

Winter 12-13-2019

# Perceptions of Educators Teaching Inclusion Classes in an Urban Secondary Environment

Nicole Bellomo

*Concordia University - Portland*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## CU Commons Citation

Bellomo, Nicole, "Perceptions of Educators Teaching Inclusion Classes in an Urban Secondary Environment" (2019). *Ed.D. Dissertations*. 287.

<https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations/287>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses & Dissertations at CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ed.D. Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact [libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu](mailto:libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu).

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ AND APPROVE THE DISSERTATION OF

Nicole Ashley Bellomo

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Leslie Loughmiller, Ed.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Sarah Everts, Ph.D., Content Specialist

Clayton Alford, Ed.D., Content Reader

Perceptions of Educators Teaching Inclusion Classes in an Urban Secondary Environment

Nicole Bellomo

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Higher Education

Leslie Loughmiller, Ed.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Sarah Everts, Ph.D., Content Specialist

Clayton Alford, Ed.D., Content Reader

Concordia University–Portland

2019

## **Abstract**

School systems across the United States have integrated students with disabilities into the general education classroom creating an inclusive environment where general and special education students can learn side by side. Within the inclusion classroom, general education and special education teachers collaborate to design and implement instruction for all student learners. Therefore, it is critical to understand the attitudes of general and special education teachers and reveal the factors that influence the beliefs they hold regarding the inclusion classroom. The beliefs held by inclusion teachers are a crucial factor to the success of students with disabilities in the inclusion setting as measured by New York State Regents Exams. An explanatory case study was used to understand the perspectives of the participants, learn about their experiences, and understand individual perceptions within the inclusion setting. General education and special education teachers from an urban high school in New York completed questionnaires and open-ended interviews discussing their attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion. Using the data, the researcher identified the factors that influenced the development of instruction and the reasons for the decreasing in achievement levels among students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom.

*Keywords:* academic performance, co-teaching, collaboration, inclusion, special education, students with disabilities

## **Dedication**

It is important to recognize the people who have contributed to this milestone in my life. I dedicate this doctoral study to; my future husband, Frank Palermo, who supported me through each step of this process and encouraged me to keep going when I wanted to give up; my parents, Vincent and Michele Bellomo, who have provided me with every opportunity I have had in life and have drilled in me the value of work ethic; my brother, Vincent Bellomo, and sister, Kristin Bellomo, who have served as great role models throughout my life; my co-teacher, colleagues, and administration, who have provided me with the drive and purpose to improve education for students with disabilities, and every student in the public school system.

## **Acknowledgments**

Thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Loughmiller, for all your guidance throughout this process and the constant reminder “if it were easy, everyone would do it.” I express my heartfelt thanks to my dissertation committee, Dr. Everts and Dr. Alford, for their expert input regarding the content, which encouraged me to think scholarly and critically while writing. Moreover, finally, to the teachers who participated in my study, I appreciate your willingness, honesty, and desire to improve education for students with disabilities.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	ivv
List of Tables.....	x
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Introduction to the Problem .....	1
Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework.....	1
Constructivism.....	2
Problem Statement .....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Research Questions.....	4
Rationale, Relevance, and Significance .....	4
Definition of Terms .....	5
Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations.....	6
Chapter 1 Summary.....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	8
Introduction.....	8

Study Topic.....	9
Context.....	9
Significance .....	9
Problem Statement.....	11
Organization .....	12
Conceptual Framework.....	12
The Review of Research and Methodological Literature .....	16
History of Inclusion.....	16
Theories of Inclusion.....	18
Inclusion Models and Teacher Roles and Responsibilities.....	19
Teacher Perceptions.....	22
Factors Impacting Perceptions .....	23
Instructional Practices and Strategies for Co-teaching.....	25
Factors Affecting Student Performance in the Inclusive Classroom .....	29
Teacher Efficacy .....	28
The Need for Professional Development in the Inclusive Setting .....	29
Effects of Successful Inclusion.....	30
Review of Methodological Issues .....	33

Synthesis of Research Findings .....	33
Critique of Previous Research .....	35
Chapter 2 Summary.....	35
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	37
Introduction.....	37
Purpose and Design of the Study .....	37
Research Questions.....	40
Research Population and Sampling Method.....	40
Instrumentation and Data Collection .....	42
Instrument 1: Open-ended Questionnaire .....	42
Pilot Study.....	42
Instrument 2: Interviews.....	43
Data Collection.....	47
Open-Ended Questionnaires .....	47
Interviews.....	48
Member Checking.....	49
Identification of Attributes .....	49
Data Analysis Procedures.....	49

Limitations of the Research Design.....	46
Validation.....	47
Expected Findings .....	47
Ethical Issues.....	48
Ethical Practices .....	48
Conflict of Interest Assessment .....	48
Researcher’s Position.....	48
Chapter 3 Summary.....	50
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Description of the Sample .....	52
Race and Gender Demographics.....	58
Years of Teaching Experience.....	59
Grade Level and Discipline .....	60
Summary of Sample.....	61
Research Methodology and Analysis.....	57
Data Collection Review.....	58
Questionnaire .....	59

Interviews.....	59
Member Checking.....	60
Data Analysis.....	61
Questionnaire.....	61
Interviews.....	70
Presentation of Data and Results.....	67
Planning.....	68
Roles and Responsibilities.....	70
Co-teaching Relationship.....	78
Professional Development.....	81
Support.....	76
Lack of Parent and Student Involvement.....	77
Lack of Literacy Skills (LS).....	78
Chapter 4 Summary.....	79
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion.....	89
Summary of the Results.....	89
Discussion of the Results.....	90
Results: Research Question 1.....	90

Results: Research Question 2.....	94
Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature.....	87
Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory .....	101
Practice .....	101
Policy .....	102
Theory .....	102
Limitations .....	93
Data Collection.....	94
Recommendation for Future Research.....	95
Areas of Improvement.....	95
Participants.....	95
Additional Recommendations.....	95
Conclusion .....	96
References .....	97
Appendix A: Open-Ended Questionnaire.....	113
Appendix B: Interview Questions .....	114
Appendix C: Follow-Up Interview Questions.....	116
Appendix D: Participant Consent Form.....	117

Appendix E: Statement of Original Work..... 121

## List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Interview Participants by License and Subject Area</i> .....	60
Table 2. <i>Teacher Participants by Ethnicity and Gender</i> .....	61
Table 3. <i>Teacher Participants by Years of Experience</i> .....	62
Table 4. <i>Teacher Participants by Grade Levels and Disciplines</i> .....	62
Table 5. <i>Summary of Teacher Participants</i> .....	63
Table 6. <i>Developed Themes and Codes</i> .....	71
Table 7. <i>Developed Themes and Codes</i> .....	72
Table 8. <i>Developed Themes</i> .....	76

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction to the Problem**

One of the biggest challenges facing educators in the 21st century is mainstreaming students with disabilities into the general education setting (Conderman & Hedin, 2015; Marshall, 2002). Inclusion is the process of incorporating students with disabilities into the general education environment (Hudgins, 2012). Within this setting, every aspect of education, from accommodations to cooperative learning, must be modified to meet the needs of every learner in the classroom (Minarik & Lintner, 2011). Teachers play an essential role in making inclusion successful (Everston & Weinstein, 2013). Research on teacher quality has suggested that schools influence the learning of students, but more importantly, educators have the most significant impact on a student's education (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The success of inclusion depends significantly on the perceptions of educators regarding inclusion (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999; Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011). Therefore, exploring the perceptions of both general and special education teachers about inclusion may provide insight and knowledge on how to improve the effectiveness of inclusion programs.

### **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework**

School systems nationwide pushed to integrate students with disabilities into the general education classroom in accordance to the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Act and the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) (Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2017). As a result, public schools across the United States implemented inclusion programs. Inclusion is the educational model where students with learning and behavioral needs are educated side-by-side in the general education setting (Hudgins, 2012). The inclusive setting enables students with disabilities to benefit from individualized instruction. Research has shown that a successful inclusion program must include specific factors (Huber, Rosenfeld & Fiorello, 2001; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Ross-Hill, 2009). Many of these factors may impact educators'

perceptions toward the inclusion setting and students with disabilities (Cassady, 2011; Fuchs, 2010; Smith & Tyler, 2011). Two of the most critical factors are teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and their confidence to provide instruction for students with disabilities in the inclusion setting (Cassady, 2011). It is necessary to explore teachers' perceptions because their attitudes significantly impact their relationship with students as well as influence the overall quality of instruction (Cassady, 2011; Fuchs, 2010).

### **Constructivism**

Constructivism is a theory of learning that focuses on the role of experience in understanding and grasping meaning (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Constructivism sustains that individuals create their knowledge through their individual or social experiences (Jia, 2010; Narayan, Rodriguez, Araujo, Shaqlaih, & Moss, 2013). Denton (2012) suggested that sharing information is a social activity where construction of knowledge may occur through interaction. Constructivism can be a practical framework through which to examine the collaborative practices between general education and special education teachers (Hoover, 1996). According to the sub-theory of social constructivism, individuals who are engaged in social activities such as interaction and collaboration are more likely to learn (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Meaningful learning between general and special education teachers occurs when teachers are engaged in planning lessons, discussing grades and accommodations, behavior management, and content (Brown, Howerter, & Morgan, 2013; Dieker & Murawski, 2003). While collaborating, teachers plan lessons and exchange ideas from their areas of expertise (Pearl & Miller, 2007), while constructing new knowledge on how to best serve the needs of the students in the inclusion classroom. A better understanding of teacher perceptions of inclusion can lead to improved planning and implementation processes in the inclusion classroom because collaboration is a useful strategy for teachers to share their areas of expertise on curriculum, teaching strategies, and approaches that promote student learning (Alquraini & Gut, 2012).

## **Problem Statement**

The No Child Left behind Act (2002) and the Individuals With Disabilities Act caused schools to increase collaboration among special education and general education (Pratt et al., 2017). The passage of this legislation required students with disabilities to be placed in the general education setting and receive their education to the maximum level appropriate (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). Inclusion is one vehicle for providing the appropriate services and supports. Inclusion is the general and special education teachers collaborating and applying their areas of specialization to enhance the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes for all students (Conderman & Hedin, 2015).

The management teams of the study site adopted a co-teaching as a form of inclusion for four major subjects: science, social studies, English, and math. Data retrieved from state standardized test scores show a decrease in academic achievement among students with disabilities enrolled in inclusion classrooms. Students with disabilities who took the English Language Arts Regents exam showed the most significant decline over five years from 2013 to 2018, decreasing from 89.5% to 65.6% over that period. Students with disabilities who took state Regents exams in social studies showed a decrease in academic performance. Between 2013 and 2018, the passing rate for social studies declined by 13%.

The purpose of this explanatory case study was to examine the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding co-teaching and working in an inclusive setting. Through the study, the researcher aimed to uncover reasons for decreasing achievement levels for students in inclusion classrooms. Gotshall and Stefanou (2011) argued it is important to understand teacher perceptions about inclusion because those perceptions influenced the type and quality of instruction, teacher attitudes in the inclusive setting, and teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities in the classroom. Hattie (2009) stated that teacher attitudes have an impact on student learning, teaching practice, classroom environment, and student achievement.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this explanatory case study was to examine the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding co-teaching and working in an inclusive setting. Through this study, the researcher also sought to discover why students in the inclusion setting were not succeeding. The study results contributed to the understanding of how teacher perceptions impact student achievement. Additionally, the study supported efforts to improve the current inclusion program at the study site.

## **Research Questions**

In this explanatory case study, the researcher investigated teacher perceptions and their impact on inclusion, development of instruction, and academic achievement. The following questions guided the research:

1. How do teachers' perceptions of inclusion affect the development of instruction?
2. How is special education student achievement affected in the inclusion classroom?

## **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance**

The rationale for this study was improving student achievement in inclusion classrooms by identifying the perceptions of general and special education teachers of the inclusion setting. Teacher perceptions regarding inclusion have a direct impact on student learning (Aish, 2014; Fisher, 2013). Educators who teach in the inclusion setting are the most direct line to student learning and achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Therefore, the perceptions of teachers influence learning in the classroom (Fisher, 2013; Rinkevich, 2014). Understanding the teachers' perceptions might assist in improving existing inclusion programs.

This study was relevant and significant because it added to existing research surrounding the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding inclusion and the effect those perceptions have on the academic achievement of students with individualized education plans.

The findings from the study helped broaden the existing knowledge base regarding teacher perceptions of teaching in the inclusion classroom using the co-teaching model, factors affecting co-teaching, and student achievement in the inclusive setting. The findings also helped identify the necessary components for an effective inclusion program. Administrators or teachers may use the findings of this study to build upon or make changes to the current inclusion program.

### **Definition of Terms**

The definitions below are included to facilitate an understanding of the study.

*Academic performance:* The outcome of a student's education or the extent to which students have achieved their educational goals (Arshad, Zaidi, & Mahmood, 2015).

*Co-teaching:* The pairing of special education and general education teacher together in a classroom with the intent to serve students, specifically those with disabilities (Wilson & Michaels, 2006). According to Hillsman-Johnson and Brumback (2013), co-teachers can assist one another in creating innovative and practical instruction for student learning.

*Collaboration:* A partnership between general education and special education teacher working to meet the needs of both non-disabled and disabled peers within the classroom (Jones & Sterling, 2011). Kafyulilo (2013) discussed how collaboration had been reported to be a useful tool for the improvement of schools' performance and students' learning outcomes across all subjects. Collaboration helps teachers alter curriculum and pedagogy within their subject area and make connections between the subject area and the pedagogy (Kafyulilo, 2013, p. 677).

*Inclusion:* The incorporation of students with disabilities into a general education classroom to providing them access to the general education curriculum (Hudgins, 2012). Within the inclusion classroom, educators provide content and pedagogical expertise from special educators (King-Sears, Brawand, Jenkins, & Preston-Smith, 2014).

*Special education:* Services mandated under IDEA for students who have been referred for evaluation and have been found to have a disability and require special services and related service (Lipkin & Okamoto, 2015).

*Students with disabilities:* Learners with learning, physical, and developmental disabilities; behavioral, emotional, and communication disorders; and learning deficiencies (Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2017).

### **Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

For this study, the researcher assumed that the participants offered honest responses to the questionnaires and interview questions. The researcher assumed that all participants were truthful and transparent in their responses. Additionally, the researcher assumed that the teachers who took part in the interviews straightforwardly answered the questions.

A delimiter in this study was the use of only general education and special education teachers currently teaching in inclusion classrooms. This specific group of teachers was able to provide insight into the current inclusion program at the study site. The researcher excluded those teachers who taught inclusion in the past because those teachers may not be familiar with the current inclusion program may have been removed from the inclusion setting or may have requested not to teach in the inclusion setting. Another delimiter was the use of only general and special education teachers in one high school. The researcher focused on one school, a single unit, to explore the inclusion program and gain a better insight into how it functions.

For the study, the researcher limited the study to focus on one school. The chosen site was the most feasible because the researcher taught at the school while conducting the study. Through purposeful sampling, the researcher chose participants to give their perceptions of inclusion. Using the purposeful sampling limited the generalization of the study to other schools in New York. The

results of the study only apply to general and special education teachers within one urban high school in New York.

### **Chapter 1 Summary**

This explanatory study focused on the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding inclusion within one high school. Teacher perceptions are an essential part of a student's success in school as research has suggested that if teachers responsible for implementing inclusion have positive perceptions of inclusion as a pedagogical approach, students in the inclusion classroom are more likely to be successful (Fuchs, 2010; Ross-Hill, 2009). Teacher perceptions can help determine opportunities for enhancement concerning the successful implementation of inclusion practices (Fuchs, 2010; Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008). An analysis of data collected from teachers who teach in the inclusion setting helped identify the characteristics of a successful inclusion program and the areas needing improvement. New information on effective inclusion practices may help school administrators support teachers as they work to improve instruction and increase the achievement of students with disabilities in the inclusion setting.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

In many schools across the United States, students with disabilities take part in inclusive programs (Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2017). Inclusion is the placement of students with disabilities into the general education environment (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, & Hudson, 2013). Within this environment, both general education and special education teachers are expected to work together and plan meaningful lessons while creating a supportive educational environment (Wilson & Michaels, 2006). The combination of the individual expertise from each teacher leads to differences in instructional approaches that all students, with or without disabilities, would not typically receive from one teacher (Pearl & Miller, 2007).

Researches support the importance of inclusion for students with disabilities (Daniel & King, 1997). Teachers need to meet the challenges of social and educational inclusion, even if they are underprepared to teach in an inclusion setting (Florian, 2008). Teachers in the inclusion environment should work collaboratively with other service providers to provide quality learning experiences that allow all students to learn (Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001). Van Reusen et al. (2001) found that effective and equitable education depends significantly on the confidence that teachers' have and their willingness to assume responsibility to teach students with disabilities. Individual teachers may not be solely capable of changing the organization and culture of education, but their effort can show that it is possible to support the learning needs of all students (Florian, 2008).

This study explored general and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion and how those attitudes and beliefs shape instruction and impact student achievement. The study site was an urban public high school located in New York. The high school had approximately 2,100 students. Approximately 12% of the student population was composed of students with special needs who are in diploma-bound programs. The school's integrated co-teaching program enrolled

7% of the total high school population. The school saw a low passing rate on state exams for those students with disabilities enrolled in the integrated co-teaching program.

### **Study Topic**

Prior researches had supported the need to determine if there are differences in practices of co-teaching, what teachers believe their co-teaching practices to be, and how successful the implementation of different co-teaching models in the inclusion classroom (Hang & Rabren, 2009). The purpose of this study was to learn teachers' perceptions of what worked or did not work within the inclusion classroom, because passing rates on state standardized tests were decreasing.

### **Context**

Within the inclusion classroom, co-teaching as service delivery is particularly common in secondary classes where general educators provide content expertise along with pedagogical expertise by special educators (King-Sears et al., 2014). Both general education and special education teachers are expected to volunteer to teach in the inclusion setting (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2013), collaborate, create mutual goals, and provide a coherent education program to support students with disabilities (Ketterlin-Gellar, Baumer, & Lichon, 2015). Prior researches indicated that combination of factors, including lack of professional development (King-Sears et al., 2014) and knowledge of inclusion (Van Reusen et al., 2001), led both general and special education teachers to believe that the quality of learning for students with disabilities in the inclusion setting is decreasing (Van Reusen et al., 2001).

### **Significance**

Data has suggested that co-teaching can influence the academic and social progress of both disabled and non-disabled students (Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Sapon-Shevin, 2003a). However, data from the study site indicates that the inclusion environment is not successful as students with disabilities have much lower passing rates compared to nondisabled peers on state assessments.

Data retrieved from the New York State standardized test scores show evidence that academic achievement for students with disabilities earning 65 or higher within the inclusion setting in the areas of English and social studies has declined over the past five years. In 2013, data revealed that the overall passing rate for students with disabilities was 75.3%, but that rate decreased to 57.3% in 2018.

Within the study site, students with disabilities are not obtaining grades of 65 or above. New York State mandates that students must earn a grade of 65 or higher on five standardized tests to earn a New York State Regents diploma (New York State Education Department, 2017). However, students with disabilities who have individualized education plans or 504 accommodations have different mandates that provide two different pathways for earning a high school diploma (New York State Education Department, 2017). The first pathway is known as “Low-Pass Safety Net Option,” which allows students with disabilities to score between 55 and 64 on all five state exams and receive credit for a local diploma (New York State Education Department, 2017). The second option, the “Compensatory Safety Net Option,” allows students to offset a score of 45–54 on any exam besides math or English with a score of 65 or higher from one of the other three Regents exams (New York State Education Department, 2017).

While these options exist for students with disabilities, both the 1997 and 2004 amendments to IDEA presumed that the most special education students in the least restrictive environment, such as inclusion, should develop the literacy skills needed to access the general education curriculum and demonstrate success on state and local assessments as their general education peers (Wilson & Michaels, 2006).

Through this study, the researcher explored teachers’ perceptions of reasons students do not succeed in the inclusion environment. The study extended the existing knowledge base regarding teacher perceptions of co-teaching, factors affecting co-teaching, and student achievement in the inclusive setting. The study contributed to the understanding of the relationship

between teacher perceptions and student outcomes and may facilitate efforts in improving the current inclusion program to improve teacher preparation.

### **Problem Statement**

The No Child Left behind Act (2002) and the Individuals With Disabilities Act caused schools to increase collaboration among special education and general education (Pratt et al., 2017). The passage of this legislation required students with disabilities to be placed in the general education setting and receive their education to the maximum level appropriate (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). Inclusion is one vehicle for providing those services and supports. Inclusion is the collaboration between general and special education teachers to apply their areas of specialization to enhance the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes for all students (Conderman & Hedin, 2015).

The study site has adopted co-teaching as a form of inclusion for four major subjects: science, social studies, English, and math. Data retrieved from state standardized test scores show evidence of a decrease in academic achievement among students with disabilities enrolled in the inclusion classroom. Data revealed that the overall passing rate on state exams for inclusion students in spring 2016 was 53.27% and declined to 51.97% in 2017. Students with disabilities who took the English Language Arts Regents showed the most significant decline over five years from 2013–2018, decreasing from 89.6% to 65.6%. Students with disabilities who took state Regents exams in social studies showed a decrease in academic performance. Between 2013 and 2018, the passing rate for social studies declined by 13%.

The purpose of this explanatory study was to examine the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding co-teaching and working in an inclusive setting. Through the study, the researcher aimed to uncover reasons for decreasing achievement levels for students in inclusion classrooms. Gotshall and Stefanou (2011) argued that teacher perceptions and their beliefs regarding inclusion strongly impact the quality of instruction and attitudes toward students

in the classroom. Hattie (2009) highlighted teacher attitudes as an important factor contributing to student learning because those attitudes influence teaching practice, the classroom environment, and student achievement.

### **Organization**

In the literature review, the researcher sought to identify case studies, content analysis articles, peer-reviewed journals, and print books on the topic of co-teaching. The chapter begins with an analysis of the conceptual framework, which serves as a guiding paradigm throughout the study. A synthesis of the academic literature on topics relevant to the study follows, covering teacher perceptions of inclusion, co-teaching models, relevant factors impacting co-teaching, instructional practices, teaching strategies for students with disabilities, and factors affecting academic achievement. After this thorough discussion of co-teaching in the inclusion classroom, the researcher reviews methodological issues pertinent to the study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The main characteristic of constructivism is the belief that learner's previous knowledge and experiences construct knowledge (Amineh & Asl, 2015). John Dewey was the first to talk about constructivism by giving individuals the opportunities to think for themselves and articulate their thoughts to allow them to construct their knowledge (Dewey, 1916). Later in the 20th century, Vygotsky (1962) and Bruner (1960) further developed the constructivist theory by informing social constructivism, which emphasizes that coordination with other human beings can develop understanding, significance, and meaning (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Both constructivism and social constructivism place a significant emphasis on the impact an individual's environment has on his or her learning. Active engagement, inquiry, problem solving, reflection, and collaboration characterize constructivist learning (Sharma & Chawla, 2014). Constructivism maintains that individuals construct understanding and build knowledge through the interaction in which they

come into contact (Jia, 2010). Social interaction is a prominent component of constructivism, which formed by being actively involved with dialogue (Jia, 2010). Vygotsky (1962) argued that dialogue helps individuals internalize information and apply it in real-life settings, in contrast to teaching methods that emphasize memorization and repetition (Olusegun, 2015).

Constructivism is concerned with how individuals acquire knowledge and learn (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The theory assumes that learners actively construct knowledge and create meaning from their experiences, whether individually socially (Narayan et al., 2013).

Constructivism can be two simple but noteworthy ideas: (a) prior knowledge affects the creation of new knowledge, and (b) learning is an active process (Hoover, 1996). Prior knowledge from culture or experiences is used in learning situations to construct new knowledge (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Constructivists suggest that learning occurs when individuals are engaged in the learning process (Bhattacharjee, 2015). For this study, learning applies to the socially constructed realities that general and special education teachers act upon through their interactions within the inclusion setting.

Constructivism suggests that the sharing and manipulation of a shared body of information is a social activity based on time, place, and individuals (Denton, 2012). The practice of collaboration by general and special education teachers is grounded in the framework of constructivism (Bhattacharjee, 2015; Jia, 2010). The environment influences both formal knowledge and the subject of instruction; therefore, collaboration among teachers is imperative for the success of the inclusion classroom (Jia, 2010). In the inclusion environment, both general education and special education teachers must engage and collaborate. Teachers in the inclusion setting build on their prior knowledge in a social context as they meet with one another, collaborate, and share experiences, which are the foundation of constructivist theory (Dewey, 1967). Collaborating and sharing experiences is specially essential as planning instruction for the

inclusion environment requires that both teachers plan and share their areas of expertise, which helps foster creativity (Goddard & Goddard, 2007).

General education and special education teachers must integrate knowledge to enhance instructional practice. Through collaboration and active learning experiences, both teachers can exchange ideas, and build upon them by personalizing learning for those students with disabilities in their classroom. This type of learning situation allows inclusion teachers to form communities, manipulate materials, and construct knowledge together. The learning communities that co-teachers form allows special education teachers and general education teachers to identify critical background knowledge needed for the lesson choose the new skills that will likely need to be taught, create opportunities for guided practice, and provide opportunities for students to work independently (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017). The interaction allows both teachers to discuss ideas, develop understandings, and identify roles and responsibilities, allowing them to construct new knowledge from these experiences. When teachers work together and share common goals, they are more likely to learn from one another and create a positive learning environment (Doobs, 1937).

Constructivists believe that reflection can help construct knowledge (Seimars, Graves, Schroyer, & Staver, 2012). Inclusion teachers must continuously reflect on their practices and encourage the learning and reflection process (Bhattacharjee, 2015). For example, teachers can review exam grades and questions students got wrong. They can then reflect on and evaluate the teaching approach or strategy used to teach the content. The time spent for reflection can be used for both teachers jointly to search for new knowledge (Kaufman & Grennon Brooks, 1996) and identify ways to improve instruction if students are not meeting academic goals. Reflection is one way for teachers to construct a new and more in-depth understanding of the components that can improve their inclusion environment (Seimars et al., 2012).

The constructivist classroom depends on constructing knowledge through interaction (Bhattacharjee, 2015). Knowledge acquired when both the general education and special education teacher actively engage utilizing learning materials and areas of expertise (Makoelle, 2014). General and special education teachers become both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated to fulfill their roles and responsibilities inside the classroom and design lessons that are creative and maximize interaction among students (Makoelle, 2014). Through this exchange, teachers can work together to create learning environments that provoke engagement from both general education and special education students and helps them develop practical thinking skills that allow them to integrate learning experiences and construct knowledge (Bhattacharjee, 2015). Collaboration and cooperation between teachers may have a profound effect on the thinking ability of the learner (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Malinen, 2012). The sharing of information between teachers allows instruction to be planned in such a way that allows students to actively participate in their learning, accommodate and assimilate new information with their current understanding, and work collaboratively with peers (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

The researcher chose social constructivism as the conceptual framework for this study after considering both psychological and social constructivism. The study focused on teacher collaboration, connecting directly to constructivist approaches to teaching that emphasize two-way interactions and see learners not as passive recipients of knowledge but as active contributors to their learning (Makoelle, 2014). Teachers can contribute to their learning by attending professional development offerings as a team, developing a deeper understanding of the roles, responsibilities, inclusion models, and strategies that contribute to an effective inclusion setting. Learning among teachers becomes a process where learners manipulate, discover, and create new knowledge (Bhattacharjee, 2015; Makoelle, 2014). Teachers' continuously learn from one another by interacting, sharing ideas, and looking at the learning phenomenon from different perspectives (Akpan & Beard, 2016; Makoelle, 2014). Teachers can enhance the inclusion process by discussing

how their students learn best and incorporating real-life experiences into their lessons (Makoelle, 2014; Steele, 2005). The advantage of collaboration, which is a primary component of constructivism, is that the expertise, knowledge, experiences, and the abilities of all teachers can be effectively utilized and benefit both general and special education students in the inclusion setting (Akpan & Beard, 2016; Makoelle, 2014).

### **The Review of Research and Methodological Literature**

The literature review is a synthesis of empirical research related to my study topic. The literature review grounded the study in the history and theories behind inclusion and determined the main areas that impact inclusion. These areas include teacher perceptions, factors impacting perceptions, co-teaching, and models, instructional practices and strategies for co-teaching, factors affecting student performance in the inclusive classroom, teacher efficacy, and the need for professional development in the inclusive setting. These topics provide the structure of the review that follows; each heading and subheading plays a role in shaping teacher perceptions and the inclusion classroom.

### **History of Inclusion**

Historically, small settings that independent of general education students addressed the needs of special education students (Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Robinson & Buly, 2007; Winzer, 1993). Dividing general education and special education instruction into separate classes often creates academic disconnects between the education of students with special needs and nondisabled peers (Tannock, 2009). Students with disabilities are often not held to grade level standards when separated from their peers, which contributes to lower high school graduation rates, and a lower likelihood of maintaining employment or living without assistance for special needs students (Daniel & King, 1997; O'Neil, 1993).

The passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Act in 1997 and the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Improvement Act in 2004 led many people to believe in giving the opportunity to special education students to develop the necessary skills needed to demonstrate success in the general education environment and on state and local assessments (Wilson & Michaels, 2006). Also, the passage of the No Child Left behind Act in 2002 emphasized how critical it is for students with disabilities to have access to the general education curriculum, making schools accountable to meet that specific standards and expectations in the core subjects (No Child Left Behind, 2002). The passage of these laws resulted in inclusion, the term used to refer to the practice of combining special education and general education (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2013; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & McCulley, 2012; Winzer, 2009), in contrast to the alternative approach of separating special education students from their age-appropriate peers (Daniel & King, 1997). Inclusive instruction is dependent on educating students in high quality, age-appropriate, general education classes (Janney & Snell, 2004). This shift in philosophy led many schools nationwide to turn to co-teaching as an accepted approach to inclusion (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Co-teaching refers to general education and a special education teacher working collaboratively within a general education classroom containing general students and students with disabilities (Wilson & Michaels, 2006).

### **Theories of Inclusion**

The promotion of inclusion of students with disabilities in the inclusion setting increased the number of students with disabilities receiving a large percentage of their instruction in the general education classroom (McLeskey, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999). With this push toward the inclusion environment, many students with disabilities, particularly those with learning disabilities, are now provided instruction in general secondary education classrooms (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). However, acceptance of inclusive education has not been universal; advocates and critics have been very vocal about their conflicting viewpoints on the subject (Daniel & King, 1997). Research has shown that within the inclusion environment, there are both significant advantages

and disadvantages for students with disabilities. Arguments are supporting inclusion focus on educational and social benefits for children with disabilities (Daniel & King, 1997), while critics of inclusion are concerned about the lower academic achievement and lack of individualized support of students with disabilities (Wilson & Michaels, 2006).

Some researchers have found that co-teaching positively influences the academic and social development of students with disabilities (Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Sapon-Shevin, 2003a), while others have expressed doubt over the effectiveness of co-teaching for students with and without disabilities (Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998; Zigmond & Magiera, 2001). Critics have argued that content in the inclusion environment could be so simplified by co-teachers to address the needs of special education students that it does not indeed hold them to grade level standards and negatively affects the general education students in the class (Sapon-Shevin, 2003b). Critics have also argued that inclusion minimizes the individualized instruction that characterizes special education. Critics have posited that it is difficult for students with disabilities in a general education classroom to receive the necessary support they need which cause the co-teachers to concentrate on the remediation of skill deficits rather than the content needed for high-stakes testing (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004, Daniel & King, 1997; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 200).

Advocates of inclusion have argued that, within the inclusion environment, students with disabilities must access to the general education curriculum. The collaboration of general and special educators in co-taught classrooms can provide the caring and learning educational setting that empowers students, support success, and increase engagement (Jones & Sterling, 2011). The inclusion set also calls for the implementation of strategies that create collaboration among peers, such as peer tutoring, which promotes learning processes that could be difficult for some students (Jones & Sterling, 2011; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Additionally, with the assistance of the special education teacher, the general education teacher can create learning experiences where students interact with one another and engage in practical activities that help the curriculum

become more meaningful for those students who exhibit below-average literacy skills (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Inclusion also provides opportunities for students with disabilities to improve behavior and form new friendships (Daniel & King, 1997; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Within the general education setting, models of appropriate social behavior are more readily available (Willis, 1994). Students with disabilities may be eager to make new friends (Daniel & King, 1997; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001) and model the behavior of their peers.

### **Inclusion Models and Teacher Roles and Responsibilities**

Co-teaching is a form of inclusion that allows schools to address standards for student achievement and provide the least restrictive environments for students with disabilities (Arthaud, Aram, Breck, Doelling, & Bushrow, 2007; Carpenter & Dyal, 2006; Friend & Cook, 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2013; Hardman & Dawson, 2008; Sayeski, 2009). The essential components of co-teaching are as follows: (a) two certified educators, one general education teacher, and one special education teacher; (b) delivery of instruction by both teachers; (c) a heterogeneous group of students (i.e., teaching students with disabilities with their peers without disabilities); and (d) a single classroom for teaching (Friend & Cook, 2010; Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Within the co-teaching classroom, teachers must be on the same page by having an understanding of (a) what will occur in the lesson for the day, (b) who will teach which parts of the lesson, (c) which instructional models to use, and (d) any accommodations or modifications that will be given to particular students (Pratt et al., 2017). It is what co-teachers do together and how they do it that can make co-teaching successful and useful for students with disabilities (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017).

Collaborative learning is related to co-teaching and involves two or more teachers working together with a shared vision and goal (Gunter, Estes, & Schwab, 2007). Vygotsky's (1962) constructivism theories promoted collaborative learning among individuals. Vygotsky (1962) argued that learning evolves from the exchange of ideas and interactions; when teachers work

collaboratively, both have the knowledge to offer, as they are experts in different areas. When teachers have opportunities to collaborate professionally, teachers can build upon their distinctive experiences, pedagogies, and knowledge (Goddard & Goddard, 2007). When collaborating efficiently and effectively, co-teachers share knowledge through co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing, to provide evidence-based and value-added instructional practices and to differentiate instruction (Conderman & Hedin, 2012; Friend & Cook, 2010; Murawski, 2008). In valid collaborative teaching programs, special education and general education teachers share responsibilities for planning curricula and lessons, teaching lessons in a variety of formats, managing student behavior, and assessing progress for all students in the class (Friend et al., 1993). Two researches revealed that, in co-taught inclusion classrooms, the general education teacher is responsible for curriculum planning, content knowledge, and instruction (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017), while the special education teacher is responsible for identifying and evaluating problems in classroom, providing strategies for addressing the problems and adapting instruction to promote learning for students with disabilities (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017). However, there is urgency for both teachers to move from their separate special education and general education environments and take on new roles and responsibilities involving shared management for a large number of students (Fennick & Liddy, 2001). Utilizing co-teaching models such as lead and support, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching allows both teachers to assume significant roles as they share techniques and teaching strategies and reflect on instruction (Hillsman- Johnson & Brumback, 2013).

Lead and support is a model that can vary within each co-teaching classroom. Lead and support can include a model where one teacher teaches and one observes, or one teacher teaches and one assist during classroom instruction (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). Both of these models involve one teacher providing extensive group instruction while the other teacher observes or circulates. The teacher who observes or assists can provide both management support and on-the-

spot assistance for students with disabilities (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). However, this model limits the role of one teacher, usually the special education teacher who is not reliable in content, a division of labor, which some students may perceive as being inherently unequal.

Station teaching is a model where students rotate from one learning station or center to another, often with each station by a teacher (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). This model allows for a wide range of learning opportunities where students learn many different skills. Within this model, both teachers have instructional roles. Teachers can provide support by circulating, or students in one group will need to work reasonably independently (Conderman & Hedin, 2015).

Parallel teaching is a process whereby teachers plan together, but each teacher instructs half the class (Treahey & Gurganus, 2010). Within this structure, each teacher has a role, which allows students to perceive both teachers as equals. Teachers can break students into two groups, determined by academic, social, or behavioral needs. While teachers can separate students to provide instruction, this model can be problematic for a special education teacher who may lack knowledge in a content area (Treahey & Gurganus, 2010).

Alternative teaching is a co-teaching model where one teacher administers large group instruction while the other teacher provides small group instruction to a few students for reteaching, reviewing, or differentiated instruction (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). This model has both advantages and disadvantages. The alternative teaching model is beneficial in that it offers the teacher the option of individualizing instruction, supporting students who may be absent and assessing students individually (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). However, pulling students aside to provide individualized instruction may make the students feel concerned about how others perceive them (Tobin, 2005, p. 799).

Team teaching allows co-teachers to model learning for students as they continue to learn from one another (Shibley, 2006). Conderman and Hedin (2015) defined team teaching as co-teachers providing instruction by presenting examples, techniques, methods, or views jointly,

rather than individually. This approach has many advantages, one of which is that there are two teachers to present materials in different ways. When each teacher takes on an instructional role, there are more chances to provide entry points for students. Co-teachers may teach curriculum differently and implement strategies that promote the learning for all students (Jones & Sterling, 2011).

### **Teacher Perceptions**

The attitudes and beliefs educators hold regarding their capability to teach students with disabilities strongly impact the inclusive classroom (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Inclusion teachers are thought to assume responsibility for the achievement of all students within their classrooms, but often believe they lack the necessary support that allows for success among teachers and students (Ploessl & Rock, 2014). Research suggests that those teachers who have a favorable perception of inclusion feel confident in their practices, while those who have a negative perception lack self-confidence and support from administration (Van Reusen et al., 2001).

Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) developed the Co-teaching Experiences and Attitudes Survey (CEAS) as a way to measure several characteristics of co-teaching as it is understood and experienced by practicing teachers. The survey concluded that teachers who had the education and in-service training had greater teacher confidence, interest, and held more positive teacher attitudes about co-teaching (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013). These results indicated that those teachers who believe they are prepared to work in the inclusive setting would strive to create an environment that is relatable to both nondisabled and disabled students. The more positive the attitude, the more interested teachers become in co-teaching (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013). Positive perceptions show that teachers support the co-teaching model and influence the school learning environments and the availability of educational opportunities (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Goodlad & Oakes, 1988; Hillard, 1990).

Hang and Rabren (2009) used both surveys and observations to identify ways co-teachers

believe the inclusive environment impacts students with disabilities. Co-teachers believe that inclusion allows students to experience an increase in self-confidence, social skills, and peer relationships, as well as improving their academic performance. Also, co-teachers perceived that students with disabilities had behavior that is more appropriate in co-taught classrooms than in resource classrooms, which could be a result of nondisabled peers modeling positive behaviors (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Teachers' attitudes towards co-teaching depend significantly on the intensity of special education training, knowledge, and experience in teaching students with disabilities (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Van Reusen et al. (2001) noticed that teachers who had negative perceptions towards inclusion found it challenging to work with disabled students because of lack of training. Some schools send teachers to 1-day workshops to help prepare them for the inclusive environment, but such workshops prove to be inadequate (Lumpe, 2007). Research suggests that teachers would benefit from their inclusion roles and responsibilities being specified in training opportunities (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Studies reporting adverse outcomes for inclusion programs often point to two main factors: lack of training opportunities and the absence of support from administration (Baines, 1997; Baines, Baines, & Masterson, 1994; McLeskey & Waldron, 1996). Overall, a thriving inclusion environment is much dependent on the perceptions of teachers and the support they receive from the administration in the implementation of co-teaching.

### **Factors Impacting Perceptions**

In a series of qualitative investigations of co-teaching through the use of observations, interviews, and transcripts, McDuffie, Mastropieri, and Scruggs (2007) found that in order for co-teaching to be useful for both teachers and students, specific components are necessary, including planning time, compatibility among co-teachers, training, and appropriate skill level. If necessary conditions are lacking, such as training, planning time, and choice in co-teachers, co-teaching may be very unsuccessful (Sims, 2008).

Austin (2001), through a qualitative study using The Perceptions of Co-teaching Survey (PCTS), indicated that the co-teaching model is heavily relied on to assist in educating students with disabilities. However, some teachers believe they are unprepared to teach in an inclusive environment because they do not possess critical skills such as differentiation and behavioral management. Some teachers believe there is a significant need for teacher preparation programs to include a course on collaborative teaching and how to implement curriculum (Austin, 2001). Moving forward, school districts should provide professional developing focusing on teaching practices and supports that help to prepare teachers to serve in inclusive classrooms.

Fennick and Liddy (2001) concluded that teachers lacked adequate time to plan a coordinated teaching approach. Lack of planning time denies general and special education teachers the chance to collaborate on instructional strategies, supplementary materials, assessments, and specific ways to implement accommodations and modifications for students with diverse learning needs (Conderman, 2011). Fennick and Liddy's study illustrated how lack of time affects academic instruction for students with disabilities. Firstly, co-teachers do not have time to meet, which results in the general education teacher planning instruction with none or minimum modifications for students with disabilities. Secondly, special education teachers do not take part in the planning process and, as a result, may fulfill more of the role of a paraprofessional or assistant.

Lack of compatibility among co-teaching relationships was a factor that many researchers found detrimental to the inclusive environment. Research has suggested that the attitude of the general education teacher may have a substantial impact on helping to shape the special education teacher's (and thus the students') perceptions of their roles in the room (Sims, 2008). The relationship between the general education and special education teacher is the key to a firm partnership and positive learning environment. They are emphasizing that co-teaching is a collaborative approach and a partnership shows that both the general and special education teacher are equal in the classroom. Issues may arise, but if co-teachers can cultivate a positive

relationship, they are more willing to continue to work through difficulties without giving up (Sims, 2008).

During an intensive study of collaborative team teaching, Gerber and Popp (2000) concluded that one major factor affecting inclusion was lack of training. Research has indicated that lack of training is a barrier to effective co-teaching (Austin, 2011; Ploessl & Rock, 2014; Sims, 2008; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006). The success of co-teaching depends significantly on the number of training teachers receive, as co-teachers must be knowledgeable and possess the essential skills necessary to provide quality education to all students (Conderman, 2011). Training should not be a one-time meeting; instead, training should be continuous and offered to all faculty members.

### **Instructional Practices and Strategies for Co-teaching**

Across the United States, students with disabilities are placed in the general education classroom environment for a majority of their school day. It is important to implement instructional delivery approaches and strategies that best support student engagement and understanding (Pratt et al., 2017). Within the co-planning framework, co-teachers are equal in developing instruction and making it useful for student teaching (Pratt et al., 2017). There are specific methods of instruction that, when utilized inside the classroom, can result in differentiation, universal design learning, cooperative learning, and modifications.

Differentiation is an approach where teachers individualize and provide explicit instruction for students with disabilities (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). The primary role of the special education teacher is to differentiate the curriculum. Disabled peers have deficits in core skills, which include reading, math, spelling, social skills, and the ability to make and maintain relationships.

Differentiated instruction helps to break down materials by skills, individual needs, modeling, and direction instruction (Conderman & Hedin, 2015). Data has suggested that students perceive this method as positive because using diverse instructional styles and perspectives of both co-teachers enhances subject matter (Wilson & Michaels, 2006).

Universal design learning (UDL) is a differential strategy that can be used for all students that maximize teaches (Hunt & Andreason, 2011). The UDL is a method of differentiation that gives students a choice by offering options in accessing the studying material in the classroom. Students with disabilities can learn the content but need accommodations to provide access to it (Minarik & Lintner, 2011). This method of delivery allows teachers to consider the different ways student minds work and helps maximize learning for all students by allowing choice within the education process (Hunt & Andreasen, 2011).

Engaging students with learning difficulties so they can contribute actively to the learning process can be challenging, especially when they are apprehensive about their intellectual abilities compared to their peers (Jones & Sterling, 2011). Cooperative learning is a strategy of ensuring students' participation, even those that appear to be disinterested in teaching (Jones & Sterling, 2011). Before implementing this strategy, teachers must observe students and identify which students work best together (Jones & Sterling, 2011). After grouping students, teachers will implement different cooperative learning approaches. One cooperative learning approach that pairs students with disabilities with nondisabled peers is peer tutoring (McDuggie, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2009). Peer tutoring is a practical approach to tutor students with disabilities by their nondisabled peers who are proficient in content (McDuggie, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2009). This strategy is particularly useful in helping students acquire new vocabulary and names.

Modifications and learning techniques in instructional practices are necessary for students with disabilities to make academic gains. Steele (2008) discussed modifications to instruction that will enhance opportunities for students with disabilities. A modifying curriculum that meets all student needs can promote learning for both general and special education students (Steele, 2008). Some of the techniques of implementing modifications are alternative assessments such as keeping portfolios, monitoring if a student has difficulty with reasoning, providing alternative texts for those students who have difficulty comprehending the textbook and using peer tutoring to provide

support for students with disabilities (Steele, 2008).

### **Factors Affecting Student Performance in the Inclusive Classroom**

Students with disabilities could meet the grade-level standards in the least restrictive environment. Daniel and King (1997) stated that students with disabilities could comply with higher standards that exist in the general education classroom and enhance their academic achievement. Keeping a high standard is important because special education students are less likely than their nondisabled peers to graduate from high school, maintain employment, and live without assistance (Daniel & King, 1997). Daniel and King conducted a quantitative study to study the different levels of effectiveness of inclusive learning for students in different grade levels. Students in the third-grade inclusion classrooms showed higher gains in reading scores; however, fourth-grade inclusion student's showed smaller gains in math. These findings support a cautionary approach toward inclusive education in determining factors that could enhance the academic achievement of students.

Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) found that there are specific attributes of a successful inclusive classroom that may include administrative support, support from special education personnel, and disability-specific teaching skills (p. 266). These characteristics provide an environment in which students are allowed to access the general education curriculum. In most states, academic learning is tracked by high-stakes testing, which in many cases, determines whether students can graduate and go on to a postsecondary institution (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). While there are benefits of testing, such as providing students access to the general education curriculum and holding schools accountable for student achievement, there are many drawbacks that cause the environment of a classroom to shift (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Mastropieri and Scruggs discussed how high-stakes testing might lead some teachers not to adopt differentiated strategies because of the pressure to increase content coverage for tests. Mastropieri and Scruggs also found that when high-stakes testing is involved, teachers might focus on content

acquisition at the expense of necessary skills. The purpose of inclusion is to provide a setting where materials are differentiated. If teachers abandon these practices to keep up with pacing for the state assessment, schools may begin to see unwanted results such as higher dropout rates (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001).

### **Teacher Efficacy**

In inclusive classrooms, it is imperative that both general and special education teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners. However, many teachers struggle to find alternative ways to present the curriculum. Some teachers are apprehensive when attempting to differentiate or do not believe they can successfully differentiate for a vast number of reasons, which include having a broad group of diverse learners in the classroom, feeling insecure, and not being comfortable with delivery of content using unknown approaches. According to Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009), “These beliefs are specific to particular teaching contexts; therefore, teachers form perceptions about their capabilities in light of the requirements of a particular teaching task” (p. 229). These perceptions regarding teacher capabilities are called teacher efficacy, a term that refers to the efforts teachers invest in teaching (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014).

Those teachers who have high efficacy beliefs are comfortable delivering instruction and implementing new teaching approaches that are outside the norm (Dixon et al., 2014). High school teachers who have high efficacy toward inclusion report that they have received increased levels of special education training or have had positive experiences working with students with disabilities (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Those teachers who report low teacher efficacy have negative attitudes toward inclusion, feel unprepared, believe their skills could not be integrated to teach a mixed ability group, and as a result believe they are ineffective within the inclusion setting (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Ross & Bruce, 2007b; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

Data suggests that there have been two common indicators that influence a teacher’s

efficacy: professional development and ongoing support (Dixon et al., 2014; Van Reusen et al., 2001). Schools are accepting and implementing inclusive classrooms; however, they are not providing the support that is needed for teachers to educate their students effectively, which affects the way they perceive themselves in the classroom (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Teacher confidence and self-esteem significantly impact the teacher's enthusiasm to accept responsibility for the achievement of students (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Studies have indicated that low efficacy points to a lack of training opportunities and support for teachers (Baines, 1997; Baines et al., 1994; McLeskey & Waldron, 1996).

### **The Need for Professional Development in the Inclusive Setting**

High-quality professional development promotes effective instruction (Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, & Youngs, 2013). Quality professional development is characterized by specific factors, including professional development sustained over time, active learning, vicarious learning experiences, and great content (Sun et al., 2013). Teachers are more likely to engage and acquire skills if teachers find professional development applicable and interesting (Lumpe, 2007). Reinforcing behaviors and skills allow teachers to become more likely to engage and make substantial changes to materials (Sun et al., 2013).

Research has shown that one-time training is less effective than many regular pieces of training over time (Lumpe, 2007). Lumpe (2007) discussed how one-time workshops are inefficient and argued that workshops are no longer the approach schools should take. Workshops serve a peripheral role, but ongoing professional development allows for strategies evaluation and application. Professional development should be ongoing and a collaborative approach that will actively monitor and track instruction and student learning.

Collaboration among teachers is a critical factor in getting teachers to engage with one another (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Active learning during professional development allows for collaboration to discuss tactics and alternative ways of teaching curriculum, gives teachers control

of their learning, and allows them to discuss with others how to improve in specific areas such as differentiation (Sun et al., 2013). This approach includes strategies such as peer observation and peer coaching. These approaches allow teachers to observe one another during a successful teaching exchange. The teacher is more likely to see the teaching task as manageable and experiment (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Professional development should include common learning experiences (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Using videos of the skill or strategy in action visually interprets a strategy and the strategy implementation (Sun et al., 2013). Observing a teacher perform a presented skill can provide valuable insight into the usage of the skill in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). If professional development is limited to watching the presenter, it may only be minimally effective at increasing teaching skill (Sun et al., 2013; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Professional development must be content driven, as well. Each content area has specific skills that require teachers to master them. Sun et al. (2013) discussed how professional development has a significant impact when educators feel they are learning knowledge and skills that are applicable in their classroom. Professional development challenges teachers to step out of their routine and experiment with delivering instruction differently.

Professional development for those educators teaching in the inclusion setting is needed. Whether taught through pre-service coursework or professional development, co-teachers must become aware there are different ways, or models, of co-teaching (King-Sears et al., 2014). Co-teachers need to learn educational strategies and how to implement specific skills that would allow for the transfer of knowledge to students quickly.

### **Effects of Successful Inclusion**

Many practices and strategies used in the secondary classroom make it possible for educators to see the presence of youth with disabilities not as a problem but as a gift (Udvari-Solner, Villa, & Thousand, 2005). These youth who have disabilities require and push educators to

implement the very best educational practices that have the potential of assisting every student (Udvari- Solner, et al., 2005). Educators who teach students with disabilities can meet the needs of every learner in the classroom by teaching a broader-based, creativity-oriented curriculum using techniques and activities that accommodate the characteristics of a more diverse cluster of youth (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Liston, 2005). Creating such an environment promotes a sense of community and common good within the classroom and has even been shown to change the attitudes of inclusion teachers (Villa et al., 2005).

Villa et al. (2005) conducted a series of interviews with inclusion teachers. Results indicated that secondary educators were adamant in their belief in the value of inclusive education. Inclusion teachers within the study expressed how their students with disabilities, who were once segregated in special schools and classrooms, succeeded in the general education environment. Many respondents within the study reported that the inclusive classroom created an environment in which students could fit in and where general education students became compassionate about one another needs. Teachers who had positive experiences within the inclusion setting reported believing there are reoccurring best practice themes that caused their inclusion environment to be successful. The participants in the study reported that collaboration and communication among staff members, parents, and students was key to success. Communicating allowed co-teachers to build a trusting partnership and identify specific roles within the classroom. Also, co-teaching also allowed both general and special education teachers to try new arrangements in the presentation of curricular content (Villa et al., 2005).

Wilson and Michaels (2006) conducted a study of students with and without disabilities. Students in both groups identified many more benefits than drawbacks to inclusion classrooms. Special and general education students believed that there was greater availability of help and assistance in the classroom, understanding of the material were enhanced due to various instructional styles, and their reading and writing skills improved. Students interviewed in the

study described a sense of connectedness, engagement, and growth of personal certainty, suggesting that co-teaching, when provided and supported appropriately, can help general and special education students develop perceptions with the potential to encourage achievement (Wilson & Michaels, 2006).

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

The review of literature provided opportunities to identify and analyze various methodologies used throughout the peer-reviewed publications. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research designs were used in the reviewed studies. The issues with each type of research methodology are reviewed in this section.

The researchers used qualitative approaches in an effort to add richness and details to the findings of the studies (Farber, 2006). Qualitative approaches such as observations, interviews, questionnaires, and case studies provided ways for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the subject being studied. This type of research allowed participants to provide their personal experiences and give the researcher the data needed to explore and interpret the phenomena taking place (Tobin, 2005). Tobin (2005) used observations as a qualitative approach to understand co-teaching relationships in the inclusion setting and was able to determine how well co-teaching models supported the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students. However, qualitative approaches can focus too much on participants' personal stories and limit the information offered by the participant. Qualitative approaches also limit the results to the sample being studied as they cannot be generalized to other populations.

Quantitative research methods such as surveys and close-ended questionnaires were common among the studies in the literature review. Quantitative approaches normally have large sample sizes, which have the ability to represent data from various groups. However, since data is represented numerically, it lacks details and richness needed to understand why a phenomenon is

occurring. Austin (2001) created the Perceptions of Co-Teaching Survey, which was based on a scale from 1 to 5. He encountered limitations as he examined his findings. In utilizing surveys as a methodology, Austin (2001) concluded there was no way to determine whether the participants reported accurate data, as they could have selected responses that were favorable to co-teaching.

The mixed methods approach involves the collection and “mixing” or integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in a study (Creswell, 2013). For example, a researcher may use a quantitative method such as a closed-ended survey and a qualitative method like observations to gather detailed information. The combination of a qualitative and quantitative approach provides the researcher with a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (Creswell, 2013). Mixed methods allows for bias to be avoided because data is collected through quantitative and qualitative approaches, neutralizing the weakness of each form of data (Creswell, 2013). However, if a researcher is not experienced with both methods, it could be challenging to integrate data. Many times, utilizing mixed methods could be time consuming because of the need to collect data using two approaches.

After reviewing the literature, it became apparent to the researcher that the use of a quantitative approach was insufficient for the study in identifying teacher perceptions and uncovering reasons why student achievement among students with disabilities decreased. The researcher chose a qualitative approach based on a review of the literature, which indicated that there is a need to improve teachers’ knowledge of inclusion regarding increasing student achievement. Using open-ended questionnaires and interviews, the researcher was able to investigate teacher perceptions of inclusion and gain a better understanding of why students with disabilities are not succeeding.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

The articles reviewed for this research supported the idea that teacher perceptions strongly

impact the classroom. Van Reusen et al. (2001) found that the attitude of a teacher influences the success of inclusive education, which is dependent upon the support the teacher receives in the implementation of inclusion (p. 15). Providing teachers with the necessary training on how to collaborate and plan instruction can create a positive learning environment for students with disabilities. Also, inclusion heavily relies on support from the administration. Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) elaborated on how those teachers who reported opportunities to learn about co-teaching were more confident in their instructional practices within the inclusion classroom. Negative attitudes were found among those teachers who had very little training in teaching students with disabilities (Van Reusen et al., 2001).

The factors that influence teacher attitudes and implementation of inclusion models include planning time, training, administrative support, knowledge of content, and teacher roles in the classroom (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006; Van Reusen et al., 2001). These factors play a crucial role in how teachers develop and implement instructional strategies for teaching students with disabilities (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013). The strategies that educators learn through professional development strongly impact the success of a disabled student (Sun et al., 2013). Data suggest that students with disabilities taught in an inclusive setting depend on multiple entry points during instructional time to increase engagement and acquisition of knowledge and skills (Zigmond & Magieri, 2001). The way co-teachers choose to implement instruction affects student performance on standardizing tests (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001).

For schools to see high efficacy beliefs, administrators need to offer more opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development that focuses on how to make inclusion successful (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Van Reusen et al., 2001). Within this study, teachers would profit from professional development by learning instructional strategies gradually and frequently, with each session building upon the one that precedes it. Topics should include collaboration, differentiation, and most importantly, how to implement models of inclusion. However, there is a gap between

professional development and the inclusion setting. Future work is needed in the area of teacher professional development, focusing on frequency, length, and duration of training opportunities available for general and special educators simultaneously (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013).

### **Critique of Previous Research**

In the studies reviewed, participants and methods were limitations in determining teacher perceptions of inclusion. When completing the studies, researchers did not choose a wide range of participants. The studies reviewed used very few teachers from schools, schools from specific geographical locations, and schools with different socioeconomic demographics. Also, some researchers allowed schools to distribute surveys to staff members, making it difficult for researchers to convey the purpose and meaning of the study.

Current researches are not covering the relationship between inclusion and student achievement, indicating the need for future research. Future research is recommended to study the effects of professional development, perceptions, and professional development on teacher choices. Also, Ross and Bruce (2007a) suggested that research should focus on professional development and student outcomes in randomized settings (p. 58). Future researches should examine the strengths and weaknesses of the co-teaching model and the academic achievement of students with disabilities as well (Gerber & Popp, 2000).

### **Chapter 2 Summary**

The most significant factor in making inclusion effective is to educate students with disabilities efficiently. Ongoing training in the form of professional development will allow for both general education and special education teachers to become familiar with the most current knowledge regarding collaborative models and instructional approaches and techniques. Offering teachers the support for co-teaching, attitudes toward inclusion will become more favorable.

Teachers' perception of co-teaching might influence the shape of instruction. The more

confident co-teachers feel in possessing the knowledge and skills needed to support and educate students with disabilities adequately, the more positive the attitude towards inclusion (Dixon et al., 2014; Van Reusen et al., 2001). In general, teachers with a more positive outlook will go beyond what their teacher contracts call for so that students with disabilities will progress in the general education environment. Despite setbacks such as lack of training, teachers with high efficacy will find time to explore and use co-teaching models and instructional approaches and techniques that provide entry points for all student learners.

The evidence presented in this literature review reflects the significance of teacher perceptions in shaping an inclusion program. With the use of surveys and interviews, researchers were able to uncover the factors needed to make inclusion successful for both the co-teachers and the students. Implementing more professional development that focuses on students with disabilities in the inclusion setting is likely to give teachers the necessary tools to improve student performance.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

In this study, the researcher used an explanatory approach to investigate the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding inclusion and the reasons for decreasing achievements for students with disabilities. Dukes and Lamar-Dukes (2009) suggested that aligning inclusive practices with teacher perceptions would enhance inclusion classroom. Further research indicates that at the middle and high school level, inclusion teachers tend to focus more on academic content and often overlook the need to modify curriculum, leading to the decline of academic performance by students with disabilities (Dukes & Lamar-Dukes, 2009). Given the influence that inclusion teachers can have on student achievement (McMaster, 2013); additional research is needed to explore the perceptions of both general and special education teachers about inclusion.

This chapter will provide an overview of the study's purpose and design of the study, research question, research population and sampling method, instrumentation and data collection, data collection, identification of attributes, data analysis procedures, limitations of the research design, validation, expected findings, and ethical issues. The chapter ends with a summary and an overview of the contents of the rest of this study.

### **Purpose and Design of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding inclusion, as it is vital to understand the impact of teachers' beliefs and attitudes about inclusion on student performance. Many teachers report that they experience the greatest self-efficacy when they feel prepared (Dixon et al., 2014; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Ross & Bruce, 2007b; Van Reusen et al., 2001). The effort that teachers make to collaborate and design lessons depend mainly on their capabilities (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Although teachers are cognitively aware of strategies to utilize in the classroom, teachers can have difficulty translating them into practice, which impacts their persistence to differentiate (Dixon et al., 2014). The literature supports a need to understand teacher perceptions of inclusion and the impact those perceptions have on student achievement.

Case study research involves an in-depth focus on a specific individual or group of people (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). The case study is qualitative in the sense that it investigates a smaller sample of study subject (Elman, Gerring, & Mahoney, 2016). What differentiates case studies from other research methods is that they study real-life situations where the investigated phenomenon is dependent on its context (Crowe et al., 2011). While using the case study, the researcher study experiences and develop a deep understanding rather than depend on quantitative data. There are various ways of defining a case study. Yin (1999) described a case study as a tool, not only to describe and explore concepts but also to explain causal relationships and support and build theory (Yin, 1999). Creswell (2007) explained the mechanism of case studies in the way the researcher explores the issue of the study using one or more limited cases and use multiple sources of information to collect data. The case study is an empirical inquiry that explores a phenomenon within its real-life context without boundaries between phenomenon and context (Yin, 2003). This study was conducted within one high school, which is an example of a bounded system. Merriam (2009) defined the bounded system as a single entity with boundaries. The phenomenon perspective study is explanative with various perspectives of inclusion, rather than just one (Merriam, 2009).

Yin (2003) distinguished three types of case studies: explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory. The design chosen for this study was an explanatory case study. Yin (1994) described the explanatory case study approach as a research tool used to answer “how” and “why” questions. “How” and “why” questions are likely to favor the use of case studies because such questions deal with operational links over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence (Yin, 1994). De Massis

and Kotlar (2014) discussed the usage of explanatory case studies to perceive why a phenomenon takes place. Within this case, the phenomenon is the teacher's perceptions. The researcher seeks to use both open-ended questionnaires and interviews to uncover how professional development assists teachers, how teachers' perceptions of inclusion affect instruction, and how the achievement of special education students is affected by their perceptions of inclusion. Both instruments call for the researcher to enter the lives of the participants thoroughly and naturally as possible (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Open-ended questionnaires and interviews are useful for explanatory studies as participants can discuss feelings or beliefs freely and provide insight about the subject of interest while giving a detailed response (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Stokes & Bergin, 2006). According to Farber (2006), the researcher uses qualitative approaches to add richness or full description of findings. The goal of this study was to improve student performance in inclusion classes.

A review of the literature revealed that the use of other methods would be insufficient for uncovering data. In taking into consideration the research questions of the study that require explicit and explanatory responses, the researcher determined that the use of a quantitative approach to gather data and synthesize results would be impractical. A quantitative approach limits the respondents' answers. It does not allow the respondent to provide rich, insightful data needed to address the research questions.

In deciding which qualitative method would be most appropriate, the researcher considered the following options: descriptive case study, narrative, grounded theory, and ethnography (see Creswell, 2007). Yin (2003) discussed how a descriptive case study illustrates and describes a phenomenon in the context in which it occurs. Descriptive case studies attempt to describe or identify the phenomenon instead of establishing why it is that way or how it came to be. This approach was inapplicable because the researcher was investigating the reasons why student achievement for students with disabilities in the inclusion setting is suffering. A narrative study requires the researcher to collect stories from individuals (Creswell, 2007). This method was

insufficient because it emphasizes the educators' biographical or autobiographical stories over their actual beliefs about inclusion. Grounded theory intends to propose a theory from data (McMillian, 2012). This approach was inadequate because a theory is not generated from the study; instead, the study is geared toward uncovering perceptions. Lastly, the researcher considered an ethnographic study, but this approach, too, proved to be insufficient because the cultural context in which the general and special education teachers work was not central to the study. Therefore, the researcher determined that a qualitative design that included both open-ended questionnaires and interviews to collect data would be most appropriate. A case study was the best approach because it allowed the researcher to investigate a specific topic (teacher perceptions) and explore the lived experiences of the teachers. Case studies allow for an in-depth understanding where research is extensive, drawing from multiple sources such as questionnaires and interviews (Creswell, 2007).

### **Research Questions**

This explanatory case study investigated teacher perceptions and the impact they have on inclusion, development of instruction, and academic achievement. The following questions guided the research:

1. How do teachers' perceptions of inclusion affect the development of instruction?
2. How is special education student achievement affected in the inclusion classroom?

### **Research Population and Sampling Method**

The population of this study was teachers in an urban high school in New York. The school had a Title I classification, meaning it has a high enrollment of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and receives funding to provide additional opportunities for students. The high school student population was approximately 2,100. Of this population, about 12% were students with disabilities. Seven percent was enrolled in the co-teaching environment; therefore, the primary mode of instructional delivery for special education students within the school was inclusion.

Slattery et al. (2011) stated that sampling plays a significant role in study design. The researcher performed purposeful sampling in this study. Researchers perform purposeful sampling when they choose to interview participants with extensive knowledge of the subject (Morse, 1991). Purposeful sampling allows the most favorable candidates to contribute to the study. The researcher prepared a questionnaire and chose participants that maximize opportunities to elicit data (Coyne, 1997). Within this case, the researcher asked follow-up questions to understand how teacher perceptions affect student achievement.

The sample consisted of 14 participants, made up of both general and special education teachers who currently taught inclusion. The participants taught different subjects and grade levels and were certified general and special education teachers. Throughout the study, the researcher made cautionary efforts to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all teachers to avoid misleading or harming participants per the recommendations of Farber (2006). When selecting teachers to survey and interview, the researcher considered three main categories: length of time teaching in the inclusion setting, length of time teaching with co-teacher, and subjects taught in the inclusion setting. These categories will assist in providing information relevant to the research questions (Coyne, 1997). Fourteen teachers were selected to participate in the open-ended questionnaire, and the researcher chose eight of them for the interview process. The first question of the open-ended questionnaire provides demographic data about the participants, which includes certification area, level of education, number of years teaching, and number of years teaching inclusion. This data will assist the researcher in choosing the eight interviewees.

Three types of participants were recruited to provide a variety of perspectives (per Denzin, 2009). The first group was made up of three beginning teachers with less than three years of teaching experience (per Melnick & Meister, 2008). The second group was made up of three teachers, with three to five years of teaching experience. The third group was made up of eight experienced teachers with five or more years of experience (per Melnick & Meister, 2008).

The researcher chose eight teachers, a mix of general and special education teachers from various subject areas, for the interview process because they can contribute most effectively to the study. Participants included general education teachers who taught math, social studies, English, or science and special education teachers who were dual licensed or taught math, social studies, English, or science.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The case study utilized two instruments: questionnaires and interviews.

#### **Instrument 1: Open-ended Questionnaire**

One of the instruments used to conduct the study was a questionnaire (see Appendix A). This method allows for greater participation because respondents can fill in responses that increase accuracy and individuality (Slattery et al., 2011), enhancing the researcher's understanding of the respondents' perceptions. The questionnaire included five open-ended questions that seek to uncover teacher backgrounds, attitudes, and experiences in the inclusion setting. The questionnaire helped to determine the participants of the study.

#### **Pilot Study**

Before the interview process, the researcher conducted a questionnaire and a pilot study. The pilot testing of the questionnaire conducted using three experts in the field of special education, which included three teachers. Researchers use pilot testing to assess the clarity of the questions and refine the data collection process (Creswell, 2013). The teachers in the pilot study were not participants in the original study. The researcher emailed the pilot study teachers requesting to schedule a meeting time. The pilot questionnaire took place in an empty classroom or office. The researcher presented the participants with a copy of the questionnaire. After reviewing the questions, the researcher asked the teachers for feedback regarding the questions' formatting

and language. The researcher noted any suggested changes to the questions. The questions were then revised before administering the questionnaire to the research participants.

## **Instrument 2: Interviews**

An expert in the education field granted the researcher permission to use a published interview set of questions (see Appendix B). Gubrium and Holstein (2002) discussed how open-ended interview questions allow for greater resilience and freedom for both the researcher and participants in terms of planning, implementing, and organizing the interview content and questions. For this study, open-ended interviews allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of teacher perceptions, allowing for follow-up questions and in-depth elaboration by the participants. In addition to using interview questions, the researcher used a conversational approach to allow the interview process to unfold (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) discussed how conversational techniques provide opportunities to investigate, explore, ask questions that clarify, and highlight the particular subject. The interview becomes more meaningful as more in-depth conversation emerges.

The interviews focused on the two areas of the study. The first area was designed to explore teacher perceptions of inclusion and how those perceptions impact the development of instruction (addressing the first research question). The second area was designed to investigate how student achievement is impacted in the inclusion setting (addressing the second research question).

Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, though some went a bit beyond the allotted time, depending on the responses of the participants and whether teachers provided additional information about specific teaching experiences. The rooms in which the interviews conducted ensured privacy to help the participants feel comfortable (Farber, 2006). The researcher recorded each interview with the permission of the participant, in addition to providing every participant with a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix E).

## **Data Collection**

For this study, the researcher used two instruments to collect data: open-ended questionnaires and interviews. The specific procedures for each method are discussed in the following subsections.

### **Open-Ended Questionnaires**

The first method that the researcher used in the study to collect data was open-ended questionnaires. Open questions allow participants to place fill-in responses that increase reliability and originality and allow the researcher to determine the importance of a specific issue better (Slattery et al., 2011). The researcher used the five open-ended questionnaires (see Appendix A). The names of the participants were not connected to identifying information. The researcher transcribed, coded the questionnaires manually, and determined the themes.

### **Interviews**

Using an explanatory case study approach for the study made it possible for the researcher to acquire the views of the participants, learn about the experience, and understand individual perceptions within the inclusion setting. According to Creswell (2013), data collection procedures require the researcher to obtain permission from the participants and institutional review boards. During the interview process, none of the data was connected to participants' names or identifying information.

During the interview process, the researcher used a digital recorder and took descriptive, reflective notes. They are using a digital recording device during the interview process assisted in the transcription process. The recording process ensured that data from the interviews were accurate. The researcher transcribed the interview and imported the audio file into MAXQDA for transcription. Recording an interview is an important part of the interview process because it allows the researcher to go back and analyze the data from the interview (Farber, 2006). Recording

descriptive, reflective notes during the interview helps the researcher collect data about the teachers, processes, and culture (Kawulich, 2005). Data from the interviews provided information on teacher perceptions of inclusion.

MAXQDA, a password protected software program, was used to assist in the coding process. The program allowed for several types of coding processes. For this study, color-coding was used to assist in determining themes. Color-coding began by first reading through the participant's transcripts to determine themes.

### **Member Checking**

Once the interview process and transcription were complete, the transcripts were securely sent to the teachers. This practice allowed the participants to review the transcription and notes and check for clarity. Checking is the process of debriefing those participants who took place in the study (Creswell, 2009). This process is especially important, as it allows participants to ensure the validity of the researcher's record of their responses. Participants were allowed to correct errors and add information if necessary. Once member checking was complete, coding began.

### **Identification of Attributes**

Specific attributes assisted in the development of this study. This study explored perceptions or ways in which general and special education teachers see or understand a situation in the inclusion classroom. The researcher sought to uncover teacher beliefs about the inclusion environment and why teachers believe students are not succeeding in the inclusion classroom.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The researcher collected and analyzed data from open-ended questionnaires and interviews. The researcher transcribed the open-ended questionnaires manually and used MAXQDA; a password protected software program to assist in the thematic coding process, search for themes, and make sense of data. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), qualitative data

analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the data collected.

Qualitative research requires analyzing data, which includes organizing, classifying, identifying themes, and coding (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The researcher determined that coding was the best approach to organize the data for this study. The process of coding involves aggregating text or visual data into categories of information, searching for evidence for the code from different databases in the study, and then designating a label to the code (Creswell, 2013).

The primary duty of the qualitative researcher is to analyze data by organizing it into categories based on themes, patterns, and concepts of similar features (Neuman, 1997). After each participant confirms the accuracy of his or her transcript, the process of coding can begin, which is the foundation of data analysis (Creswell, 2009). After reading results from the open-ended questionnaires and reading the transcripts from the interviews several times, the researcher began the process of coding to uncover keywords and phrases. Thematic analysis, a form of coding, allowed the researcher to analyze different types of data from secondary sources (per Braun & Clarke, 2013). The thematic analysis involves six different phases: (a) familiarization with the data, (b) coding, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and reviewing themes, and (f) writing up or weaving the data together (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was the best strategy for this study because it works best with a wide range of research questions, which include people's experiences or understandings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

In this study, the researcher recognized three limitations: the researcher's focus on one school, the fact that participants work in the same building as the researcher, and the use of an open-ended questionnaire. The study was conducted in one school, limiting the generalization of the study to other urban schools in New York or other states. Because some participants held a professional relationship with the researcher, there was significant potential for bias. Using an open-ended questionnaire enabled some participants to provide very detailed answers, making it

challenging to analyze, interpret, and code. Additionally, the researcher had to make sense of the answers, leading to the potential for personal bias to influence conclusions. Driscoll (2011) argued that bias could be present in the way the researcher asks questions and takes notes throughout the interview process.

One major delimiter in this study was the small sample of participants. The researcher delimited the participants for the study to general education teachers who teach math, science, English, and social studies, along with special education teachers. The researcher excluded music, art, career, and technical teachers, and speech providers, all of whom may have had a different attitude toward inclusion.

### **Validation**

Validity refers to the degree to which results can be reflective of the real experiences of the participants (McMillian, 2012). In order to provide validity throughout this study, credibility (trustworthiness) and dependability (reliability) were demonstrated by employing trusted research methods and using member checking. Questionnaires and interviews allowed data to be cross verified through member checking. Member checking is a process where the participants review their findings. McMillian (2012) discusses how member checking allows, “participants to review interpretations and conclusions, and the participants confirm the findings” (p. 303). In this specific case, participants were given the transcripts from their interviews to look over before data are analyzed. During the data collection process, “researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). The collection of data from both the questionnaires and interviews allowed for consistency and verification and improved trustworthiness.

### **Expected Findings**

Through this research, the researcher expected to discover that general and special

education teachers in the inclusion setting are exposed to minimal professional development, making it challenging inclusion to be successful at improving student achievement. The researcher expected to see results indicating that both general and special education teachers attended professional development for inclusion throughout their teaching career. The researcher also expected these results to be reflected in responses to the open-ended questionnaire and discussed again during the interview session.

Additionally, the researcher expected to discover that teachers' perceptions of inclusion were not accurate, because of inconsistent training. During follow-up interviews with participants, the researcher expected to find that general education teachers take the lead in planning and teaching, while special education teachers differentiate material. The researcher expected that the model most used in the inclusion setting is lead and support, which is best described as one teacher teaching one teacher observing.

The results of this study add to the literature by drawing attention to the reasons why student achievement is lower among students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. Also, the results help provide ways in which teachers can improve their practices in the inclusion setting to enhance student achievement. The results also highlight the need for ongoing professional development for both general and special education teachers in the inclusion setting.

## **Ethical Issues**

### **Ethical Practices**

Creswell (2013) described how ethical issues in qualitative research occur before conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during the data collection, during data analysis, and in reporting the data. MaxQDA aided the researcher in conducting an ethical study, as it is a secure software package and requires the researcher to have an ID and password.

The researcher used Bryman and Bell's (2007) principles that help guide a compelling

study, which includes, but are not limited to:

1. Research participants should be free from harm.
2. Participants are given a consent form before the study.
3. The protection of participant contributions at all times.
4. Interviews should remain confidential.
5. Communicating results using pseudonyms.
6. The integrity of the study is a priority.
7. Known and suspected conflicts of interest must be kept an interest.
8. Data should not be misleading or proven to be biased in any way.

### **Conflict of Interest Assessment**

Prior to completing the study, the researcher obtained written permission to complete the study from Concordia University–Portland’s Internal Review Board, the city’s Internal Review Board, and the principal of the high school. It should be noted the researcher currently teaches in an inclusion environment and has a professional relationship with the school. However, the researcher promised to engage in ethical practices and ensured that conflicts of interest were avoided. The researcher took the necessary steps to uphold ethical standards and follow proper protocol.

### **Researcher’s Position**

As a special education teacher, the researcher had knowledge of the inclusion setting and also held professional relationships with the school. As a result, there was potential for the researcher to introduce bias into the study. The researcher took all necessary measures to avoid this possibility. The researcher was mindful when selecting participants, randomizing the selection of participants instead of selecting pairs of co-teachers who may have had similar responses leading to skewed data. The researcher’s intentions were to add to existing research surrounding the

perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding inclusion and the effect those perceptions have on the academic achievement of students with individualized education plans.

### **Ethical Issues in the Study**

Prior to the study, participants were provided with written consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants received a copy of their consent form. To ensure confidentiality of participants, all identifying information was removed and participants were identified by a combination of letters and numbers. Data from the study was stored in a secured locked cabinet, which the researcher only had access to. Once the study was completed, data was destroyed. Recordings from the interviews were deleted as soon as participants confirmed transcripts. The account for MaxQDA was deleted at the conclusion of the study.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

This chapter provided a discussion of the explanatory method; the procedures are taken for choosing participants; the procedures for collecting, analyzing, and verifying data; ethical issues; and ways in which findings are to be validated. Exploring the perceptions of general and special education teachers, helped to identify how significant some factors, such as professional development are for implementing instruction in the inclusion setting and ways to measure student achievement. The findings from this study provided the educational community with specific inclusion strategies for the inclusion setting. Additionally, the findings provided insight into how professional development can be framed, in what degree, and how it may serve as a tool to monitor student achievement in the inclusions setting.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

### **Introduction**

This case study was designed to examine the perceptions of inclusion by general and special education teachers who worked in an inclusive setting. Using the data, the researcher uncovered reasons for the decreasing achievement levels among students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. An explanatory case study was used to understand the perspectives of the participants, learn about their experiences, and understand individual perceptions within the inclusion setting. Themes emerged through data gathered from open-ended questionnaires and interviews. This study will contribute to research by increasing the understanding of how teacher perceptions influence student achievement. Additionally, the study results may help educators improve the current inclusion program at the study site.

The study site indicated some challenges concerning their current inclusion program. Students with disabilities in the study site succeed in science and math from 2013–2018. However, there has been a decrease in students score in English and social studies. The researcher wanted to understand the perceptions of inclusion teachers within the high school and gain insight on how teachers' perceptions influence student achievement. The researcher created a questionnaire for the study participants to address the research questions. The participant's selection process considered whether participants were a general education teacher or special education teacher, the subjects they taught, and their questionnaire responses. The researcher explains the process of analyzing the data in this chapter.

For this study, 14 teachers completed an open-ended questionnaire. Eight of these teachers were then chosen to participate in a semistructured interview based on their responses to the questionnaire. After the interviews, the researcher completed member-checking sessions with the

participants to check for accuracy and provided an opportunity for the participants to elaborate on or modify their responses to the interview questions.

### **Description of the Sample**

The researcher recruited teacher participants from an urban high school in New York. The target population was inclusion teachers who taught 9th through 12th grade. Fourteen participants who taught an academic subject and had either a generalist or special education license were recruited to take part in the questionnaire, and all 14 participated. The researcher then chose eight participants to be interviewed. To avoid bias, the researcher purposefully selected interviewees based on their license and subject areas taught instead of selecting participants based on experience and number of years working with their co-teacher. Randomizing the selection of participants helped to eliminate bias, instead of choosing pairs of co-teachers whose similar responses had the potential to skew the data.

All participants consented to the interview process and were given a code using both a number and letter to protect their confidentiality. During the interview process, participants offered detailed explanations regarding their beliefs and experiences with inclusion. Table 1 describes the participant's license and subject area.

Table 1

*Interview Participants by License and Subject Area*

Participant	License Area	Subject Taught
1A	Special Education	Social Studies
2B	Special Education	Math
3C	Math	Math
4D	Special Education	English
5E	Special Education	Science
6F	Special Education	Science
7G	Social Studies	Social Studies
8H	English	English

**Race and Gender Demographics**

Fourteen participants took part in the study. Concerning ethnicity/race, approximately 57% of participants were White, 21% identified as Hispanic, and 7.3% identified as Black, Asian, or Other. Approximately 42% of participants identified as male and 58% identified as female. Table 2 shows the race and gender of the study participants.

Table 2

*Teacher Participants by Ethnicity and Gender*

Frequency	Ethnicity	Gender
5	White	Female
3	White	Male
2	Hispanic	Female
1	Hispanic	Male
1	Black	Male
1	Asian	Male
1	Other	Female

### **Years of Teaching Experience**

Average years of teaching experience were nearly evenly distributed among participants. Of the sample population of 14 high school inclusion teachers, 28.5% of the teachers had between 16–20 years of teaching experience, 28.5% of teachers had between 10–15 years of teaching experience, 21.5% of teachers had 5-9 years of teaching experience, and 21.5% of teachers had 1-4 years of teaching experience. Data on years of teaching experience were self-reported by participants. Table 3 shows years of classroom teaching experience completed for each of the case study’s participants.

Table 3

*Teacher Participants by Years of Experience*

Frequency	Years in the classroom
4	16-20
4	10-15
3	5-9
3	1-4

### **Grade Level and Discipline**

Participants were chosen based on grade level and discipline taught to allow the data to reflect achievement among inclusion students across different content areas. At the study site, inclusion was a method of delivery for students with disabilities in the following subjects: social sciences, English, math, and science. Grade levels ranged from grade 9 to grade 12. Table 4 shows the subject and grade level taught by study participants.

Table 4

*Teacher Participants by Grade Levels and Disciplines*

Frequency	Academic subject	Grade level
5	Special Education	9
2	Special Education	10, 12
1	Social Studies	10, 12
1	English	10, 12
1	Special Education	10
1	Math	9
1	Science	9
1	Social Studies	9

---

1	English	11, 12
---	---------	--------

---

**Summary of Sample**

Participants were selected based on grade level taught, years of teaching experience, and subject taught. Fourteen teacher participants completed questionnaires. Of those 14, eight participants were purposefully selected to interview. Table 5 shows an overview of participant demographics.

Table 5

*Summary of Teacher Participants*

---

<u>Teacher demographics</u>	
<u>By ethnicity</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
White	8
Hispanic	3
Asian	1
Black	1
Other	1
 <u>By academic subject</u>	
Math	1
English	2
Social Studies	2
Science	1
Special Education	8
 <u>By gender</u>	
Female	8

---

Male	6
------	---

Years of teaching

16-20	4
-------	---

10-15	4
-------	---

5-9	3
-----	---

0-4	3
-----	---

Grade levels

9	8
---	---

10	1
----	---

10, 12	4
--------	---

11, 12	1
--------	---

---

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

In this qualitative case study, the researcher used an explanatory case design to understand how teachers perceive inclusion. Yin (2003) defined the explanatory case study as a tool that guides the researcher in answering “how” and “why” questions. Using this approach for the study makes it possible to understand the views of the participants, learn about their experiences, and understand individual perceptions within the inclusion setting.

In this qualitative case study, the researcher collected data via an open-ended questionnaire, semistructured interviews, and member-checking discussions with the eight participants who took part in the interview process. The focus of this case study was to investigate the perceptions of general and special education teachers regarding inclusion and the reasons for decreasing achievement for students with disabilities.

A qualitative inductive analysis method was selected for this study because it served as a way to gather and interpret raw data (Thomas, 2003). This method allowed the researcher to reach

a deep understanding of teacher perspectives and experiences within the inclusion classroom. The inductive analysis, also called for the development of codes from the data collected, allowing the researcher to capture key themes (Thomas, 2003). In the following section, the researcher will explain in detail the coding processes and the process of collecting data from questionnaires and interviews. Coding by hand using thematic analysis (per the recommendation of Braun & Clarke, 2013) was used for the open-ended questionnaire and interview transcripts.

Following IRB approval from Concordia University, the researcher obtained approval from the city's Department of Education's Internal Review Board (NYC DOE IRB) by completing an application describing specific details about the study site, participants, methodology, data collection process, and data analysis procedures. NYC DOE IRB required that the researcher submit a signed letter from the principal of the high school granting permission to conduct the proposed study, explaining the instruments to be used, and showing the consent form for participants to complete. NYC DOE IRB also asked the researcher to describe how to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and the data. The researcher guaranteed and assured the confidentiality of participants and findings. Participant names are not significant to the study's data, but participants were protected using a coding system by the researcher that includes numbers and characteristics for the researcher's use only for both the questionnaire and the interviews.

The researcher recruited the participants of the study from one location. The participants worked at the study site as inclusion teachers, teaching one of the four major content areas: math, science, English, or social studies. The researcher provided the selected participants with a consent form that explained the purpose of the study and the interview process.

## **Data Collection Review**

### **Questionnaire**

The researcher recruited participants directly and provided them with a consent form that Concordia University–Portland IRB had previously approved. Participants signed the consent form before taking part in the questionnaire. Each participant received a copy of his or her completed consent form.

The questionnaire took approximately one week to administer. The researcher administered questionnaires in person to individual participants in private locations within the school building, such as empty classrooms and offices. Participants took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Because all 14 recruited participants completed the questionnaire, the response rate was 100%. After collecting the questionnaires, the researcher placed them inside a locked box inside a locked filing cabinet in the school building, to which only the researcher had access to them for three years before destroying them.

The questionnaire included five open-ended questions on the topics of teacher backgrounds, attitudes, and experiences in the inclusion setting. The questionnaire also asked for teachers' perceptions of the factors causing a decrease in student achievement among students with disabilities in the inclusion environment. Additionally, the questionnaire helped to determine who should participate in the interview.

### **Interviews**

The researcher selected eight participants to participate in the interview process based on their responses to the questionnaire. The participants agreed to record the interviews by signing the consent form. The researcher purposefully chose both general education and special education teachers who taught in the inclusion of the four major subject areas. During the participants' summer vacation and over four week's period, the researcher conducted the interviews. Five of the

interviews took place in private homes, two at the study site, and one at a coffee shop as requested by the participant. The recorded interviews lasted approximately 25 to 45 minutes.

During these interviews, the researcher asked each participant 10 questions that were subject to prior approval. Questions 1 and 2 were designed to gain an understanding of how the participants defined inclusion and their roles and responsibilities in the setting. Question 3 helped identify whether participants believed they have the expertise to work with students with disabilities and why they feel this way. Question 4 uncovered whether participants had a voice in teaching in the inclusion setting. Questions 5 and 6 identified the necessary supports participants believed they need. Questions 7 through 10 allowed participants to reflect on their experiences in the inclusion setting.

The researcher took reflective notes during the interviews to help process meaning and made notes when participants seemed passionate about specific topics. For example, participant 5E provided detail when explaining why co-teaching partnerships are so important to the success of inclusion. The participants' detailed responses offered insight into the specific elements that make a co-teaching relationship successful.

The researcher transcribed the interviews by hand. Then, to check for accuracy and completeness, the researcher imported the audio file into MAXQDA; a password protected the program for aiding audio file transcription. Using MAXQDA, the researcher was able to manipulate the interview speed and make the transcription process easier.

### **Member Checking**

After recording and transcribing each interview, the research used member checking to ensure the validity and accuracy of the transcriptions. Member checking allows participants to review and confirm the findings the researcher has recorded (McMillian, 2012). After transcribing the interviews, the researcher shared the transcripts with the participants via work email within 72

hours. Participants were asked to review their transcripts within a week. During this process, participants had the opportunity to check over their responses and make any necessary changes or clarifications they believed would enhance understanding of their perceptions. Seven out of the eight participants confirmed their transcripts and did not request to make changes. One participant asked to make a minor change to the transcript, asking to change “most teachers” to “some teachers” to clarify a belief about classroom teachers’ ability to work with students with disabilities. After making the requested change, the researcher emailed the participant with an updated transcription, which the participant approved.

After the initial interview, the researcher arranged a meeting with participants where they were able to provide additional information by answering follow up questions. Meetings took place individually, either in person or over the phone, as requested by each participant. Participants were able to see their responses either in person or via email. Participants were allowed to check their follow up questions for clarity and request changes. No changes were requested.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher used the thematic analysis coding procedure to analyze the data collected through open-ended questionnaires and interviews. The researcher will present the patterns found within these data after providing details about the thematic analysis procedures.

### **Questionnaire**

Before beginning coding, the researcher checked the questionnaires for completeness. Once the researcher confirmed that the questionnaires were completed, the coding process began. To analyze the open-ended questionnaire data collected, the researcher used Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis procedures. The thematic analysis involves six different phases: (a) familiarization with the data, (b) coding, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and reviewing themes, and (f) writing up or weaving the data together (Braun & Clarke,

2006). First, the researcher immersed herself in the data and read the completed questionnaires multiple times. During this process, the researcher began to take notes and marked ideas down for coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Marking down ideas allowed the researcher to pinpoint repetitive information and led to the development of codes. The ideas noted across the questionnaires were *planning, lack of skills, parent involvement, and student motivation/involvement.*

After the researcher became familiar with the data, she began the coding process. The researcher began to code using initials. Using initials during the coding process helped the researcher easily identify the categories (see Table 2). Lack of literacy skills (LS) was a prevalent code used throughout the questionnaire. One teacher believed that some students with disabilities are not succeeding due to improper placement; they are not at the reading level of their peers. Another teacher noted, “The foundational literacy skills that kids need to succeed are often lacking.” One teacher explained that students with disabilities (SWD) have poor skills that often make it difficult to differentiate in the inclusion setting. One teacher stated, “Some SWDs may not be successful because of the pacing of curriculum and lack of study, writing, and reading skills.” Another teacher indicated that some students with disabilities do not succeed in the inclusion environment because they “do not get the required attention, especially if reading levels are critically low.”

The researcher also found that teachers perceived a lack of parent involvement (PI) and student involvement (SI) to be contributing factors that affected students with disabilities from succeeding in the inclusion classroom. One teacher noted that “parents are uninvolved and do not communicate with teachers.” Another teacher stated, “Family support for some students at home is not sufficient.” One teacher explained that students with disabilities “have the skills but struggle to apply themselves and their skills. Often, with those students, parents are uninvolved and do not communicate with teachers or make excuses for their kids.”

In the area of student involvement, teachers believed students' lack of motivation to succeed is a contributing factor in low student achievement among students with disabilities. One teacher believed, "many of the students with disabilities who are not successful in the inclusive classroom need to invest more time, be more motivated." Another teacher stated that students with disabilities have difficulty succeeding in the inclusion classroom because "unless that student has personal drive and motivation, they will find it difficult to be successful." One teacher believed that students with disabilities are not succeeding because "many students do not take advantage of their resources."

Planning was a common factor that teachers believed influenced their attitudes towards inclusion. Lack of planning time affected teachers' ability to plan instruction. One teacher noted that planning is a significant influence impacting his attitude: "Differentiating can be challenging, and having time to plan with my co-teacher can be difficult. I particularly find not knowing my schedule for the following school year or my potential co-teacher makes any early planning/summer planning nearly impossible." Another teacher indicated that teachers have to "find our own time to plan; the teachers have to make it work." Several teachers believed that having "too many prep [periods] makes it difficult to make time to work with their co-teacher." Not having time to plan affects the success of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom because "co-teachers are not on the same page" and "co-teachers do not do their part."

Table 6

*Developed Themes and Codes*

Theme	Code
Lack of literacy skills	LS
Planning	P
Lack of parent involvement	PI

When the researcher completed the coding, four different codes had emerged. Two codes, planning and lack of literacy skills became their theme because a common pattern had emerged throughout the questionnaire. The researcher was able to sort two codes, parent involvement (PI) and student involvement (SI), into one theme, lack of parent and student involvement. Once the themes were determined and found to be coherent, consistent, and distinctive, the researcher was able to define and review the themes by identifying the importance of each theme and determined the aspect of the captured data (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher was then able to produce a summary detailing the themes.

### **Interviews**

Once all participants had approved transcripts from both the first initial interview and the second follow-up interview, the researcher used thematic analysis to color-code the transcripts utilizing MAXQDA. MAXQDA allows for several types of coding; for this study, the researcher used color-coding of the transcripts to align with the research questions. The researcher read the transcripts multiple times and was able to mark essential data, such as repeated phrases without initially deciding the coding process. The repeated phrases included *disabilities, differentiation, support, collaboration, roles, responsibilities, co-teaching relationship, and co-teaching models*.

After re-reading the transcripts several times and becoming familiar with the data (see Braun & Clarke, 2006), the researcher identified the following codes: roles and responsibilities (red), professional development (blue), support (magenta), and co-teaching relationship (yellow). Table 7 shows the codes and their corresponding colors. MAXQDA only allows five colors when coding, so the types of professional development opportunities were combined into one color. The researcher was then able to use these colors to highlight specific information for each code and compile data in color-specific segments, as discussed below.

Table 7

*Developed Themes and Codes*

Theme	Color Code
Roles and Responsibilities	Red
Professional Development	Blue
Support	Magenta
Co-teaching Relationship	Yellow

The researcher used the color code red to identify the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the inclusion environment. Any information provided by the participants that discussed their specific roles or responsibilities in the inclusion classroom was highlighted in red. Participant 3C stated, “I was the general education teacher, so I was primarily the one to plan the lessons and any activities or any assessments.” Participant 4D stated, “I communicate with parents and also provide one on one tutoring.” As stated by Participant 7G, “My role, I generally do the majority of planning; unit planning, lesson planning, projects, tests, and assessments.” These responses suggested that teachers had clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

The researcher used blue to color-code the types of professional development that teachers discussed thoroughly throughout their interviews’ models, differentiation, and understanding disabilities. Teachers had many different ideas about the types of professional development they would benefit from, including training on co-teaching models, differentiation, and understanding disabilities. For example, Participant 2B indicated, “There is no training. There has been no major training or demo. There is no backing of support to show how models can be done.” The participant elaborated, stating that actual examples of successful co-teaching models would be beneficial in

showing teachers how to implement the models within their inclusion classroom. Participant 1A stated that most teachers do not understand how disability impacts a child in an inclusion classroom: "I feel those general education teachers should be given training on students with disabilities because they do not always approach topics and situations with the disability in mind." The participant further explained that workshops on differentiating would also be beneficial because they could teach educators how to tailor materials according to student needs. Participant 6F stated,

General education teachers are there to teach the content, and so they go to college and learn only their subject. They do not necessarily learn the same techniques that special education teachers do and do not know what to look out for because they are looking at the class as a whole, not individuals.

The researcher used the color magenta to code data that showed the importance of support for teachers in the inclusion setting. Participant 6F discussed how working with a group of related service providers helps in planning instruction. Participant 4D explained that support from teachers, parents, administration, and related service providers are necessary for designing instruction. Participant 4D further explained how support from any adult who plays a pivotal role in the student's education throughout the school day could provide insight into how the student learns best. Teachers perceived support to play a role in how planning instruction affects the academic performance of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom.

The researcher used the color yellow to code data related to co-teaching relationships. Throughout the color-coding process, the researcher was able to highlight significant characteristics of the inclusion classroom. Teachers' perceptions of inclusion as positive or negative depended on their relationship with their co-teacher. Participant 5E discussed how a co-teacher is a major if not the dominant factor to a thriving inclusion environment. He stated:

You have to develop a routine, even minimal in the beginning until you get some comfort

level with the other teacher. You need to have a good relationship. There are some teachers I do not want to teach with, I will never teach with again, and I will not name them. A lot of it has to do with time, working together for any extended length of time. One teacher, I taught with for eight years, and I would teach with that individual again. The one teacher I taught with one year I definitely would not teach with again.

Participant 8H discussed how the relationship with her co-teacher worked well because they were friends outside the classroom:

I think that is because my co-teacher and I get along and we never really argued over anything, and our personalities mesh, and we have the same philosophies over the way we want to teach, so that helps a lot. The few things we do disagree on, because we are friends, we do not fight with each other, and we figure it out.

Participant 6F stated that the most critical contributor to success in the inclusion setting is the relationship formed with a co-teacher. Participant 6F described how both she and her co-teacher are a united front and are both willing to listen to one another and implement personal ideas in the classroom.

Once coding was complete, the researcher discovered that the codes could not be categorized; all four-color codes, roles and responsibilities, professional development, support, and co-teaching relationship then evolved into themes. The researcher was able to produce a summary detailing the themes derived from the interview.

### **Presentation of Data and Results**

The researcher analyzed the data collected during the open-ended questionnaire and interviews using a thematic analysis. The researcher presented the data and results of the analysis in the following section. Analysis information is organized by both research questions and themes developed (see Table 8). Overall, seven themes emerged from both the questionnaire and interview process that supported both research questions: planning, roles, and responsibilities, co-teaching

relationship, professional development, support, lack of parent and student involvement, and lack of literacy skills.

Table 3 shows the themes that evolved from the data in support of answering the research questions. Data suggested that teachers believed planning, roles and responsibilities, co-teaching relationship, professional development, and support from school personnel have shaped their attitudes towards inclusion and have affected the development of instruction for their inclusion classroom. Teachers believed that lack of parent and student involvement and lack of literacy skills contributed to the decrease of success among students with disabilities in the inclusion setting.

Table 8

*Developed Themes*

RQ	THEME
1	Planning
	Roles and Responsibilities
	Co-teaching Relationship
	Professional Development
	Support
2	Lack of Parent and Student Involvement
	Lack of Literacy Skills

Five themes emerged to support the answer to Research Question 1: (a) planning, (b) roles and responsibilities, (b) co-teaching relationship, (c) professional development, and (d) support. Each of the five themes is explained in detail below.

**Planning**

Teachers perceived collaboration to be an essential component of inclusion. Through collaboration, teachers believed they could plan instruction effectively and clearly define their roles

and responsibilities both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers also believed planning had a significant influence on the quality of instruction they could provide, identifying planning as a critical component for designing instruction that is necessary for students with disabilities to succeed in the inclusion classroom. Because planning time was difficult for co-teachers to coordinate, teachers were challenged to create meaningful instruction that would allow students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum. Teachers were unable to modify materials and differentiate, leading students with disabilities in the inclusion setting to struggle academically and hindering their ability to pass state assessments.

Teachers also expressed the belief that having too many prep periods makes it difficult to plan with their co-teacher because they have to prepare for other courses. Participant 5E discussed the importance of planning, stating:

Developing a routine where you know what they are going to do, and you can pick up anywhere [is important]. The special education teacher also needs to be able to pick up the class, so if the general education teacher is out; the class can go on. Students can see there is no difference in having one teacher over the other.

Participant 4D also discussed how her attitudes around planning for inclusion are negative because she feels she does not have enough time to plan, making her feel less effective in the classroom.

Teachers also indicated that their teaching program for the next school year was usually undetermined, making it difficult to plan. Most participants in the study indicated that if they knew their program ahead of time, they would plan over the summer. Participant 7G stated:

We do not ever know what we are teaching for the next year. If I assume I am teaching what I usually do, yes, I do try to look into activities that might reach different types of students or just new ideas.

Participant 7G elaborated, explaining that she likes to plan and seek new approaches that could be

beneficial for students with disabilities. Participant 8G made a similar observation: “We do not ever know what we are teaching until we show up in September. In my department, our schedule is always very, very, very tentative.” Participant 3C had found out his program a week before the school year started. He stated, “I found out I was teaching inclusion a week before the first day of school. It did impact planning because Algebra is broken down into two years, and I was able to start pacing the curriculum.” The participants expressed the belief that sufficient planning time assists in developing instruction that is meaningful and reachable for students with disabilities in the inclusion environment.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

General and special education teachers believed that roles and responsibilities were shared, but defined. While both the general education and special education teachers engaged in parental outreach and co-teachers shared grading responsibilities, both teachers had specified roles. Overall, general education teachers believed their main role was to teach the class, and their responsibilities included planning lessons and assessments. Special education teachers all felt their roles and responsibilities in the classroom included providing support to those students with disabilities and differentiating materials.

Participant 2B believed that within the inclusion classroom, a special education teacher’s role should be more than differentiating and providing support to those students with individualized education programs. Participant 2B described her role in the classroom within the past year as follows:

You should take turns; they do now is on me, the 15-minute introduction of a lesson, and back and forth and walk around. However, what has been my role is not that. This year I did not have the opportunity to co-teach. I was more like an extra person in the room. I would go to individual students and help, so I was not really at the board that much.

Participant 2B believed that she has a minimal role because her co-teacher did not have any professional development on inclusion and how it was supposed to work. Participant 2B reflected positively on a broader prior co-teacher role that she had in the past. When asked about her roles and responsibilities, she stated, "We went to a one-time training together, and we understood our roles, and we worked together before teaching a lesson." Overall, Participant 2B perceived her roles to be dependent on her co-teacher, considering the "training of the person, the years of experience, and if the person is willing to give me room to put a voice in."

Participant 1A was unfamiliar with the educational content in her inclusion classroom and explained that in her role as special education teacher, she "walked around, kept students on task, tried to assist in any way possible." Participant 1A stated, "Since I did not have any knowledge in the content area, it was hard for me to differentiate and plan." She discussed how she took on full responsibilities that are usually shared, such as making all the parent outreach and entering grades in the online grade book. Participant 1A perceived inclusion to be her most challenging part of the day because she felt her role lack the content knowledge.

Participant 6F explained that her primary role in the classroom included differentiation. She explained her role as:

I break the work down a lot. I provide visuals. I do much rephrasing of questions. I provide much individual support. I did much work in creating small groups and do small group work basing it on student levels or grouping students with a higher functioning individual.

Therefore, it is taking what my co-teacher has and molding it to fit the needs of the kids.

Participant 6F attributed her significant classroom role to her co-teacher, whom she believed allowed her to have a more significant voice than what she thinks is typical in an inclusion classroom.

## Co-teaching Relationship

The teachers explained that the co-teacher they were assigned to work with influenced their own experiences in the inclusion classroom. Those teachers who had a strong co-teaching relationship reported positive classroom experiences and were able to identify memories of successful moments in the classroom.

Data generated through the interview process suggested that the co-teaching relationship strongly influences the success of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. Data retrieved from the questionnaires show that co-teaching relationships were one of the factors that influenced teacher attitudes toward inclusion. One participant noted that co-teachers had a “lack of motivation to work together,” making it difficult to strategize and plan lessons. Another teacher indicated that she “enjoys teaching in an inclusive setting in part because of her co-teacher.”

Participant 5E discussed how a co-teacher is a major if not the dominant factor to a thriving inclusion environment. He further stated:

You have to develop a routine, even minimal in the beginning until you get some comfort level with the other teacher. You need to have a good relationship. There are some teachers I do not want to teach with, I will never teach with again, and I will not name them. A lot of it has to do with time, working together for any extended length of time. One teacher, I taught with for eight years, and I would teach with that individual again. The one teacher I taught with one year I definitely would not teach with again.

Participant 5E reflected on his relationship with his current co-teacher. He discussed how positive his experience was, stating,

We had a great atmosphere, serious when we needed to be and were able to joke around with the kids. It worked out well. I do not know if there were any other essential elements other than, letting the students know the expectations and that there was no fooling around. We let students know they had to be organized. We had a routine for them. Both of us were

content proficient; we can play good cop, bad cop.

Participant 5E discussed how both he and his co-teacher were proficient in their content and made planning instruction for students with disabilities that much easier. He discussed how co-teacher is often turned to him to provide him with alternative ways to present materials that may be easier for all students to conceptualize since the content could often be dry.

Participant 8H explained that some teachers are fearful of co-teaching because of its reputation in the building. Participant 8H stated, "I think teaching inclusion has an awful rap because you could get a co-teacher that you do not get along with and get screwed. I have not had that experience, so I guess I do not get it." Participant 8H went on to state:

I know many people do not agree with that from their own experiences and I know many people have had a rough time and many people have a co-teacher who says they sit in the corner and hand out papers.

However, Participant 8H described an experience that was far from negative, instead stating that she and her co-teacher get along well. When it comes to teaching students with disabilities, Participant 8 H and her co-teacher, have the same outlook, methods, and expectations, leading to positive learning experiences for students. Participant 8H noted that, because there are two teachers in the classroom, they could provide students with more individual attention:

The one thing that worked well was calling the students one by one, having conferences with the students about their essays, and going over the feedback. Following this process, enable the chance to talk to kids according to their specific needs. I tried doing it in my junior class, where it was just me, and it was impossible to get through 34 kids.

Participant 6F also perceived her relationship with her co-teacher to be positive. Participant 6F indicated:

I think it is essential to work well with your co-teacher because I could see how it could go wrong quickly if you're not on the same page. My co-teacher is flexible, and he is always

open to new ideas. We kind of ping pong off each other during lessons. We were a united front. I think if I did not have someone like that; it would be a lot harder.

According to Participant 6F, her co-teacher gave her much freedom in planning instruction for the class as a whole; she and her co-teacher designed instruction tailored individually to student needs: “To make it works we did jigsaw activities and I think it helped my students because they were able to become an expert in one part and got a glimpse in to the others.” As a pair, they also differentiated for all types of learners by using gallery walks and other activities that incorporated visual, auditory, and kinesthetic approaches.

### **Professional Development**

Participants expressed the belief that ongoing professional development would help develop instruction for students with disabilities, and furthermore, the need for professional development for inclusion in specific areas. These areas include understanding models, differentiation, and understanding how disabilities affect a student’s learning. Teachers believed that having a better understanding of their roles and modifying lessons would increase success for students with disabilities. Teachers also expressed the belief that having a firm understanding of how a disability affects a child within the classroom would increase the student’s chance at succeeding because teachers would be able to create learning opportunities that would suit the student’s individual needs.

The data collected demonstrated that all participants believed they could benefit from professional development on the models of co-teaching. Teachers noted that they usually practice the traditional model (one teaches one assist) but would be interested in professional development that showed them how to implement other models successfully. Participant 2B stated, “There is no major training. There is no backing of support to show how models can be done. It is more recommendations on an observation sheet, but no modeling.” The teachers noted that seeing live

demonstrations of different co-teaching models would allow them to make shifts in developing instruction.

Data collected in this study also suggested that professional development is needed to teach general education teachers how to differentiate. Those special education teachers who participated in the study believed their co-teacher could use assistance in differentiating the curriculum.

Participant 5E explained that the general education teachers he has worked with in the past have found it very difficult to understand what is needed when designing instruction for students with disabilities. Participant 6F stated:

General education teachers are there to teach the content, and so they go to college and learn only their subject. They do not necessarily learn the same techniques that special education teachers do and do not know what to look out for because they are looking at the class as a whole, not individuals.

Special education teachers perceived differentiation to be part of their roles and responsibilities but believed all teachers in the inclusion setting should have an understanding of how to present materials utilizing different approaches.

Teachers noted that they did not have a firm understanding of how a disability affects a student academically, socially, and behaviorally. Teachers expressed that professional development focusing on disabilities would help create a thriving inclusion environment for learners of all disabilities. Participant 7G stated, "Most of us had no training. We do not have enough training in the different disabilities and the different techniques that will work for those students who have disabilities." Participant 1A stated, "I feel those general education teachers should be given training on students with disabilities because they do not always approach topics and situations with the disability in mind." Participant 1A further stated, "Many teachers fail to understand that a child's disability affects them not only cognitively, but also emotionally and socially. Some teachers need to show different types of support besides academic." Participant 5E also believed general education

teachers need training, stating:

In most situations, unless they have been doing it for several years, and I am talking about a general education teacher in that setting, most of the time they do not handle it very well. It is challenging to control or understand what is needed. Many times, you get the “your kids are not focusing or doing well.” They say that and refer to special education students.

Teachers believed if they had more knowledge of inclusion, especially how to plan instruction utilizing the inclusion models and how to best approach the needs of students with specific disabilities, students with disabilities would have higher levels of success.

## **Support**

Data from participants showed that having a strong support team helped make teachers aware of the strategies and approaches students with specific disabilities could benefit from in the inclusion classroom. Both general and special education teachers expressed the belief that having support from administration, related service providers, and parents played a significant role in the success of students with disabilities. The teachers viewed this support as a way to promote learning according to student levels and needs.

Data collected from the questionnaires, interviews suggested that support from administration, and related service providers help in developing instruction. Many teachers believed that having constructive feedback from school administrators helps promote learning for students with disabilities. Participant 6F discussed that having an administrator who is an advocate for the students and supports a teacher’s willingness to try new approaches is the type of support that allows her to grow as an educator. Participant 6F also expressed the belief that having an excellent team of related service providers allowed geared instruction toward student needs. Participant 7G stated, “Having support from the guidance counselor or psychologist or social worker, just getting their input often helps figure out what strategies they need.” Teachers felt that

related service providers offered insight into the types of activities that could be utilized in the classroom to promote growth in the area of struggle. Participant 4D stated:

I think you need a ton of support. The teachers and parents have to be on the same page as well as the administration and any specialist that the student sees, like related service providers. I think all of them need to be on the same page in order for our students to be successful in the general education setting.

Overall, teachers believed that having support from staff members who service the students in other areas helps shape instruction to meet the student's learning needs.

Two themes emerged to support the answer to Research Question 2: (a) lack of parent and student involvement and (b) lack of literacy skills. These themes are described in detail below.

### **Lack of Parent and Student Involvement**

Teachers stated that parents often do not respond to parental outreach, making it difficult for parents to be informed about poor performance by the student or even upcoming assignments. Teachers also reported that students do not ask for help, do not attend tutoring, and often become disinterested once work becomes challenging.

**Parent involvement (PI).** Teachers expressed the belief that students' lack of achievement is a result of poor parent involvement. Teachers perceived lack of involvement by both parents and students to be a contributing factor to poor performance among students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. Participants expressed frustration that parents did not support their children at home in terms of monitoring the completion of work. Also, teachers reported that parents were not as responsive as they should be regarding returning phone calls. Teachers noted on the questionnaires that parents often do not return phone calls and that even with continual outreach, often no change is seen in the student's academic performance. Participant 3C stated, "A lot of the students, they do not get help or support at home. A lot of the times, parents are not helping at home or give answers. They are not working on their own." Participant 4D

discussed that both parents and teachers need to be on the same page, going on to explain that, very often, parents do not send their students to tutoring, even if the teacher strongly recommends it. For students to be successful, teachers and parents must have a clear set of shared expectations.

**Student involvement (SI).** Data suggested that students lack involvement in academia. Participants indicated that there are many factors affecting students motivation. Participant 2B stated, “Some students are misplaced in ICT. The special need students can not keep up with the fast pace of the general education side and are not motivated to keep up with the rest of the students.” Those students who are placed in the inclusion classroom may not have the ability to stay on track with the general education curriculum. Participant 3C stated, “Some students did not belong in the inclusion setting and were placed there, and it was a challenge on how we would group them.”

Participant 5E elaborated on the role a student’s attitude plays in academic performance, stating: “We as teachers only have that student for 45 minutes each day. Unless that student has personal drive and motivation, they will find it difficult to be successful.” Participant 5E expressed the belief that students who are not academically inclined do not take advantage of the many opportunities that are offered, such as tutoring and Saturday school. He also added that students with disabilities often do not turn in projects that provide more natural ways for them to earn good grades, causing them to lose points.

Teachers expressed that many students do not take advantage of the resources that the school offers. They lack self-advocacy skills and the ability to ask for help when needed. There are ample tutoring opportunities, but the lack of motivation on the student’s behalf or “I just need to pass” mentality, which Participant 5E noted in many of his students, will not increase academic success for students with disabilities.

**Lack of Literacy Skills (LS).** Teachers reported that a lack of literacy skills was a significant cause of the decrease in achievement among students with disabilities. Teachers felt that many

students lacked the necessary skills needed to meet grade-level standards for both curriculum and state assessments. One participant indicated, “SWDs have poor skills, lack vocabulary and background knowledge, which makes it difficult to differentiate in an integrated classroom.” The teacher provided an example of how a student in the class did not know the term *female*, something neither he nor his co-teacher would think needed defining at that grade level.

Another teacher discussed how the “foundational literacy skills that kids need to succeed are often lacking.” Many teachers noted that some students with disabilities are not succeeding due to improper placement. “They are not at the reading level of their peers and makes it difficult to access the general education curriculum.” Teachers perceived this as an issue because these “students who lack literacy skills require modified materials far below grade level, and when they sit to take the state assessment, they do not have the literacy skills needed to answer the questions fully.”

Participant 2B discussed how some students with disabilities in the inclusion setting lack skills and require individualized instruction. Participant 2B stated:

For special education students, they need the one on one support sometimes and for me to go back and teach individually. They need smaller groups, which I sometimes take small groups and reteach and reinforce and give more examples and check for mistakes.

Data showed that participants feel that providing instruction in small groups allows students with disabilities to focus more and learn the skills needed to grasp the content and succeed in the content area.

#### **Chapter 4 Summary**

The research findings for this study provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of teacher perceptions about inclusion classrooms. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of both general and special educators regarding their development of instruction for students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom, as well as to

determine how student achievement is affected in the inclusion classroom. Data collected from questionnaires and interviews showed teachers' attitudes toward developing instruction within the inclusion setting were heavily influenced by lack of planning, teacher roles, and responsibilities, co-teaching relationship, professional development, and support from personnel. Teachers believed that student achievement is decreasing within the inclusion setting because parents are not involved, and students with disabilities lack motivation and the literacy skills needed to succeed in the general education curriculum. In Chapter 5, the researcher will present the discussion, interpret results, and draw conclusions.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

The study results showed that, for students with disabilities to succeed in the inclusion environment, substantial resources, collaboration among teachers, administration, parents, and professional development are required. The participants in the study reported reasons for decreasing achievement levels among students with disabilities within the inclusion setting. The reasons they reported supported those already established in the literature, including lack of planning time, co-teaching relationship, and roles and responsibilities.

This chapter includes a summary and discussion of the study results and findings, including an evaluation of the study results about the literature on inclusion and a review of the study's limitations. Finally, the researcher highlighted the study's implications for everyday teaching practices, policies, and theories, as well as recommendations for further research on inclusion and student achievement. All names used are pseudonyms to establish confidentiality and protect the identity of teacher participants.

### **Summary of the Results**

Two central research questions guided the study:

1. How do teachers' perceptions of inclusion affect the development of instruction?
2. How is special education student achievement affected in the inclusion classroom?

These questions were created to address how teacher perceptions impact the development of instruction and academic achievement of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. The questionnaire and interview sessions provided rich and descriptive data from the participants in the study.

The results showed that the sample of high school inclusion teachers perceived the current inclusion program to be useful, but indicated factors that prevented the implementation of best

teaching practices and favorable conditions for both teachers and students. Teachers believed that planning, roles and responsibilities, co-teaching relationship, professional development, and support were key factors that contributed to their ability to plan instruction for students with disabilities effectively. The teacher participants consistently described these factors as being most important in providing access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities while creating an environment that is based on knowledge of students with disabilities and support from those who work best with the student.

Results demonstrated that high school inclusion teachers believed students with disabilities are not succeeding in the current inclusion program because they lack literacy skills and motivation. Teachers also believed that the parents of those students are not actively involved in their child's education. This lack of involvement on the parents' part diverts students from completing assignments, handing projects in on time, and attending additional opportunities such as tutoring, from which students with disabilities would benefit.

## **Discussion of the Results**

### **Results: Research Question 1**

The first research question was: How do teachers' perceptions of inclusion affect the development of instruction? Results from this study showed that teachers did not feel prepared to develop instruction for students with disabilities. Teachers noted ongoing concerns that prevented them from developing quality instruction; issues with planning time, the conflict between classroom responsibilities, compatibility among co-teachers, and lack of training. These results were categorized under four themes: planning time, roles and responsibilities, co-teaching relationship, and professional development.

**Planning time.** Teachers reported they were given planning time weekly, but not daily, which prevented them from collaborating and designing instruction that meets the needs of

learners. One participant discussed how she did not have enough time to plan with her co-teacher because she taught three different courses, which prevented her from meeting with her co-teacher daily. As a result, she felt ineffective in the classroom because she could not modify content and relied on her co-teacher to plan instruction. One teacher expressed the discontent her co-teacher had for the inclusion environment. Her co-teacher lacked the motivation to meet and discuss strategies that could be used to group students by ability or create activities that support student-learning needs. Teachers are not provided the time to work together and develop instruction that addresses students' IEP goals. There is a vast need for planning lessons that include individualized learning modalities, as students with disabilities require opportunities for learning through their preferred learning style.

**Roles and responsibilities and co-teaching relationship.** General education and special education teachers described conflicts hindered their ability to work together. Teachers also noted that different teaching philosophies between co-teachers led to conflict when developing instruction. For example, some special education teachers believed that below-grade-level texts should be provided to students with disabilities, while general education teachers believed that every student should receive grade-level texts. This led to difficulties with planning lessons that met the needs of all learners. Because teachers were often paired with one another based on scheduling needs, instead of philosophical compatibility, teachers frequently disagreed on how to develop instruction. One way to resolve these types of situations is to provide inclusion teachers with self-assessments or inventories inquiring about their educational philosophy. Use of these assessments or inventories before pairing teachers would increase compatibility between co-teachers. Teachers should ensure they share similar beliefs about how instruction should be planned and presented and understand that students with disabilities need multisensory instruction. Identifying teacher visions enhances compatibility among co-teachers and promotes a more productive environment for students with disabilities.

Participants also reported that teacher roles and responsibilities inside the classroom were not clearly defined. This caused the general education teacher to take ownership of the classroom, while the special education teacher became an assistant, monitoring classwork and student behavior. For example, one special education teacher discussed how she taught in the inclusion setting for over 10 years. The last two years, her role had been diminished because her co-teacher was new and did not share responsibilities in the classroom. Another teacher explained that her roles and responsibilities were confined to walking around and keeping students on task because she did not know the subject she taught. Many of the teachers who participated in the study relied on the inclusion model of “lead and support,” where one teacher is responsible for providing instruction, and the other teacher walks around and provides assistance and support. This model prevents students from receiving small group instruction, having their individual needs addressed, and working as they would in other models of co-teaching.

**Professional development.** Professional development was another theme that frequently occurred in participant responses. Teachers were concerned that they were not fully prepared to design instruction for those students with disabilities inside their classroom. Many participants discussed how they do not have enough knowledge of the five inclusion models because they had no coursework or training. Instead, teachers in the study continue to adopt the model of lead and support, where one teacher teaches and one teacher assists. For example, a special education teacher discussed how it was difficult to modify materials for a few students during a lesson when all students had to follow along with the general education teacher. Teachers believed the learning needs of students with disabilities were not being individualized in this model because it called for large group instruction.

Teachers also discussed the need for professional development that focused on characteristics of disabilities. General education teachers expressed that they had limited

knowledge of the characteristics of student disabilities, making instruction challenging to develop and gear towards the learning needs associated with specific disabilities. Special education teachers elaborated that general education teachers need professional development, focusing on how disabilities affect students. One participant felt that general education teachers need the training the most because they do not always approach instruction with a student's disability in mind. Another participant believed training would help general education and special education teachers learn more about strategies that could target specific disabilities.

Special education teachers discussed the need for general education teachers to focus on differentiation and adapt instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities. One special education teacher observed that her co-teacher would benefit from workshops focusing on modifying materials because she felt her co-teacher did not plan lessons with a student's disability in mind. Another special education teacher stated that general education teachers do not study courses in college that prepare them for the special education setting. Planning instruction that is differentiated makes inclusion possible, as teachers can plan for every student while taking into account each student's learning style. Differentiation ensures that the curriculum is both understandable and relatable to the student while ensuring that individual goals are being addressed.

## **Results: Research Question 2**

The second research question was: How is special education student achievement affected in the inclusion classroom? Participants expressed a belief that two factors contribute to lower student achievement: lack of involvement by parents and students and lack of literacy skills among students with disabilities.

**Parent and student involvement.** An unanticipated theme that emerged in the study was the lack of parent and student involvement. Teachers in this study indicated that lack of

involvement among parents and students has led to poor assessment grades on Regents' exams. Teachers believe that students with disabilities who perceive their parents to be lightly involved in their education lack motivation and have low state assessment scores. Teachers stated that parents of students who were not passing would not return phone calls. Often, those students would not hand in homework or complete assignments at home. Teachers elaborated on their frustration over parents not supporting their children at home. One participant believed parents and teachers have to be on the same page and share the same goals for the student. Despite constant parent outreach and tutoring opportunities for students, participants reported that performance in some subjects has decreased or has stayed stagnant.

Teachers were also concerned with students being uninvolved in their learning process. Students with disabilities are capable of succeeding, specifically on state assessments, but teachers have become doubtful and wary when there is an absence of involvement on the student's behalf. One participant elaborated on how students' drive plays a role in their academic performance, adding that some special education students have the mentality that their goal is "just passing." Also, teacher participants discussed how students do not advocate for themselves and do not ask for help, causing them to fail. Some of the special education teachers who have worked at the study site for many years believe the special education department should reinstate inquiry teams, where teachers focus on those students whom they believe lack support at home and could use the encouragement and assistance from school staff. Teacher participants discussed how inquiry teams were used in the past but were discontinued due to budget cuts and changes in administration. Participants also expressed a need for professional development that would help assist teachers in increasing student engagement, specifically for those students who are not academically motivated.

**Lack of literacy skills.** The second theme that emerged under the second research question was the lack of literacy skills. Teachers recognized that students with disabilities

frequently lacked the reading and writing skills needed to master the general education curriculum and pass the state exams. Teachers attributed the low assessment scores to the students with disabilities' lack of literacy skills needed to understand grade-level content. One participant discussed how many students are moved to the least restrictive environment lacking the foundational skills needed to complete assignments. Another participant discussed how students with disabilities are provided far below grade level texts, and when they take the Regents exam, they do not pass because the reading is too difficult. Teachers expressed a need for remedial courses that would enhance a special education student's reading and writing skills, specifically those students with disabilities in the inclusion setting who have reading levels that fall far below grade level. Professional development is also needed to assist in modifying grade level instruction and making appropriate instructional accommodations that would support learning needs.

### **Discussion of the Results about the Literature**

Co-teaching has become a typical support service for students with disabilities in secondary classes (King-Sears et al., 2014). It is a form of inclusion that allows schools to provide the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities (Friend & Cook, 2010; Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2013). Research has suggested that the success of students with disabilities in the inclusion setting depends on two important factors: educator attitudes toward students with disabilities and educators' personal belief in their ability to provide instruction (Cassady, 2011; Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011). It is essential to investigate teachers' perceptions because their attitudes contribute to student teaching (Hattie, 2009). Teachers in this study described their perceptions of inclusion and discussed how their attitudes influenced student learning. Through the constructivist framework, teachers reflected on how they promoted the needs of their students within the inclusion classroom.

**Constructivism.** Constructivism can help researchers understand how teachers collaborate and provide instruction to students with disabilities. Sharma and Chawla (2014) discussed how the constructivist-learning environment is built on collaboration. Through collaboration, teacher participants can interact with one another, share experiences and knowledge, and personalize lessons for their inclusion setting (Dewey, 1967; Goddard & Goddard, 2007). Teacher participants in this study discussed the importance of the relationship between co-teachers and the impact it has on developing instruction and reflect on positive experiences that occurred within their inclusion classroom. Teachers discussed that when they were able to collaborate with their co-teacher, they were able to develop meaningful instruction. The findings are consistent with literature that showed teachers who meet frequently are more eager to fulfill their roles and responsibilities inside the classroom and design instruction that increases engagement and maximizes interaction among students (Makoelle, 2014).

**Inclusion models and teacher roles.** Teacher participants were knowledgeable about inclusion and were able to provide an overview of what the inclusion classroom should include and what their specific roles entail. Teachers explained their roles inside their classroom. General education teachers believed they were responsible for planning instruction and special education teachers were responsible for adapting instruction. These findings are consistent with the literature because prior research has revealed that in co-taught classrooms, the general education teacher is mostly responsible for content and planning instruction, while the special education teacher's main role is to differentiate and address learning challenges of those students with disabilities (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017).

Teachers lacked knowledge of the specific co-teaching models and teacher expectations for each model. Teachers felt they did not have enough knowledge to implement other co-teaching models inside their classroom besides the lead and support model. This would mean both general

and special education teachers would have to step out of their defined roles and collaboratively, develop curriculum and create lessons, modify lessons using different approaches, manage student behavior, and assess student progress for all students within the inclusion setting (Friend et al., 1993) There is an urgency for inclusion teachers to move from their separate special education and general education environments and take on new roles and responsibilities where management of all students is shared (Sun et al., 2013).

**Teacher perceptions of inclusion.** The participants communicated an understanding of inclusion, highlighting factors that have caused them to perceive inclusion in such a way. Teachers were willing to reflect on their experiences and share what they perceived to be issued in the inclusion environment. Planning time, compatibility among co-teachers with an understanding of roles and responsibilities, support from administration and related service providers, and training are factors that must be present for an inclusion classroom to be effective (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; McDuffie et al., 2007). The study corroborated the literature as teacher participants believed these factors were also issues preventing them from planning instruction. The participants also declared that a lack of literacy skills among students with disabilities and involvement by both students and parents contributed to poor state assessment scores. The participants agreed that when factors or specific conditions are lacking, co-teaching could often yield disastrous results.

Some teachers reported that their co-teacher was unmotivated to meet and plan lessons. This made it difficult to work together and share common goals and decreased the likelihood of learning from each other and creating a successful inclusion environment, which is a characteristic of the constructivist view (Doobs, 1937). Teacher participants recognized that lack of collaboration has effects on the development of instruction, student learning, and engagement, which in turn,

affects the motivation of those students with disabilities and debilitates them from playing an active role in their education.

**Teacher efficacy.** Teachers were willing to reflect on their own experiences and share what they found to be successful. Those teachers who shared positive experiences felt prepared to teach inclusion because they had acquired the necessary skill set. These findings are broadly in line with the literature because high school teachers, who have increased efficacy towards their inclusive classroom, have received training or have had positive experiences with both their co-teacher and students with disabilities (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Teachers who felt prepared had high efficacy because they have obtained training and enjoyed working with their co-teacher. Some of the teachers had highlighted moments where they believed their lessons were engaging and informative for students, indicating that their confidence and self-esteem greatly impacted their willingness to test out new approaches.

Teachers who reported issues such as incompatibility with their co-teacher or who believed their co-teacher lacked the skill set or content knowledge to teach students with disabilities had negative attitudes toward inclusion. This validates the literature because teachers who have negative attitudes toward inclusion believe they lack the skills to teach students with disabilities and become ineffective within the inclusion setting (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Ross & Bruce, 2007b; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

**Factors affecting student performance.** Teachers believed that student assessment scores have decreased because students with disabilities lack the skills needed to complete grade level coursework. Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) discussed how academic learning is often tracked by high-stakes testing. Failure to pass assessments can prevent a student from graduating and moving on to a post-secondary institution (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Mastropieri and Scruggs discussed how state assessments had caused some teachers not to differentiate material

because of the pressure to cover grade-level content. This validates the literature because teachers are aware that curriculum in the inclusion environment should be modified, but often feel students will be unprepared to take the regents at the end of the coursework if they are not given grade level coursework.

**Need for professional development.** Teacher participants discussed the need for ongoing professional development that would promote the skills needed to teach in the inclusion setting. Teachers are more likely to learn and acquire skills if the workshops are of interest (Lumpe, 2007). Teachers desired workshops that were focused on the models of inclusion, characteristics of disabilities, and differentiation. These findings run counter to the widely expressed view that professional development allows for collaboration, the discussion of strategies and how to promote learning for students with disabilities and other special needs (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017; Sun et al., 2013).

Teacher participants demonstrated knowledge of inclusion, but were candid about the areas of improvement and shared possible ideas of how to enhance the current inclusion program. These results indicate that there is a need for teachers to learn more about students with disabilities and current and specific methods that could be used to create instruction and teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. Because inclusion is widely promoted, there have been a growing number of students with disabilities being served in the general education classroom (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001).

### **Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

This section includes a discussion of the implications of the results on practice, policy, and theory. The results are related to the conceptual framework, constructivism, and explain the implications of this study on practice and policy in connection to the literature. The results of this study were made available to scholarly and educational communities.

## **Practice**

The gap in practice that was explored in this study suggests that there is a need to improve teachers' knowledge of inclusion regarding increasing student achievement. The teacher participants discussed how they are using their knowledge and classroom experiences to develop instruction for students with disabilities. Teacher participants expressed doubt in their ability to provide an adequate education for students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. Teacher participants expressed concern over several issues that prevented them from providing quality instruction for students, which included but were not limited to lack of planning, professional development, and literacy skills. The absences of these necessary components have led to a decrease in student achievement. Thus, there is a need to continually look for new knowledge and change to teaching strategies that promote better education and skill acquisition for those students with disabilities in the inclusion setting.

In an effort to improve the situation at the current high school, teachers need to engage in ongoing professional development that promotes active learning experiences. Workshops should allow teachers to observe how inclusion models work and how to successfully implement literacy strategies in the inclusion setting. Teachers should be provided the opportunity to observe inclusion classrooms in other schools where there has been success on state assessments among students with disabilities in the inclusion setting.

## **Policy**

The results of this study do not represent all inclusion programs throughout urban high schools in New York but indicate that the sample of participants at the study site understand the current inclusion program and would like an improvement to the program within the study site and throughout New York. As more students with disabilities are moved into the least restrictive environment, from a policy perspective, it would be in a teachers', schools', and students' best

interest for districts and policy-makers to include guidelines on how to select inclusion teachers, mandating a limited number of partners for each school year, and require training specializing in inclusion models, characteristics of disabilities, and differentiation.

At this study site, the researcher recommended that teachers complete a survey where they indicate the type of professional development that would best prepare them to teach in the inclusion setting. Teachers should be allowed to attend workshops with their co-teachers that help them develop the skills necessary for working collaboratively in a partnership.

## **Theory**

The findings of this study supported constructivism, the theory that maintains that individuals construct knowledge and meaning through experiences and interaction (Vygotsky, 1962). The findings supported the theory because the learning experiences the participants have had with their co-teachers have helped shaped their perceptions and knowledge of inclusion. As the data and results from this study suggest, teachers continually make meaning as they collaborate to design lesson plans, discuss teaching strategies/approaches, and modify lessons for all learners.

Teachers reflected on their ideas and experiences of inclusion, describing the importance of collaboration, indicating that teachers construct their perceptions of inclusion by interaction and the ideas, events, and activities in which they come in contact. Teachers perceived collaboration among teachers, administrators, related service providers, parents, and students to be the basis of an active inclusion program. Through collaboration, teachers were able to enhance the inclusion environment by discussing meeting students' needs in the inclusion setting.

## **Limitations**

Three limitations have been identified: the study only focuses on one school, the possibility of participant bias, and the use of an open-ended questionnaire. The study was limited to only the perceptions and experiences of a sample of inclusion teachers at one high school site. The sample

did not represent all high school inclusion teachers throughout urban high schools in New York and, therefore, was constrained to only the data available to and experiences of the participants within the high school where the study took place.

Within the study, there was also significant potential for participant bias. Because the researcher and the participants held a professional relationship, participants may have responded based on what they believe the researcher wanted to hear. Also, because participants were aware of the purpose of the study, participants may have adapted their responses to provide answers that supported what they perceived to be intended results.

Another limitation of the study was utilizing an open-ended questionnaire. Some of the questionnaires collected were more complete than others were and provided substantial information, while others did not. Those questionnaires that lacked information led the researcher to attempt to make sense of answers, leading to potential bias to influence conclusions. Also, the researcher could not guarantee that the participant answered the questions honestly.

### **Data Collection**

The data gathered from the study was limited, as it only came from a small group of inclusion teachers at the study site. The time spent collecting data from the teacher participants presents another limitation. The researcher spent a small amount of time, less than 30 minutes when orchestrating the open-ended questionnaire. When conducting interviews, member checking, and follow up questions, the researcher spent no more than two hours with each participant. The data collected from both the open-ended questionnaire and interview is limited to what participants discussed during the time spent together, which is not a substantial amount of time for detailed information.

## **Recommendation for Future Research**

### **Areas of Improvement**

Areas for improvement of this study for future researchers include the use of a new methodology approach in the form of observations. Utilizing observations would allow the researcher to see the type of instruction that is developed and implemented within the inclusion classroom and see how students with disabilities respond. Future replication of this study would benefit from a yearlong analysis in which the teachers can be interviewed and observed several times throughout the year to decipher which instructional approaches work and which do not.

### **Participants**

A variety of participants in the case study may lead to the evolution of different perspectives for the current inclusion program. Anyone responsible for a replication of this study should also consider expanding the study to include students in the inclusion program and their parents. This may lead to a more productive case study where multiple perceptions from teachers, students, and parents would lead to an in-depth examination of the inclusion program. By including the perceptions of teachers, parents, and students, the results could provide significant implications regarding the current inclusion program and decreasing student achievement.

### **Additional Recommendations**

Future research is needed to explore types of professional development that may have an impact on teacher perceptions towards inclusion. Professional development workshops can focus on the areas that would allow teacher attitudes towards inclusion to increase positively. Additionally, further research is needed to identify whether professional development is relevant and applicable for inclusion teachers.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how teacher perceptions of inclusion impact the development of instruction and student achievement. This chapter included a discussion of the results of the study in detail and the context of the central research questions. The first research question asked how teacher perceptions affected the development of instruction. After analyzing data from questionnaires and interviews, the results indicated that several factors were hindering the ability of inclusion teachers to develop effective instruction suitable for students with disabilities. These factors included a lack of planning time and the need for professional development to increase the knowledge of inclusion and to provide exceptional instructional support to students with disabilities.

The second research question asked teachers how special education achievement was affected in the classroom. Data indicated that teachers believed lack of parent and student involvement, and lack of literacy skills has caused student achievement in the inclusion environment to decline. One of the ideas for improvement was creating a remedy course focusing on reading and writing skills to support literacy needs. Another idea was reinstating inquiry teams focusing on students who lack motivation and are not supported at home.

In this dissertation, the researcher addressed a gap in the knowledge of inclusion among these teachers in which the conceptual framework of constructivism was used to study the perceptions of general education and special education high school teachers who work with inclusion students. The methodology of the qualitative case study was designed to learn more about this group of teachers to provide their story in detail.

## References

- Aish, D. (2014). *Teachers' beliefs about creativity in the elementary classroom* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation Dissertations and Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3631498)
- Akpan, J., & Beard, L. (2016). Constructivist teaching strategies to enhance academic outcomes of students with special needs. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 4(2), 392–398. Retrieved from <http://www.hrpub.org>
- Allday, R., Neilson-Gatti, S., & Hudson T. (2013). Preparation for inclusion in teacher education pre-service curricula. *Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 36(4), 298–311. Doi:10.1177/0888406413497485
- Allison, R. B. (2011). *The lived experiences of general and special education teachers in the inclusion classrooms: A phenomenological study* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from Dissertations & Theses @ Walden University. (902459538). Retrieved from <https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org>
- Alquraini, T., & Gut, D. (2012). Critical components of successful inclusion of students with severe disabilities: Literature review. *International Journal of Special Education*, 27(1), 42–59. Retrieved from <http://www.internationaljournalofspecialeducation.com>
- Amineh, R. J., & Asl, H. D. (2015). Review of constructivism and social constructivism. *Journal of Social Science, Literature and Language*, 1(1), 9–16. Retrieved from <http://www.blue-ap.org>
- Arshad, M., Zaidi, S., & Mahmood, K. (2015). Self-esteem and academic performance among university students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(1), 156–162. <http://www.iiste.org>
- Arthaud, T. J., Aram, R. J., Breck, S. E., Doelling, J. E., & Bushrow, K. M. (2007). Developing collaborative skills in pre-service teachers: A partnership between general and special education. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 30, 1–12. Retrieved from

<http://journals.sagepub.com>

Austin, V. (2001). Teachers' beliefs about co-teaching. *Remedial and Special Education, 22*(4), 245–255. doi:10.1177/074193250102200408

Baglieri, S., & Knopf, J. H. (2004). Normalizing difference in inclusive teaching. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37*, 525–529. doi:10.1177/00222194040370060701

Baines, L. (1997). Future schlock: Using fabricated data and politically correct platitudes in the name of education reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 78*(7), 493–498. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com>

Baines, L., Baines, C., & Masterson, C. (1994). Mainstreaming: One school's reality. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(1), 39–40. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com>

Bhattacharjee, J. (2015). Constructivist approach to learning- An effective approach of teaching learning. *International Research Journal of Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Studies, 1*(6), 65–74. Retrieved from <http://www.irjims.com>

Bloomberg, D., & Volpe, M. (2012). *Completing your qualitative dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London, England: SAGE.

Brown, N., Howerter, C., & Morgan, J. (2013). Tools and strategies for making co-teaching work. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 49*(2), 84–91. doi:10.1177/1053451213493174

Bruner, J. (1960). *The process of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bryant D., Bryant, B., & Smith, D. (2017). Teaching students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. *ELT Journal, 71*(4), 525–528. Retrieved from <https://academic.oup.com>

- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2007). *Business research methods*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Carpenter, L. B., & Dyal, A. (2006). Secondary inclusion: Strategies for implementing the consultative teacher model. *Education*, *127*, 344–350. Retrieved from <http://www.projectinnovation.biz>
- Cassady, J. M. (2011). Teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with autism and emotional behavioral disorder. *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, *2*(7), 1–21. Retrieved from <https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu>
- Conderman, G. (2011). Middle school co-teaching: Effective practices and student reflections. *Middle School Journal*, *42*(4), 24–31. doi:10.1080/00940771.2011.11461771
- Conderman, G., & Hedin, L. (2012). Purposeful assessment practices for co-teachers. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *44*(4), 19–27. doi:10.1177/004005991204400402
- Conderman, G., & Hedin, L. (2015). Differentiating instruction in co-taught classrooms for students with emotional/behaviour difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, *20*(4), 349–361. doi:10.1080/13632752.2014.976918
- Cook, B. G., Semmel, M. I., & Gerber, M. M. (1999). Attitudes of principals and special education teachers toward the inclusion of students with mild disabilities: Critical differences of opinion. *Remedial and Special Education*, *20*, 199–207. doi: 10.1177/074193259902000403
- Cooper, D. R., & Schindler, P. (2006). *Business research methods* (9th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Coyne, I. T. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling: Merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *26*(3), 623–630. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.t01-25-00999.x

- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Crowe, S., Creswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *11*(1), 100–109. doi:10.1186/1471-2288-11-100
- Daniel, L., & King, D. (1997). Impact of inclusion education on academic achievement, student behavior and self-esteem, and parental attitudes. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *91*(2), 67–80. doi:10.1080/00220679709597524
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *8*(1), 1–40. doi:10.14507/epaa.v8n1.2000
- De Massis, A., & Kotlar, J. (2014). The case study method in family business research: Guidelines for qualitative scholarship. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, *5*(1), 15–29. doi:10.1016/j.jfbs.2014.01.007
- Denton, D. (2012). Enhancing instruction through constructivism, cooperative learning, and cloud computing. *Tech Trends*, *56*(4), 34–41. doi:10.1007/s11528-012-0585-1
- Denzin, N. (2009). The elephant in the living room: Or extending the conversation about the politics of evidence. *Qualitative Research*, *9*(2), 139–160. doi:10.1177/1468794108098034
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

- Dieker, L. A., & Murawski, W. W. (2003). Co-teaching at the secondary level: Unique issues, current trends, and suggestions for success. *The High School Journal*, *86*, 1–13.  
doi:10.1353/hsj.2003.0007
- Dixon, F., Yssel, N., McConnell, J., & Hardin, T. (2014). Differentiated instruction, professional development, and teacher efficacy. *Journal for The Education of the Gifted*, *37*(2), 111–127.  
doi:0.1177/0162353214529042
- Doobs, W. L. (1937). Competition and cooperation. *American Journal of Sociology*, *43*(3), 481–483.  
Retrieved from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu>
- Driscoll, D. L. (2011). *Writing spaces: Readings on writing*. Anderson, SC: Press Parlor.
- Dukes, C., & Lamar-Dukes, P. (2009). Inclusion by design: Engineering inclusive practices in secondary schools. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *41*(3), 16–23.  
doi:10.1177/004005990904100302
- Elman, C., Gerring, J., & Mahoney, J. (2016). Case study research: Putting the quant into the qual. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *45*(3), 375–391. doi:10.1177/0049124116644273
- Englert, C. S., & Tarrant, K. L. (1995). Creating collaborative cultures for educational change. *Remedial and Special Education*, *16*, 325–336. doi:10.1177/074193259501600602
- Everston, C. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (2013). *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Farber, N. (2006). Professional school counseling. *American School Counselor Association*, *9*(5), 367–375. Retrieved from <https://www.schoolcounselor.org>
- Fennick, E., & Liddy, D. (2001). Responsibilities and preparation for collaborative teaching: Co-teachers' perspectives. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, *24*(3), 229–240.  
doi:10.1177/088840640102400307

- Fisher, S. (2013). *Developing creativity from school and home experiences: How parents and educators influence students in developing their creative literacy practices* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation Dissertations and Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3566488)
- Florian, L. (2008). Special or inclusive education: Future trends. *British Journal of Special Education*, 35(4), 202–208. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8578.2008.00402.x
- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2010). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Friend, M., Cook, L., Hurley-Chamberlain, D., & Shamberger, C. (2010). Co-teaching: An illustration of the complexity of collaboration in special education. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 20(1), 9–27. doi:10.1080/10474410903535380
- Friend, M., Reising, M., & Cook, L. (1993). Co-teaching: An overview of the past, a glimpse at the present, and considerations for the future. *Preventing School Failure*, 37(3), 6–10. doi:10.1080/1045988X.1993.9944611
- Fuchs, W. W. (2010). Examining teachers' perceived barriers associated with inclusion. *SRATE Journal*, 19(1), 30–35. Retrieved from <http://www.srate.org>
- Gartner, A., & Lipsky, D. K. (1987). Beyond special education: Toward a quality system for all students. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(4), 367–395. doi:10.17763/haer.57.4.kj517305m7761218
- Gerber, P., & Popp, P. (2000). Making collaborative teaching more effective for academically able students: Recommendations for implementation and training. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 23(3), 229–236. doi:10.2307/1511166

- Goddard, Y. L., & Goddard, R. D. (2007). A theoretical and empirical investigation of teacher collaboration for school improvement and student achievement in public elementary schools. *Teachers College Record*, 109(4), 877–896. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org>
- Goodlad, J. L., & Oakes, J. (1988). We must offer equal access to knowledge. *Educational Leadership*, 45(5), 16–22. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org>
- Gotshall, C., & Stefanou, C. (2011). The effects of on-going consultation for accommodating students with disabilities on teacher self-efficacy and learned helplessness. *Education*, 132(2), 321–331. Retrieved from [Retrieved from http://www.projectinnovation.biz](http://www.projectinnovation.biz)
- Gubrium, J., & Holstein, J. (2002). *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Gunter, M., Estes, T., & Schwab, J. (2007). *Instruction: A models approach* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hamilton-Jones, B., & Vail, C. (2013). Preparing special educators for collaboration in the classroom: Pre-service teachers' beliefs and perspectives. *International Journal of Special Education*, 29(1), 76–86. doi: <http://journals.sagepub.com>
- Hang, Q., & Rabren, K. (2009). An examination of co-teaching: Perspectives and efficacy indicators. *Remedial and Special Education*, 30(5), 259–268. doi:10.1177/0741932508321018
- Hardman, M. L., & Dawson, S. (2008). The impact of federal public policy on curriculum and instruction for students with disabilities in the general classroom. *Preventing School Failure*, 52, 5–11. doi:10.3200/PSFL.52.2.5-11
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning*. London, England: Routledge.
- Hillard, A. (1990). *Changing schools fundamentally*. Keynote address at the Twelfth Annual AASA/AASE "I Care" National Policy Conference, Washington, D.C.

- Hillsman-Johnson, N., & Brumback, L. (2013). Guest editorial: Co-teaching in the science classroom: The one teach/one assist model. *Science Scope*, 36(6), 6–9. Retrieved from <http://www.nsta.org>
- Hoover, W. A. (1996, August). The practice implications of constructivism. *SEDL Letter*, 9(3), 1–2. Retrieved from <http://www.sedl.org>
- Huber, K. D., Rosenfeld, J. G., & Fiorello, C. A. (2001). The differential impact of inclusion and inclusive practices on high, average, and low achieving general education students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 38(1), 497–504. doi:10.1002/pits.1038
- Hudgins, K. (2012). Creating a collaborative and inclusive culture for students with special education needs. *McNair Scholars Research Journal*, 5(1), 79–90. Retrieved from <http://commons.emich.edu>
- Hunt, J., & Andreasen, J. (2011). Making the most of universal design for learning. *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School*, 17(3), 166–172. Retrieved from <https://www.nctm.org>
- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2014). Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9, 23606. doi: 10.3402/qhw.v9.23606
- Isherwood, R. S., & Barger-Anderson, R. (2008). Factors affecting the adoption of co-teaching models in inclusive classrooms: One school's journey from mainstreaming to inclusion. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 121–128. Retrieved from <http://www.jeqr.org>
- Janney, R., & Snell, M. E. (2004). *Modifying schoolwork* (2nd ed). Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Jia, Q. (2010). A brief study on the implication of constructivism teaching theory on classroom teaching reform in basic education. *International Education Studies*, 3(2), 197–199. doi:10.5539/ies.v3n2p197

- Jones, T., & Sterling, D. (2011). Cooperative learning in an inclusive science classroom. *Science Scope, 35*(3), 24–28. Retrieved from <http://www.nsta.org>
- Kafyulilo, A. C. (2013). Professional development through teacher collaboration: An approach to enhance teaching and learning in science and mathematics in Tanzania. *Africa Education Review, 10*(4), 671–688. doi:10.1080/18146627.2013.853560
- Kaufman, D., & Grennon Brooks, J. G. (1996). Interdisciplinary collaboration in teacher education: A constructivist approach. *TESOL Quarterly, 30*(2), 231–251. doi:10.2307/3588142
- Kawulich, B. (2005). Participant observation as a data collection method. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research Sozialforschung, 6*(2), n.p.
- Ketterlin-Gellar, L., Baumer, P., & Lichon, K. (2015). Administrators as advocates for teacher collaboration. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 51*(1), 51–57.  
doi:10.1177/1053451214542044
- King-Sears, M., Brawand, A., Jenkins, M., & Preston-Smith, S. (2014). Co-teaching perspectives from secondary science co-teachers and their students with disabilities. *Journal of Science Teacher Education, 25*(6), 651–680. doi:10.1007/s10972-014-9391-2
- Klingner, J. K., Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., Cohen, P., & Forgan, J. W. (1998). Inclusion or pull-out: Which do students prefer? *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 31*(2), 148–158.  
doi:10.1177/002221949803100205
- Lipkin, P. H., & Okamoto, J. (2015). The individuals with disabilities education act (IDEA) for children with special educational needs. *Pediatrics, 136*(6), e1650–e1662.  
doi:10.1542/peds.2015-3409
- Lumpe, A. (2007). Research-based professional development: Teachers engaged in professional learning communities. *Journal of Science Teacher Education, 18*(1), 125–128.  
doi:10.1007/s10972-006-9018-3

- Makoelle, T. M. (2014). Pedagogy of inclusion: A quest for inclusive teaching and learning. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(20), n.p. doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n20p1259
- Marshall, M. (2002). Asperger's syndrome: Implications for nursing practice. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 23, 605–615. doi:10.1080/01612840290052749
- Mastropieri, M., & Scruggs, T. (2001). Promoting inclusion in secondary classrooms. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 24(4), 265–274. doi:10.2307/1511115
- McDuffie, K., Mastropieri, M., & Scruggs, T. (2007). Differential effects of peer tutoring in co-taught and non co-taught classes: Results for content learning and student-teacher interactions. *Exceptional Children*, 75(4), 493–510. doi:10.1177/001440290907500406
- McLeskey, J., Henry, D., & Axelrod, M. I. (1999). Inclusion of students with learning disabilities: An examination of data from reports to congress. *Exceptional Children*, 66, 55–66. doi:10.1177/001440299906600104
- McLeskey, J., & Waldron, N. L. (1996). Responses to questions teachers and administrators frequently ask about inclusive school programs. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78(2), 150–156. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com>
- McMaster, C. (2013). Building inclusion from the ground up: A review of whole school re-culturing programmes for sustaining inclusive change. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 9(2), 1–24. Retrieved from <http://www.wholeschooling.net>
- McMillian, J. H. (2012). *Educational research: Fundamental for the consumer (6th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Melnick, S., & Meister, D. (2008). A comparison of beginning and experienced teachers' concerns. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 31(3), 40–56. Retrieved from <http://erquarterly.org>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.

- Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R.S. (1999). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Minarik, D., & Lintner, T. (2011). The push for inclusive classrooms and the impact on social studies design and delivery. *Social Studies Review*, 50(1), 50–53. Retrieved from <https://www.ccss.org>
- Morse, J. M. (1991). Strategies for sampling. In J. M. Morse (Ed.), *Qualitative nursing research: A contemporary dialogue* (pp. 127–145). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.
- Murawski, W. (2008, November). *What is really happening in co-taught classrooms: One state knows!* Paper presented at the Annual Teacher Education Division of CEC Conference, Dallas, TX.
- Murawski, W. W., & Swanson, H. L. (2001). A meta-analysis of co-teaching research: Where are the data? *Remedial and Special Education*, 22(5), 258–267. doi:10.1177/074193250102200501
- Narayan, R., Rodriguez, C., Araujo, J., Shaqlaih, A., & Moss, G. (2013). Constructivism constructivist learning theory. In B. Irby, G. Brown, R. Lara-Alecio, & S. Jackson (Eds.), *The handbook of educational theories* (pp. 169–183). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Neuman, W. L. (1997). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- New York State Education Department. (2017). *Safety net options available to students with disabilities to graduate with a local diploma*. Retrieved from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov> No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. (2002). Pub. L. No. 107–110, 115, Stat. 1425, codified in 20 U.S.C. x 6301 et seq.
- Olusegun, S. (2015). Constructivism learning theory: A paradigm for teaching and learning. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 5(6), 66–70. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com>

- O'Neil, J. (1993). "Inclusive" education gains adherents. *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Curriculum Update*, 35(9), 3-4. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org>
- Pancsofar, N., & Petroff, J. (2013). Professional development experiences in co-teaching: Associations with teacher confidence, interests, and attitudes. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 36(2), 83-96. doi:10.1177/0888406412474996
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Pearl, C. E., & Miller, K. J. (2007). Co-taught middle school mathematics classrooms: Accommodations and enhancements for students with specific learning disabilities. *Focus on Learning Problems in Mathematics*, 29(2), 1-20. Retrieved <https://www.questia.com>
- Ploessl, D., & Rock, M. (2014). eCoaching: The effects on co-teachers' planning and instruction. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 37(3), 191-215. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com>
- Pratt, S., Imbody, S., Wolf, L., & Patterson, A. (2017). Co-planning in co-teaching: A practical solution. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 52(4), 243-249. doi:10.1177/1053451216659474
- Rinkevich, J. L. (2014). *The relationship among student creativity, curiosity, and academic intrinsic motivation: A mixed methods phenomenological study of sixth grade students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation Dissertations and Theses Full Text database. (UMI No. 3632604)
- Robinson, L., & Buly, M. R. (2007). Breaking the language barrier: Promoting collaboration between general and special educators. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(3), 83-94. Retrieved from <http://www.teqjournal.org>

- Ross, J. A., & Bruce, C. (2007a). Self-assessment and professional growth: The case of a grade 8 mathematics teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*(2), 146–159. Retrieved from <https://www.journals.elsevier.com>
- Ross, J. A., & Bruce, C. (2007b). Professional development effects on teacher efficacy: Results of randomized field trial. *The Journal of Educational Research, 101*(1), 50–60. doi:10.3200/JOER.101.1.50-60
- Ross-Hill, R. (2009). Teacher attitude towards inclusion practices and special needs. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 9*(3), 188–198. doi:10.1111/j.1471-3802.2009.01135.x
- Sapon-Shevin, M. (2003a). Equity, excellence, and school reform: Why is finding a common agenda so hard? In J. Borland (Ed.), *Rethinking gifted education* (pp. 127–142). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Sapon-Shevin, M. (2003b). Inclusion: A matter of social justice. *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 61*, 25–28. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org>
- Savolainen, H., Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., & Malinen, O. P. (2012). Understanding teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusive education: Implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 27*(1), 51–68. doi:10.1080/08856257.2011.613603
- Sayeski, K. L. (2009). Defining special educators' tools: The building blocks of effective collaboration. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 45*, 38–44. doi:10.1177/1053451209338398
- Scruggs, T., & Mastropieri, M. (2017). Making inclusion work with co-teaching. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 49*(4), 284–293. doi:10.1177/0040059916685065

- Seimars, C. M., Graves, E., Schroyer, M. G., & Staver, J. (2012). How constructivist-based teaching influences students learning science. *The Educational Forum*, 76(2), 265–271.  
doi:10.1080/00131725.2011.653092
- Sharma, M., & Chawla, S. (2014). Designing constructivist learning environments using a concept browser. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, 3(5), 70–76. Retrieved from <https://www.ijrte.org>
- Shibley Jr., I. (2006). Interdisciplinary team teaching: Negotiating pedagogical differences. *College Teaching*, 54(3), 271–274. doi:10.3200/CTCH.54.3.271-274
- Sims, E. (2008). Sharing command of the co-teaching ship: How to play nicely with others. *The English Journal*, 97(5), 58–63. doi:10.3200/CTCH.54.3.271-274
- Slattery, E., Voelker, C., Nussenbaum, B., Rich, J., Paniello, R., & Neely, G. (2011). A practical guide to surveys and questionnaires. *Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery*, 155(6), 831–837.  
doi:10.1177/0194599811399724
- Smith, D., & Tyler, N. (2011). Effective inclusion education: Equipping education professionals with necessary skills and knowledge. *Prospects*, 41(3), 323–339. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com>
- Solis, M., Vaughn, S., Swanson, E., & McCulley, L. (2012). Collaborative models of instruction: The empirical foundations of inclusion and co-teaching. *Psychology in the Schools*, 49, 498–510.  
doi:10.1002/pits.21606
- Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1988). *Understanding and conducting qualitative research*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Faris, A. (2017). Teaching students with learning disabilities: constructivism or behaviorism? *Educational Research and Reviews*, 12(21), 1031–1035. doi:10.5897/err2017.3366

- Steele, M. (2008). Teaching social studies to middle school students with learning disabilities. *The Clearing House*, 81(5), 197–200. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com>
- Stokes, D., & Bergin, R. (2006.). Methodology or "methodolatry"? An evaluation of focus groups and depth interviews. *Qualitative Market Research*, 9(1), 26–37.  
doi:10.1108/13522750610640530
- Sun, M., Penuel, W., Frank, K., Gallagher, H., & Youngs, P. (2013). Shaping professional development to promote the diffusion of instructional expertise among teachers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 35(3), 344–369. doi:10.3102/0162373713482763
- Tannock, M. T. (2009). Tangible and intangible elements of collaborative teaching. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 44, 173–178. doi:10.1177/1053451208318682
- Thomas, R. M. (2003). *Blending qualitative and quantitative research methods in theses and dissertations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Thousand, J., Villa, R., & Nevin, A. (2006). The many faces of collaborative planning and teaching. *Theory into Practice*, 45(3), 239–248. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip4503\_6
- Tobin, R. (2005). Co-teaching in language arts: Supporting students with learning disabilities. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28(4), 784–801. doi:10.2307/4126455
- Treahy, D., & Gurganus, S. (2010). Models for special needs students. *Teaching Children Mathematics*, 16(8), 484–490. Retrieved from <https://www.nctm.org>
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & McMaster, P. (2009). Sources of self-efficacy: Four professional development formats and their relationship to self-efficacy and implementation of a new teaching strategy. *The Elementary School Journal*, 110(2), 228–245. doi:10.1086/605771
- Udvari-Solner, A., Villa, R.A., & Thousand, J. S. (2005). Access to the general education curriculum for all: The universal design process. In R.A. Villa & J.S. Thousand, *Creating an inclusive*

- school* (2nd ed.), (pp. 134–135). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Van Reusen, A., Shoho, A., & Barker, K. (2001). High school teacher attitudes toward inclusion. *The High School Journal*, *84*(2), 7–20. Retrieved from <https://soe.unc.edu>
- Villa, R. A., Thousand, J. S., Nevin, A., & Liston, A. (2005). Successful inclusive practices in middle and secondary schools. *American Secondary Education*, *33*(3), 33–50. Retrieved from <https://www.ashland.edu>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Willis, S. (1994, October). Making schools more inclusive. *ASCD Curriculum Update*. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org>
- Wilson, G., & Michaels, C. (2006). General and special education students' perceptions of co-teaching: Implications for secondary-level literacy instruction. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *22*(3), 205–225. doi:10.1080/10573560500455695
- Winzer, M. A. (1993). *The history of special education: From isolation to integration*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.
- Winzer, M. A. (2009). *From integration to inclusion: A history of special education in the 20th century*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Yin, R. K. (1999). Enhancing the quality of case studies in health services research. *Health Services Research*, *34*, 1209–1224. Retrieved from <http://www.hsr.org>
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research, design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Zigmond, N., & Magiera, K. (2001). Current practice alerts: A focus on co-teaching. Use with caution. *DLD Alerts*, *6*, 1–4. Retrieved from <http://teachingld.org>

### **Appendix A: Open-Ended Questionnaire**

- a) Describe your level of education, number of years teaching and your experience teaching in the inclusion setting.
- b) How long have you been teaching with your co-teacher and what are your roles and responsibilities?
- c) Does your school provide you with sufficient training opportunities in order to appropriately teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom?
- d) What factors do you think impact your attitude towards inclusive education? (class size, differentiation, support, resources, planning, working with another teacher, etc.)
- e) Why do you believe some of the SWD are not being successful in the inclusive classroom and/or the state assessment?

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

An expert in the education field has developed the following interview questions. Permission has been granted to use the interview questions. During the interview, information about the participants' perceptions of inclusion will be gathered. The interview will be recorded and will last approximately 45 minutes. Descriptive notes will also be taken throughout the interview.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Teaching Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching Position: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Based upon your teaching in an inclusion setting, how do you define inclusion?
2. What is or has been your role as a teacher in the inclusion setting?
3. Based upon your experiences in an inclusion setting, do you feel that classroom teacher's possess the expertise necessary to work with students with disabilities in the inclusion setting? Why do you feel this way?
4. Did you have a voice in whether or not you would be teaching students with disabilities in the classroom? If yes, please explain. If no, how did that shape your attitude and beliefs towards inclusion?
5. What amount of supports do you feel are necessary for successfully integrating students with disabilities into the general education setting?

6. Did knowing that you were teaching in the inclusion setting impact your planning prior to the start of school? If so how?
7. Describe a time when inclusion was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?
8. To what extent do you feel inclusion has been successful and why?
9. What has been your overall experience in relation to teaching in an inclusion setting?
10. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about inclusion?

Allison, R. B. (2011). *The lived experiences of general and special education teachers in the inclusion classrooms: A phenomenological study*. Available from Dissertations & Theses @ Walden University. (902459538). Retrieved from <https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/docview/902459538?accountid=14872>

## Appendix C: Follow-Up Interview Questions

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Teaching Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching Position: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Since our last interview, have any of your perceptions about inclusion changed?
2. Based upon your experiences in the inclusion setting, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may be working in an inclusion setting?
3. Is there anything else you would like to ask me?

## **Appendix D: Participant Consent Form**

**Research Study Title:** Perceptions of Educators Teaching Inclusion Classes in an Urban Secondary Environment

**Principal Investigator:** Bellomo, Nicole

**Research Institution:** Concordia University–Portland

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Leslie Loughmiller

### **Purpose and what you will be doing:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of general education and special education teachers and how those attitudes and beliefs shape instruction and impact student achievement.

I expect approximately 14 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. I will begin enrollment on 7/10/2018 and end enrollment on 9/01/18. To be in the study, you will complete a two part open- ended questionnaire. The first part asks demographic data and the second part of the questionnaire requires participants to answer questions based on their perceived beliefs regarding inclusion. The questionnaire should take less than 30 minutes of your time. 8 participants will be chosen to continue with the interview process where they will be asked about their personal experiences. Interviews will last about 45 minutes. Interviews will be recorded utilizing a digital recording device. Recording the interview assists with the transcription of data. Once the interview is transcribed, you will receive the notes and check for clarity and errors.

### **Risks:**

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, I will protect your information. I, the principal investigator, Nicole Bellomo will record interviews. I will transcribe the recording, in addition to MaxQDA, a password protected software program. Then, as soon as the transcript is checked for accuracy, the recording will be deleted when the transcription is completed. Any data you provide will be coded so people who are not the investigator cannot link your information to you. I will not identify you in any publication or report. Any identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption on my password-protected computer locked inside the cabinet in my office. The recording will be deleted as soon as possible; all other study documents, which include but are not limited to the questionnaires, will be kept secure for 3 years and then be destroyed. Once the final study is completed, the account with MaxQDA will be deleted and all data will be destroyed.

### **Benefits:**

There may be benefit derived from contributing to this project, by having an opportunity to reflect on and express your perspective, and through sharing your experience.

**Confidentiality:**

Your identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study. This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but I acknowledge that the questions I am asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, I will stop asking you questions.

**Deductive Disclosure Clause:**

Participant names are of non-significance to the study's data, but to prevent deductive disclosure, participants will be protected using a coding system by the researcher that includes numbers and characteristics for the researcher's use only.

**Contact Information:**

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Nicole Bellomo. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email [obranch@cu-portland.edu](mailto:obranch@cu-portland.edu) or call 503-493-6390).

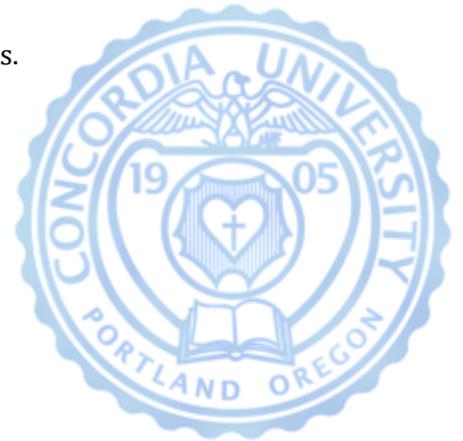
**Your Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. Indicate whether or not you agree to participate in the study and whether you give permission to be recorded if chosen for the interview process.

\_\_\_\_\_ I volunteer my consent for this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission to be recorded, if chosen for the interview process.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not choose to participate in the study.



\_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Participant Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Investigator Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Investigator Signature

Investigator: Nicole Bellomo  
c/o: Dr. Leslie Loughmiller  
Concordia University-Portland  
2811 NE Holman Street

Portland, Oregon 97221

## **Appendix E: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations:**

#### ***What does “fraudulent” mean?***

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### ***What is “unauthorized” assistance?***

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate.

This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the

work.

### Statement of Original Work (cont.)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

Nicole Bellomo

---

Digital Signature

Nicole Bellomo

---

Name (Typed)

05/01/2019

---

Date