. Through this study in the inclusion model, the teachers must expect the unexpected and be prepared for anything. According to Ko & Boswell (2013), teachers need the ongoing process of collaboration and training with other teachers on inclusive practices. Paige and Shelby collaborate together to ensure the SWD are receiving the appropriate accommodations and modifications to reach the goals listed on their IEP's. It also became evident through the words and actions of the participants how the teachers and students benefit from an inclusive atmosphere because they felt the SWD were showing learning gains and were growing socially and emotionally by being included in this environment. Educating SWD in the regular education classroom signifies how the members of this LRE are valued by the others students while providing important contributions to the regular education classroom. Inclusion should not be the sole responsibility of the regular and special education teachers, but a shared task among administrators, parents, and stakeholders.

The research conducted in this study can help teachers with the implementation of inclusion by ensuring they have the appropriate strategies, methods, and practices. Giving teachers training to prepare them for SWD will make the process of implementation easier. This study and Kavale (2002) recognize the daily challenges of the regular education teachers and

support providing them the opportunity to seek training to implement differentiation and cooperative learning strategies which will increase their knowledge as an inclusion teacher.

Implications for Administrators. Building solid relationships between the administration, peer teachers, and students will also help with the implementation of inclusion. Giving teachers the confidence and strategies to be successful inspires them to stay in the profession and continue teaching for years (Bogotch, 2014). Therefore, teachers who are provided administrative support, will grow professionally as inclusion teachers. Teacher collaboration is important to facilitate the success of inclusion, acceptance, and learning gains in the regular education classroom.

Collaboration, cooperative learning, and differentiation are essential factors for implementing inclusion. Collaboration between the teachers enabled instruction to be individualized for SWD and enabled them to feel success in the inclusive environment. According to Giangreco (2007), cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are beneficial strategies for the SWD and the regular education students creating an effective learning environment. Cooperative learning and differentiation enabled the SWD to work with the regular education students and have the curriculum presented in a manner which nurtures academic success.

The implementation of inclusion was hindered because of the lack of time for planning and collaboration among the administration and teachers working with the SWD. Collaboration is crucial in planning and being prepared for teaching SWD. According to Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren (2015), collaboration between teachers provides a model to learn and assist in the success of the SWD. Providing teachers with time to plan and collaborate will allow for the development of strategies and practices in the inclusion classroom. For example, Josie worked

with Felix to plan for the instruction for the SWD. She stated including the SWD in the regular education classroom allows her to work together with Felix towards helping the students receive the academic support they need for success.

Providing the regular education and ESE teacher with supplemental resources to use when necessary for differentiation is also a hindrance. The two schools observed had limited resources for supplemental use with their SWD. Both schools conveyed the confines of curriculum when modifications are necessary. Giangreco (2007) suggests when the curriculum content is too difficult for the SWD, teachers need to differentiate the information to an appropriate level for the students. Both schools expressed the difficulty of this based on the availability of supplemental materials in their schools. Shelby, as the regular education classroom teacher, stated she needs additional resources other than the materials adopted by the county. The instruction presented in her classroom is differentiated for the needs within her classroom but is provided through supplemental resources she has purchased with personal funds and incorporated to accommodate the specific needs of her students.

Recommendations

Providing teachers with the time necessary to collaborate, plan, and differentiate instruction is needed for inclusion. Based on the responses from interviews, Singh (2007) and O'Meara (2010) said giving teachers the time necessary to prepare for teaching SWD is a crucial ingredient for success and one of the challenges of teaching SWD. Teachers in the study felt supported but were lacking sufficient time due to constraints on their daily schedule to help with the collaboration and planning instruction for the SWD. Administrators could provide teachers with a monthly day of planning collaboratively to help with the strain of time. This would allow the regular education and ESE teachers a whole day to spend planning collaboratively

uninterrupted. The district observed for this research had half days once a week which allowed the teachers to plan collaboratively during this time. The administration should not plan meetings during the half days to allow the teachers to be able to work collaboratively on planning with their grade levels and ESE teachers during this time.

Another challenge was having the resources necessary to teach the SWD. The teachers felt they were not given the appropriate or necessary resources to adequately teach the SWD to their fullest potential. The district did not provide supplemental resources for the ESE teachers to use in implementing instruction to the SWD. Therefore, finding resources for the teachers to use would benefit the teachers with their planning time and enable the SWD to have the materials needed to help present the curriculum to them using multiple strategies provided throughout such resources. If the district could provide the schools with funds to purchase supplemental resources to help with the implementation of inclusion for the SWD. If the district could find funding within the budget, through grants or business partners, or use their personnel to develop such materials, this would allow teachers to have a variety of resources needed for the SWD. This would allow the schools who are successfully implementing inclusion an opportunity to purchase supplemental materials or be provided the materials developed through the district which could help with the differentiation of instruction for the SWD.

Providing appropriate training would permit inclusion teachers to be prepared for teaching SWD. The qualifications of teachers should be evaluated before being considered to teach SWD to ensure they have been properly trained. Providing training for the teachers who do not have the adequate credentials before placing them into classrooms with SWD would allow the teachers to be sufficiently prepared for this type of learning environment. Training prepares teachers to differentiate instruction, design accommodations, and create modifications to meet

the needs of the SWD. According to Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis (2016), leaders providing training assistance allow teachers to be welcoming of the inclusive classroom and help them to be prepared for the unexpected. Providing teachers opportunities to seek or acquire training prior to obtaining SWD or even while the students are in the classroom will expose the teachers to strategies, methods, and approaches to help with differentiating instruction. These methodologies will enable the inclusion teacher to provide accommodations and modifications to their SWD with success.

Further Research

Based on the limitations discussed, conducting future research could include interviewing the SWD on their perceptions of working collaboratively in the LRE with their peers and the inclusive environment. Conducting research on the views of the students could help determine if inclusion is benefiting the SWD academically and socially based on their perceptions. Allowing the students to express their insights on inclusion would allow for an understanding of strategies, methods, practices, and procedures that were benefiting the SWD based on their individual needs.

Future research for this study could also include interviewing principals, regular education teachers, and ESE teachers in middle schools and high schools. Examining the perspectives of the administration more deeply towards inclusion would allow for the research to be expanded on the benefits and challenges from their viewpoints. For this research, two principals were interviewed. Interviewing additional principals would allow for a deeper understanding of their perspectives and provide support to administrators for a diversity of learners with and without successful models of inclusion. According to Crockett (2002),

providing administration support for a diversity of learners and the development of relationships is beneficial to the implementation of inclusion.

Exploring the perspectives of regular education and ESE teachers in middle and high schools would generate information with the perceptions and perspectives of these teachers on the benefits and challenges within all levels of schooling, not just elementary. Since the challenge in the elementary schools seemed to be time when teachers have common planning time, interviewing these teachers and discovering the methods, strategies, and practices they use to implement inclusion effectively for SWD could inform best approaches among elementary school populations. The information from these teachers would examine their understanding of the perceptions and outlooks on the benefits and challenges within the higher levels of school. Interviewing the middle and high school teachers about time to collaborate for the SWD would allow for exploration on their methods. When and how are they able to find time to collaborative for their SWD? Interviewing these teachers and discovering the methods, strategies, and practices they use to implement inclusion effectively for SWD and could inform best approaches among elementary school populations. It would also include interviewing teachers who are not effectively implementing inclusion and evaluate the steps they take to incorporate time and planning for inclusion of the SWD in higher education.

Further research might also include interviewing and observing multiple districts to see if the results would be similar. The district in this study was large, therefore, collecting information in a smaller district could consequently provide different results. Choosing multiple districts of the same size to compare how inclusion is incorporated for the SWD would allow for more data to compare based on the population of the districts. Since Florida has six really large districts, choosing to interview and observe teachers from these districts would allow for an exploration

on the benefits and challenges according to those working in districts with a higher population of SWD. Collecting data in districts of the same size would provide information to examine and explore the results based on the findings.

Impact of this Study on the Researcher

This study impacted me as both a doctoral student and an ESE teacher. After reading Creswell's (2013) work, I felt the need to conduct qualitative research to explore the issue of the benefits and challenges of inclusion. This exploration was needed to discover and describe the perspectives of teachers working effectively in inclusion settings. In order to do this, I had to clarify my understanding of inclusion along with the benefits and challenges of servicing SWD. From the initial contact and meeting with participants, I had to work toward developing conversational partnerships. This process made me push through my comfort zone and be confident with the interview process. In addition, I quickly realized that I needed to develop my skills as a writer. The more I would write, the more I realized that I would have unnecessary words and needed to give adequate phenomenological descriptions to tell the stories of my participants. Feedback from my committee chair, as well as, other members of my committee allowed for persistent revision which facilitated improvement in my writing. I believe this process has helped me become a better writer and more aware of the words that I write making sure my writing is concise and to the point.

As an inclusion teacher, I became more aware of the benefits and challenges of teaching SWD based on the responses of my participants. Listening to them describe their beliefs, opinions, thoughts, and feelings about the inclusion model drove me to reflect on my own classroom and working with SWD. After the interviews and observations with my participants, I feel mindful of the benefits and challenges of inclusion and the impact this model has on the

SWD. I feel more prepared to support the inclusion model after reflecting on my own experiences and examining some of the obstacles that arise with preparing for this learning environment.

The conclusion of this study represents the end of a journey. This journey has encompassed two years of coursework followed by a year of dissertation research. While on this journey, I have learned about the benefits and challenges of working with SWD and personal endeavors that must be overcome when working with these students. This journey has required determination, dedication, persistence, and patience. Through this process, I have had to learn to balance this work with other roles within my life. I have had to rely on my dedication and determination to completing the goal of finishing this journey. If inclusion is to be successful, then compassionate teachers with positive attitudes, persistence, and dedication are the teachers that are needed in such a learning environment for SWD. Creating the environment that is the least restrictive for these students is imperative to the success of their learning outcomes. I learned a lot from my eight participants throughout this journey and am grateful for their participation.

Conclusion

The findings reported from this study and the literature reviewed explored the benefits and challenges of inclusion that the regular education and ESE teachers are faced with on a daily basis. The perceptions of principals, regular education, and ESE teachers were shared based on their personal, overall experiences. Educational experience, training, and administrative support for teaching SWD play an essential role in the successful implementation of inclusion. Teachers' preparedness plays a significant role in the success of the implementation of inclusion as well as collaboration among the regular education and the ESE teacher. According to Gehrke,

Cocchiarella, Harris, & Puckett (2014), teacher preparedness allows teachers to acquire knowledge needed for successful implementation of instruction and hands-on practical experience.

Inclusion is important because it is constructed on the principle that SWD should be valued for their exceptional abilities and included as important members of the regular education classroom just as the regular education students. Inclusion enables the SWD to be educated with their peers in the LRE with instructional strategies such as cooperative learning and differentiation being used to deliver instruction. Inclusion is a social justice issue that is complex and complicated. Social justice is an essential ingredient of inclusion and students are encouraged to accept one another for all their differences. IDEA provides a set of guidelines so each student has their needs tailored to meet their individual and specific education plan. Inclusive education supports the rights of the few versus the rights of the many which allows for the SWD to be included in the LRE for optimal learning and individual success. Based on the responses of the participants, the results from this study stated that inclusion is just good for all students!

As an educator, I fully support inclusion. Being part of an inclusive school environment benefits students academically, socially, and emotionally. As an inclusion teacher in a regular education classroom, I have witnessed the positive impact of inclusion and how influential it can be on the SWD and the non-disabled students. The students build relationships and learn to accept individuals for themselves. Students learn to accommodate one another regardless of their differences. Creating the LRE for all students helps to build a community among the students within the classroom. There are always going to be obstacles that must be overcome when implementing inclusion but these obstacles are worth the efforts. Watching the academic

achievements of the SWD within the classroom and the confidence these students build with success is rewarding.

Inclusion is built on the principle that students should be valued for their exceptional abilities and included as important members of the school community. Singh (2007), however, suggests that not all SWD belong in a regular education classroom while others feel that effective teachers can meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities. I conclude that inclusion is an important and essential part of our educational system. Inclusion allows students of all different learning abilities to be included in the regular education classroom among their peers. All students deserve to be treated equitably and inclusion allows for the SWD to be exposed to the normalcy of regular education classroom routines and, as appropriate, procedures where they are also asked to follow the same rules. The goals of inclusion are achieved when a child is participating in the activities of the class, as a member who belongs. Inclusion is not a trade-off of support for placement in the regular education classroom because it allows the regular education and special education teacher to collaborate together to find the best methods of practice for each SWD individually (Campbell, 2010).

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Teachers

Interviewee's Name:

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. How many years of experience do you have teaching inclusion students?
3. How do your SWD fare/perform in an inclusive regular education classrooms?
(Ko & Boswell, 2013; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
4. What are the academic outcomes in inclusive regular education classrooms?
(Michael, 2013; Tomlinson, 2003, Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
5. What roles do paraprofessionals fill in your classroom? (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)
6. How do your students without learning disabilities receive appropriately challenging education in an inclusive regular education classroom? (Savich, 2008; Sapon-Sherin, 2003, Campbell, 2010; Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer, 2009)
7. How does SWD in the inclusion classroom, work compared to their classmates without disabilities? (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; Smoot, 2011; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
8. How do your students with disabilities and students without disabilities receive equal access to the same curriculum? (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; Ross-Hill, 2009; Smoot, 2011)
9. How do your SWD actively participate in the classroom activities with their peers in the regular education classroom? (Chidindi, 2012; Ross-Hill, 2009)
10. How do the instructional strategies and teaching style you use help to meet the needs of the SWD? (Crockett, 2002; Hadadian & Chiang, 2007)
11. How do sufficient, relevant, and available resources help to implement inclusion in your classroom effectively? (Fisher, Roach, & Fry, 2002; Fuchs, 2010)
12. How is your input in the development of the best interests of your inclusion students valued in your school? (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2001; Villa & Thousand, 2005)
13. How do you manage your time to individualize instruction for your SWD?
(Singh, 2007; O'Meara, 2010)

14. How do you cooperate and assist your colleagues to implement inclusion successfully in your classroom? (Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Smoot, 2011; Villa & Thousand, 2005)
15. How do you provide the information on accommodations for SWD? (Kavale, Spaulding, & Beam, 2009; Villa & Thousand, 2005)

Appendix B

Follow-up Interview Questions for Teachers

Interviewee's Name:

1. What is your degree in specifically?
2. How do you feel that your SWD are treated among their peers? (Chidindi, 2012; Ross-Hill, 2009)
3. How do you believe that your teaching style helps to meet the needs of the SWD? (Crockett, 2002; Hadadian & Chiang, 2007)
4. Do you believe that you have adequate resources help to implement inclusion in your classroom effectively? Why or why not? (Fisher, Roach, & Fry, 2002; Fuchs, 2010)
5. Do you believe that your input within the development of the SWD is valued in your school? Why or why not? (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2001; Villa & Thousand, 2005)
6. Can you explain how you manage your time to individualize instruction for your SWD? (Singh, 2007; O'Meara, 2010)
7. Can you explain how you work collaboratively with your colleagues to implement inclusion successfully in your classroom? (Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Smoot, 2011; Villa & Thousand, 2005)

Appendix C

Principal Interview Questions

Name:

School:

1. How many years have you been a principal?
2. How many years have you been the principal of your current school?
3. How do you choose your teachers for inclusive classrooms? (Ko & Boswell, 2013; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
4. How do you support the co-planning model? (Singh, 2007; O'Meara, 2010)
5. How do you support the co-teaching model? (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)
6. What do you expect to see when you walk into a co-teaching model? (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)
7. How do the students in the inclusive classroom receive an appropriately challenging education? (Savich, 2008; Sapon-Sherin, 2003, Campbell, 2010; Belland, Glazewski, & Ertmer, 2009)
8. Do you believe your teachers are provided with appropriate resources to help implement inclusion effectively? (Fisher, Roach, & Fry, 2002; Fuchs, 2010)
9. How does scheduling work in your school? (Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; O'Meara, 2010)

Appendix D

Observation Instrument

Co-teaching (Dusty & Dinnesen, 2012; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)	
Differentiation (O'Meara, 2010)	
Teacher collaboration with students (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2001; Padilla, 2009)	
Teacher collaboration with peers (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Lathan, 2001; Padilla, 2009)	
Accommodations/Modifications (Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; Tomlinson, 2003; O'Meara, 2010)	