

A supportive and inclusive education that prepares:
A deeper look at students with learning challenges and the support systems a Catholic, all-male,
school provides for teachers to educate those students

by

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B.A., College of the Holy Cross, 2015
M.Ed., Providence College, 2017

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Abstract

There has been a great deal of research conducted examining how academic and social supports in schools, along with individualized accommodations, have helped to aid the education of students with learning challenges. There has also been research done in the response of Catholic schools to the education of students with learning challenges. This study examines the perspectives of teachers, in a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school, and those teachers' perceptions of the support they receive from their school when working with these students. It examines teachers' perceptions about the access to resources, materials, and professional development that support students with learning challenges and how teachers' differentiated instruction and non-academically related experiences provide academic and social support to all learners. It also specifically looks at how a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school model impacts the perception of inclusion classrooms. This study concludes that inclusion is essential to Catholic education, and that private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools have an obligation to have classrooms that include students with learning challenges. It also suggests differentiated instruction is beneficial to students with learning challenges and their educational experiences. Finally, it concludes though there are existing supports, such as educational personnel and teacher preparedness, there needs to be improvement in making these supports more effective and available for the teachers themselves.

Keywords: learning challenges, academic supports, relationships, professional development, preparedness, differentiation, Catholic, all-male, mission-driven

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Approved by:

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Dr. Suzanne Porath

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Dedication

To my daughter, Eleanor (and any future siblings you might have), you are the highlight of my life, and I appreciate how you teach me every day what it means to be a father and the first educator in a person's life. Also, Ellie, thanks for allowing me to be able to complete this program and dissertation process throughout the first year of your life. You taught me balance and when to walk away. I love you kiddo!

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Introduction

As addressing learning challenges has become an increased need in schools, the teachers who support students with specific learning needs have to feel they have the support to educate them (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2024 and National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). Teachers need to support all students in their classrooms and, equally, schools need to support those students and the teachers that educate them. In many school districts, individualized educational plans (IEPs) have served as a great support for students through their education and have prepared them for college and careers (Hackmann et al., 2019). However, many students do not know what they struggle with, and many teachers feel as though they do not have the support to aid students with learning challenges. Support systems, composed of parents, teachers, and mentors, often aid student success. Students' ability to be successful in their educational progression and gain necessary skills, such as literacy, analytic, and social skills, through their schooling is a hard task to accomplish at times. This research study sought to examine, through the perspective of teachers, what educational supports and interventions aid those teachers in education students with learning challenges while creating inclusive classrooms in a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school. It is important to note here, the legal responsibilities Catholic schools have in term of servicing students is different than public schools (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020). Catholic schools are required to make accommodations that are minor adjustments, providing an inclusive setting to the maximum extent appropriate, both in academic accommodations as well as nonacademic services and activities (Scanlan, 2009). Many Catholic schools, including the Catholic school this study uses as its setting, takes

IEPs and 504 plans from the local public school and creates accommodation plans unique to the school. Understanding this helps understand how inclusion is carried out in this Catholic school.

By examining what support systems are currently in place by the school to aid students with individual learning challenges, there is a better understanding of what interventions already exist, as well as what this school might improve. This research study examined what interventions and strategies teachers are using to educate students with learning challenges, the support systems that are already in place within schools for those students and faculty, and the feeling of preparation teachers have in order to support students with individualized learning challenges. Specifically, this study focused on adults' perspectives of inclusive education and support systems for students with learning challenges. This research study first, and primarily, examined teachers' perspectives, specifically general education classroom teachers. By interviewing teachers about their experiences working with students with learning challenges as well as their perception of support from the administration and school system, it sought to determine if these supports exist and how effective they are from the view of the teacher. In this sense each teacher was interviewed individually, providing their own insights and experiences to the various questions they were asked throughout the interview process. Interview questions regarding strategies related to group work and choice (Gumpert and McConnell, 2019) and support and teacher assistance (Pook, 2017) were included to have a better understanding of teachers' perceptions. The interviews also helped to understand the insights of teachers with regards to perceptions of inclusion (Milsom, 2006), social modeling (Lipka et al., 2019), and feelings of preparation (Mackey, 2014). The study specifically looked at how the perceptions of the teachers relate to the school being a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school. It addresses how Catholic schools are aiding teachers, particularly as it relates to the all-male

environment that has been suggested to be helpful when educating boys with learning challenges (Piechura-Couture et al., 2013). It also helped to see how the school embraces their Catholic identity as it relates to components of Catholic mission included in Catholic Social Teaching, a framework used by the Catholic church for social teachings, and from Pope Francis, the late pope, who was the leader of the Catholic church (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020), as a way to respond to inclusive education.

Statement of Problem

As mentioned in my statement of significance below, I believe from my own experiences and those of my colleagues, there is a sense of being overwhelmed and fear of burning out. There continues to be the desire to help all students, but it appears that this is becoming more of a challenge. With the growing numbers of students with learning needs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024), the burden cannot be left to the teachers to just “figure it out.” Rather, teachers need support that is sustainable for education to be meaningful for students. This support can come in the way of professional development to enhance direct instruction to better aid students with challenges, giving specific strategies and techniques that work. This can come with personnel, providing teachers with resources, such as special education teachers, who can push in, pull out, and provide another layer of instructional support, both to students and teachers. It can also come with a sympathetic and understanding approach from administrators who recognize teachers need help when trying to create inclusive classrooms as the needs of the students become different. I believe that we should have inclusive classrooms in Catholic schools, but I believe to do so effectively, teachers need the right support and training.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives of support systems and interventions that help them educate students with individual learning challenges. This study examined teacher preparedness and support when working with students with learning challenges. Specifically, this study looked at a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school. The setting is intentionally important to this study as it indicates a specific model of schooling, comprised of multiple factors. This study seeks to determine how those individual factors of being Catholic, (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020), all-male, (Piechura-Couture et al., 2013) and a secondary school (Bosh, 2016), impact educators' experiences working with students with learning challenges, as well as how those factors might work together. Learning challenges in this study was intentionally broad, and though it might have included teachers who work with students who have individual educational plans (IEPs) and 504 plans (University of Washington, 2024), it did not exclusively refer to or use those students when interviewing teachers.

Using a constructivist framework (Koro-Ljungberg et al, 2009) as an umbrella theory, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Egbert & Roe, 2020) more specifically, the research sought to use semi-structured interviews from teachers to specifically understand their perceptions of support when educating students with learning challenges, including their preparedness and comfort levels (Ko & Boswell, 2013), and the way these factors shaped their perceptions. The research included looking at what specific accommodations work well (Gumpert and McConnell, 2019), in order to continue those accommodations, as well as what accommodations, modifications, and supports, academically and socially, can be improved. Education is more than just academics, and so much learning occurs beyond the academic content of class within that very classroom, and Catholic education specifically seeks to form

beyond academics (Lapsley & Kelley, 2022). In light of this, the study sought not just academic supports but social components (Elias & White, 2017) of teachers' experiences as well. By examining these aspects of the research, it helps to answer what teachers' perceptions of supports are, academically and socially, when educating students with learning challenges to have inclusive classrooms in private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools.

Research Questions

This research study used interview questions to gather qualitative data to answer questions related to the educational experience of students who have various learning challenges and different abilities. These are the key questions this study sought to answer:

- 1) In a private, all-male, Catholic, secondary school, what are teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for and their access to resources, materials, and professional development to support students with learning challenges to create inclusive classrooms?
 - a) How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges while also providing academic support for all learners?
 - b) Beyond academics instruction, what resources, materials and professional development is available to support teachers in creating social supports for students with learning challenges?

Along with these three main research questions, subsequent questions throughout the interviews included questions exploring various strategies and techniques teachers use to differentiate instruction, specific educational coursework, professional development, and educational instruction teachers have been provided to educate students with learning differences, and perceptions of what inclusive classrooms look like. These subsequent questions give better insight into teachers' perspectives on addressing the research questions at hand. By addressing

teachers' experiences of preparedness through coursework, professional development and instructional strategies used in the classroom, there is a better understanding of how teachers of private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools, are adequately aiding students with learning challenges. Additionally, more insight is given into the support systems that help the teachers educate their students as well as the resources and changes needed to improve teachers' ability to provide support to all students in their classrooms.

Statement of Significance

This study is important because the growing number of students with learning challenges is a concern schools across the country need to face, including private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools (Burke & Griffin, 2016; Piechura-Couture et al., 2013). The National Center for Education Statistics reported that the number of students served under IDEA in the United States was 6.4 million in 2012-2013 and raised to 7.5 million in the 2022-2023 academic school year, an increase from 13% to 15% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). With a rise in educational testing and an increase in the needs of students with accommodations, the burden cannot fall on the classroom teachers themselves. By looking into what strategies and techniques work, what perceptions teachers have of inclusion, and what supports and preparations schools are providing for teachers, there can be a greater insight into how all stakeholders involved in children's education can aid teachers in providing an informative and beneficial education to all students. Some research indicates teachers at Catholic schools have negative attitudes towards educating students with learning difference due to the demands they have as well as the lack of resources Catholic schools have (Bonfiglio & Kroh, 2020). Further research regarding this is looked at in Chapter 2 and brings more light to the realities of Catholic schools. As it relates to private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools, this study addresses specifically the perspectives

teachers have and how these types of schools might address those perceptions. The study also addresses the needs of teachers in private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools which allow them to create inclusive classrooms, components looked at in previous research studies and further discussed in the literature review.

Theoretical Framework

The research reflects the teachers' responses through interview questions; and therefore, the teachers are the primary knowledge producer of this research study, embracing the constructivist framework (Koro-Ljungberg et al, 2009). By using interviews, the constructivist framework allows the teachers, the educators of students with learning challenges, to be the main perspective. This allowed those individuals, directly working with these students, the opportunity to provide insights into the various strategies, techniques, and supports that exist and the areas that need improvement. A constructivist framework embraces the individuals' experiences with inclusive classrooms and speaks directly to what is or is not occurring in those classrooms. This allows more precisely a constructivist framework to occur, allowing the teachers' views of the situation to be described (Creswell, 2013). In this case, the perceptions teachers have regarding supports related to educating students who have learning challenges.

More specifically, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1994) is the guiding framework for this research. Using a constructivist framework as an umbrella, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, in more detail, speaks to the systems that impact a person, in this case, the teachers being interviewed and the perceptions they hold. Bronfenbrenner's first system is the microsystem, the most proximal setting in which a person is situated (Egbert & Roe, 2020). For this research study, the teachers themselves are the microsystem. The stories they share from their experiences and the perspective they have regarding their teaching of students with learning

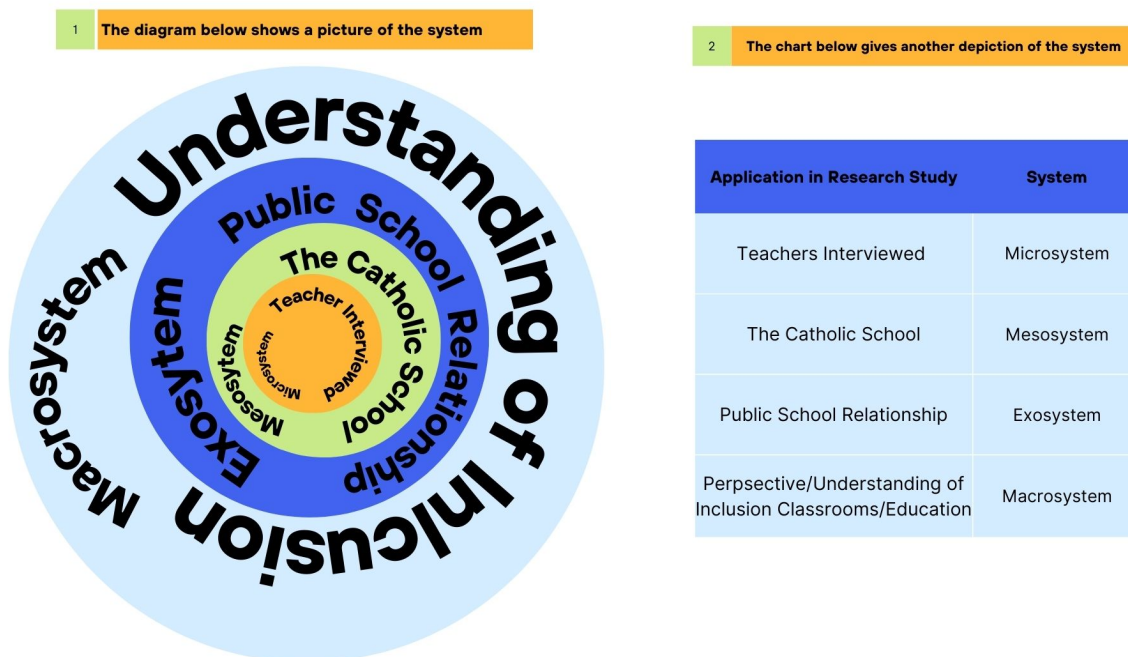
challenges are the immediate environment being examined. Bronfenbrenner's second system is the mesosystem. Mesosystems are defined as relations or connections to the microsystems (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). The mesosystem is an interaction among two or more microsystems (Egbert & Roe, 2020). In this study the mesosystem is the relationship the teachers, the participants of the study, have with the school and the school administration. Examining this interaction allows for a better understanding of the teachers' relationship to the school, and the administration, and how that might be impacting their perspective.

Bronfenbrenner's next stage, the exosystem relates to settings that are not directly involved in microsystems, but impact and affect microsystems (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). The influence exosystems have is indirect on microsystems, but does impact them (Egbert & Roe, 2020). In this study the exosystem is the relationship between the Catholic school, in which teachers are being pulled from, and the town's public school system where the Catholic school is located. Having a better understanding of the relationship that the public school has with the Catholic school and the resources the Catholic school has access to from the public school, gives greater depth to the teachers' perspectives. Some of the insights include services, like evaluation, the public school provides to non-public schools, funding non-public schools might receive from local town or state systems, and the working relationship of the personnel between the institutions. These factors impact teachers in this study as they can speak to the experience of observations in their classrooms from outside people, the resources that these teachers do or do not get, and what the working relationships with personnel outside of the building might look like.

Bronfenbrenner's final system, the macrosystem, which though it might not directly impact microsystems being studied, it can impact systems that influence other systems (Egbert &

Roe, 2020). The macrosystem involves larger cultural contexts surrounding microsystems (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). For the purpose of this study the macrosystem is the understanding of inclusive education, particularly as it relates to how private, all-male, Catholic, secondary schools respond to inclusivity. These insights might address teachers' perspectives of inclusion classrooms versus separate special education classrooms or the expectations that the school, or the dioceses, have on teachers regarding religious education. This allows for a deeper dive into teachers' perspectives of inclusive education in general, as well more specifically as it relates to this study, how teachers of private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools feel about inclusion. Please see the figure below for a visual representation of the theoretical framework.

Figure 1.1. Theoretical Framework



Catholic School Pedagogy

The specific type of school this study is being done in, a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school, is also intentional and brings attention to a specific model that is part of the conversation of inclusion classrooms and potentially aids in addressing it. Cloonan's (2016)

research regarding single-gender schools, particularly as they relate to boys, and the benefit they can have when it comes to students with learning challenges, aids in understanding the particular type of setting this research study was done. Burke and Griffin's (2016) sentiments regarding Catholic schools use of Catholic Social Teaching in relationship to the dignity of all people, including those with disabilities, is also essential in understanding the specific type of school used in this study. By using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a guiding framework in this study, there is a greater insight into not only perspectives that teachers hold regarding educating students with learning challenges, but more so the other aspects influencing those perspectives. Having a constructivist framework as an umbrella ensures the teachers remained as the focal point, and their views are the components interpreted in the study.

Researcher Perspective/Researcher Positionality

My interest in this topic comes from my personal experience. My positionality comes from a long history of the word "disability." When I think about my specific work with students with learning disabilities, I think of students with dyslexia, ADHD, and auditory processing delays. Although most students with learning challenges find some type of modification and accommodations in their educational experiences, these challenges are not always easy for students to overcome. Coming from a family where I watched a sibling struggle with dyslexia, certainly I can sympathize with these students. I want to be able to help these students, and sometimes I feel like I do not know how to do that. However, the more I talk about inclusion and students with disabilities, I think about who that could include and who it does not. When I suggest "include", I suggest who that can be, and honestly who that cannot include, specifically as we discuss classrooms. For example, I have an uncle who is developmentally disabled. He is nonverbal and has very low communicative skills and decision-making abilities. I recognize a

traditional classroom might not have been good for him or good for other students that would have been in class with him. On the other hand, I moderate a club where one Friday a month, my students, without disabilities, have social interactions with students who have some type of disability. These students attend the local public school and have disorders which include things such as Down syndrome. When I think about these Friday nights, and I see the capabilities of these individuals, and then talk to the parents regarding their perspectives of what is happening in the schools, I know there is so much conversation related to this topic that needs to be happening, including the role of Catholic schools. This pushed me to suggest what inclusion can be and how we can create inclusive classrooms.

I am also drawn to this research because I teach at the secondary and post-secondary level, and my wife at the elementary level. Many of the conversations we have circle around the feelings of needing support and feeling overwhelmed with the ability to properly service all the students that are in our classrooms. These feelings are based in the authentic concerns and issues facing my school, issues in which the administrations, educational systems, and society need to address. However, this cannot just happen and for it to happen well, teachers need the right training and support to make it happen. This leads me to my research and the desire to understand teachers' perceptions of support and the ways that they make inclusion possible in their classrooms.

Even more so, my position as a teacher in Catholic education guides this research study. I want to ensure we as Catholic schools are doing what is right and ensuring, to the best of our ability, we are providing inclusive classrooms. When I say right, I mean that we, as Catholic schools, are allowing students the opportunity to attend Catholic school, whether they have learning challenges or not, and providing them with the adequate resources and supports to be

successful in the learning occurring throughout their time in Catholic education. My experience has inspired me to further see how Catholic schools can do this effectively and support the idea of inclusive classrooms, something that seems, from my point of view, important for Catholic schools to do as extensions of the Catholic church. Faggella-Luby and Engel (2020) suggest Catholic Social Teaching, the NCEA, and Pope Francis require Catholic schools to be inclusive of students with disabilities and that these inclusive services are essentially a Catholic identity issue not an instructional practice concern. The necessary response Catholic education has towards educating students with learning challenges and having schools which incorporate inclusion classrooms will be further explored in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Definitions of Terms/Operational Definitions

Catholic School: Philip Brown (2010) indicated in order for a school to be Catholic, Canon law, requires it to be one of the following: (1) directed by the ecclesiastical authority, often times a bishop of a diocese, though the bishop would not administratively run the school, (2) schools directed by a public juridic person, often times religious orders, though not exclusively, or (3) any school that is deemed in writing by the bishop or pope a Catholic school (Brown, 2010). This term Catholic school will come up a great deal, and knowing what constitutes a Catholic school is important.

Disability: A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions) (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). This term might be used to describe the variety of challenges, impairments, conditions, and restrictions students have which teachers will be speaking to regarding feelings of preparedness and the ability and support to address these needs, though it will not be

exclusively the only term used in regard to this study and the students being discussed. Other terms, such as learning challenge itself, listed below, will also be used.

Inclusion: Inclusion is a state of being valued, respected and supported. It is about focusing on the needs of every individual and ensuring the right conditions are in place for each person to achieve his or her full potential (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021).

Inclusion will be used to refer to both the perception teachers have regarding students with learning difference being included in their classroom as well as how they view inclusion occurs in the school overall.

Inclusive Classroom(s): An inclusive classroom climate refers to an environment where all students feel supported intellectually and academically, and are extended a sense of belonging in the classroom regardless of identity, learning preferences, or education (Yale University Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, 2021). This, like inclusion above, will refer to the makeup of actual classrooms, and whether teachers interviewed have a variety of learners in their classrooms, to what extent does that mean with regards to different student learners, and to what extent does that mean to the overall classroom environment/space.

IEP: University of Washington describes an IEP as “The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is a plan or program developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services.” (University of Washington, 2024) This term will be used when specifically addressing students who have an official IEP through the school and teachers can specifically respond to how the accommodations in the IEP are being met.

504 Plan: University of Washington also describes a 504 plan as “The 504 Plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an

elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment” (University of Washington, 2024). This term will be used when specifically addressing students who have an official 504 plan through the school and how teachers can specifically respond to how the accommodations in the 504 plans are being met.

Jesuit Schools: Jesuit schools are Catholic schools run by the members of the Society of Jesus, or if no longer any member of the order, the tradition of the religious order, which was founded by Ignatius of Loyola (Xavier University, 2023). This term will also arise a great deal in this study as the Catholic school that teachers are coming from is a Jesuit school.

Learning Challenges: In this study, I will use the term learning challenges a great deal. I want to intentionally leave this broad, as to be as inclusive as possible. Often, this will refer to students who have an IEP or 504 plan, defined above, and who have a diagnosed disability, also defined above. However, I am hoping by leaving this term broad, I will be able to apply the theories, techniques, and concepts discussed in this research paper to a variety of students.

Conclusion

Recognizing the need to take a vested interest in students’ social relationships and experiences outside the classroom, beyond just the academic needs, educators can have a greater ability to provide them with the skills they need to support them throughout their lives. By being aware of specific, concrete, supports that are effective, such as small groups and individual attention as well as socioemotional support, educators are equipped with tools that can aid student acquisition of necessary skills. This study sought to know more specific strategies that educators use to provide support for students’ acquisition of skills as well as what support they have from others, both inside and outside of school, that allow them to provide students with

learning challenges the education they need and deserve. It is of particular interest to research the support, training, and preparation educators feel they do or do not receive in this process. Additionally, the research related to discipline specific instruction is of particular interest as it relates to content-specific instruction from the perspective of various teachers, a key aspect of secondary education. The interview process with teachers helped to give insight into what specific areas they feel they are lacking in and where schools can improve in supporting them with these skills. By building on the research of what works, it was beneficial to take a deeper dive into what additional resources could be used and what preparation and support educators feel they do or do not have which equip them to provide a strong education for students with learning challenges. More specifically, this research study itself addressed a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools and how they can respond to this topic given the type of school they are and the uniqueness they hold as part of the educational system.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

Education requires many individuals to be involved in the learning of all students, especially those students with learning challenges. When thinking about ways to better aid the learning process for all students, including those with learning challenges, a sense of recognition of students' abilities, skills, and understanding requires the insight of teachers, parents, and other educational staff can be impactful. To know some of the better ways schools are able to provide a positive, impactful, education to all students, including those with individual learning challenges, it is important to examine the support systems which currently exist in schools. Understanding existing models allows a deeper look at what additional resources can be provided to help teachers facilitate a strong and influencing education. Understanding these concepts also helps to guide the interview process with teachers of the study to determine how they implement these strategies or why they might have difficulty doing such. More so understanding how Catholic schools have responded to inclusive education and the research that exists regarding private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools is essential for this study.

This chapter will explore what inclusive education is, including the legal responsibilities of schools to students with disabilities, how that relates to Catholic schools specifically, models of inclusion classrooms that exist in Catholic education, barriers Catholic schools face, specific strategies and techniques used to differentiate instruction, and all-male environments as they relate to inclusive education. Examining the prior research conducted in these types of schools will help to understand inclusive education as it relates to Catholic schools, and potentially any gaps, such as supports for teachers or access to Catholic education for students, that may exist. It will also help to better understand the perspectives had by teachers regarding the support they

feel, the ways in which they try to differentiate instruction, and the social supports that they might provide outside of academic instruction.

What is Inclusive Education?

Inclusive education in and of itself is a broad term. Many researchers and educational systems have a variety of ways in which they define inclusive education, including the IDEA, Matthew Schuelka, Yale University's Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, Matthew Cunningham and his colleagues, and Christine Bonfiglio and Karen Kroh. The IDEA in 2015 states: "improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities" (US Department of Education, 2023). Schuelka (2018) discusses the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities definition of inclusive education as: "a fundamental right to education, a principle that values students' wellbeing, dignity, autonomy, and contribution to society, [and], a continuing process to eliminate barriers to education and promote reform in the culture, policy, and practice in schools to include all students." (p. 3) Schuelka (2018) goes on to suggest that inclusive education means students with disabilities and other disadvantages are taught with their peers for most of the school day. Lambert (2008) indicated inclusion includes allowing students with disabilities to attend local schools and providing support to both those students and the teachers that are educating them. These insights address both the broad definitions that identify what inclusion is, while also speaking more specifically to how that impacts classrooms and schools as they relate to other social systems.

An inclusive classroom climate refers to an environment where all students feel supported intellectually and academically, and are extended a sense of belonging in the

classroom regardless of identity, learning preferences, or education (Yale University, Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, 2021). Inclusion is the practice of integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms and schools (Cunningham et al., 2017). Bonfiglio and Kroh (2020) extended this assertion, a worthy addition for the purpose of this work: “inclusion goes beyond the physical spacing and meaningfully integrates curricula, materials, and best practices to provide support to SWDs within the general education setting with their nondisabled peers” (p. 140). For the purpose of this study these definitions regarding inclusion and inclusive education will serve as necessary contributions and insights into the understanding of the perceptions of the teachers, and further give a foundation to components of the conversation including the legal responsibilities schools have for all students.

Legal Recognition of Disabilities

As the educational system and the United States government’s recognition of learning disabilities and challenges has progressed throughout the years, the landscape of classrooms has equally done so. In 1975 the United States Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), later changing in 1990 to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), attempting to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). From 1975 to now, this act has had revisions to target the support of students with learning disabilities. This has included revisions from the changing of words to be more inclusive and respectful to ways in which students with disabilities are included in classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). In 1976 the law was amended from when children reached three years old to the time when they are born. In 1986 the law expanded parents say and involvement in their child’s IEP. In 1990 iterations of the law included transition plans for students post their secondary education. In

2004 the law expanded more, including earlier intervention for students and raising the standards for special education educators (University of Kansas, 2024). Each one of these changes acknowledged important adaptations of the law to better serve students with learning disabilities. Additionally, these changes impacted the way in which educators needed to, and still need to, ensure they are aiding all learners in their classrooms.

The legal aspect of this Act is important as it provides a historical context to how students were and are included, or not included, in the educational system. Additionally, it better helps to understand how inclusion works in relationship to those who define it, including those previously mentioned. Acknowledging this legal aspect of the educational system is an important component to the research as it suggests the basic, fundamental, and necessary aspects that students not only deserve but are required to have by law. These laws include the implementation of students IEPs and 504s. IEPs, or individualized education programs, are written statements for children with disabilities that are developed, reviewed, and revised and include a student's academic achievements and functional performance, how a disability impacts a student, measurable goals for a student, and accommodations and modifications (Parent Center Hub, 2024). A 504 plan provides accommodations and supports to access academics and extra-curricular activities, however unlike IEPs they do not require special education services (Schultz, 2022). As both IEPs and 504 plans are legally binding documents, public schools are required to follow these documents (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2024). These plans as legal documents provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to a person with a disability in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the severity or nature of the disability (US Department of Education, 2023). The education one receives can be in general education classes, either individually or with aids and services, or in special education classrooms for all or portions

of the day. Additionally, students with disabilities must be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate for the educational needs of the students with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2023). IEPs and 504s have explicit guidelines, accommodations, modifications, and goals to aid educators in providing this type of education of students. This legal background provides greater insights into the perceptions of the teachers that work with students with learning disabilities. By recognizing this Act, a better conversation can be had regarding the ways in which students with learning disabilities and challenges are educated. The section below will speak about Catholic schools requirements to follow IDEA laws.

Catholic Schools Responsibility to Inclusive Education

The need for inclusive classrooms in Catholic education is evident in the mission of Catholic schools. Catholic schools often have individual missions that guide the purpose of the institution and the education that it provides. Equally, their missions are almost unanimously grounded in the larger mission of the Catholic church. Faggella-Luby and Engel (2020) suggest Catholic Social Teaching, the NCEA, and Pope Francis require Catholic schools to be inclusive of students with disabilities and that these inclusive services are essentially a Catholic identity issue not an instructional practice concern. Catholic Social Teaching suggests the Church must prioritize the needs of marginalized members of society and that each person is endowed with dignity, therefore requiring people with disabilities to be part of the communities that make up the Church, including schools (Burke & Griffin, 2016). Burke and Griffin also suggest research conducted in public schools has shown a great deal of insight for Catholic schools and Catholic school students. From academic growth in core curriculum to social interactions and growth in the community, students with, and students without, disabilities benefit from inclusive classrooms (Burke & Griffin, 2016). Long and Schuttloffel (2006) discuss Catholic schools as a

community, and that the teachers and leaders of these schools have a responsibility to be educated on the rights and need of students with disabilities. Catholic schools should provide accommodations including additional time on tests, peer notes, and adjusted co-curricular activities. (Russo et al., 2002) This information gives great insight into Catholic education, providing a foundational understanding into the types of conversations that might arise from teachers regarding their perceptions of inclusive education related to their teaching role in a Catholic school. It is also important, as explored in the next section, to understand how Catholic schools structures work overall, beyond just the scope of inclusion, as to better understand how inclusion classrooms fit into that scope.

The Structure of Catholic Education

Just as in public schools, Catholic schools have a structure that guides their everyday practice. According to the National Catholic Educational Association, a Catholic school has a governing body, a person or persons, who exercise responsible decision-making in collaboration with the leadership team. In addition, a Catholic school has a qualified leader, or leadership team, which empowered by the governing body, successfully embodies the school's mission and effectively runs the instructional aspects of the school (NCEA, 2023). Philip Brown (2010) discusses the structuring of Catholic schools, particularly as it related to both Canon law (church law) and civil law. Brown indicated that in Canon law, in order for a school to be considered Catholic it needs to fall into three categories: "(a) schools directed (moderatur) by the competent ecclesiastical authority, (b) schools directed by a public ecclesiastical juridic person, and (c) schools recognized as "Catholic" in writing by ecclesiastical authority. (p. 470) Brown (2010) further says Catholic schools need a competent authority, which could be the Holy See (the pope), but more often the diocesan bishop. More specifically, Brown (2010) states: "Religious

institutes whose mission is education are also authorized to establish and operate schools, but may only do so with the consent of the diocesan bishop” (p. 470). This is particularly valuable insight into this study, as this study has teachers from a Catholic school which is specifically run by a religious institution, the Jesuits, discussed in greater detail in the section below. In any case, a Catholic school is considered Catholic with the approval of the bishop, meaning the school is an extension of the Church and the diocese. That being said, in most cases the bishop is not the direct administrator of the school. Though bishops have power to intervene and be involved, the understanding is that the actual administration of each Catholic school is a governing person who is usually not the bishop (Brown, 2010). Understanding what makes a Catholic school Catholic is valuable to this study. It also addresses the importance of stakeholders, in this case the specific and uniqueness that Catholic schools have in relationship to the diocese and the bishops, specifically as it relates to this study given the school the teachers work in is not a diocesan school, but a private, Catholic school.

Jesuit Schools

As mentioned early, Catholic schools can be considered Catholic if they are, for example, run by a religious order. In this study this is the case, the participants are teachers in a Jesuit school. As the study is done in a Catholic, Jesuit school it is important to understand the aspects of Jesuit education. Jesuit schools are Catholic schools run by the members of the Society of Jesus, or if no longer any members are present in the school, the traditions of the religious order, which was founded by Ignatius of Loyola (Xavier University, 2023). Jesuits schools are rooted in their desire to aid students’ intellectual development, as well as their moral and spiritual growth. Jesuit high schools aim to help their students develop five characteristics known as their Grad at Grad, which include being open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, loving, and

committed to doing justice (Jesuits, 2024). Jesuit schools also seek to ensure that their students are prioritizing service and justice as a principal part of their education, embracing the motto being men and women for and with others, coined by Pedro Arrupe, a Superior General of the Jesuits. (Jesuits, 2024). Additionally, the learning experience and process in Jesuit education embraces the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, which include five elements: context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation (Fordham University, 2024). This is the model the educators of the schools use as a foundational guide to their teaching practice. Jesuit schools embrace the values of being contemplatives in action, finding God in all things, being men and women for and with others, the magis (the more), and cura personalis (the care of the whole person) (Dunfee et al., 2017). These aspects are engrained in every Jesuit school, which aids to their uniqueness and identity as a Jesuit institution. Having an understanding of what makes a school Jesuit is helpful in this study as it speaks to the educational philosophy that grounds the institution and allows for a better insight into the teachers' responses.

Other Religious Ordered Schools

Jesuits are not the only religious order that have contributed to Catholic education. Though this section will not discuss every single type of religious order that has schools, it will give insight into a few. These insights will provide a comparison to what might make Jesuits schools different from other private, Catholic, or non-diocesan run Catholic schools. For example, Salesian high schools are rooted in the principles of the Salesians of St. John Bosco: reason, religion, and loving kindness (Don Bosco Prep, 2024). Schools that are rooted in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, founded by Catherine McAuley, embrace the following as part of the core values of their schools: compelled by mercy, educational courage, inspired by faith, principled leadership, and a voice for dignity and respect (Mercy Education, 2024). Finally,

Christian Brother schools have The Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education, which include evangelizing the mission of the Church, standing in solidarity with marginalized in poverty and injustices, and pursuing excellence in all endeavors (Iona Preparatory, 2024). These are a few examples of Catholic schools run by, or in the traditions, of other religious orders, beyond the Jesuits. These insights help to give comparison to other private, Catholic, schools which guide their educational philosophies. Having these insights positions an understanding into the specific school teachers of this study are coming from. It will help determine whether responses are unique to Catholic schools as a whole, or whether the Jesuit charism might be driving the perspective of teachers.

The History and Philosophy of Catholic Education

The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) discusses in its documents the standards and benchmarks for effective Catholic education both at the elementary and secondary levels. This document is the continued work of Dr. Lorraine Ozar and Dr. Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, who in 2012 began the compellation of research to define Catholic education standards (Schuttloffel, 2012). Defined by the NCEA there are nine characteristics, four standards, and benchmarks that drive Catholic education's overall mission and philosophy. The nine characteristics come from the Holy See's (papal authority) teaching on Catholic schools (NCEA, 2023). The nine characteristics are centered in the person of Jesus Christ, contributing to the evangelization of the mission of the church, distinguished by excellence, committed to educating the whole child, steeped in a Catholic worldview, sustained by Gospel witness, shaped by communion and community, accessible to all students, and established by the expressed authority of the bishop (NCEA, 2023). These guiding principles by the NCEA influence many Catholic schools and the practice, pedagogy, and instructional methods embedded in their

schools. Lapsley and Kelley (2022), using the NCEA's standards, suggest Catholic schools are guided by a mission statement which acknowledges their Catholic identity and the work done within the school that embraces that identity. They suggest a part of Catholic education's role, and a reason for parents sending their children to these types of schools, is the ideas of moral-character formation and development. Catholic schools often encourage students to value service to others, respect for self and others, and to become productive members, and leaders, of society (Lapsley & Kelley, 2022). Garcia-Huidobro (2017) discusses the lack in research done related to Catholic education. He suggests there needs to be more conversations about curricula, specifically as it relates to, and is implemented in, Catholic schools. He also suggests the research done surrounding this needs to be more empirically based. Garcia-Huidobro (2017) also says there are limited conversations between Catholic primary and secondary schools, as well as a lack of outline in the relationship between discipline specific content area to the mission of the Catholic schools. These insights into Catholic education as a whole, the standards that guide it, and the additional research needed to be done, are important aspects to acknowledge in this study as they will likely overlap with teachers' perspectives. They provide a foundation to what might be shared from the teachers, as general education teachers, and build in how the teachers' perspectives to inclusion classrooms and students with learning challenges relate to the Catholic school they are in.

Historically, Catholic education has not serviced students with learning differences. Despite efforts to service students of other marginalized members of society, such as poor and working-class families, Catholic schools generally did not start efforts of teaching students with diverse learning styles until about 1950, with the Archdiocese of St. Louis' development of the Department of Special Education (DeFiore, 2006). Before this, there were groups including a

group of religious sisters, Sisters of the Good Shepperd, who were working with this population of students in Kentucky. In 1954 the NCEA developed a Department of Special Education (DeFiore, 2006). Data from 2018 reported by the NCEA shows that U.S. Catholic schools had 5.1% of students with diagnosed disabilities (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020). These brief statistics help to paint a picture of where the American Catholic school system has been in terms of servicing students, including students with learning differences. This information also stresses the need to further research teachers' perceptions of what is occurring in schools regarding the education of students with learning challenges, and what might be impeding on it.

Barriers to Inclusive Education in Catholic and Private Schools

Catholic schools desire to include special education and students with learning differences does not come without challenges. Much of the research indicates some of the barriers associated with inclusive classrooms in Catholic schools. Some of these include teachers' attitudes and exasperation, due to the increasing number of students with learning differences and the demands teachers feel this puts on them (Bonfiglio & Kroh, 2020). Bonfiglio and Kroh (2020) also discuss the lack of resources Catholic schools have. Though Catholic schools receive some federal funds to support students with disabilities, it is not enough to meet the cost of things such as faculty and staff. They also indicated, from prior research conducted, shared time is required to make evidence-based practices possible, and this can be challenging (Bonfiglio & Kroh, 2020). Burke and Griffin (2016) indicate a lack of information regarding successful models of other Catholic schools and programs that work as one barrier to inclusive Catholic education. Research conducted by Boyle and Hernandez (2016) suggests a lack of teachers' experience and training in working with this population provides a challenge. Understanding the barriers to the inclusive education in the Catholic schools can help bring to

light not only understanding, but how the insights of the teachers' perceptions will speak to or add to the previous research already conducted.

As indicated by Faggella-Luby and Engel (2020), Catholic schools are not required to admit students with disabilities, though many of these schools do. That being said, the requirements and legal responsibility these schools have in terms of servicing is different than that of public education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act does not require school districts to service students with disabilities who are enrolled in private schools (Boyle & Hernandez, 2016). Martin Scanlan (2009) discusses Catholic schools' legal responsibility to special education. Scanlan (2009) suggests though while the ADA of 1990 and the IDEA of 1990 speak to Catholic schools' requirements regarding special education, the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 carries the greatest implications for Catholic schools. While there are some exceptions, Section 504 applies to the majority of Catholic schools, and these schools are legally required to provide services to accommodate students with special needs (Scanlan, 2009). Though Catholic schools are required to not be more restrictive towards students with disabilities, they are allowed to have policies requiring minimal level of academic performance. Catholic schools are also required to make accommodations that are minor adjustments, providing an inclusive setting to the maximum extent appropriate, both in academic accommodations as well as nonacademic services and activities (Scanlan, 2009). Though Catholic schools are not required by law to provide special education, there are still certain requirements Catholic schools must legally follow once they have accepted students with learning needs. This understanding of the legal responsibilities, and lack of legal responsibilities, is an important aspect to consider when thinking about carrying out this research. Understanding the various models that already exist in Catholic schools is also helpful to allow other Catholic

schools to know ways they can carry out the law and their responsibility to their admitted students. This will be explored in the section below.

Models of Inclusive Education in Catholic Schools

To the mission of Catholic education, as stated, there are Catholic schools that service students with challenges, differences, and disabilities (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020).

Recognizing these students currently exist in Catholic schools, it is important to know the research already done to better appreciate teachers' perceptions of what is occurring in the schools that service all types of students. As Faggella-Luby and Engel (2020) suggest, inclusive classrooms include learning environments that have curriculum and instruction which meets the diverse learning needs of students and preparation for the professionals working within the schools. Research has also suggested the need for professional development for teachers in Catholic schools who service diverse learners (Cunningham et al., 2017). Cunningham and his colleagues (2017) did research focused on the implementation of a professional development program for general education teachers at Catholic elementary schools. This research speaks specifically to the training and professional development that can be implemented for Catholic schools teachers.

Burke and Griffin's (2016) research identify Catholic schools which service students with learning differences, one with hearing loss and another that allows for students with Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, and cerebral palsy. The research describes the academic and social opportunities provided for students with and without disabilities in these high schools (Burke & Griffin, 2016). Peer mentoring has also shown effective in supporting students with learning differences as it has allowed for high levels of student engagement, increased social interactions, reduction in behavior issues, and improved academic performance (Bonfiglio &

Kroh, 2020). Incorporating this type of model into the inclusive classroom setting is essential at any school, including in Catholic education. Bonfiglio and Kroh (2020) offer insights into a Catholic elementary school servicing students with learning differences, uses HLPs and MTSS, as well as scheduled time for faculty and staff collaboration. This prior research will certainly be important to this study as it will touch upon the perceptions teachers in Catholic schools have regarding their preparation with students who have learning challenges and the ability to compare new research to existing models of inclusion within Catholic schools.

Inclusive Education in All-Male Schools

In addition to examining the Catholic dimension, this study also looks at an all-male school environment. When looking at this topic is important to also see how inclusion education already exists in all-male schools and the research conducted in relationship to this. Piechura-Couture and her colleagues (2013) suggest single-gender classrooms can improve behavior and academic performance for boys. Additionally, single-gender classrooms have positive impacts for African-American males, particularly as it relates to behavior. Furthermore, they state:

“Single-gender classrooms in which teachers have boy friendly lessons that allow for greater physical movement, elevated noise levels, and direct teacher talk have proven successful for many students. The results presented provide preliminary evidence that the single-gender format is an option that should be explored to reduce the over representation of males and minorities in special education period” (Piechura-Couture et al., 2013, p. 241).

Their research indicated the positive aspects involved with single-gender education and the referral for special education. African-American males were less likely to be in special education if they attended a public single-gender school, than if they attended a public coeducational

school (Cloonan, 2016). This research specifically speaks to minority students in special education and the impacts single-sex education can have on this. Morgan and his colleagues' (2017) research indicate minority children are less likely than White children to receive special education service. Their research, in relation to the two previous studies, suggest the need to see how male students, including minority students in all-male environments, are being serviced. It also helps to shed light onto the academic performance and behavior aspect that can help students with learning differences feel more comfortable in single-gender spaces. This prior research helps to understand the type of conversations and results that might arise in this study and how the perceptions of the teachers of a private, Catholic, all-male, school are shaped, especially as it relates to the perceptions they have, the differentiation in instruction they exercise, and the social support they provide in relationship to the all-male environment.

Teacher Preparedness

There is extensive literature directly related to general education teachers, including secondary education teachers, work with students with learning challenges. This research speaks to a great deal of those teachers' experiences, including their collaboration with other administration and staff in the building. Additionally, there is research done expressing various other types of educators' perceptions regarding educating students with learning differences, specifically, teachers and educators in elementary schools, in higher education, and in career and technical education programs. All the participants in these studies expressed the lack of preparedness regarding working with students with learning challenges in some way. By examining these types of education, there can be comparisons and connections drawn to education at the secondary level and an application to the specific type of school used in this study.

The research agrees that general education teachers feel a sense of unpreparedness in some manner with regards to teaching all students in inclusion classroom. Ruppar and her colleagues (2016) indicated from their study, special education teachers of student with severe disabilities felt prepared to complete IEPs and collaborate with other educators, but did not feel as prepared for supporting things such as the medical and physical needs of students and using assistive technologies. They also suggest teaching experience impacts teachers' perceptions of preparedness to educate students with serve disabilities, oversee paraprofessionals, and determine curricular content (Ruppar et al., 2016). This research suggests, for special education teachers directly, there might be something lacking in the preparation programs that prepare them to work with students with disabilities. This study specifically looks at students with severe disabilities, but the sentiments made here could be applied to students with lesser challenges and infers if special education teachers are having concerns, general education teacher might be as well. Bosh's (2016) research looked at the attitudes of both general education and special education teachers at the secondary level regarding children with autism in general education classrooms. Her research indicates though there are differences in the attitudes of general education and special education teachers at the secondary level, general education teachers tend to have a positive attitude towards having inclusion classrooms and students who require special education services in the classroom (Bosh, 2016). Bosh (2016) also indicated general education teachers reported having more professional issues with regards to inclusion, including attitudes towards their knowledge and confidence levels in teaching children with autism. This speaks to the idea of preparation and ensuring general education teachers have preparation in their academic programs to be able to have inclusion classrooms.

McGlothin (2023) suggests in her dissertation collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers is an important part of working with students. This indicates working together with support staff and resources in a building are significant for general education teachers, an essential question being asked in this study with regards to supports. Additionally, teachers generally feel their programs did not adequately prepare them to meet the needs of all learners in their classroom (Mackey, 2014). Mackey (2014) also suggests general education teachers are not provided with enough time to plan and collaborate to implement inclusion, and teachers report a lack of in-class support. This is particularly of interest in this study as it speaks directly to research question of the perspective of teachers regarding support systems in their school. Ko and Boswell (2013) also suggest teachers report having little preservice learning about inclusion classrooms and desire schools to provide more opportunities on the topic. This further suggests teachers feeling underprepared to adequately serve students with learning disabilities and challenges in their classroom.

One study conducted involved educators in career and technical schools. These teachers in these programs felt the need for more courses in the certification programs and more trainings to be able to better work with students with learning needs (Milledge-Henderson, 2020). Another study looked at elementary school teachers and their feelings of preparedness for teaching students with learning difference. Overall, these teachers did feel prepared to work with students with learning differences. However, an important factor in this study was that it mostly interviewed teachers who were in their first couple of years teaching (Halvorson, 2020). This might express a change in teacher education programs but does not address the issue of teachers who might not have had this same educational training. Additionally, there was a study conducted which examined college faculty preparedness to teach students with learning

disabilities. It found, generally, faculty are underprepared for teaching students with learning differences but have a desire to have better preparation (Hansen & Dawson, 2020). These three studies indicate three things. First, more research needs to be completed in all areas of education, but especially at the secondary level regarding teacher preparedness to aid students with learning challenges. Secondly, teachers have a general sense and desire to want to learn how to better serve students with learning differences. Lastly, teachers generally feel underprepared with working with students with learning differences and need more education to be provided, either in training or coursework. These are important insights to consider when thinking about this study's examination into teachers' sense of support. This sense of support and the type of aid given to teachers speak directly to the ideas of instructional differentiation and social supports given to students, aspects that will be explored next.

Social Support and Modeling

From previous research done, a major area discussed impacting the education of students with learning challenges, goes beyond academic support, and suggests a need for social emotional support (Vaughn et al., 2001). Hackmann and his colleagues (2019) suggest, though students' well-being seems to influence learning, there has been an oversight in addressing social relationships at school. The lack of attention with regard to social relationships indicates there is an impact which causes a lack of learning to occur in the classroom. Elias and White (2017) discuss children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) attending college struggle with social competence and lack the executive functioning skills that allow them to not only have good time management and attention, but strong concepts with regards to social interactions. Based on parents' perspective, Elias and White (2017) state: "The desire for social supports aligns nicely with parental-perceived areas of difficulty, and strongly suggests that interventions designed to

target transitioning or postsecondary students with ASD need to encompass social skill training and opportunity” (p. 741). It is important to acknowledge it is not just socioemotional support students need to be successful and obtain necessary skills, but it is necessary to instill these social skills into students, particularly students with learning challenges. By providing those supports to students, one cannot just give students the components they need to be successful, but model for students skills.

By modeling these social skills, hopefully teachers will be able to instill some of those social components needed to transition beyond a secondary school education. Lipka and her colleagues (2019) discuss one student in their article that indicated the examples of others, especially their teachers, helped them understand what to do. This clearly indicates students need to see an example to know what to do, both academically and socially. By showing, explicitly or implicitly, the social skills that students need, it might better aid them when transitioning to other post-secondary endeavors. This connects to the idea of working in small group settings or providing individualized attention which is explored in the next section.

Small Group and Individualized Attention

Another component of effectively impacting students with learning challenges was with regards to smaller group and individualized attention. Overall, many researchers agreed smaller class sizes, small group activities, and individualized support was necessary to help students (Linder & Schwab, 2020). Cooperative learning, where students of different abilities work together in small groups to improve understanding, can be beneficial for students with learning disabilities (Vaughn et al., 2004) Lipka and her colleagues (2019) write: “With respect to social and emotional advantages, many of the students noted that small class size was one of the more meaningful characteristics of adapted courses, as it helped create a comfortable environment and

enabled the provision of emotional support” (p. 152). The small class sizes demonstrate the connection for the need of emotional support with regards to the individual. However, there is suggestion whether small groups in and of themselves are beneficial. Bolic Baric and colleagues (2016) suggested small groups were helpful, but not sufficient enough to help the support of learning. They argue there also needs to be individualized teaching methods. Drawing on one student’s experience, they discuss a student working one-one-one with a teacher to create a schedule which helps that student execute tasks (Bolic Baric et al., 2016). This is an important component to discuss and challenge. It is not enough to have small class sizes, or put students who need it, into small groups by pushing in or pulling out. Students also need one-on-one, individualized attention. Addressing this is a key component in ensuring all interventions and supports are intentionally and effectively provided. By explicitly discussing concrete ways that aid students in their learning, such as small class sizes, small groups, and individualized attention, it helps educators and researchers to know what components need to remain in place and be built on, to look at what other aspects are lacking. Beyond these examples, it is important to look at other strategies teachers use to aid students in their classrooms.

Strategies and Techniques

As inclusive classrooms vary greatly and the needs of students in the classrooms vary, it is important to address the variety of research done which discusses different strategies that are beneficial to aiding students with learning challenges. Angelides and Aravi (2017) suggest that collaboration amongst teachers and co-teaching models can help create differentiation and individualized lessons. Modifying assessments, including providing additional time, ignoring specific mistakes, allowing for oral exams, and having students in a separate room are helpful strategies for students (Linder & Schwab, 2020). Gumpert and McConnell (2019) give a variety of

strategies to help students with disabilities in the classroom. This includes having students with disabilities preview material early, work in heterogeneous groups, and allow choice in presentations, through either written or verbal communication. The article also provides more specific examples of various components of a lesson, such as content, process, and affect, with specific ways to differentiate material. Some of these techniques include modeling by teachers, flexible grouping, and modeling respect (Gumpert & McConnell, 2019). Gumpert and McConnell give insight into a specific lesson that helps students of various abilities in a classroom participate and begin to comprehend the material.

Other research done argues access to a teaching assistant, who can assist with working on specific differentiated tasks with students, is helpful to the learning process (Pook, 2017). This research also suggests simply asking students what they need allows for an empathetic approach to be taken and can help achieve equality. In the same breath, Pook (2017) argues having students being able to have access to field trips is also important. She discussed creating a schema, by having a specific plan or diagram to help students as well as asking students specifically what they found helpful in the lesson (Pook, 2017). Pook's article provides specific content area examples that help when working with students with disabilities. These articles provide additional support and insights into research, helping to understand specific strategies that benefit students who learn differently and have their own learning challenges. When thinking about these strategies, it is also beneficial to think about how they connect to discipline specific areas, which will be explored in the next two sections below as they relate to literacy and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).

Literacy Specific Intervention and Instruction

At the secondary level, there has been extensive conversation regarding the connection between literacy instruction and content-specific instruction. When looking at how to best aid students with learning disabilities, a great deal of research has been conducted regarding literacy specific interventions (Bhattacharya, 2020; Lauterbach et al., 2020; Lefèvre et al., 2022). This targeted type of intervention, as it relates to students with learning disabilities and challenges, gives great insight into what work is being done in classrooms and what that means for further research. Research conducted from content-specific courses to parent perceptions of what is occurring in the classroom gives valuable information that can be expanded on as it relates to teachers' perceptions of support to students with learning disabilities and challenges (Lefèvre et al., 2022; Wakeman, et al., 2021). Though this study did not specifically look at literacy intervention, given some of the teachers taught humanities courses, it is valuable to have a better understanding of the research done related to literacy concepts. This prior research helps to understand how teachers' responses throughout their interviews better address the research questions being asked regarding support from the school, differentiation, and the social components of education.

In research conducted by Lauterbach and her colleagues, teachers discussed the importance of literacy being taught through the content and ensuring literacy instruction was a part of content instruction. Lauterbach and her colleagues (2020) stated: "They saw literacy instruction as a tool to prepare students with LD for postsecondary education and life, and this perspective informed the literacy skills they chose to emphasize" (p. 238). This suggests an importance of the teachers' perceptions about how literacy skills can be taught to students with learning disabilities through their content. This article also discussed that participants described

the importance of engaging in formal and informal learning opportunities, including professional development, meeting with colleagues, and reading research, to better serve their students (Lauterbach et al., 2020). This specific training, as it relates to literacy instruction, furthers the importance of research done related to teacher preparedness. The research also discussed specific strategies used to ensure students have literacy skills, including underlining, taking notes, and chunking material for students with learning needs (Lauterbach et al., 2020). This further connects to other research related to strategy-specific ways to aid students with learning disabilities.

It is also worth noting, as teachers might directly speak about parents through the interview process, the parental perspective. Wakeman and her colleagues (2021) write: “problem behaviour and motivation served as barriers to literacy for elementary students, and a lack of instructional time served as a barrier to writing for high school students” (p. 95). Here, specifically as it relates to secondary students, parents have a perception of a lack of instructional time impeding their child’s learning and acquisition of skills. This is important as it gives insights to teachers of what parents are perceiving so there can be a better enlightening into what teachers are perceiving. From this research, parents also reported the desire for there to be functional application behind the literacy skills taught, in line with the cited research that discusses the connection between real-life contexts and examples and the positive outcomes after high school. Using previous research, Wakeman and her colleagues (2021) suggested there should be a greater emphasis in elementary and middle schools on building foundational reading skills, such as phonemic awareness and fluency, and high schools should provide instructional programming with an emphasis on functional literacy which addresses direct applications to post-school life. These findings suggest parents perceive literacy instruction as important and its

relatedness to a better quality of life but have concerns of the connectedness it plays with postsecondary plans. This research is important as it provides a baseline of insight into the perception of parents, which can help explain or allow for further elaboration into the insights of teachers.

Another important aspect of previous research is the specific type of literacy instruction examined in older students with learning disabilities and challenges. This research gives even further insights into the type of instruction being provided to students who struggle or have a disability and how it relates to the perceptions of teachers. Bhattacharya (2020) looked at the effectiveness of teaching struggling high school readers how to read words using syllabic versus morphemic analyses. With having an increasing number of multisyllabic words in academic disciplines in secondary education, older struggling readers have difficult reading words. Earlier research has shown struggling readers often have poor phonological and morphological skills, so there must be explicit practice to help these readers accurately decode multisyllabic words.

One approach, related to decoding, looked at helping struggling high school students who were reading at an upper elementary level, master syllable patterns to help them decode multisyllabic words. Another approach investigated improving struggling readers' ability to read multisyllabic words by focusing on morphemes, the smallest units of meaning. For example, this approach would rely on identifying and reading prefixes and suffixes correctly, to help with the base word (Bhattacharya, 2020). Bhattacharya shares both syllabic and morphemic intervention approaches benefit struggling readers because it provides them with the opportunity to break down words into smaller word parts, which can be more easily stored and retrieved for reading and memory. This research conducted allows insight into literacy specific techniques that can expand across disciplines. It is important as it relates to how secondary school teachers might

respond to interview questions from their own perceptions, especially if they are teaching in the humanities.

Lefèvre and her colleagues (2022) took a close look at high school females in France with dyslexia. Individuals with dyslexia often have deficits with the phonological domain. Previous research in this area has pointed to individuals with dyslexia having a weakness in their morphological skills, but there is growing research to support the intact morphological skills for those with dyslexia. This article cites the work of Bitan (2020), whose behavioral and functional MRI study indicated dyslexic individuals could use their morphological skills to compensate for their phonological skill deficits. The study's results showed individuals with dyslexia read less words correctly and had a longer reading time compared to the typical readers (Lefèvre et al., 2022). Readers with lower fluency seemed to have a greater reliance on morphological processing and reading fluency was found to be dependent on verbal IQ, phonological awareness, and morphological priming, in that order of importance. Another finding was dyslexic adolescents benefited from priming to see the information before processing the word target (Lefèvre et al., 2022). The study's results suggest readers with low reading fluency appear to use morphological processing more during word recognition, which also may be a marker for how dyslexic individuals have a neural reorganization to compensate. The insights provided from this research serve well to the conversation as it provides insights into students with a specific learning disability that contribute to the conversation regarding teachers' perceptions. Beyond literacy struggles, students might also have math related challenges, and exploring those topics is also important.

STEM Specific Intervention

Just as teachers from the humanities were interviewed for this research, math and science teachers were also interviewed for this study. Having an understanding of the research done specifically in math and science classes will help give better insights into the responses of those teachers. Students with learning disabilities can struggle with working memory and have trouble coordinating problem-solving steps (Geary, 2004). Marita and Hord (2017) suggest from their literature review that: “strategies that promote students organization of mathematical information and their thought process may provide students with ways they can self-support during challenging mathematical problem solving” (pp. 37-38). Walker and Hunt (2012) discuss incorporating math lessons that include content and social skills. In these lessons they suggest making choice, promoting self-advocacy, organization, and collaboration. They suggest skills paired with the content is what is beneficial to student success. This pairs with other components of the literature review related to preparation beyond secondary school and social supports as a part of education.

Heinrich and her colleagues (2016) suggest simultaneous prompting procedures can be an effective way to combat the barrier of the pace of instruction can often be a challenge for students with disabilities. Having used a STEM class as their study, they also suggest the social benefits of inclusive classroom as collateral gain when students with and without disabilities are included in the STEM classes (Heinrich et al., 2016). McGrath and Hughes research related to inquiry-based science classrooms and students with learning disabilities included insights into reading supports. They suggest: “Effective instruction in science classrooms must incorporate reading supports necessary for students to access the science curriculum” (McGrath & Hughes, 2018, p. 139). This indicates not only science specific instruction, but a connection to the prior

section related to reading instruction and literacy support. This math and science specific literature provides greater insight into content-specific instruction as it relates to educating students with learning challenges and disabilities, speaking more directly to some of the teacher interviews.

Post-Secondary Plans, Perspectives, and Prospects

A large component of secondary education is the need to provide students with skills, knowledge, and training that allows them to be prepared to embark in the next moments of their lives. Understanding what secondary teachers are trying to accomplish in their classrooms and more importantly why they are doing what they are doing is an important aspect of secondary education. What comes after high school is not always the same for all students, but aiding students with their post-secondary plans through the work done in classrooms is valuable. An important aspect of this research is understanding the research done previously regarding skill preparation for individuals with disabilities to gain employment. In order to ensure students with disabilities have the ability to be successful beyond high school in their education, employment, or other avenues, the education system needs to provide them with the tools necessary to do this. Two articles specifically addressed the employment component of individuals with disabilities.

Bennett and Gallagher (2013) argue there needs to be strong job coaches at the secondary level to ensure students are gaining the skills they need to be prepared for employment and are having the support to ensure they gain access to employment. This addresses the need to ensure educational systems have these job coaches to make sure these students with learning challenges are supported in their transition to employment. Additionally, specific programs, which target soft skills such as attitude, cooperation, and reliability to name a few, can ensure students are gaining the skills they want and need to be employed (Clark et al., 2019). Having schools utilize

these programs in collaboration with students and families about goals and aspirations, ensure the skills these students need are embedded in the curriculum schools are teaching.

An important component to education and employment is perception, including the perception of students with learning challenges. Milsom (2006) examined the attitudes individuals within schools had regarding students with disabilities. With regard to adults, those who had negative attitudes towards students with disabilities could manifest in not participating in certain meetings or not recommending certain inclusion opportunities for those students. For other students, these negative attitudes resulted in bullying and exclusion (Milsom, 2006). Milsom suggests certain teachers' negative attitudes come from a lack of understanding of students with disabilities or a feeling of attention being taken away from other students. To address these concerns, Milsom argues teachers need appropriate training, students need education that encourages cooperative relationships, and administrators need to be supportive of the implementation of programs. She concludes by encouraging school counselors to use their training to conduct needs assessments within their schools to examine the attitudes of people in the school to create necessary change to have a positive environment for students with disabilities (Milsom, 2006). By discussing attitudes and behaviors, this article provides an important component to the conversation regarding students with disabilities and what might not only be occurring in schools but also be carried over into post-secondary plans, such as college or work. Ensuring there are positive environments, which create healthy perceptions, where students not only have inclusion in classrooms, but schools aiding these students ensure their education is useful to them beyond the classroom, and in society helps create a more inclusive, beneficial, system for all. This research is valuable because this study is being done in a secondary school, and the perspective of teachers might be impacted in what they consider

important in preparing their students for beyond their classroom, driving what they are doing in their classroom, and influencing their responses.

From the Literature to the Research

As insightful as this previous research is, there are still gaps that exist in this conversation. It will be helpful to find more specific and concrete examples that teachers provide regarding what type of academic and social skills they are trying to help students gain, and how these teachers' support systems allow them to provide the skills to students or inhibit them from doing this. This research will also provide greater insight into the specific ways teachers in this study utilize small group activities and individualized attention to support students with learning needs and how they are supported by schools to do such. The interviews expand on different strategies teachers are using to aid students with learning disabilities and challenges and how schools, administrators, and other support systems are, or are not, providing ways for this to occur, including aspects regarding professional development, preparation, and specific training. The prior research will help to see if this study can expand on the concepts regarding literacy specific instruction, as well as math and science instruction, as it relates to these discipline-specific teachers at the secondary level and ways in which they are speaking to this type of instruction.

Specifically, as this research will be looking at private, Catholic, all-male secondary teachers, there will also be greater insight into how teachers are preparing students for post-secondary plans and what that means regarding the ways in which their school, administrators, and supports are aiding them to do such as it relates to students with learning challenges. It also expands on the research already done in private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools work with students with learning challenges and better understand the perspective of teachers regarding

their work in inclusive education and the schools that support that work. It will help to better understand Catholic schools' responsibility and response to students with learning challenges, how the all-male environment impacts that, and how secondary education effects this conversation. Overall, this research seeks to find ways to expand on what has been previously looked at and provide more specific teacher narratives and insights into these conversations, particularly as they relate to the support systems that teachers are provided within a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school to educate students with learning challenges.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This research study uses a qualitative research approach to examine the support systems that exist for teachers regarding the education of students with learning challenges. It more specifically examines the research through the use of case study, by conducting multiple semi-structured interviews with teachers. This chapter will explore the methodology of the study, the setting in which the study was conducted, some demographics of that setting, the teachers and how they were chosen, the data collection procedures and analysis, and the limitations regarding this study, which will also be further explored in Chapter 5.

Research Design

A qualitative case study approach is beneficial in this study. Qualitative inquiry details the issue of supports teachers receive regarding students with learning challenges. By talking to those people directly, the study allows them to tell their stories, understanding the context and setting in which the participants are in relationship to the issue (Creswell, 2013). In this case qualitative inquiry makes sense because it allows teachers the opportunity to engage in conversation, shedding light onto the realities these teachers feel related to inclusion education and the supports they receive from the school, in terms of personnel and professional development, when educating students with learning challenges. The perspective teachers provide, through their interviews, address the lived experiences they are having and how they see themselves in relationship to inclusive education. Qualitative research should also be ethical in nature, including that the research lends itself to things, such as being a model of change (Koro-Ljungberg & Cannella, 2017). This qualitative case study is grounded in a model of change as it uses the teachers' responses as a way to understand potential changes that can better support teachers in supporting their students with learning challenges. Qualitative research consists of

researchers studying things in their natural settings and attempting to make sense of the meaning individuals bring to those settings, through interviews and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study does this by specifically trying to represent the perspective teachers have regarding their support systems, differentiated instruction, and the social components to educate students with learning challenges.

This research design will focus on a qualitative methods approach. A qualitative methods approach is beneficial in this situation as stated earlier, because it allows for the participants' stories to be heard as it relates to their situation in the setting (Creswell, 2013), in this case as a teacher of students with learning challenges. Creswell states:

“Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.” (Creswell, 2013)

Using this definition, this study seeks to do the very things Creswell describes as qualitative, starting with my own assumptions, as the researcher, regarding students with learning challenges, collecting data through interviews with educators who work with these students, and allowing participants' voices to come through the interpretation of the data. Creswell suggests case study research studies an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system

(Creswell et al., 2007). This case study looks at teachers' perspectives regarding supports for educating students with learning challenges, and more specifically, a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school, the aspects that bound the case.

Methodology

More specifically, using Stake's view of cases as people (Stake, 1995) and Creswell's view of exploring bounded systems through interviews (Creswell et al., 2007) this qualitative case study seeks to understand better the teachers' view of supports they are receiving regarding educating students with learning challenges. Stake describes cases as people and programs (Stake, 1995). For this study, the teachers who were interviewed were the primary case. Using these two concepts as a foundation, this research design was a case study as it sought to interview the people, the teachers of students who have learning challenges, and understand their perceptions of support from their school, the bounded system that is the education of diverse learners. This case is bounded in the fact the teachers come from a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school. The uniqueness of this school bounds this case as the teachers will be speaking about their experiences in this school model and how that relates to the idea of having students with learning challenges in their classrooms. Case study was chosen as it helps to understand the unique situation the teachers of the qualitative case study are positioned in and the perspective they brought to the interviews.

The two semi-structured interviews sought to better understand the experiences of the teachers regarding their work with students with and without learning challenges and disabilities. The interviews directly address the research questions regarding teachers' preparation for this work as it relates to private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools and the ways in which it helps them aid students in academic and social ways. Please see Appendix B for a diagram that

illustrates a triangulation between the research questions, the methodology, and the theoretical framework.

Setting

This research took place in the Northeastern part of the United States. The teachers came from a private, Catholic, all male, secondary school located in a suburban town. The school is grades 9-12. The Catholic school pulls students from over forty-five different towns and cities, with students that come from lower socioeconomic urban populations, middle class to upper middle class suburban populations, and middle to lower middle class more rural populations. This is important to recognize as the school draws a diverse population of students with various types of educational experiences and backgrounds. This could have contributed to teachers' experiences regarding what is shared throughout the interview process as many students have not only different abilities but also different educational experiences and preparedness. The diverse background and varying towns and cities students come from will also provide a greater scope into different types of students within the school. The variation in student experience and educational preparation could have impacted teachers' responses to the perceptions of support teachers feel, how they differentiate instruction, and what social supports they feel they need to provide. This also helps to better understand the ecosystems surrounding the teachers, the microsystem in this study. Tables which provide further demographics about the student and teacher population of the school are located in the sections below, and more specific demographics about the teacher population used in this study are listed in the beginning of Chapter 4.

School Demographics

The school in this study is located in a middle-class to upper middle-class suburban town. The school is comprised of 792 students. 250 (31.57%) of the students are residents of the town, with the remaining students coming from surrounding towns and cities. The average award for tuition is approximately 46%, with the maximum award being 95% of tuition. More than one in three students receive financial aid. The first table below breaks down the demographics of students based on ethnicity, additionally including the total amount of financial aid or scholarship rewarded to families. The second table gives an insight into the religious makeup of the student body, which is helpful as it indicates the level of students who are not Catholic who attend this Catholic school, another potential influence on perspective. This demographical information further helps understand the research questions themselves, as it indirectly acknowledges some of the other systems not addressed in this study that could be impacting the perspective of the microsystem, the teachers. It also gives context to future research that might address different mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems in relationship to this type of study. It further brings to light the insights teachers shared in the interviews as it relates to their own perceptions of support, how they differentiate instruction, and the social supports they provide.

Table 3.1. School Demographics

The table below illustrates demographics related to ethnicity as well as financial aid/scholarship:

Ethnicity	# of Students	% of students	Financial Aid Total	Scholarship Total
White	558	70.45%	\$1,548,400	\$206,000
Hispanic or Latino	75	9.47%	\$825,050	\$30,000
Black or African American	46	5.81%	\$638,000	\$7,000
Multi-Racial	33	4.17%	\$84,000	\$7,000
Asian	29	3.66%	\$92,000	\$9,000
Prefer Not to Answer	45	5.68%	\$228,000	\$15,000

Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	2	0.25%	\$0	\$0
American Indian/ Alaska Native	4	0.51%	\$16,000	\$0
Total	792	100.00%	\$3,431,450	\$274,000

Table 3.2. Religious Makeup of School

The following table illustrates the religious makeup of the students:

Religion	# of Students	% of Students
Catholic	523	66.04%
Christian	131	16.54%
Unaffiliated	38	4.80%
Prefer Not to Answer	50	6.31%
Agnostic	2	0.25%
Interfaith	39	4.92%
Hindu	2	0.25%
Jewish	4	0.51%
Muslim	2	0.25%
Atheist	1	0.13%
Total	792	100.00%

Beyond school demographics, understanding the school’s daily schedule can be helpful. The school runs on an eight-day cycle that rotates. The first six days of the cycle has seven classes a day, each meeting for 40 minutes. The final two days of the schedule’s cycle are “block schedule,” with four classes that meet for 75 minutes once over those two days. In an eight-day cycle teachers see students seven times. Students are required to take six classes, with the option to take seven classes. During one of the block schedules there is a “community” period, in which the entire school has community events. These events range from masses to assemblies for whole school events, as well as class/grade specific events and other schoolwide programming.

Additionally, there is an advisory period that meets for 10 minutes in the middle of the day. This period is where school announcements and daily prayer takes place. In addition to their teaching responsibility, each teacher is responsible for an advisory class. Though most days advisory is for announcements and a “reprieve” in the day, some days there are activities the advisory teacher facilitates. These activities can be schoolwide or grade/class specific. Knowing the schedule, and some of the day-to-day workings of the school that this information provides, can be beneficial in hearing the responses of the teachers, better recognizing how the insights shared responded to the research questions.

Additionally, having a general idea of what the school’s teacher demographics are, is helpful for understanding the perspectives shared by the teachers of this case study. The table below gives context to the demographics of the teaching faculty of the school. It provides two years of data to show the changes over the course of an academic year and to give context to various changes that occurred in the demographics of the teaching faculty. This is helpful for this study as it helps to understand the perspective of the teachers and how their responses might address the research questions given their careers in education and the school itself.

Table 3.3. Teacher Demographics of the School

ACADEMIC YEAR		2024 - 2025	2023 - 2024
Number of Full Time Faculty		49	48
Number of Part Time Faculty		8	5
Percent of Full Time Faculty with Advanced Degrees		87.76%	87.50%
Alumni Faculty		16.33%	18.75%
Gender	Female	38.78%	39.58%
	Male	61.22%	60.42%
Ethnicity	White	85.71%	85.42%
	Black	2.04%	2.08%
	Hispanic	10.20%	10.42%
	Asian	2.04%	2.08%

	Middle Eastern	0.00%	0.00%
	Other	0.00%	0.00%
Years of Service Teaching at the School	Percent of Faculty in Year 1	6.12%	6.25%
	Percent of Faculty Teaching at School for 3+ Years	87.76%	83.33%
	Percent of Faculty Teaching at School for 5+ Years	61.22%	68.75%
	Percent of Faculty Teaching at School for 10+ Years	38.78%	45.83%
	Percent of Faculty Teaching at School for 20+ Years	14.29%	14.58%
	Percent of Faculty Teaching at School for 30+ Years	2.04%	4.17%
	Average Years of Service	9.71	9.52
Class Size	Average Class Size	20.00	20.11
	Average Number of Students Per Teacher	101.92	101.59
	Student to Full Time Teacher Ratio	17:1	16.4:1

Additionally, the following information provides insight into the services provided to students with and without learning disabilities at the school. The verbiage used in the following is that of what the school has in their handbook and provides to parents. The information below, provided by the school, addresses some of the academic supports that exist in the school, which include the learning specialist, who primarily assists students receiving Tier 3 support, a math tutor, and a literacy specialist. These additional supports are beneficial to be aware of as they are frequently referenced throughout participants' interviews.

Figure 3.1. Artifact from School

The need for additional support services programming is evaluated on an ongoing basis and programs are added based on student need. Supports that are available for all students include:

- Access to faculty before and after school for extra review
- Access to after-school homework help in the Academic Center
- Access to exam study sessions and reading days before semester and final exams
- Access to the Academic Center before, during, and after school for a quiet study space
- Support and guidance from School/College Counselor, School Social Worker, and Asst. Dean of Students
- Ability to match with a peer tutor in a variety of subject areas
- Access to math support through the Academic Center
- Access to literacy support through the Academic Center

Should students require a higher level of support (Tier 2), as determined by a documented learning need or a referral from staff, students may be matched with a college intern and/or receive weekly support from the Learning Specialist (full time member of the school's staff). They will continue to have access to the aforementioned services available to all students.

The highest level of support (Tier 3) available to students is a targeted academic support program for students with identified learning needs. Enrollment in the program is by invitation only. Students in this program will participate in a daily academic support class, which will take place during a regular class period within their existing schedule in lieu of a free period. Within this class, students will receive both small group and individual instruction from a learning specialist. The learning specialist will help students maintain academic progress, employing strategies to enhance their learning by making class content more accessible. A secondary focus will be on augmenting study skills, such as note-taking and test preparation, as well as broader executive functioning behaviors (e.g., organization, time management, planning/prioritizing). In addition, within their academic support class, students will have the opportunity to seek math support in the Academic Center, as well as schedule time with teachers for additional subject-specific support. Regular class attendance is a mandatory requirement for participation in this program. Students within the program will continue to have access to the aforementioned services available to all students.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Participants were selected by a general communication being sent out to faculty people to participate in the study. Not all members of the faculty were contacted, but there was communication made to multiple members of each department, as well as the chairs of every department. After further communication with participants who responded, indicating they were interested in the study, the scheduling of interviews began. No individual who expressed interest

was excluded from the study. This sample population in this study is not random, as it did not give every teacher in the school the opportunity to participate (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). It was both purposive, as I the researcher determined potential participants to be more informative, based on their experience in the school, and criterion, as individuals were contacted based on their academic discipline and role as a Catholic, secondary school educator. It was also convenience sampling as the participants were easily available to me (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The type of sampling done in this study impacts the results of the study and is further explored in the limitations section.

Participants

This research study included six teachers who are teachers at the private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school where students with and without learning challenges attend. The teachers interviewed were all general education teachers and the purpose of this was to explore their experiences regarding educational support systems that help with instruction. This ranged from how they worked with the academic support specialists, literacy interventionist, math coach, or administrators to their perceptions of preparedness. The table below provides insights into the teachers, including their time in education as well the school itself.

Table 3.4. Teacher Participants

Participants/ Teachers	Years Teaching at School	Years Teaching in Career	Academic Discipline	Advanced Degree (Master's)	Teacher Preparation/Education Program (not necessarily certified)
Steve	12	13	World Language	Yes	Yes
Bridget	24	24	World Language	Yes	Yes
Kerri	12	20	Theology	Yes	No
Joe	8	21	Science/Math	Yes	Yes

Brad	1	1	Math	Yes	Yes
Rich	5	19	English	In process	In process

This study intentionally did not interview administrators, parents, or other school support staff, as it sought to look at the perspective of the general education teachers themselves. Though those insights are valuable in other research, especially when thinking about a comparative lens, this study is focusing on the microsystem, the teachers, and their experience related to the other systems they are a part of, not the perspective of those other systems themselves. Additionally, the perspective of the general educators, in relation to inclusion classrooms and students with learning challenges, is important because it speaks to the ways in which this is, or is not, occurring and to what level this is happening in a general education classroom. All teachers teach at the secondary school level and teach in different academic disciplines. It is also important, given that the interviews conducted occurred at the secondary level, teachers came from various content areas and could speak to the experience of teaching students with learning challenges across a wide variety of disciplines.

Having a diverse perspective of different academic disciplines matters because it speaks more to various strategies and techniques that can be effective in content-specific classes. It also determines if there is overlap and interdisciplinary learning that occurs across departments at the secondary level when it comes to educating students with learning challenges. Having representation from a variety of disciplines in the school better addresses the research questions by more specifically determining if the perspectives of support are commonly felt across all academic departments, or if some individuals in certain departments feel differently than others. It also speaks to the level of differentiation that is occurring in the school, and again better

addresses whether some departments are better able or more willing to do this, and whether some disciplines naturally lend themselves to differentiated instruction more easily. The same is true for the research question regarding social supports and if some disciplines lend themselves better to establishing social supports in individual classrooms. Teachers' responses indicate if there were differences, or commonalities, across disciplines. This also further speaks to the theoretical framework, determining if the microsystem's (the teachers) perspective is universal to the other systems, or if the academic discipline a participant teaches impacts their perspective in relationship to the other systems.

Data Collection

Interviews

In this study, I conducted two interviews with each teacher, completing these interviews over the course of three months. The interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. The other piece of data collected is listed above (Figure 2) and relates to the academic support teams verbiage listed in the school handbook, and demographic information related to the student and teacher makeup of the school. The semi-structured interview questions were shaped in a way to aid in responding to the research questions. After reviewing the literature, questions were developed to address aspects explored in previous studies, including access to resources and support, perceptions of preparedness, including coursework and professional development, techniques and strategies used in classrooms, and the relationship to the Catholic, all-male, model of education. The two interviews done allowed for a few things to occur in the study. It first allowed for reflection between interviews, giving teachers time to think about what they said, the topic at hand, and if they would like to clarify or expand on different components of the initial interview. It also allowed for the first interview to be an opportunity to develop a rapport

with the teacher, confirm anonymity in the research process, and begin to have broader conversation related to the topic. The first interview explored general insights, including the teacher's background, why they entered the field of education, the change in their teaching styles over their career, how they differentiate instruction, and the perspective they have regarding supports from the school and their preparation regarding educating all students.

The second interview allowed for more detailed questions and more in-depth responses to occur. The second interview further sought out responses related preparation from the perspective of each individual teacher, both as they see it in relationship to themselves as well as to their colleagues in general. It dove deeper into questions related to the supports the school provides to teachers in educating all students. Finally, it sought to determine if there are changes needed to occur regarding supports for teachers educating students with learning challenges, what those changes might be, and what the ideal inclusion classroom looks like. The two interviews supported understanding patterns in individual teachers' responses in relationship to the research questions and to better understand the relationality of the ecosystems the teachers are a part of, grounding the research in the theoretical framework. For this qualitative case study, interviews were the most prominent form of collecting data as they spoke directly to the educators' experiences of working with students with learning challenges, and the supports they are receiving. Please see Appendix A, and Tables A.1 and A.2 for more details related to the direct, prepared, interview questions as they relate to the research questions and align with the theoretical framework. As a reminder, these interviews were semi-structured, so additional questions, not listed, were asked through the interview process to better understand insights shared.

Data Collection Schedule

This study interviewed six teachers over the course of three months. There was about one to two weeks between each interview with each individual teacher as it gave them, and me, time to reflect. Issues regarding this study included teacher concerns regarding anonymity, especially since the teachers might have been worried what superiors might discover and any repercussions regarding this. This could impact full disclosure or honesty in the interviews. The table below gives a detailed explanation of my timeline.

Table 3.5. Timeline

April-May 2024	Propose/IRB amendments
June-July 2024	Preliminary Exams
August-September 2024	Participant recruitment/Conduct interviews
October-December 2024	Finish interviews/Begin writing
January-March 2025	Compile findings
April-May 2025	Compile and analyze findings
June-July 2025	Conclude/edit writing and meet with chair
August 2025	Dissertation is complete/defended/K-Rex

Data Collection Procedure

In this qualitative case study, each of the six teachers were interviewed two different times. Before I began the initial interview, I ensured I had disclosure and consent forms completed. The sampling here is purposeful and convenient to me as the researcher. The semi-structured interviews were completed using a constructivist framework (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009) as an umbrella framework, to gain the insights and perspective of the teachers' experiences, and an ecological systems framework (Egbert & Roe, 2020) to understand how the teachers exist in their setting and what might influence their perspectives. This was important in this study as it allowed the teachers to be the driving force, ensuring if the conversation moved in a different direction from the prepared questions, the insights shared were still useful and

provided necessary components to the results of the study. As the researcher, it gave me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions to sentiments made, which allowed for clarification, expansion, and an appreciation of components to the topic I might not have expected arising during the interview processes.

There was at least a week between each interview to give both the teacher and me time to reflect on the questions and responses. The interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. This gave me time to go through those responses to see how to appropriately further ask questions that were relative to the purpose of this study. The teachers were all from a private, Catholic, all-male school, located in the Northeast region of the United States. The school, as stated above in the settings section, pulls students from over forty-five different towns and cities, with students that come from lower socioeconomic urban populations, middle class to upper middle class suburban populations, and middle to lower middle class more “rural” populations. This is important to recognize as the school draws a diverse population of students with various types of educational experiences and backgrounds, and impacts teachers’ perspectives and the way in which they are responding to the interview questions.

The student demographics contributed to the teachers’ experiences regarding the interview process as many students will have not only different abilities but also different educational experiences and preparedness. The site is also a specific type of school, a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school. These components impacted the way teachers responded to the interview questions, and intentionally allowed for a better insight in responding to the research questions. Individual aspects of the school, such as being a private, Catholic school versus a diocesan Catholic school, being all-male versus coeducational or all-female, and being a high school versus a middle or elementary level school, contributed to the responses teachers had

and addressed the research questions with more directness. It also aided in understanding the ecosystems the teachers were a part of, further grounding the research in the theoretical framework set out from the beginning. By having semi-structured interviews, I was able to hear in two parts the teachers' experiences, giving time to reflect, reaffirm, or give clarification to sentiments made, allowing for a more insightful understanding in response to the research questions being explored.

In this two-part, semi-structured, interview process each interview lasted between 45 to 75 minutes and focused in on a different aspect regarding inclusive education. In the first interview questions were broader, gaining insights from the teachers, specifically their motivation to become a teacher, their general teaching style, and their view on inclusive education in relationship to their teaching style. In the second interview, questions were geared to academic and social support, both on the part of the teacher in differentiating instruction and supports that exist for the teacher from the school. The second interview also featured questions which focused on change, both on the part of the teacher and by the school. These topics were explored as they added value to the research questions themselves. By asking these types of interview questions, teachers were better able to give details of their lived experiences and educational realities to differentiated instruction and the resources available to them for academic and social supports. It also acknowledges these are individuals, with individual thoughts and perspectives. Allowing them the opportunity to discuss change, if it is in fact necessary, gave teachers the opportunity to further dive into their own point of view and the lived experiences they are seeing in their own classrooms, ensuring the teachers provided their insights throughout the conversation. This helps understand the teachers, from Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, and better positions them to the theoretical framework guiding the research. As the

microsystem, the teachers exist within the school, the mesosystem, have a connection to the local public school through certain resources, the exosystem, and provide a perception of Catholic education and inclusion, the macrosystem. All these systems work together, influence each other, and impact the insights being shared by the teachers. Acknowledging this as a part of the interview questions, ground the process in the theoretical framework guiding this research.

Data Analysis

Having done interviews, I used a coding system to interpret the data to determine themes from the various teachers' interviews. After I collected the data, I found common themes the teachers continued to reference throughout each interview and worked to code these themes into meaningful findings. Before coding, I shared the transcripts with the individual teachers, following up with them, to ensure member checking. This allowed for an accurate representation of what was shared to be validated by that individual teacher and the opportunity for them to clarify anything they felt they needed to. Saldaña (2021) suggests descriptive coding generates a sufficient list of subtopics while in vivo coding derives the actual language of the teacher and is more action oriented. I used these types of coding in two rounds before moving to themeing the data.

I read through all the transcripts from the interviews once, along with my field notes, and then compiled a list of codes. After having a compiled list of codes, I then read the interviews again, and applied aspects of the teachers' interviews to the compiled list of codes. In my first round of coding I used a priori coding, codes created beforehand and applied to the text (Blair, 2015) and (Elliot, 2018). From there, I moved to a second round of coding using an open, descriptive, in vivo, coding method. This process was open, as it allowed for the data to provide the codes, not me the researcher (Blair, 2015). It was descriptive as it helped summarize the

essence of what the participants were discussing (Wicks, 2017). Finally, this coding method was in vivo in nature as it allowed the words being said by the participants to create codes (Rogers, 2018). Going through the transcripts and field notes again, I used what the teachers had shared as a way to identify more codes or confirm codes already created, before moving to theming these codes.

Saldaña describes categorical themeing as a descriptive detail about the patterns observed, expanding major ideas from the research (Saldaña, 2021) Categorical themeing was useful in this study as it allowed the interviews conducted to be synthesized into common ideas and concepts that relate to individual teachers' perceptions and work with students with learning challenges. By using this method, I was better able to understand the experiences of teachers and the overarching concerns that relate to working with students with learning challenges. It allowed me to, concisely, find parallels between the teachers' realities and share their lived experiences. Using Dooley's view of reflective analysis, I positioned myself in a way to analyze the data I am saw from the interviews (Dooley, 2002). Induction identifies patterns from the cases studies to make general statements (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018). I used induction to find patterns from the various teachers' interviews and develop general takeaways from the data. These theoretical foundations are the grounding for the analysis of the research I conducted through these interviews.

For a better understanding and insight into my coding method, please refer to the table below, which provides some examples of the coding process. The first table provides insights into some of the predetermined codes I used in round one when initially reading through the interview transcripts as well as some of the codes that arose from the interviews themselves, codes discovered and labeled after going back through the transcripts in the second round. The

codes were then themed, as seen in the second to last column in the table. If themes could be broken up in the results section they were, seen through the final column, subcategory. The second table, using examples from the first table, gives a better depiction of how the process went, from round one to subcategorizing.

Table 3.6. Coding

Round	Type of Code	Example/Quote	Code	Categorized Theme	Subcategory
1 st Round	a priori	“into a more of a need to focus more on how they learn and how that I can adapt my lessons”	Individualized Learning Styles		
1 st Round	a priori	“I started to get to know my students a little bit...where their learning styles were”	Relationships with Students		
1 st Round	a priori	“I took one course in my master's program”	Professional Development		
2 nd Round	in vivo	“one of the reasons I am going back for my doctorate is to have more insights on this”	Prior Coursework	Preparedness and Support Systems Within Schools	
2 nd Round	descriptive	“I took one course in my master's program” “one of the reasons I am going back for my doctorate is to have more insights on this”	Prior Coursework	Preparedness and Support Systems Within Schools	Professional Development and Preparation Programs
2 nd Round	open	“So perhaps there needs to be a point person”	Additional Layers of Support	Preparedness and Support Systems Within Schools	Additional Layers of Support
2 nd Round	in vivo	“it's more than just the academic piece for us, we're trying to teach them to be good people, trying to turn them into young men”	Social Support	Mission, Identity, and Culture of the School	Student Formation and Development

2 nd Round	in vivo	“Our mission is just this Jesuit Catholic mission”	Mission	Mission, Identity, and Culture of the School	
2 nd Round	in vivo descriptive	“Our mission is just this Jesuit Catholic mission” “our mission here is to form you.” “The mission of the school, and what we're trying to do”	Mission	Mission, Identity, and Culture of the School	Catholic Mission and Identity
2 nd Round	open	“some sort of contact between teachers and parents”	Parent Relationships	Relationships with Students and Families	
2 nd Round	in vivo	“I don't know how many times I see kids like light up when I talk about like a football game”	Relationships with Students		
2 nd Round	a priori in vivo open descriptive	“I started to get to know my students a little bit more...where their learning styles were” “By building those relationships outside, and even just outside the class time” “stopping in the cafeteria and talking to a kid...”	Relationships with Students	Relationships with Students and Families	

Table 3.7. Isolated Coding Example

Please see the isolated example from the table above to show a specific example and progression from the first round of coding to the final categorizing of themes.

Round	Type of Code	Example/Quote	Code	Categorized Theme	Subcategory
1 st round	a priori	"I took one course in my master's program"	Professional Development		
2 nd round	in vivo	"one of the reasons I am going back for my doctorate is to have more insights on this"	Prior Coursework	Preparedness and Support Systems Within Schools	
2 nd round	descriptive	"I took one course in my master's program" "one of the reasons I am going back for my doctorate is to have more insights on this"	Prior Coursework	Preparedness and Support Systems Within Schools	Professional Development and Preparation Programs

Ethical Considerations

It is also important to think about the ethical considerations needed to be addressed within the study. Before I began the initial interview, I ensured I had disclosure and consent forms completed from the teachers. I also expressed to them explicitly the school gave me permission to complete the study, they would be deidentified within the study, and I would remove any information or verbiage they used that would be able to be referred back to the exact setting of study, the institution, or the teacher specifically. Each teacher was given a pseudonym to aid in protecting their identity. These ethical considerations are important in protecting teachers.

Trustworthiness in the Interview Process

It is important to note here the interviews conducted are subjective. The trustworthiness of the teachers and their experiences are an important aspect of this research. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) tenets of trustworthy qualitative research are important in evaluating the worth of the

research itself (Cohen, 2006). Trustworthiness tenets include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This study achieved credibility, confidence in the truth of the findings, through engagement with the teachers. I spoke to the teachers genuinely before, during, and after the interview process, especially during the initial interview in gaining background knowledge of their experience and what led them to education. Additionally, during the interview process I ensured to not just focus on my prepared questions, but actively listen and respond accordingly to what I was hearing. Transferability, applicability in other contexts, (Cohen, 2006) was achieved through thick description, or the contextualization of the meaning and intention (Holloway, 2005) of the insights shared. Dependability, the idea findings are consistent and replicable, (Cohen, 2006) is an aspect of Lincoln and Guba's theory that is not necessarily present in this study. Though teachers agreed with each other, there was no auditing of me, the researcher, by other people to confirm the experiences of the teachers were consistent or inconsistent with each other. Additionally, no further research has been done using my research as the basis so it cannot be determined if it is a commonly shared experience amongst other participants in similar contexts. This study has confirmability, a degree of neutrality in the research (Cohen, 2006), through reflexivity, the reflection of me, the researcher's own point of view, and my role within the data (Holloway, 2005). Through my shared positionality in Chapter 1, and personal moments of reflection throughout the process, I ensured, to the best of my ability, to remove myself and my own viewpoints on the topic out of the results that were taken from the interviews. Please see the section regarding limitations which speaks more to other aspects of the study.

Limitations

When conducting this research there are a number of limitations. First, the research conducted solely comes from teachers in a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school located in Northeast United States. Additionally, the teachers being interviewed could lack honesty in reporting. This honesty could be related to the support they feel when working with students with learning challenges, and the impact can be in both directions, either a positively or negatively. In this same regard, teachers might have embellished or under reported the strategies and techniques they use for students with learning challenges. This might occur to make themselves look or feel like better educators to themselves, me the researcher, and though deidentified, those reading the results of the study. Lastly, another limitation is the sampling of teachers picked to be interviewed might have been biased, intentionally or unintentionally. This might have been based on teaching schedules, desire to participate, and relevance to the study. It might also have been based on preconceived notions on my part as the researcher of the teacher's effectiveness as an educator. Being aware of these various aspects of limitations provides me with a better way to frame my research and objectively interpret the results. I will also be able to provide better clarity when sharing the results in a meaningful way having acknowledge these limitations. Further limitations are discussed in Chapter 5.

Delimitations

Just as there are limitations in any study, there are also delimitations. In this study some of the delimitations include the setting, the research questions themselves as well as the interview questions, and the theoretical framework grounding the research. In terms of the setting, this looks particularly at a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school. If this included a diocesan Catholic school, K-8 school, coeducational schools, or private non-religious schools,

this could have impacted teachers' responses. Additionally, the research questions sought to seek what supports teachers themselves felt from the school regarding students with learning challenges. It did not consider the perspectives of administrators, parents, or students. It did not directly seek to understand perceptions or attitudes of teachers towards inclusion classrooms and children with learning challenges. Though this came up in the study, the study sought to understand the perspective of the supports that exist in educating these students. This was also a qualitative study, grounded in an ecosystems framework. This impacts the results of the study. Each of the delimitations bounds the case and are important to recognize in understanding the results. The boundedness of this case as a private, all-male, Catholic, secondary school, is essential to the purpose of the study, but it is equally essential to recognize the impact that might have on the findings of the study.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives of support systems and interventions that help them educate students with individual learning challenges. By addressing the ways in which this study is designed, the methodology behind it, and the way in which the data is being collected and analyzed, allowed for the results of the study to be shared authentically to the perspective of the teachers. As a qualitative case study, this study allowed people to be the driving force of what is being shared. As a case, the study helps to give insights into how a specific institution works related to educating students with learning challenges, and the perspectives of the individuals working with those students in this setting. Finally, using a coding and themeing system for the analysis sought to find commonalities that existed between the teachers' responses, driven by the teachers themselves. This better abled me as the researcher to address the research questions related to supports, academic differentiation, and social

components of educating students with learning challenges in a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary setting. It aligned with my theoretical framework, ensuring from a constructivist viewpoint, the teachers were the guiding force, and from an ecosystems view, the teachers, as the microsystem, are better understood in relationship to the other systems they are a part of. The follow chapters will more closely look at what teachers shared (Chapter 4) and the relationship between this research and its contributions to the field (Chapter 5).

Chapter 4 - Findings/Results

This chapter discusses the recurring elements that emerged from the interviews conducted with the teachers of this study. This chapter situates participants' interviews through four common themes: (1) relationships with students and families; (2) understanding individual learning styles and accommodations; (3) preparedness and support systems within the school (4) mission, identity, and culture of the school. The discussion section will explore the meaning behind these themes and implications for further research. One note to make is learning challenges in this study predominately relates to academic learning. Though teachers referenced social skills, student development, and modeling, the majority of comments did not have to do with student behavior as it relates to students with learning challenges and their academic progress. When teachers referred to behavior it was overarchingly related to all student behavior, not only students with learning challenges, and tailored to social skill development not academic impediment.

Participant Portraits

The six teachers who participated in this study discussed their teaching careers, bringing context to the various insights provided throughout the interviews. Steve, who has been teaching for 13 years, 12 of them at this school, shared that he teaches in an all-male, Catholic school because he also attended an all-male, Catholic school for high school, and this shaped his educational and personal experience. He expressed that he continues to teach in this school because he believes in the mission of the school and the values it instills in the students. Particularly, he sees the benefits of single-sex education and having gone to both a Jesuit high school and college, shares the Jesuit values of this school.

Bridget has been teaching for 24 years, almost all of them at this school, with the exception of a half a year at a coeducational school. She went to a Jesuit college and expressed that the mission of the school is something that draws her to teaching in this type of school. She also shared she feels that this school is a place where her and her family are part of the community. Bridget indicated that the school has helped her grow professionally and personally and has been a supportive place to not just teach but learn. Bridget shared that teaching came naturally for her at the beginning of her career and her love for language was something she wanted to share with students. Through the interview Bridget also referenced being the parent of a student with learning challenges and discussed how this is something that impacts her teaching.

Kerri has been a teacher in the school for 12 years, with almost 20 years of teaching experience. She is also a parent of student with learning challenges, which she referenced in her interviews as well as a parent of a son who attended an all-male, Catholic school. As a parent, she expressed the positive influence her son's education had on him. She shared that the mission of the school, and the all-male, Catholic components of this school are something that draws her to teach at this school. Kerri also has experience as a college professor, which is how she started her teaching career. Kerri shared some of the strategies she sees used at the college level to help students with learning challenges and spoke to the ways this might be used at the secondary level. This post-secondary teaching experience furthered some of Kerri's insights as it relates to what she expressed doing in her classroom.

Joe has been a teacher for 21 years, 8 of them at this school. Prior to this school, Joe served as an administrator at his previous school. He spoke to believing in single-sex education as a reason of why he teaches at this school. He spoke to feeling called to teaching and that the mission of the school and its Catholic identity is a major factor to his teaching in this type of

environment. Joe expressed that what led him into teaching was the feeling that he could make an impact on students.

For Brad, teaching is a second career. After completing his graduate degree in education he came to this school, initially to do his student teaching, but then became a long-term substitute teacher, and eventually a full-time member of the teaching faculty. He was drawn to education because he found in his career in economics that he would have to teach basic skills to coworkers, especially as it related to math, something he enjoyed. Brad initially intended to go to public school after his student teaching at the school but spoke to the community of the school as a place he enjoys and looks forward to continuing being a part of.

Rich, who has been a teacher for 19 years and five of them at this school, shared that he intended to be a researcher after college, but moved into education. He started as a substitute teacher before becoming a full-time teacher at a school geared to students with learning challenges and differences, particularly reading disorders and processing delays. He also expressed that his teaching is shaped by his experience as a student with a learning disability himself and his desire to build relationships with students. He is an alum of the school and after many years teaching at other schools, he expressed that his experience as a student at this school, especially as it related to the all-male, Catholic aspects draws him to continue teaching at the school.

The table below is a reminder from Chapter 3 of the teachers in this study to help provide context to who the teachers in the study are and how their responses might be impacted by some of their experiences.

Table 4.1. Teacher Participants

Participants/ Teachers	Years Teaching at School	Years Teaching in Career	Academic Discipline	Advanced Degree (Master's)	Teacher Preparation/Education Program (not necessarily certified)
Steve	12	13	World Language	Yes	Yes
Bridget	24	24	World Language	Yes	Yes
Kerri	12	20	Theology	Yes	No
Joe	8	21	Science/Math	Yes	Yes
Brad	1	1	Math	Yes	Yes
Rich	5	19	English	In process	In process

Relationships with Students and Families

One of the most pressing topics that arose, especially in the early interviews with the teachers, was the constant attention they put on having positive relationships with students and families. Almost all teachers indicated this was important because it allowed teachers to better understand their students as individuals, which in turn better helped teachers educate students, with or without learning challenges. Steve stated, “I started to get to know my students a little bit more to a point where I knew what their learning styles were.” Additionally, Joe indicated the necessity of “understanding who's in front of you.” This indicated an importance to acknowledge where students are in their educational journeys and how to, as Steve put it, “challenge them at that point.” This allows a student to feel comfortable in a teacher’s classroom and be able to know that teacher cares about them. Brad indicated, “building that personal relationship helps them come after school and ask you questions.” The interpersonal connections teachers make with students can cross into the academic sphere, allowing a place where a student can feel more

comfortable to seek help when they know their teacher cares about them beyond the academic setting.

Multiple teachers discussed the importance of connections and relationships throughout the interview process. Many indicated these sentiments when they said things such as “I can talk to you [the students] about thing that are interesting to you” (Brad), and “I don’t know how many times I see kids light up when I talk about a football game that happened just that that weekend, at school, or even obviously like over the weekend, like on Sunday night football. Making the connections with students makes the material more relatable” (Steve). Bridget suggested the importance at the beginning of class for “allowing students to interact with each and me” and further suggested the necessity to build relationships outside of the classroom by “stopping in the cafeteria and talking to a kid that you have in class.” These testimonies speak to the importance for teachers in education to recognize, for learning to occur, relationships need to be made, aligning with the prior research done of social relationships and their impact on learning (Hackmann et al., 2019).

Especially when working with students with learning challenges, teachers collectively showed the value of not just having standard expectations for all students, but having reasonable and obtainable goals for students, specific to where those individual students are in their educational experiences. Brad discussed the importance of modeling for students when building relationships with them. In one interview he stated, “it’s okay to make mistakes.” This demonstrates a great deal of importance to be a model for students, helping them realize it is okay to make mistakes in class and not feeling as though they have to have everything perfect or correct. As Lipka and her colleagues (2019) discussed, students found the modeling and examples of what to do from teachers very helpful. Brad’s insights about modeling the

importance of being able to make mistakes, is a great way to help all students, especially those with learning differences, feel comfortable and know that all people, including their teachers make mistakes.

Teachers also discussed the importance of having strong relationships with parents and families. In his interview Rich said, “I reach out to parents to let them know I understand what they’re going through...we become close...it’s almost like therapy.” Here Rich suggests the importance of building relationships with the families and aiding them through the learning journey of their children. Rich also shared with me he has a diagnosis of dyslexia, something he shares with his students and their families. By being open about his own disability, he draws a connection to students and parents, further building that relationship, which fosters a strong sense of learning and progression in the classroom. Kerri indicated, “I think that communication with parents is a key thing going forward, especially for students with learning differences.” Her insights address the constant need to be communicative with parents and work with them in partnership. This is an important aspect of this research study because it stresses the various stakeholders involved in educating a child, including a child with learning challenges. These comments indicate the importance of the value of how a good parent-teacher relationship can benefit a student in their educational experience. Steve shared the following which aided to this sentiment:

But I think parents being able to be open enough to share what's going on with their child and how that's impacting their learning is important. And you know, to be honest, I do hear a lot from parents about wanting to check in on their son. And these communication emails are important.

These thoughts further stress the value in having relationships with parents, relying on their knowledge and experience with their own children, and using those shared moments to better a child's education. When parents and teachers can have good communication, they form partnerships that positively impact student learning. These insights shared reflect back to the research conducted by Wakeman and her colleagues (2021) regarding parental perceptions of what is occurring in the classroom, bridging the understanding of parents and families understanding to what is occurring in their child's learning. When working with students with learning challenges, these interactions only give more ways to help teachers and students overcome the obstacles that are inhibiting students' learning and remove barriers that might be present. This also speaks to the initial research question of the supports teachers have, which can be parents, something which will be further looked at in Chapter 5. The insights parents provide can be helpful in the overall idea of knowing a student, and understanding their individual learning styles and needs, something explored in the next section.

Understanding Individual Learning Styles and Accommodations

It was clear throughout the interview process that individual learning styles were an important aspect to teaching students with learning challenges. Each teacher addressed this in a variety of responses, and with a demonstrated response of care, that related back to the idea of relationship building previously addressed. Rich suggested, "If you're really committed to helping kids with learning disabilities...it's going to be different, every single time." This acknowledges the very real fact every student, learning challenges or not, is different and needs to have an individualized approach to their education, to the best of a teacher's ability. Kerri suggested, "I've understood how to meet the kids where they are better, so that they can learn better. I mean, I just love them so much, and I want to see them succeed. So, for me, like I try to

understand the depth of the disability.” Kerri’s comments speak to the desire to understand each student, and their learning disability, in order to help them be successful. This connected to Steve’s comment, “we need to have flexibility because we don't know who's coming into our classrooms every year.” As educators who might not be aware of what one group of students looks like from one year to the next, being intentional about trying to understand them and knowing it is going to be different each time, is an important step to take as indicated by these teachers. Throughout all the interviews it was clear it is not just an important, but a necessary aspect of teaching, for teachers to embrace an understanding that not every student learns the same way, and there should be caution when a teacher thinks they know what a student has or has not learned. By consistently addressing this throughout the interview process, all teachers understood the need to recognize that each student in their classroom does not have the same abilities, and it is the teacher’s responsibility to aid each student through the process of learning, however that might occur.

In addressing the needs of all students, Steve suggested it is valuable to acknowledge this early, with an entire class, in general ways and without pointing out specific students. He stated:

Being a teacher, you want to make the environment safe by addressing that with all your students, and letting them know, you know not everyone is coming into the classroom at the same level. Not everyone is at the place you might be. But I think, expressing that helps the kids understand.

Steve’s insights indicate that by sharing the reality that students in class are at all different places and learn in all different ways, better helps a class work together through the learning process. It also demonstrates Steve’s ability to be honest with students collectively, and that is important. This speaks to the research regarding learning differences and the importance of having positive

attitudes towards those who have learning differences (Milsom, 2006). Milsom (2006) also suggests negative attitudes towards students with differences comes from a lack of understanding those students. Steve's insights recommend taking an honest approach of recognizing to the whole class that students are often in different places. This can help provide positive insights and interaction with peers, and perhaps provide a stronger learning environment for all students. Milsom's research, in relationship to Steve's comments, might indicate these positive perceptions will exist long-term, lasting into adulthood and throughout society. These insights about starting with an empathetic understanding are essential to begin to differentiate instruction, an idea explored next.

Individualized and Compassionate Understanding

A large component of aiding students is being able to provide differentiated instruction, which better helps students individually learn. All the teachers interviewed addressed how they seek to do this in their classrooms. An important aspect of this relates to the initial theme that came out of this research, building relationships with students. Rich spoke to this in great detail, more than any other teacher, and I see this as an important place to start this next finding that came from the study. He suggested, "I'm emotionally trying to help kids understand that it's going to take longer and by being there as somebody who has gone through it myself with my own disability, I am able to root them on" (Rich). This is an essential aspect of the research, as it bridges the ideas of relationships between teachers and students to the idea of differentiated instruction. It is not just understanding students' academic learning, and it is not just making accommodations for them, but it is allowing them to know a teacher cares and wants to do what it takes to help students in their learning. Rich has the "advantage" by being able to share his own educational journey with his disability, and how he overcame it through his schooling, and

cope with it every day. By sharing this with students, he opens himself up to be vulnerable with them. In doing so, Rich allows the students who are struggling or who have learning challenges to know, he not only sympathizes with them, he empathizes with them too, and they are not alone. This is very helpful as it allows him to have an advantage when he hits that crossroad of being challenging in an academic moment where a student might feel frustration. Kerri also addressed this when she said, “but that kid also needs to understand that they’re not an island.” She further stresses the idea of ensuring students know that they are not alone in their struggle, and they have support.

Bridget also touched on this idea of compassionate understanding as an important place to start with differentiated instruction. She disclosed she is the parent of a child with learning differences and has a great deal of experience from the parental perspective. She indicated this has greatly influenced her as a teacher. She stated she wants students to feel comfortable, and therefore has honest conversations with them, saying to students, “no one needs to know that you're struggling with this here, I'm going to help you through. We're going to figure this out. I think I try to be very fair and open in that manner. And even for just a “typical” kid, right? It doesn't have to be a kid with learning challenges in front of me. I just think this is how I am in terms of how I teach every student.” This further indicated teachers can be transparent with students, letting them know that they desire to help them learn, and they understand that it does not always come easy to all students. Steve added to this when he shared how he changed over his career and “shifted toward focusing more on how a student learns and how I can adapt my lesson and curriculum to their learning.” Steve’s comments further express a relationship with students and knowing how a change on the teacher’s part might further help a student progress. Though it is not directly expressing something to a student, it is a self-recognition of

understanding towards a student and their learning needs, connecting to the idea of other teachers. These testimonies are an important starting point and speak well to understanding individual learning styles and how to begin to accommodate them. It stresses the need of teachers to have a connection to students and build those relationships in order to make those accommodations occur in meaningful ways.

Accommodation Plans

Additionally, Steve and Kerri spoke directly to the importance of reading the documentation and understanding what those accommodations require and recommend for the success of students in their classrooms. Steve and Kerri indicated multiple times that having a firm understanding of what the accommodation plans contain are essential to aiding the students' learning. Steve stated, "that definitely means doing some research about your students, whether that's in person, face to face, or researching the documentation that's given to us at the beginning of the year." Here, Steve has signified the importance of understanding individual students and their accommodations, which takes time. He touches upon the recognition that in order for teachers to be helpful to their students, especially students with learning challenges and formal documentation, they need to put in extra effort to ensure they understand the disabilities and learning differences these individual students have. It allows the teacher to have a firmer grasp on the accommodations, which better ensures the progression of learning to occur.

Kerri also indicated the importance of understanding the documentation and said, "at the beginning of the year I make sure I put time aside to read the accommodation plans and think about how I can go about making these accommodations throughout the year." This reflective nature suggests the reality teachers need to have by thinking about not just what the words on the documents are and what needs to happen, but how they can effectively go about making this

possible in their classroom. Similarly, Bridget shed light on this from a parent perspective.

Bridget shared her daughter had a teacher in kindergarten who would sit up at night and think about how to help her daughter be successful in the classroom, including alternatives to writing when her daughter was struggling. This insight provides great context to the previous points of teachers needing to put in the effort to understand the differences and what best practices aid students with learning challenges. This builds on the research done regarding teacher perceptions of students with learning disabilities and challenges, and how they can effectively use strategies to aid them in the learning process (Lauterbach et al., 2020). Thinking about strategies, and being reflective about best practices, leads to a better sense of how to carry out those accommodations and differentiated instruction in the day-to-day classroom.

Accommodations and Differentiated Instruction

Teachers further spoke to ways in which they accommodate in their classroom. A reoccurring accommodation was providing notes for students. Many teachers indicated this was a manageable and appropriate accommodation that aided their students. Steve said, “I find myself sending notes to students because they can't concentrate when taking notes in class.” Kerri stated, “that if they're taking notes and writing notes down and they're not understanding anything, I will make sure that that kid gets the notes either from me, or from a peer that I know takes good notes.” Here, Kerri indicated the importance of seeing that some students struggle with note taking and it becomes a distraction to understanding, further speaking to knowing and understanding the accommodations. Joe took this idea one step further. He stated:

Sometimes I can see a student who is genuinely trying to take notes and has a tough time getting it down. I'll be like, ‘hey, stop! Don't worry about it. Just listen, participate, and

try the practice problems. I'll send you my notes after class. No worries!' And like you wouldn't do that for every kid, because the purpose of the way I structure the notes is to help kids pay attention. But if I see a kid paying attention but is actually having trouble getting the notes down like fine, we'll adjust that way. (Joe)

Here Joe spoke about something of great value, moving beyond simply what the accommodation plans might be indicating for some students, and knowing students, seeing how they are learning, and adjusting throughout the year. This indicates a reflective teacher who is willing to accommodate students who are struggling, with or without formal documentation, to ensure they are progressing through their learning, further speaking to the overall research question regarding a broader definition of students with learning challenges. These insights further the previous research regarding different techniques one can use when working with diverse learners (Gumpert & McConnell, 2019). Note taking was an accommodation many teachers shared as insightful, along with other strategies, including preferential seating.

Preferential seating was brought up by various teachers at different moments throughout the interviews. They were apt to share this does not just mean a student sitting in the front of the class, but ensuring the student is positioned in a place that allows them to be successful. Kerri suggested, "It's not always just put the kid in the front of the class. Maybe they need to be sitting next to somebody that is not disruptive" while Joe indicated a more specific example of a student he had. He shared how this student needed to be in the back of the room:

I kind of figured out like if I put him in a seat, it actually needed to be at the back of the room, which really wasn't where we started with for this accommodation. But I just like gave him the freedom to move to the back and where he was would say 'hey, man, if you need to get up and walk around, you're not bothering anybody back there.

These two insights recognize that something as “simple” as preferential seating is not always as simple to carry out. It also speaks back to the importance of building relationships. These two teachers have touched upon the idea that it requires getting to know students better to fully understand how to best carry out their accommodations. This is an essential aspect of the conversation and adds a great deal to the research as it positions the ideas of relationships with students paired with their accommodations. Note taking and preferential seating are good places to start, but education requires more than just accommodation, but differentiation as well, something teachers gave insight into in their interviews.

Several teachers touched on how they differentiated instruction in the classroom. Steve said, “Very specifically when it comes to vocabulary recall, I would give more word banks, you know, in terms of grammar, as well making more open-ended questions, free response, rather than just like fill in the blank.” Steve discussed how this strategy helps him differentiate instruction and allows appropriate and manageable challenges for students. Another insight Steve shared, related to time on tests, was, “I have students who only can take a certain portion of the test, for instance, if it's a two page test, the student needs to take one and then has to focus on that one page, and then he'll come back later that day, or the next day, to complete the second portion of the test, which is totally fine.” Steve’s comment further expresses ways he provides accommodations for students as they individually relate to the students’ learning challenges.

Brad indicated when he is teaching, he tries to provide opportunities in class that allow him to, “get off the stage so then I can sort of bop around and provide that sort of individualized attention.” By providing structured time in class for the teacher to walk around and aid individuals as they need, Brad is suggesting different types of instructional methods beyond lecturing alone that might help students with their learning. Bridget indicated she uses partners as

a strength to take away the pressure of performing in front of the entire class or her as the teacher. She stated, “I have them pair off and practice, explaining to their partner why they used that specific tense, so they have to listen to another student’s reasoning” (Bridget). Steve spoke to this idea of pairing students together as well, along with other accommodations. He said, “I’ve noticed that a lot of pictures, a lot of repetition, a lot of peer-to-peer talking and speaking, has definitely helped when it comes to retaining the information that that I’m teaching” (Steve). This speaks to Burke and Griffin (2016) and Bonfiglio and Kroh’s (2020) research regarding the value in peer modeling. Bridget and Steve’s comments suggest the strength of students learning from their peers, and the removal of certain types of pressures in the classroom which can allow for a place of learning and progression. Beyond peer instruction, teachers also discussed the value of advocacy and alternative assessments, like mentioned above by Steve.

Joe shared a very specific example of alternative assessments he uses in his classroom, speaking to this idea of accommodations in terms of assessments. He indicated a story regarding a student with dysgraphia and how he helped this student with assessments in his physics class. He said:

I think of a kid I had a couple of years ago who had dysgraphia, to a degree that I had never seen before. And this was as an advanced class, and it'd be like. Wow! Very clearly, he is engaging with the material. He has an understanding of the material, and just like absolutely could not put it down on paper, and it was, you know, it was just so obvious that that he just had this obstacle. So, we had to just kind of work out ways for him to succeed. He had the extra time and all that, but honestly, extra time wasn't really going to cut it, right, like it just wasn't. It wasn't a time issue. But what's cool is that he was an older high school student, so he was pretty adept at talking about it. And so, we

just kind of came up with ways around it, or not around it but to work through it. So, he did some of his labs just orally with me, and there were times where we would just need to sit down and take a test sometimes and talk that through.

Joe's comments speak to something important. For one, they speak to the ways teachers can be flexible and find alternative ways to help students demonstrate knowledge through a variety of assessments. Additionally, it speaks to advocacy, something other teachers touched on as an important aspect to teach secondary students (a concept discussed in another section of this paper). This gave a concrete example of alternative assessments and ways to make accommodations when thinking about testing, beyond extended time. These insights are important as it not only provides strategy-specific methods that aid student success, but also provides an acknowledgment amongst the teachers, that though these methods are different, they are very much acceptable. This specific narrative gives insights into discipline-specific accommodations being attempted.

Discipline-Specific and Future Strategies

The idea of discipline-specific strategies, and opportunities, also came up with Bridget and Steve who teach in the world language department. There is a newer course being offered in the world language department specifically designed for students with accommodations, removing a great deal of the grammar and testing requirements. This course is called "Conversational Spanish" and is designed to help students focus on the speaking and listening aspects of the language, but not on the writing component. The course was created to allow students who have accommodations the opportunity to still take a language course but do so in a space where they can be successful. The creation of the course was something the chair of the world language department brought to the attention of the administration, and in collaboration

with them, worked to implement it into the department's course offerings. Steve, one of the teachers of the course, described the course as the following:

I teach this one class called Conversational Spanish, and that offers students who have a struggle with learning a second language the opportunity to take a language. Students who come into the school, having dyslexia, or a different type of learning challenge, that would prevent him from learning the language the opportunity to take a class. As a language department we decided that we would offer this class, and me and the chair, created the course that would just strictly focus on the speaking and listening portion of the language, and refrained from a lot of writing or reading.

Bridget also discussed the course as a member of the world language department and her excitement to have a course such as this as an offering for students. Here is an example of ways teachers are accommodating for whole groups of students. Though these students are grouped together, and therefore not "tracked" with students without diagnosed learning disabilities, they are also given an opportunity to take a course that is modified to their ability and aid them in their learning process, expanding their access to a variety of disciplines.

Beyond just discipline-specific strategies, the idea of choice, independence, and autonomy came up throughout some of the interviews. For Bridget this was from the perspective of her as a teacher working with students. She suggested the following, "You have lots of autonomy, so you can kind of choose what you do and how you do it. There's lots of independence there. And so, as a result, I think you kind of come up with on your own what needs to happen as opposed to being told like, here's how you should." This is a valuable insight, because it suggests the teachers have choice in how they can modify and accommodate students. This can be problematic at times. For example, it might allow teachers too much freedom where

consistency lacks across the teaching of curricular standards. On the other hand, it speaks to the administrations' trust of teachers, and teachers' perspectives of feeling comfortable in their own class to adjust to ensure learning is occurring for all students. Steve spoke to the point of view of providing choices in his classroom. He stated, "I also give students options on projects, allowing them to pick what works best for them (Steve). These strategies line up the research of previewing work early, heterogenous groups, and choice (Gumpert & McConnell, 2019). Similarly, one of the most insightful strategies Steve shared was a project he does in one of his classes. He splits students up based on proficiency level, working on comprehension skills. In this activity he gives each group a different task to achieve this. At the end of the project, students present to the class. Steve stated, "and then each group shares what they wrote, based on what the video was, so at the end maybe students did see that people had different roles, but no one was outcasted as the person that did less work because in their eyes, everyone did the project together that way." This project was an impressive way to help students have different ways of comprehending material based on their abilities, without shaming or calling out students for not having to do the "same" thing in class. Choice, curricular offerings, and discipline-specific accommodations are just some of what was indicated that occurred from teachers' points of view in their own classrooms.

Beyond things teachers already did, there was also a noticeable desire on their part to try new practices in their classroom. This recognizes the desire to grow, be reflective, and try new ways to better help all students in the classroom. Steve suggested, "you know what I would love the chance to sort of do, is to rethink how I assess my students when it comes to differentiating my assessments." Here, he is showing an openness to want to learn how to do things differently, to better the instruction of all of his students, including those with learning challenges. Kerri

indicated wanting to be more intentional about changing up the type of instruction and activities she does, throughout the class and week, providing more opportunities for students who learn differently to have chances which play to their strengths. Bridget discussed going to a variety of conferences with her husband. She indicated how her desire to learn more for her daughter's sake has better helped her with her own teaching. Though the teachers might not yet know what it is they want to, or how it is they want to change some of their instructional practices to meet the needs of all their students, they are equally not resisting change and the desire to want to change. This speaks to Hansen and Dawson's (2020) work in which teachers felt a desire to want to be better prepared. These strategies, techniques, and goals teachers shared provide a great amount of insight into the importance of understanding individual learning styles. It also gives great insight into what teachers are doing to better understand their insights regarding the perception of support from the school itself.

Preparedness and Support Systems Within Schools

The teachers discussed the importance of having resources for teachers which better help them in the process of educating students with learning challenges. Each teacher shared a great deal of insights regarding the types of resources they have and would like to have, ranging from teacher formation, through education and professional development, to personnel staff that aid teachers in the process of educating students. They all discussed working with some level of staff in the building, including newer created positions. Four of the six teachers have been at the school longer than a majority of the newly created positions, which were put into place to target working with students with learning challenges and those who need more academic support. These positions, all created within the last five years, include the director of academic support, the learning specialist, a part-time math tutor (interventionist), and a part-time literacy specialist.

Teachers also addressed working with the counseling office, including the newer created social worker position. The insights shared helped to understand the complexity of these relationships.

All teachers, in some fashion, shared positive aspects about the relationships with these personnel, the impact those relationships have when being able to effectively communicate with the support staff, and how that translates to working with students with learning challenges. Teachers said, “I think we're heading in a very good direction with it” (Joe) and “the expansion of our academic support office has been very helpful” (Steve). Additionally, Bridget conveyed the following, “I think they've done a great job in recent years of adding some of that support for students more directly.” Brad pointed to the structured study program and the math specialist as two formal structures within the school that provide support to students and teachers and spoke to the added positions and programs as being beneficial growth. These comments speak to a positive outlook teachers have regarding the school’s formal support structure. However, the teachers also acknowledged there were concerns in the model when it comes to the support for teachers.

Though all teachers suggested some type of positive component of the support staff designated to aid students with academic support, there were concerns most teachers discussed, particularly as it related to the difference in support for students versus teachers. Joe suggested the following, which was common to the overall impression teachers gave regarding the support for teachers. He said, “It is kind of like we are left on our own a little bit. And again, it's not for lack of desire. It's more just like the people that you're going to are good at understanding the kids’ side of things. But they're not necessarily the best for here's how you teach it.” This indicates the supports are there for students, but something is lacking in the connection of aiding teachers when actually teaching those students. Kerri shared, “we've done a really good job of

recognizing that we lacked in that department and hired, and continue to hire people, that can support us. But I still feel like they're overworked and the access to them is hard.” Bridget added, “there’s support but I think a lot of it has to come from the teacher taking the initiative.” Kerri and Bridget are indicating the school has made a conscious effort to provide additional support, but again, there seems to be a lack of connection. This made more sense when seen in conjunction with other comments Joe and Steve made. “It’s like the supports are there, right? But sometimes you have to reach out to them yourself” (Joe) and “it's fantastic progression, but now it's like, well, how are you gonna help us as teachers” (Steve). In general, the comments indicated teachers were happy with the level of effort the school has made to hire more people to assist in the success of students with learning challenges, but equally there seems to be a disconnect between those support personnel and the teachers themselves.

Teachers shared the effort is on the part of the teacher to reach out, and there is not a lot of direct support or instruction of how to teach students with learning challenges. Steve stated at one point in the interview, “I would say that particular resources, given to us...I would say, no, there's really not much to go off of there.” This suggests, though there are individual people in the building that teachers can work with when needed, the school itself does not provide a lot of resources regarding aiding students with learning challenges to the teachers themselves. All teachers talked about the importance of collaboration and working with other people to better the education of students with learning challenges. Steve referenced the need for the people that are currently in his building to do more collaboration, pushing in more and coming into individual teachers’ classrooms more. He stated:

I think that my classroom, in the way I'm thinking about this, does not only belong to me.

We should be willing, as teachers, to be inviting of, not just our students that we are

having come into our classroom every day, but also, you know, inviting people who sort of can help students more than I can. I think having that direct communication and push-ins from people like the director of academic support, or even having counselors have more of a role when it comes to students' learning, and maybe even administrators, can be very beneficial. (Steve)

This insight indicates an important aspect of collaboration, and the desire had by, not just Steve, but many of the teachers interviewed, to work with other individuals to ensure that all students are learning. He went on to discuss this more, saying, "We don't always have the tools. We need to educate all of our students in our classrooms, right? And I think the more and more we sort of invite those people, the more and more the lessons can be differentiated" (Steve). Many teachers echoed this point throughout the interview process, expressing teachers alone do not have all the tools needed to benefit all the students in their classroom. By effectively collaborating with other individuals, students with learning challenges are more likely to get the support they need to be successful in the classroom. These insights relate to the research already conducted about Catholic schools needing to have models of inclusivity and supports for students with learning disabilities (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020). The school has made an effort to have supports and be a model of inclusivity, but not without a need for improvement.

Professional Development and Preparation Programs

Teachers also discussed the importance of professional development and the need for the school to provide these opportunities for teachers. Teachers indicated time as a major factor in general, but especially as it related to professional development. Bridget suggested there might be a theme related to professional development in a given year, and perhaps one year could be geared to educating students with learning challenges. Either way, she suggested the school

needs to, “have a certain number of PDs every year dedicated to special education” (Bridget). Joe also spoke to the importance of professional development and the importance of follow through. He said, “often you get these great ideas, but there’s not a lot of follow through. And so, if this hopefully going to be something that we would push for, the school really needs to put the time and effort behind it and not just have it be an afternoon” (Joe). Joe is further stressing the importance of not just providing professional development but making it meaningful and giving time and attention to it.

Steve discussed a good starting place would be for people in the building itself to provide their own professional development days, where individual teachers share with each other particular learning differences they see in this specific institution and how they go about best aiding student learning. Steve suggested this is important because it provides a specific type of approach to the students that are currently in the school, and allows the teachers to learn from their colleagues, who they already have a relationship with. He further expressed this as a good way for teachers to have a collective relationship with students, better aiding those students who struggle from the point of view as an entire community. He even stated at one point that the administration of the school, “needs to allow, maybe once a month, a scheduled or an unscheduled day, where teachers can come in when there’s no classes meeting, and sort of have a day where we do focus on the things that we’re seeing on a month-to-month basis.” This indicates a desire, to have an administration that provides opportunities for teachers to learn more about how to help students with learning challenges and work with current colleagues to do so. Steve also indicated the importance of learning from experts stating, “hearing from teachers themselves, but also having somebody come that specializes in these types of learning differences can definitely help.” This aligns with previous research indicating teachers are

looking for more training to be better able to work with students with learning needs (Milledge-Henderson, 2020).

Brad and Rich indicated that formal education can also be a part of professional development. They suggested taking courses, either in a master's or doctoral program, can be a way to learn and hone skills. Rich said, "one of the reasons I am going back for my doctorate is to have more insights on this." Teachers saw taking more courses to learn more about specific topics, such as inclusion education, as a good way to professionally develop their skills and better aid students in the learning process. These comments align with the prior research of Milledge-Henderson (2020) regarding teachers' desires to have more preparation for educating students with learning needs. Whether going back to school to learn more, or having reflected on coursework taken, most teachers spoke to the preparation they have had through their academic experience. This preparation in terms of educational programs is good, but teachers did suggest at times there is a need for improvement in these programs.

As indicated, teacher preparation and educational programs came up throughout the interview process and almost all the teachers interviewed indicated it was important for teachers to have proper preparation during their own educational experience. The level and degree to how this relates to special education, inclusive classrooms, and diverse learners varied. Bridget's comment on this was particularly interesting as it shed great light to the idea of learning and the experience of practice. She indicated:

Obviously, I took special education courses getting my master's, but having gone through it firsthand, and becoming aware of things that I necessarily never thought about before, like processing speed and executive functioning skills, motor planning and all these things that I think that even if you're not diagnosed with something, a lot of people, might

have, right? I think a lot of us have something right diagnosed or undiagnosed, that it's just, it's best practices. It's just kind of doing everything I can to give a variety of resources and a variety of lessons, so that everyone has the best chance at success.

(Bridget)

Bridget's comment brings to light that learning about different aspects of special education is important, and she certainly had some preparation with this in her graduate program, but there is more to it. Bridget speaks to the important reality that it takes practice, and actually being in the classroom surrounded by students of all different learning styles, to figure out how to take those theories and put them into practical ways, helping all the students of a classroom.

Steve said, "You know something, even when I was taking my master's degree courses, differentiated learning was like an optional course that you could take, or even like more of an optional focus. And so, maybe, that is something that you make mandatory when it comes to any type of education degree." This indicates the perception that it is important in educational programs to provide exposure to differentiated instruction and working with students with learning differences. This speaks to the research indicating positive preparation for newer teachers from their teaching program, and the importance that has on working with students with learning challenges (Halvorson, 2020). However, it still does not address the concern and need for those teachers who did not have that during their educational experiences. Kerri was frank with this as her degree was "discipline-specific" to the department she teaches in saying, "I did not have a lot of formal education courses." She went on to note over the past 20 years she has learned a lot, especially how to be accommodating and adjust, but that did not come from her graduate program. Kerri's comments suggest there are some teachers, particularly in private school, who are well versed in the discipline they teach, and can be very effective teachers, but

do lack some of the foundational education courses that can benefit students, such as those with diverse learning needs. Kerri's comments speak to the research done by Ko and Boswell (2013) related to teachers' perceptions of a desire for more opportunities to learn about inclusion classrooms as some teachers feel they had little preservice learning opportunities on this topic. Overall, teachers indicated the desire for more support from current support staff, professional development, and educational training, indicating these would aid them when working with students with learning differences.

Additional Layers of Support

Teachers in this study further explored specific aspects of assistance and intervention they wanted to see. Bridget suggested one of the responsibilities she sees the individuals who are part of the academic support office having is staying knowledgeable on research-based strategies and sharing those with teachers. She said:

We're all very passionate about our job, trying to get better, and being the best teachers that we can be. At least, that's my impression of my colleagues. So, I think there's probably a lot more going on independently behind the scenes, than most of us realize, and there isn't a whole lot of time for collaboration. So perhaps there needs to be a point person who's doing the research...I don't necessarily have time to read the newest journals and find really cool new project ideas, because I'm in it, I'm teaching, I'm prepping, and I'm proctoring. So, I always viewed that kind of role as like you do the research for me. You stay current on the trends, and then you come tell me what they are. Maybe we need to have somebody like that in school where there's that person who is just almost forming a database of best practices.

Bridget's comment speaks to a few things. One, is the idea of time, and how time can impact teachers' overall effectiveness in the classroom. Specifically, to this study it addresses how, having someone in the building who provides teachers with resources or strategies from the research they have compiled, can benefit teachers' time, allowing them to be more effective with that time. The other aspect suggested from Bridget's perspective is it seems teachers in her building desire to aid students and want to be the best they can be. Joe also brought up the desire to learn more, but the time that it entails. He said, "Yeah, I mean, I guess what I would like to do is to read up on more stuff, go to workshops, and learn more strategies that help certain needs that we are seeing in the classroom. Part of that is like, you know, you gotta set aside the time to do that." Joe is further stressing how time becomes an issue for teachers. Bridget and Joe's comments express the concern about time, while offering a solution that might be able to address this concern. Other teachers brought up additional suggestions they believed would be helpful, including ways to better implement things already occurring.

Kerri brought up two things she would like to see. The first thing is a more formal note taking process for students who need notes. She said, "Yeah, I would totally embrace a notetaker, an anonymous notetaker in my class, and having an anonymous notetaker portal for those students to upload the notes and the students who need it to have the access to them." This indicates a burden taken off of the teachers to get the notes to students with accommodations. Kerri also suggested the importance of having staffings at the beginning of the year for all students with learning plans. She did share some students with more extensive accommodation plans already do have staffings which include the parents, counselor, a member of the academic support team, all the teachers, and often the student themselves. Though Kerri indicated that it was beneficial to meet those students' parents, she had wished all students who had

accommodation plans were given this opportunity. Kerri acknowledged this would logistically be difficult given that a large percentage of students have some type of accommodation plan, but it would still be valuable. “I think that there should be a staffing. I mean, this might be going a little too far, but I think that there should be a staffing or some sort of contact between teachers and parents, for every kid that has a learning plan” (Kerri). Kerri continued and drew on her experience as a mother of a student who has learning needs: “It would have been really beneficial as a parent of a child with an accommodation plan to, every year in the beginning of the year, be able to sit down with all his teachers and the administration and be like this is what's going on from my point of view.” As both a teacher and parent, Kerri’s comments indicate a necessity to have more opportunities for these types of meetings for any student with a learning plan who has learning challenges.

Beyond staffing meetings, Joe spoke to something I felt was important to include, as it speaks to the complexity of the additional supports at the secondary level. He acknowledged the limitation of his comment. While speaking he indicated wanting to be cautious and critical of his own sentiment. He said:

It's been surprising to me how much less I see my students for extra help than I did previously, and a lot of it is because they're going to the math specialist. And that's great. I do think there's a little bit of a miss there though with making sure students are seeing the teacher too, on top of this support. Or maybe go to the teacher first and then student support is kind of like between classes, you know, on your free period. I don't want to go too far with this, because it's definitely much more of a positive than it is a negative. But it's just more like something I've been kind of noticing that was a big surprise to me, I guess, pleasantly so, and that the students are definitely using her is good. But there is a

bit of a negative there too because, I'm also like, I'm the one developing the tests and all of these materials so like you should have your touchpoints with me as well.

Joe's comments suggest two things. One is the complex relationships that come with working with interventionists at the secondary level, as well as the recognition that what is positive, such as the support, can also have negative components, and the relationship between all personnel aiding students must be a reflective one. These three teachers' comments specifically spoke to some of the more systemic aspects of the school and how things could be addressed better moving forward. In this system, the school's model is specific, equally impacting what teachers shared. This is further explored in the next section.

Mission, Identity, and Culture of the School

This research study sought a very specific type of school, a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school to see how a school with this model provides support to their teachers. This significantly impacted the responses of the teachers and how they suggested the demographic of the school influenced the perspectives on inclusion classrooms and working with students with learning challenges. This ranged from ideas of what it means to be a mission-driven school to instilling aspects of self-advocacy and kindness. Each of the teachers' responses suggested there are shared, common values, the adults working in the school have and those influence almost all areas of the school, including working with students with learning challenges.

The mission of the school, particularly as a Catholic, Jesuit school certainly came up in the interviews. Joe's comments, I believe speak well to the insights shared by almost all teachers. He said:

It's just boundless in terms of what our staff is willing to do to be able to help our students, and that comes down, in my opinion, to the Catholic, Jesuit nature of the school.

When we are trying to attract teachers, that's the paramount, that's the number one thing we seek our teachers to understand, the mission of the school. And what we're trying to do is have inclusivity, it is a hallmark of Catholic education and the people who generally come to work at schools like ours, really desire to be there for students.

Joe's comments speak well to the insights shared by other teachers. There seemed to be a universal intentionality to working in a school such as the one studied and that the character of the teachers working in this institution included a desire to help all students be successful.

Bridget spoke further to this idea indicating:

Our mission is just that, a Jesuit, Catholic mission is to be inclusive, and to respect all, and to walk with those on the margins, so I think, just by definition of who we are, we're very inclusive. And I think we've done a really good job of even with the strong academic reputation and college prep school idea, and all the rest of it, I think we've done a really good job of accepting and admitting students and giving some kids a chance. I think our model is pretty good in terms of like the inclusive piece.

Bridget is further speaking to the idea Joe indicated with the members that make up the community. Her comments reflect the institution itself as an intentional place which desires to be inclusive and the adult members of the community further that idea. By looking at these comments in connection to each other it speaks to the idea that the institution, in spite of some of its "reputation" as Bridget indicates, makes an effort to be inclusive to students with learning challenges and that is in part because there is a certain type of person that seeks out the school and the school seeks out for its faculty. Steve and Kerri's comments also spoke to this idea of mission. Steve said, "We owe it to our students, as a Catholic, Jesuit, school to be inclusive" while Kerri indicated, "the Catholic tradition is very important." Additionally, Bridget said, "We

all have to walk the walk, and talk the talk. It's everyone modeling and demonstrating the values that we represent for each other. And I think that's really important, because you kind of have to buy into the whole idea.” Her comments further stress the idea of a collective nature of both students and adults in the building having a shared sense of identity within the school. These teachers’ comments further speak to the idea that many teachers found the school’s identity as a Catholic, Jesuit, school as an important aspect to this conversation regarding the care of all students, including those with learning challenges, supporting prior research conducted by Burke and Griffin (2016) regarding inclusive classrooms and Catholic schools.

Student Formation and Development

The idea of community, inclusivity, and student formation and development was further brought up throughout the interviews. Teachers shared the desire to help form students through the mission, religious culture, and sense of community the school has. Joe stated, “We want to give those students, give all students, the opportunity to explore their full selves, right? And to you know, really develop their values and their character.” This insight brought to light others’ comments regarding the development of students. Steve said, “our mission here is to form you. It's about how they learn, how they play, and how they interact with each other.” Kerri indicated the same sentiments tying it back to the religious identity of the school: “the way that we practice the faith on campus centers the boys, number one, and number two, the Jesuit mission is about being men for others and getting the boys to understand compassion.” Her comments extend the ideas of Joe and Steve by suggesting the development of character previously mentioned, connects to the mission of the school as a Catholic, Jesuit school. Joe further indicated a universal idea held by adults in the building saying, “I’ve never had a conversation with a colleague where, they just kind of are like, okay, I teach my classes and go home right?

Everybody cares about the kids that are in front of them.” This idea of inclusivity was further expanded by comments Bridget made regarding students’ access to finding their “thing” at the school. She said:

They feel the support, right? And they find success, you know. They find success by being included in something, whether it's a team or music, or a retreat, or a club that they started with the teacher that they felt comfortable with. I feel like there's just lots of opportunities to kind of find your place. I think that schools that offer plenty of extracurriculars, especially a school like I'm at, that has tons of different activities, it's huge, right? Because you can do your rock climbing or play your basketball, or you know, do your video game club. Like there's something for everyone which I think is really, really, important, because I do think we as a school tend to provide an environment for those kids that maybe wouldn't be able to find it in another school.

Bridget’s comments further expanded the previous insights and gave concrete examples of the opportunities students have outside of the classroom to grow. This idea of development inside and outside of the classroom was one that was constantly being brought up by the teachers, both as it related to mission and related to other social aspects of students’ experiences.

The development of the student as it relates to the mission of the school was evident for teachers. They were also particularly interested in discussing the social aspects outside of the classroom that they seek to help students with. Kerri discussed how social interactions occur around grades and the positive insights she sees regarding students and academic performance. She said, “I think that there's such a stigma with grades and we are at a private school, a college-preparatory school, and so when you're dealing with kids who are struggling it can be hard. But honestly, like the good part about that is that the students support each other or prop each other

up.” Kerri also discussed the attention needed to be taken when there is less than positive responses to students’ performance by peers, but she indicated that this was far less. Bridget also spoke to this when she indicated giving kids time at the beginning or end of class to be themselves and have nonacademic interactions with one another, with the acknowledgment she is aware of what is being said and shared. She said:

You kind of got an ear to it, right? So, you're kind of listening. So, when the kid's in the back on his iPad, and you know he's on something you shouldn't be on, like being able to say, ‘hey, I told you we don't do that in here,’ or if a kid's being rude or unkind to somebody else like ‘hey, what's the most important thing to me here,’ and this is a big thing for me, is being kind.

Bridget’s comments give insight into the experiences that occur in classrooms outside of academic instruction. She is indicating a sense of “instruction” or “teaching” that takes place in her classroom that is outside of her academic content but related to the demeanor, expectations, and interactions students are having.

This further speaks to the development of students that other teachers were discussing in their interviews. Kerri brought further insight to this when she discussed the service requirement for the school. She indicated that all students throughout all four years must complete a certain amount of service hours. She suggested this impacted their view of others and the relationships they are trying to expose students to. Kerri said, “the fact that the boys all have to do a certain amount of service” impacts the way the school is trying to get them to care about relationships and the way in which they treat others. Bridget also spoke to, what I view as, an important aspect of the conversation. She indicated she wants to help students learn how to advocate for themselves. She said:

I think a big part of our job is helping them learn to be advocates for themselves and take control of their own learning and kind of get to know themselves. That way if something isn't clicking, if there's something that just doesn't feel right, they have to come and say to me, 'I've been studying this for three days, and I don't get it.' And look, they're young, right? So, I think part of it is just being that classroom leader and knowing it's more than just the academic piece for us. We're trying to teach them to be good people. We're trying to turn them into young men and there's a lot more to it than just can you ace calculus.

Bridget's comments speak even further to comments by previous teachers related to social skills and modeling. She is adding the importance of teaching skills beyond the content of her classroom to aid her students. The idea of providing some type of developmental instruction beyond academic learning within the classroom was very evident in the teachers' responses. Beyond academic learning in the classroom, and other formation that occurs in the classroom outside of academics, many teachers addressed the value of interactions that occur outside of the classroom.

As teachers shared how they are aiding students within the classroom, academically and socially, they also shared how their interactions outside of the classroom are essential. Steve suggested, "By building those relationships outside, and even just outside the class time, like we're just sitting here in my classroom after school talking about our lives, provides trust between a student and me, which is really important." Kerri indicated, "it's good that teachers see kids in different contexts whether that be in on a service trip, a foreign exchange program, or through a club or sport. I think a teacher would be more inclined to help him learn the way he learns if they knew him in a different context." Bridget suggested it is important to understand if "there are other things that are going on to help a child grow and develop." Joe spoke in detail

about this idea. He indicated he could not put a direct line to social interactions outside of the classroom to the success of student with learning challenges, but did suggest he believes these interactions are valuable for all students. He said:

A lot of school requires such a certain set of skills, and so the students who are naturally good in those areas, do well. But it's only a very narrow part of what a fully functioning human being needs to have right. And so many times I find kids assign their own self-worth to how they're doing in school. And it's like trying to express to them, they do so many other things, really well. And I think about this with my own children as well. It's like, it's okay to be a decent student. But when you go home, and you're an awesome coder or something that's amazing. That's just as valuable as getting an A in math class, right? It's the same with sports, sometimes the athletic ability is there, sometimes it's not, but it's giving the kids an avenue to shine. And a lot of times that comes to leadership and how they treat other people. There's always something that kids are doing that you can praise that's there and going to help them light up. And that is important to find and share with students. (Joe)

Joe further expressed the value of relationships, as discussed earlier in the findings. He stressed how fostering those relationships as a means to help develop self-worth and finding ways to either build those outside the classroom, or identifying them in the classroom, are valuable. As seen in the narratives, the teachers' responses stress the importance of attending to social skills and focusing on aspects beyond academics in their interactions with students.

Catholic Mission and Identity

Furthermore, teachers spoke greatly to the level of responsibility the school has given its Catholic, Jesuit identity. These insights speak to the school's culture as well as the critical

lens that the teachers have regarding the best way to bridge the connection between the identity of the school and its responsibility to students with learning challenges. Joe said:

I definitely don't feel the response is go to the public schools. They have the services.

Let's leave it to them, because I think there's a huge miss there. Because it's not going to be delivered with the same care that, in my opinion, that a Catholic school could. At least in my experience, and you know, I've been in Catholic schools twenty plus years now, at this point, and the reason for it is that I really believe that we're all pulling, pulling in the same direction and that we really care about the students as individuals. So, if we put it in that light, you know being accessible to all types of kids is at the core of our mission.

Joe provides insight that educators within Catholic schools have a certain personality and that the institutions should embrace those individuals as it is essential to their identity. This is further understood in connection to comments Bridget made:

As a parent of a child with learning needs, I can speak to this. Especially when it comes to a Catholic school, there are reasons why a family would choose a Catholic school.

Like, especially if you're doing Catholic, single sex there are reasons why, you want your child to be in a particular environment. So, I think it's really, really, important that you have that opportunity. And I know, like funding, and all the rest of it, comes into play, but I think it's super important. And again, is there a line? I don't know, but I do think it's super important that as much as possible is done to provide support, so that these kids have the opportunity to go and learn and be supported.

Bridget's comments provide insight into the choices parents make, and the intentionality behind choosing a Catholic school, and therefore the school's responsibility to those families and students. Steve suggested this is important as well, indicating that if the school is not admitting

students who have learning challenges and providing those students with the supports they need, they are being antithetical to who they are a school. He said, “And if we're not keeping up with those types of changes we are seeing in our students, then we shouldn't have that mission of caring for the whole boy” (Steve). His comments, though direct, indicate the necessity of schools to be authentic to who they are, while being authentic to the students that attend their schools. These insights given further stress the value that the teachers have of the institution and what it stands for, while recognizing that its mission requires it to be something to all students, aligning with the idea of moral-character formation Lapsley and Kelley (2022) suggest are essential to Catholic schools.

All-Male Environment

The school’s all-male school orientation also came up. Teachers indicated they believed the all-male environment was overall beneficial to the learning of the students. Though many of their responses did not speak specifically to students with learning challenges, it did speak to the culture and identity of the school as whole, which might be able to be applied in future research to students with learning challenges. Joe suggested the following sentiments which I believe are a good starting to place to bridge the connection to comments shared by other teachers. He said, “It's just different, right? It's not better. It's not worse. It's different. Generally, speaking, you know, it's [academics] a little bit harder for boys, particularly at an adolescent age. That's why I am a proponent of single gender education. Because I think it helps you target some of these challenges.” Joe’s insights give context that teachers feel, for the students they are teaching, the single-sex environment is better, particularly as it allows teachers to address concerns that are predominantly present with teenage boys. He also gave insight to the idea that more often boys are the students who struggle academically, so it allows teachers the ability to cater instruction to

this type of demographic. Steve said he believed the all-male environment, “allows them to have that second place that is a continuation of their home. And for students they feel this is where ‘I’m gonna learn. This is where I’m gonna succeed.’ I think in and of itself, it allows students to truly be themselves which is a component of their success.” Brad suggested that in the classroom: “It seems the boys are more willing to stick their neck out and ask a question in the single-sex environment, maybe because they do not need to impress members of the opposite sex.” Steve and Brad’s insights indicate that in the all-male environment, students are comfortable with each other, and it allows them to want to succeed, taking chances academically within the classroom to do such, which might not happen in coeducational classes.

Other teachers more specifically referenced coeducational schools in their responses. Bridget added to this idea, saying, “I taught in a co-ed school for a brief time, and it was hard to have girls in there, it changed the dynamic of the classroom. And I think a lot of that is in the all-male environment they kind of can just be comfortable and be themselves. They have a lot more in common with each other.” Kerri gave a very in-depth response at one point. She stated:

But the all-male model is awesome. I think that there are definitely less distractions. I think the social comparison is there, right? It's always going to be there for teenagers. That's a whole other beast to discuss. But I think the all-male platform gives the guys an advantage in that. They’re focused on themselves. I mean, of course, they, you know, meet girls and whatever, and hang out with girls outside of school. But it's just, different...When I say distraction, I mean both socially and academically, and what I mean is, when you have a bunch of guys, a bunch of teenage boys hanging out together, there is going to be social comparison. But when you have teenage boys and girls hanging out together in a classroom, there's a different social comparison, almost more

social competition. And I think there's just so many more layers to being distracted in a co-ed environment than there is in an all-male one. And the way I am thinking about that distraction, it's almost like social comparison in an all-male environment versus the social competition is in a co-ed situation. I don't know if that sounds sexist or not, and I am certainly not trying to be, but I have a daughter and a son and I think that it's good for my son to be in an all-male setting and remove a layer of the social comparison and competition occurring in adolescence. (Kerri)

Kerri's in-depth comment speaks to several things involved in this conversation. For one, she was reflectively aware to ensure that her comments about single-sex education were not speaking to it being a comment in the vein of sexism. Additionally, she brings light to the types of comparison that might exist when students of the opposite gender are in classes together. Steve spoke to this as well saying, "although they may not know, implicitly, what the factor being taking away is, I think the removal of girls gives them a better path of being who they are, instead of just focusing on that extra thing that might be impeding them to be successful." Kerri and Steve's comments indicate a level of social impact co-educational schooling brings, and how the removal of that, seems to have a positive impact academically and socially for students in all-male environments. The insights shared here build on the research Piechura-Couture and her colleagues (2013) have done related to boy-friendly lessons in single-gendered classrooms.

Summary of Findings

These various insights from teachers, categorizes the major findings of this research study. Teachers, through their interviews, shared valuable contributions which speak to these findings. Having relationships with students and families is important to the education of students. Understanding students' individual learning styles, and the accommodations that aid

those learning differences, is essential to helping students with learning challenges be successful. Ensuring teachers are adequately prepared and have the right support systems within the school is necessary for teachers to be able to do their jobs, especially as it relates to working with students with learning challenges. Finally, understanding this research in the context of the setting in which it was done is vital to the full picture. This school is a mission driven institution and has a specific identity of being a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school, giving it a unique culture and impacting the findings. The findings discussed above will be further explained in their relationship to prior research, as well as what future research should look at, in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives of support systems and interventions that help them educate students with individual learning challenges. This research study provides great perspectives and insights from teachers at a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school which allows for a greater conversation to be had about practices and challenges of working with students with learning challenges in this specific type of environment. As the previous chapter indicated, the major findings of this study are: (1) relationships with students and families; (2) understanding individual learning styles and accommodations; (3) preparedness and support systems within the school (4) mission, identity, and culture of the school. These findings suggest teachers believe it is important to have relationships with students and families, to understand individual learning styles and accommodations, to have preparedness through trainings and support from the school, and to recognize the mission, identity, and culture of the private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school they teach in. This chapter will further explore these findings in relationship to the previous literature and what that means in terms of this case, as well as potential future research.

Discussion

This study demonstrated the teachers feel there is an importance of building relationships with students and seeing that as a necessary way of aiding students with the learning needs. At points, teachers discussed having support with people pushing-in and pulling-out, providing that more individualized attention Bolic Baric and her colleagues (2016) and Lipka and his colleagues (2019) discuss as an important part of working with students with learning needs, specifically the small group and individualized attention components. Having good relationships

with students and understanding who they are as learners, which most teachers indicated throughout their interviews, allows a teacher to better know what types of assistance students might need and who to turn to in those situations to help provide support for these students. More research might look closer at specifically what is occurring when these small group and individual meetings take place amongst students, giving better insight into what makes them so beneficial. However, from previous research and insights shared by the teachers of this study, small groups and individualized attention seem to have a positive impact on students with learning challenges.

Teachers also discussed that it is necessary to ensure students understand it is okay to make mistakes and modeling that behavior. These points further build on the relationship piece that is so important in education, but also the modeling piece Milsom (2006) and Lipka and his colleagues (2019) discuss. Having a teacher demonstrate in front of students that it is okay to make mistakes, builds an idea in a classroom that learning does not mean it is always about getting it right. Especially with individuals that struggle with learning, the likelihood of making a mistake is possible, but the perception that it is okay, and will be okay, is even greater when this attitude of being okay with making mistakes is brought to a classroom. Additionally, beyond those relationships of modeling with students, teachers indicated that parents can be a resource. Interviews suggest parents can provide insights into their child's learning which can aid teachers, relating to the work of Wakeman and her colleagues (2021) regarding parent perceptions regarding their children's learning.

Teachers only briefly discussed perceptions and preparation beyond the secondary school setting. Further research should explore more about how secondary teachers are preparing students for what is beyond high school and how whether that be employment, college, or

another route, students are prepared to be successful. Further research can dive more deeply into the perceptions of teachers and how they believe they are adequately preparing students with learning challenges for life beyond their classroom and school environments. It can also examine how the school is aiding those teachers through this process of preparation. As Bennett and Gallagher (2013) indicate, as well as Clark et al. (2019), aiding students with skills that allow them to be successful post high school and gain employment is important. Though this was not a large conversation from all teachers, many of them indicated that through various assignments and strategies in class, and open conversations about inclusion, they are trying to create a positive perception of all individuals in their classroom and allow them to have a meaningful and impactful experience in which each student is gaining something. This speaks to Milsom's (2006) research about perceptions and the importance of adults in schools having positive perceptions of students with learning challenges to avoid bullying and exclusion as well as create long-term respect for one's capabilities beyond high school. Additionally, Joe specifically mentioned the skill set required for school, and how there is much more to learning beyond that. His comments stress aiding students beyond just academics, helping students to gain an appreciation for areas beyond classroom-specific content. It will be helpful to further research how students with learning challenges are doing beyond high school and what they believe their perceptions are by the people around them.

This study also provided examples of how one can differentiate instruction and provide various methods and techniques to aid all students in the classroom. This ranged from providing word banks, giving alternative assessments, allowing students to take an assessment in two parts, or providing different choices and options for projects, both by student choice and by the instructor's informed decision. The teachers referenced how they try to meet students where they

are at, speaking to Gumpert and McConnell's (2019) research of differentiated instruction and Pook's (2017) research about engaging with students to hear what helps them best. It would be beneficial in future research to have more teachers from each discipline represented, as well as other disciplines that were excluded from this study, to discuss more how differentiation occurs and what works best in a specific discipline for students with learning challenges.

This study provides a recognition of better supporting teachers by providing resources, such as additional staff, professional development, and teacher training. Every teacher indicated at multiple times that there needs to be more professional development, something Milledge-Henderson (2020) and Hansen and Dawson (2020) suggest as well in their research. It is important to acknowledge that many teachers believe that this can be provided by both educational experts on the matter who are able to share specific strategies and techniques, as well as by individuals within the building itself. This indicates, though specialists provide a great deal of insight, those who already have direct relationships with students, such as colleagues in the building, can have a great deal of insight to share with other teachers, something valuable when working with students with learning challenges. By listening to both experts on a specific topic and experts on the specific students themselves, there can be a better sense of meeting students where they are and providing teachers the supports they need to educate students with learning differences.

The study brought greater insights into the research already conducted regarding all-male environments. Almost all teachers suggested the all-male environment is beneficial, with no teacher suggesting the opposite. This relates to the research conducted by Piechura-Couture and her colleagues (2013) regarding boy-friendly lessons. By tailoring lessons and allowing for an environment that specifically meets the needs of males, teachers are able to aid students to be

successful in their classrooms. This came up throughout the teachers' responses. Joe indicated that often school can be harder for boys, and they struggle more. The all-male environment, as Joe suggests, allows you to target those challenges that boys have better, building on the research. Additionally, many teachers, including Bridget and Kerri, discussed the commonality between the boys and levels of social comparison, and as Kerri put it, social competition, that seems to be less in the all-male environment. Further research could use this to build more on the idea of how all-male environments can positively impact students with learning challenges, especially as it relates to all-male environments in Catholic schools.

Social modeling and its impact on learning came up often from teachers, something else previous research has looked at. As Hackmann and his colleagues (2019) suggest, a student's well-being influences their learning and Lipka and her colleagues (2019) suggested modeling is important. These ideas came up throughout this study at multiple points. Many teachers spoke to the social aspects of learning that occur in school beyond academics in the classroom. Bridget spoke to this regarding behavior and how it is important to model respect in the classroom and correct behavior when necessary. Joe's comments regarding finding ways to positively praise students beyond their academic work connects to the idea of social modeling as well, as it indicates the importance of educators caring about the whole student, not just their academic performance. Further research can speak more in depth to this idea and seek to more directly discover how teachers see social modeling and non-academic related experiences to the success of students who have learning challenges working in relationship to one another. Additionally, many teachers spoke about getting to know students outside of the classroom. Steve suggested just talking to students outside of class time, Bridget mentioned more specifically talking to students in the cafeteria, and Kerri and Joe acknowledged that going on service trips or school

trips, are all essential to getting to know students. These further connect to the research regarding social modeling and building relationships. More research can be done to explore these ideas and determine the exact impact this can have on student performance, especially as it relates to students with learning challenges, but this study certainly acknowledges the value in these relationships and the example of modeling.

As this study was intentionally done in a Catholic, Jesuit, secondary school, previous research related to this type of schooling is valuable. As Garcia-Huidobro (2017) suggests, there is limited research related to Catholic education, including the conversations between Catholic primary schools and secondary schools. This research solely looked at secondary schools, which adds to the insights about discipline-specific content Garcia-Huidobro (2017) suggests needs to be addressed. The discipline-specific strategies were addressed with Joe's insights on his student with dysgraphia and Bridget and Steve's comments related to the conversational Spanish course offered in the department. Lapsley and Kelley's (2022) research discussed service, respect, and leadership as being essential to Catholic schools. Many of the teachers, including Kerri, discussed these aspects as equally being essential to the mission of this school that the study was done in, and a way to better understand students. More research needs to be done to find a stronger connection to what that specifically means regarding students with learning challenges. Future research can more closely examine how content and Catholic mission connect. Additionally, future research should interview teachers at primary schools or do a comparison between primary and secondary teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and support.

The Jesuit mission of the school also was frequently discussed. Many teachers used phrases related to the Jesuit mission of the school and spoke specifically to the Jesuit ideals of the school being an important aspect of this conversation. As indicated in Chapter 2, Jesuit

institutions aid their students in developing a sense of service and being men and women for and with others (Jesuits, 2024). This certainly came up in the interviews, with one teacher directly addressing the service requirement, and another using the term “men for others.” Though not explicitly addressed, the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (Fordham University, 2024), as mentioned in the literature review, is an instructional model for Jesuit educators. The idea of context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation arose with teachers. Teachers discussed the experiences their students have, in and out of the classroom, the reflective nature of facilitating academic and non-academic learning, and the ways to adjust evaluations, or assessments for students. Teachers had a commonality in their approach to education, shaped by the Jesuit institution they work for. Further research should explore more specifically the makeup of Jesuit schools, specifically Jesuit high schools. This research should also more specifically attempt to understand how this model of education speaks to students with learning challenges. Additionally, the literature review acknowledged other types of Catholic schools that were not Jesuit, though teachers did not refer to those types of institutions specifically or make a comparison considering the research questions. A future comparative study might provide greater information to see if the charisms of the individual types of Catholic schools impact responses to inclusive education and classrooms.

As far as inclusion, all teachers interviewed seemed to indicate that Catholic schools should be a place of inclusion, allowing students with learning challenges and diagnosed disabilities to attend and be provided the appropriate services. Joe’s comments regarding the perception he felt of his colleagues desiring to aid students, Bridget’s comments regarding parents choosing a Catholic school, and Kerri and Steve’s comments acknowledging the mission of Catholic schools and its responsibility to inclusion, support the previous research. As

Faggella-Luby and Engel (2020) suggest, providing services to students with learning disabilities is essentially a part of Catholic education. Burke and Griffin's (2016) research indicates Catholicism's responsibility to marginalized members of society as well as the way public school research can impact and aid Catholic schools' response to this concern. Teachers' responses coincide with this prior research done and further suggest the need for Catholic schools to be providing resources for inclusive education. Further research needs to examine exactly how this can be done, especially as it relates to resources and money, something that prior research, and teachers in this study discuss as a concern.

Previous research examined barriers to Catholic schools and inclusive classrooms. Bonfiglio and Kroh's (2020) research suggests the funding Catholic schools receive is not enough to carry the cost associated with supporting students with disabilities as well as the concern regarding having collaboration time among teachers. Burke and Griffin (2016) acknowledge there is not enough information on models of Catholic schools that have successful programs that aid this type of population. Boyle and Hernandez (2016) also acknowledge the issue regarding preparation and training. Each of these in some ways is addressed in this study. Bridget specifically discussed time being an issue, especially as it relates to the training and continued learning, a problem that all schools and educators seem to have. The need to provide more time for teachers to collaborate, learn, and be given resources, is essential and something that this study acknowledges as a hurdle, coinciding with prior research. The issue about funding, though briefly addressed a couple of times, needs to be further explored, and this study cannot speak directly to this aspect of the research. This study does however address the concepts of models for inclusion in Catholic education, a topic further explored next.

This study speaks to Burke and Griffin's (2016) insight about models. This school has a model, with an academic support team, including a director of academic support, a literacy specialist, math tutor, and learning specialist. This study provides insights into what prior research suggests is lacking. Though not perfect, and though teachers acknowledged a need for growth in terms of the support educators receive, they all acknowledged that this was a significantly beneficial move on the part of the school. In terms of models, this study provides a valuable model for other schools to use. Although this should be used with caution, as this school is a private, Catholic, secondary school and not a diocesan, Catholic school. Though not confirmed, one might infer that this type of Catholic school, being independent from the diocese, has access to more resources and money. Further research could examine the difference between the funding for these types of schools and its impact on research related to inclusion classrooms. However, most importantly here is the beneficial contribution that this study provides for a model of support which other schools can use.

Responding to the Research Questions

In terms of the research questions directly, the teachers' responses in the interviews that were conducted were enlightening to the questions. More research will need to be done to further seek deeper insights into the ways in which these questions can be responded to. The initial question asked about teachers' perceptions of preparedness and access to resources for educating all students, including students with learning challenges. Teachers' responses, as indicated through much of the discussion above shed light into this. Overall, though teachers felt they had some preparedness, such as a special education course in their academic studies or some type of professional development tailored to inclusion education, there seemed to be a desire for more. Teachers' responses indicated they have had exposure to these types of things, but there could be

greater exposure that better equips them to be more successful in the classroom when working with diverse learners. This could be more required coursework through education programs, professional development during the year catered to inclusive classrooms and learning challenges, or opportunities to collaborate with colleagues on strategies that aid all students in the classroom. The study's findings suggest most teachers had a perception that they were exposed to these concepts, but they needed additional exposure to better hone their ability to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms. By providing more special education courses in general education programs and giving more opportunities for teachers to learn from others, including professionals in the field and colleagues in the building, there can be a greater sense of preparation and access. Additionally, this study suggests though there are resources in this school, such as the academic support staff, there needs to be a greater sense of collaboration in terms of working with teachers themselves. The teachers indicate a great sense of support these staff members provide for students, but equally indicate a greater sense of support they can provide for the teachers themselves. Finding time to collaborate or ways for the support staff to push into classrooms could be a way to address this concern shared by teachers. In relationship to the theoretical framework, both the microsystem, the teachers, and the mesosystem, the school, helps unpack this question. The teachers shared their insights and perspectives, giving a narrative to their experiences with students directly in their own classrooms. Additionally, teachers spoke specifically about what the school is doing to provide support, and how teachers would like to see further support, speaking to the relationship between the school, including support staff, and the teachers themselves.

This study, in many ways, responded to the question of the perception of support for teachers in private, all-male, Catholic, secondary schools, but further research still needs to be done. This

study gives great insight into the experiences teachers are having and speaks to what they are feeling regarding preparation and access to resources. A larger sample size, with more teachers, would allow the opportunity to see if there are commonalities in experiences. That being said, this is a good basis as it indicates that multiple teachers feel similarly regarding this topic. Additionally, as qualitative research this study seeks to understand the experience of these individuals in this setting. Though future research could see how this study relates to other schools with this same model, it is not a concern for this study itself, as this is a case study. Overall, the case study better understood the perspectives of teachers in a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools related to supports for educating students with learning challenges.

Additionally, this research study also sought to determine how teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges to provide academic support to all learners. Teachers in this study did discuss several ways in which they differentiate instruction. Teachers discussed strategies such as providing notes or word banks for students. In terms of direct instruction, teachers discussed giving students different tasks or assignments in class to cater to the strengths of one's abilities. This strategy speaks to the level of expectation teachers might have for students, ensuring all students are demonstrating learning, progress, and mastery, while being challenged in a manner that is appropriate for them. Teachers shared alternative ways of assessing, such as giving oral exams, and providing different academic courses, like the Conversational Spanish course, that allow students of all learning abilities to participate in the curriculum. Teachers also discussed ensuring they mix up their instructional methods, so all students have an opportunity to be successful, especially if one method caters to the strengths of a student more than another, as well as a desire to do this more intentionally and often. Multiple teachers pointed to the use of peer and group work as an essential tool, acknowledging students

can learn from each other, which is an important aspect to educating students, especially students with learning challenges. This speaks to the microsystem and the mesosystem of this case study. The microsystem, the teachers, have insights into what works for their students in their classrooms. The mesosystem, the school, is also understood as there are administrative decisions being made, like course offerings, to better aid all students regardless of their learning challenges. Looking at this question in relationship to the theoretical framework better helps understand this case from its boundedness and position as a Catholic, all-male school.

This study builds a foundation for potential future research. More research can seek to better unpack instructional methods teachers use to aid all learning, including those students with learning challenges. Additionally, future research might seek to see how this differentiation is impacted by the school, such as being in a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary environment. This study did not specifically determine if the entire makeup of the school as a private, Catholic, all-male environment impacted differentiated instruction or not and is something worth further examining. Aspects of it, such as the all-male component came up, but more insights are needed to better understand how the components of the model of the school directly impact each other in response to differentiation.

Lastly, the research explored what resources and materials, beyond academics, are available to help teachers in a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school to socially support students with learning challenges. This study did not directly respond to this question from its findings, but the teachers' insights began to address this. Almost all teachers suggested relationships are valuable, and getting to know students outside of the academic setting is important. They shared being able to relate to students, discussing aspects of their lives, such as extracurriculars, or things that might be of interest to students, such as the football game over the weekend, build

those relationships. Many teachers could not directly speak to how this differed regarding students with and without learning challenges; however, they indicated the relationship piece is vital for all students. Additionally, the institution's Catholic, Jesuit orientation spoke to this ideal of social modeling. Teachers discussed the importance of doing service trips with students or going on international immersion trips. This speaks to theoretical framework and the macrosystem, the response of Catholic education to inclusion classrooms. The insights provided by the teachers regarding this question of social supports beyond academics is tied to the perspective teachers had of Catholic education as a whole. They discussed coaching and being moderators of extra-curricular activities. They also discussed the importance of modeling behavior, by demonstrating that behavior themselves, inside and outside their classrooms. Though these insights do not directly address the original question of what exists to aid teachers regarding social supports for students, it does begin to address that in this case, educators are taking a vested interest in providing social supports to students beyond academics. This lays a good foundation for this type of research question to be further examined to find what is available, and can be available, for teachers to aid all their students socially, including those with learning challenges.

Revisiting the Theoretical Framework

The guiding framework of this study impacts the results. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013), umbrellaed by a constructivist viewpoint (Creswell, 2013), was the driving framework in this study. As indicated in Chapter 1, the teachers themselves are the microsystem, as the stories they share from their experiences and the perspectives they have regarding teaching students with learning challenges is the immediate environment being examined. This study significantly unpacks this microsystem, and the

experiences had by the teachers. Their narratives shared were direct comments to how they perceive inclusive classrooms, how they attempt to make that occur in their classrooms, and what that means in the relationship to their school environment, the mesosystem.

The mesosystem was described as the school and the administration. Teachers' comments significantly spoke to the school overall, including other non-teaching school staff, and the relationship they have with them. This relationship is essential to understanding the comments of the teachers and a guiding factor in the interpretation of the results as it was a driving force in the interview process. The discussions with teachers often came back to other individuals in the building, particularly members of the support staff and the experiences shared with them. The comments gave a greater insight into how the microsystem, the teachers, exist in the mesosystem, the school. Though the administration was not often directly mentioned by teachers, the teachers often referred to the choices of the school and the direction in which the school is moving. It can be inferred that when teachers responded and referred to "the school," it could include the administration as part of the leading forces behind the school. From the interviews, it sounded that the microsystem, the teachers, worked well with and moved in the same direction as the mesosystem. It appeared from responses that the criticism that arose was not about the people, their choices, or the shared idea of the values of the institution, but more about the effectiveness of how things operate. This suggests that the microsystem and mesosystem work well together and there is a positive relationship and influence between them.

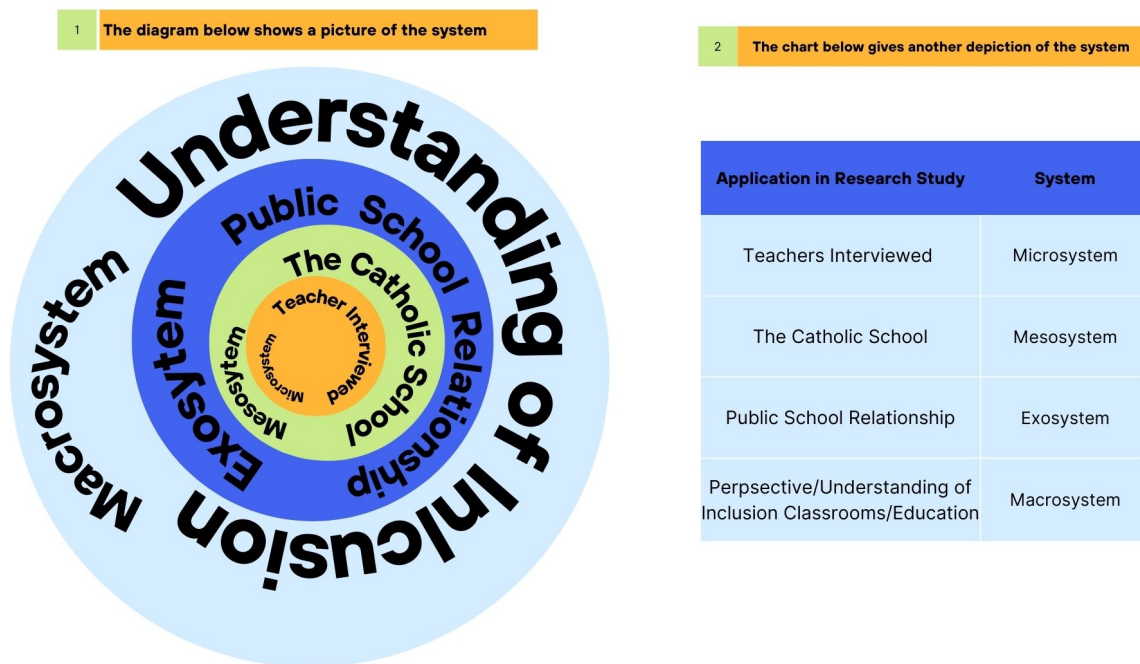
The next level of Bronfenbrenner's system theory is the exosystem. The exosystem, described in Chapter 1, is the relationships between the Catholic school, and the public school system in which the school is located. This system is a limitation of this study as there is more that could have been examined in relationship to the connection between the school and the

public school system. The majority of teachers did not acknowledge the services provided by the public school, and the few comments, from a couple teachers that did mention it, did not give great detail. The public school does have personnel, who provide services to non-public schools, including evaluations of students, to the local private and Catholic schools and are involved in creating documentation for students, including 504 plans and IEPs. However, this study did not explicitly examine this relationship further, nor did teachers discuss it in detail. It is beneficial to the study to know that the public school system does work with non-public schools in the town, including the one studied, but more can be examined to better understand the relationships between the school that teachers came from and the school system in which this private, Catholic, school is located. Recognizing this exosystem helps acknowledge that private and Catholic schools do have resources provided to them in some districts which can impact working with students with learning challenges. It might address some of the barriers and roadblocks Catholic schools have regarding resources discussed in the literature review and confirmed in the interviews. What needs to be explored more is the understanding and insights that all teachers in the building have, or do not have, regarding this relationship with the public school system, and how that impacts their perceptions of support when working with students with learning challenges. Additionally, it cannot be assumed this is true in all public schools across the country, or even the state in which this study was conducted, and should the study be replicated in a different setting, to understand a different case, it is important to be aware of this.

Finally, the macrosystem, was described initially as the understanding of inclusive education, particularly as it relates to private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools' response to inclusion. From the interviews conducted it seemed all teachers desired to have inclusion classrooms and felt that the mission of the school, as a private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school should

embrace having students with learning challenges. This insight is important in understanding the findings of this study as the macrosystem seemed to be a general shared belief that inclusivity, as it relates to diverse learners, is an essential aspect of Catholic education and the school’s mission and therefore, should exist. This shared belief certainly impacted all the systems, but especially the microsystem, as the teachers’ insights portrayed this as a common idea amongst others in the school community who did not participate in this study. Please see the same image as provide in Chapter 1 as a visual reminder of the framework.

Figure 5.1. Theoretical Framework



Limitations

As in all research, this study had its own limitations. First and foremost, if more teachers were interviewed from this particular school, it would result in a better sense of perspectives had amongst all teachers of this institution. As a case itself, it only examines an experience from one school. Should aspects of the research design and methodology be repeated, there could be more insights from teachers of other private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools, to understand their

perspectives of supports. The teachers were also picked in a convenience factor to the researcher, me, based on location, scheduling, and availability. This lack of random recruitment might have impacted my choice and bias in the sample. Though intentionally designed to target general education teachers, this study did not hear the perspectives of special education teachers, academic support specialists, or administrators. As the study specifically looked at high school students, the teachers, though pulled from different content-specific areas, did not pull from all disciplines, including visual and performing arts. This limitation does not allow the voices of other contents to be heard and therefore not as many insights were provided into differentiated instruction across content areas. Additionally, most disciplines only had one teacher who taught in that discipline, therefore not providing a fuller picture and greater insight from other teachers within that content area. This limitation does not allow a greater depth of knowledge to be heard from various teachers in a given content area. The teachers all identified as white, which speaks to lack of diversity within this study. These are just a few limitations of the study.

Further Research

This study lends itself to additional research to be done. Further research should look deeper at several different topics covered in this study. First, there should be a greater look into the various strategies and techniques that are used to aid students with learning challenges. Though teachers provided some examples, it would be beneficial to have more specific strategies to pull from. It should also examine what exactly is happening during small group and individualized instruction and how that carries over into the general instruction occurring in classrooms. This idea of small group work and individualized attention was not discussed greatly in this study but was highlighted greatly in the literature review and therefore should be examined more through current empirical work. This would be an important topic to further dive

into and find how it can be utilized for more teachers across the board. By doing more research on various strategies and techniques, there can be more concrete examples that educators can pull from, especially how it might impact supports for teachers in private, Catholic, all-male, secondary schools.

Future research should also more closely examine Catholic, and other types of private, schools' experiences with the public school system and the services provided to non-public schools. Teachers, and the documents provided by the institution, briefly addressed the connection to the public school system and the resources that students are entitled to. Studies that examine this closer will be able to speak in a greater depth to the exact types of resources provided, the amount of funding, if any, that non-public schools receive, and the level to which the relationship exists between the public schools and the private schools.

Another area that can be looked into is the post-secondary plans of students with learning challenges and the preparation for those endeavors. This can be done from the perspectives of teachers and the perceptions of aiding students with the skills to be successful in college or at a job. It could also look at the perceptions of the students themselves and how they are feeling about the skills and abilities they have gained through their education and the preparedness they feel. By looking at more post-secondary research, one can better understand what is happening at the secondary level and how one can use it to ensure that students with learning challenges are receiving the education they need, and deserve, to aid them in their future endeavors. Though teachers did not speak to this directly, many teachers referenced the type of school this study was done in, particularly as a college-preparatory school, and the underlying expectations of what that means post-graduation. More research into the type of post-secondary plans students with

learning challenges embark on could speak better to the school model this research was done in and determine if that has an impact, and if so, positively or negatively.

A comparative study between all-male schools and other types of schools could be another area of interest for future research. Teachers spoke to this specific model of education, and from their experiences, the benefits that come from all-male schooling. It would be interesting to do a cross-cultural study to see how this compares and contrasts to that of educators in co-educational schools, all-female schools, and other all-male schools. It would also be worth further looking into all-male environments that are not religiously affiliated to see if that creates a different perspective regarding educating students with learning challenges.

Additionally, a comparative study might look at interviewing administrators. This study solely looked at teacher perspectives, and did not account for the perspectives of administrators. Interviewing administrators might give greater insight into funding, decision-making, parental conversations and insights, and how administrators' responses align, or do not align, with teachers. In this same breath, it could be worth getting parents as participants. This study, though it did not seek it out, had two parents of students with learning challenges. Having a more specific parental perspective could speak to further insights, especially as they relate to the findings of the study which suggested parent and family relationships are important in educating students, including those with learning challenges.

Lastly, further research could examine teacher education programs and professional development trainings. It could look at the perception teachers have about how these programs impact educators' abilities to work with students with learning challenges. It could also examine what is happening in these courses or trainings and how those instructional and contextual methods are being delivered. This future research could determine who is providing these

trainings and the effectiveness of them with relationship to students with learning challenges. These are just a few examples of ways future research can examine different aspects of teacher experiences working with students with learning challenges, as well as other aspects of this topic that overlap and came up during the study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives of support systems and interventions that help them educate students with individual learning challenges. This study provides good insights into the experiences shared by the teachers in their interviews. It suggests there are supports that exist in this private, Catholic, all-male, secondary school, and personnel to provide additional services and resources for students with learning challenges. The study further acknowledges the initial research questions, suggesting though these supports are in the school, and the teachers' perspectives acknowledged that, there needs to be more done in supporting the teachers in educating students with learning challenges in their individual classrooms. Additionally, it does provide some ways of differentiation in terms of instruction, including small group or paired work, giving students choice, and creating testing accommodations. It does not give detailed examples of further specific teaching in terms of instructional pedagogy and how teachers differentiate their instruction. Finally, the study does not speak directly to the supports teachers are given in terms of providing social support for students, particularly students with learning challenges, but it does suggest teachers in this study believe that providing social supports and modeling for all students is an important aspect of their individual classrooms and collectively their school. These insights from teachers are helpful in responding to the initial research questions that were inquired about at the start of this study. Lastly, in a very specific relationship to the Catholic, all-male, aspect of this school, this school gives a model that can be

built off. By having additional supports, including an academic support director, literacy specialist, learning specialist, and math tutor, this school provides a model of additional staff to help educate students with learning challenges, something other Catholic schools can use as an example. The research done in this study, though it has limitation and gaps, provides a contribution to the conversation related to teachers' perceptions of supports when working with students with learning challenges as they relate to Catholic education and all-male environments.

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Appendix A - Interview Questions/Alignment to Theoretical Framework

Appendix A Table A.1

Interview Questions: First Set	Response to Research Question	Alignment to Theoretical Framework
What motivated you to become a teacher in the first place?	In a private, all-male, Catholic, secondary school what are teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for and the access to resources, materials, and professional development that support students with learning challenges to create inclusive classroom?	Constructivist (Creswell) – participants views described
How has your teaching style changed over your career?	In a private, all-male, Catholic, secondary school what are teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for and the access to resources, materials, and professional development that support students with learning challenges to create inclusive classroom?	Constructivist (Creswell) – participants views described
What does inclusive education mean to you?	How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – microsystem – individual participant
In relationship to inclusive education has your teaching style changed to better fit diverse learners and if so how?	How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners? Beyond academics, what resources, materials and PD is available to support teachers in creating social supports for students with learning challenges?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – microsystem – individual participant
In relationship to academic support and learning differences how do you differentiate instruction?	How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – microsystem – individual participant

How does the school provide support to you to educate students of all learning abilities?	In a private, all-male, Catholic, secondary school what are teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for and the access to resources, materials, and professional development that support students with learning challenges to create inclusive classroom? How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners? Beyond academics, what resources, materials and PD is available to support teachers in creating social supports for students with learning challenges?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – mesosystem – participant to the school
What background – coursework, professional development, etc. – do you have that has helped you aid students of all learning differences?	In a private, all-male, Catholic, secondary school what are teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for and the access to resources, materials, and professional development that support students with learning challenges to create inclusive classroom? How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners? Beyond academics, what resources, materials and PD is available to support teachers in creating social supports for students with learning challenges?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – microsystem – individual participant/ macrosystem – relation to inclusive education

Appendix A Table A.2

Interview Questions: Second Set	Response to Research Question	Alignment to Theoretical Framework
How do teachers feel regarding access and preparation to resources, materials, and educational opportunities which support students with learning challenges?	In a private, all-male, Catholic, secondary school what are teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for and the access to resources, materials, and professional development that support students with learning challenges to create inclusive classroom?	Constructivist (Creswell) – participants views described/ Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – microsystem – individual participant/mesosystem – the school
What specific supports exist in your school to better aid teachers in the process of educating all student.	In a private, all-male, Catholic, secondary school what are teachers' perceptions regarding their preparation for and the access to resources, materials, and professional development that support students with learning challenges to create inclusive classroom? How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners? Beyond academics, what resources, materials and PD is available to support teachers in creating social supports for students with learning challenges?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – mesosystem – participant to the school
Are there ways in which you would want to change your educational practice to better serve the needs of students with learning differences?	How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners? Beyond academics, what resources, materials and PD is available to support teachers in creating social supports for students with learning challenges?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – microsystem – individual participant

From your perspective, how can schools, districts, and other parties involved better support teachers in the process of educating students with learning challenges?	How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners? Beyond academics, what resources, materials and PD is available to support teachers in creating social supports for students with learning challenges?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – exosystem – individual participant to school/public school
From your perspective, what does the ideal inclusive classroom look like and what changes, either directly from your previous responses or an expansion of those ideas, could make that classroom exist.	How do teachers differentiate instruction for students with learning challenges that also provides academic support for all learners? Beyond academics, what resources, materials and PD is available to support teachers in creating social supports for students with learning challenges?	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory – microsystem – individual participant/mesosystem – participant to school/macrosystem – inclusive education/Catholic schools

Appendix B - Triangulation of Study

