

The Lived Experiences of General Education Teachers working with IEP students with
Significant Academic Difficulties

by

Pete N. Kinnas

B.A., San Francisco State University, 1979

M.A., Arizona State, 2004

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum & Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2026

Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of these teachers working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties. It sought to uncover the meaning these teachers attribute to the various challenges and to give them a voice (Bloomberg, 2023a) in these matters. Implications and recommendations for practice are given.

Based on the classroom teachers surveyed in this mixed-methods study, 55.5% of the responses indicated that it was overall challenging or extremely challenging working with students with significant academic difficulties. The majority of responses came from teachers with the most experience. Finding time to meet their needs was a significant challenge, also reflected in the interviews. Nearly two-thirds (63%) felt that the mainstreaming model would better serve these special needs students. Interviewed teachers generally expressed mixed views about placement; however, those who opted for inclusive education (IE) often cited conditional circumstances or made exceptions. This study also revealed the difficulty for classroom teachers to fulfill IEP requirements.

Students routinely placed in the inclusive classroom during core instruction raises legal concerns. The IDEA (2004) stresses the importance of placing students in the regular classroom *when appropriate*. Further, working in the classroom with these special needs students contributes significantly to the stress teachers experience. A collegial and caring model could help alleviate the emotional strain. Teachers in this study also desired additional administrative support and more special education staff both inside and outside of the classroom.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Spencer Clark

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Based on the classroom teachers surveyed in this mixed-methods study, 55.5% of the responses indicated that it was overall challenging or extremely challenging working with students with significant academic difficulties. The majority of responses came from teachers with the most experience. Finding time to meet their needs was a significant challenge, also reflected in the interviews. Nearly two-thirds (63%) felt that the mainstreaming model would better serve these special needs students. Interviewed teachers generally expressed mixed views about placement; however, those who opted for inclusive education (IE) often cited conditional circumstances or made exceptions. This study also revealed the difficulty for classroom teachers to fulfill IEP requirements.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to classroom teachers in the public schools across the U.S. and elsewhere, to their special needs students, and to special education staff.

Preface

While the APA 7th edition poses no time limitation (Greenbaum, 2021), I cited older studies along with newer ones to show relevance. These older studies revealed similar findings to the more recent ones. In fact, in the Literature Review in Chapter 2, I typically cited the studies in chronological order to determine if things have changed. Apparently, they have not, and that was a key point in one of my arguments. Note that the literature review has several subheadings or categories. Each section starts over with the chronological order.

Regarding bulleted participant quotations in the results section, I bulleted each participant's quotations for a few reasons. First, it is easier to read than mixing their various quotations in a narrative paragraph. Second, it is also easier to see the related ideas among each participant. Finally—and most importantly—one of the aims of this dissertation was to give voice to the teachers; that is also why I included longer block quotations (40 words or more).

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Background

In a southwestern urban school district, students with individual educational programs (IEPs) are routinely assigned to the regular classroom during core instruction (District Official, personal communication, November 30, 2022). This may be reflected in the National Center for Educational Statistics (2024): From 2012 to 2022 the number of students with IEPs spending 80% or more in the regular class room rose from 61% to 67% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024)

Four students with IEPs struggled in my 4th-grade class. Only one student made meaningful progress in reading. The students could answer literal questions (locating facts) but not beyond their reading level. Abstract thinking was a challenge. They struggled with finding main ideas, making inferences, and drawing conclusion, regardless of their reading levels. Figuring out unfamiliar words using context clues challenged the students, as well. None of the students made noteworthy progress in math. The students struggled with mathematical operations, and word problems presented additional difficulty. I characterized this population as *IEP students with significant academic difficulties*.

These students also struggled to maintain attention. They attended briefly, sometimes only a minute or so, posing barriers to their learning. It took time to address each diversion which also interfered with the learning of other students and with my teaching. At least two of these students were diagnosed with ADHD, who perform better in small groups (Hart et al., 2011). In fact, my colleagues and I felt that our students with significant academic challenges would be more productive in a small group pullout setting.

Of interest, these students would not be appropriate for a life-skills class, in which students are non-communicative. I also doubted that these students fit the criteria for significant cognitive disability (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2017) or intellectual disability (ID); however, regardless of the type of disability, I focused on the academic and behavioral characteristics, not disorders per se.

That said, the lines between academic difficulties and behavior can be interdependent (J. Teagarden, personal communication, June 12, 2025). However, it is beyond the scope of the dissertation to analyze this interdependence.

When I researched the effectiveness of pullout rooms, I found articles comparing pullout programs with inclusive programs (e.g. Meyers et al., 1990; Raisch & Simpson, 1996). In a pullout program, students with special educational needs (SEN) typically attended part of the day in the regular classroom and part of the day or sometimes the entire day in a resource (or pullout) room working with a special education (SpED) teacher or SpED aid. Phillips (2023) described the function of the resource room: The pullout or resource room is separate setting. A child who qualifies for special education attends these rooms to receive individualized assistance from SpED staff, who rely on the student's IEPs to guide instruction. Sometimes, the type of resource room can be tailored to a child's specific disability. The goal is to have the child join the regular classroom often. Ideally, SpED staff work together with the regular classroom teacher to help meet the specific needs of the child and to assist and provide support for the general education teacher.

Mainstreaming describes the model in which students spend the day in both a pullout room and in the regular class (University of Texas Permian Basin, n.d.). That is, they are mainstreamed into a regular classroom for part of the day. On the other hand, inclusion refers to

students that are in the regular classroom all day (UNESCO 2023; University of Texas Permian Basin, n.d.; Harkins and Fletcher 2015; MacMillan et al.,1996). (See also Definition of Terms, p.4).

Inclusive education (IE) is at odds with mainstreaming. According to Mancera (2023), for students who qualify for SpED, IE aims to include all students with disabilities in the regular classroom. The goal is equity for these students, that they have equal access to the same educational opportunities as their peers. Mancera referred to the push-in model and different ways it can operate. For instance, in the co-teaching model, SpED teachers and gen-ed teachers share teaching responsibilities within the regular classroom. Here, collaboration between the two departments becomes essential. Mancera also described differentiated instruction within the push-in model, in which the special needs students are provided instruction to meet their individualized learning needs. This can include accommodations. For example, if a student has a visual impairment, that child could receive enlarged print or text-to-speech aids. A student with a reading disability could also receive text-to-speech support.

As a side note, sometimes the literature uses the term “full inclusion.” However, based on the research just cited, that term is redundant since the term *inclusion* encompasses total or “full” immersion in the general education classroom. Nevertheless, I sometimes used the terminology “full inclusion” for clarification.

Some of the research indicated that inclusive programs resulted in statistically significant gains, but the gains were not meaningful; that is, the effect size was small (Szumski and Karwowski, 2014; Oh-Young and Filler, 2015). Other research indicated there were no significant gains in the regular classroom (Fuchs 2010; MacMillan et al. (1996). This was consistent with my experience: The IEP students with significant academic difficulties problems

in my class made little or no meaningful progress. Because of their lack of progress and their deep needs, my two 4th-grade colleague, the push-in SpED teacher, and I felt they would have been more productive in a pullout room. Although I prefer pullout programs during core instruction for some students, I am aware of the social benefits students could experience in the regular classroom (Bruin, K.,2020), and addressed briefly below and more so in Chapter 5.

A blended approach provides a third option: students could be taught in both the regular classroom and in the pullout room (Fernandez and Hynes, 2016). This sounds like mainstreaming, but it does not carry the political or legal connotations of mainstreaming. This does not refer to the blended approach described by Rivera (2017), in which face-to-face learning is combined with online learning. Note that the literature review will address these issues.

Statement of Problem

General education teachers frequently work with IEP students with academic difficulties. In fact, to be eligible for special education the student must 1) have at least one of the thirteen qualifying disabilities listed in the IDEA and 2) that disability hampers the student's *learning* (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act*, 2004, 20 U.S.C. § 1401(3)(A). In other words, all IEP students struggle academically; otherwise, they would not be eligible for special education. About 7.5 millions students ages 3-21 qualify for special education, or about 15% of the students in public education (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024). As noted earlier, students with significant academic difficulties presented challenges to teachers in the regular classroom.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the lived experiences of these teachers working with IEP students with Significant Academic Difficulties. It sought to uncover the meaning these teachers attribute to the various challenges and to give them a voice (Bloomberg, 2023a) in these matters. From this study and its implications, I provided recommendations for practice.

Research Questions

Overarching Research Question: What are the lived experiences of general education teachers working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

1. What challenges do special education (SpED) students with significant academic difficulties pose for teachers in the general education classroom?
2. What kind of support do general education teachers desire when working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

Subsidiary Question A: What kind of support would gen ed teachers desire from SpED teachers?

Subsidiary Question B: What other kinds of support would gen ed teachers desire in working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

3. What are gen ed teachers' perceptions of the placement process for students with IEPs?

Subsidiary Question A: Who participates in the placement of students with IEPs?

Subsidiary Question B: According to gen ed teachers, who has the most influence in placement of students with IEPs?

Subsidiary Question C: What settings do general education teachers feel will better serve special educational needs students with significant academic difficulties?

Subsidiary Question D: Once these students are in the gen ed classroom, how much influence do gen ed teachers feel they have in a change of placement?

4. What influence does experience and level of education have on general education teacher's perceptions of IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

Definition of Terms

1. Blended approach: students could be taught in both the regular classroom and in the pullout room (Fernandez and Hynes, 2016). Similar to mainstreaming, but does not carry the legal or political connotations of mainstreaming.
2. Core instruction: instruction of essential subjects like language arts (English/reading), math, science, and social studies.
3. Constructivist/constructivism: "Constructivism is an epistemology, a learning or meaning-making theory that offers an explanation of the nature of knowledge and how human beings learn [sic]. The real understanding is only constructed based on learners' previous experience and background knowledge.... [I]ndividuals create or construct their own new understandings or knowledge through...what they already believe and the ideas, events, and activities with which they come into contact" (Ültanır, 2012, p. 195; Bloomberg 2023a) .
4. Cross-sectional survey: Data is collected at a one specific time, as opposed to a longitudinal survey which collects data on the same subjects at different times, such as 1 year, 2 years, and so on. My study is a cross-sectional survey since I surveyed the participants only once at a specific time
5. Effect size: Effect size measures the practical significance. While results may show statistical significance, they might not be meaningful.

6. IE: Inclusive Education: Students with disabilities are taught in the regular classroom with necessary supports.
7. Inclusion: All students with special educational needs (SEN) are taught in the regular classroom. Special education teachers work with the classroom teacher to provide the needs of these students (UNESCO ,2023; University of Texas Permian Basin, n.d.; Harkins and Fletcher, 2015; MacMillan et al.,1996; Cipkin & Rizza, n.d). Sometimes referred to as “full inclusion.”
8. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): “The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a [federal] law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children” (U.S. Department of Education, 2026).

The relevant portion of the IDEA states the following:

(i) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily¹ (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)§ 300.114, last modified on May 3, 2017).

¹ The lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii) were added by the publisher for clarity.

9. Mainstreaming: Students with special educational needs (SEN) are integrated or mainstreamed in the regular classroom for part of the day; however, they are taught in special education settings, like a pullout or resource room, for other parts of the day (University of Texas Permian Basin, n.d.). While the University of Texas Permian Basin states that SEN students are mainstreamed in subjects like, math, a core subject, Wright (1999) indicated that SEN students are mainstreamed “usually during nonacademic periods,” (p.12).
10. The *least* restrictive environment (LRE): The LRE *is* the regular general education classroom (IDEA, 2004), but it is based on a continuum of placement settings. An institution would be the most restrictive.
11. Participants/Respondents: These terms are used interchangeably and refer to the teachers who are being surveyed or interviewed in this dissertation.
12. Pullout room: A room where students are pulled out of the regular classroom to receive small-group instruction, also known as a resource room; generally referred to as a pullout setting.
13. Praxis: action, practice; practical application of a theory (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) Note: this definition suffices for the study’s purpose.
14. Resource room: A room where students are pulled out of the regular classroom to receive small-group instruction, also known as a pullout room.
15. SEN: Special Education Needs (referring to students)
16. SEND: Special Education Needs and Disabilities (referring to students)

17. Statistical significance: measures how much a result happened or didn't happen by chance, typically set at 0.05. This means there is only a 5% chance that results happened by chance.

Limitations and Delimitations

Delimitations

To make this study manageable, I focused on elementary teachers grades 1-5 in a southwestern urban school district, consisting of 10 public, non-charter elementary schools. I left out kindergarten since its curricula typically differ from grades 1-5: The kindergarten curriculum is more foundational than the curricula for grades 1-5 (...Public Education Department, 2025) ²

Limitations

Respondents may be inadvertently biased in how they answer the research questions and interpret the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Originally called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), P.L.94-142 passed in 1975, the EAHCA was amended in 1990 when the name was changed to IDEA. Later amendments came in 1997 and 2004 (University of Washington, n.d.).

It is important to note that although the wording emphasizes inclusion, a careful reading of section specifies “to the maximum extent *appropriate* [emphasis added].” This does not mean inclusion “no matter what”; if inclusion is not appropriate, then students should *not* be in the regular classroom. The potential problem arises in how section one is interpreted. Here’s a quote from a southwestern school district official:

² Ellipsis dots are used to keep the school district name anonymous.

...it is state legislation that all students in elementary school receive 90 minutes of uninterrupted core English Language Arts and 60 minutes of core math. Meaning as you stated that any pull out supports for Layer II should happen outside of that time and be in addition to the 90 minutes of Layer I instruction. This goes for all students, not just students who have IEPs that designate pullout time for support (personal communication, November 30, 2022).

This looks like inclusion exclusively, at least during core instruction, so participants aware of this implementation of IDEA may opt to choose inclusion as their choice, going with the status quo.

Similarly, organizational bias poses another potential limitation. Because teachers perceive the district and pro-inclusion researchers as authority (The Strategy Institute, n.d.), they may opt to choose inclusion. Further, teachers may face administrative pressures to promote inclusion, also a form of organizational bias (Reiman & Rollenhagen, 2011).

Social desirability bias, another potential limitation, influences respondents to answer in a way that is “socially acceptable” (Bergen and Labonté, 2020, p. 783). Because of the pro-inclusion publicity in research journals (Avramidis, et al., 1999/2000; Garrad, & Pedersen, 2018; Chung et al., 2015) and the public-school emphasis on inclusion, respondents may be inclined to select inclusion as their “socially desired” preference. Incidentally, section ii of IDEA allows for students with disabilities to be educated in alternative settings, yet I did not come across this in the pro-inclusion articles in my literature review. I did not consider age and gender in my study as a limitation since Lindner et al., 2023 showed mixed results in the 36 studies they examined. Other limitations include the following:

- The sample represented only one southwestern state's school district, not the entire population of the state.
- The survey response rate was only 11.1% (addressed later)

Significance

Several studies in my literature discussed inclusion. The overarching purpose of this study seeks to understand the lived experiences of elementary teachers working with students on IEPs who have significant academic challenges. The literature review covered various topics related to this. Several studies discuss “full” inclusion, often in reference to pullout settings in a mainstreaming model. Those who promoted inclusion—even so-called full inclusion, made exceptions. For example, pro-inclusionists often made exceptions for those students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) (Avramidis et al., 1999; Avramidis et al., 2000; Khan, et.al., 2017b). Data from these studies often suggested that the exceptions are made for behavioral reasons, not necessarily academic ones. However, Avramidis et al. (1999) indicated inclusion works best for the humanities, not for the sciences, suggesting academic reasons.

With few exceptions (ADHD), I did not know my students' diagnosis, but they did not meet the criteria for a life-skills class (... personal communication, April 4, 2024), for intellectual disability (Gargiulo & Bouck, 2018), or for a significant cognitive disability (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2017). In addition, I was not aware of any of my students diagnosed with developmental delay, which refers to children ages 3-9 (Gargiulo & Bouck, 2018).

Using Google Scholar in Kansas States's library database search, I saw several articles about addressing specific academic difficulties, such as math or writing (Benítez, 2011;

Kusumadewi & Retnawati, 2020), and several other articles involved college students (Allen, et al., 1988; Cleland et al., 2005), a population irrelevant to my study. In my literature review, I came across articles that discussed specific disabilities, such as autism (Harkins and Fletcher, 2015; Zablotzky et al., 2013), intellectual disabilities (Rose et.al., 2015), learning disabilities (Cole et al., 2004; Rose et.al., 2015), or behavioral disorders (Avramidis et al., 2000). These studies sometimes indicated how these disorders affected learning. Like my research, some of articles in the literature review also highlighted the stress teachers experienced working with these special needs students (Herman, et al., 2017; Pressley, et al., 2025; Walker, 2019). However, I did not come across literature that specifically focused on academic difficulties per se related to teachers lived experience and with the intent of giving voice to teachers, with the exception of Pressley (2025), who stated that “retention efforts should center on policies that ... amplify their voices...” (p.9).

Therefore, I chose to explore teachers’ lived experiences with elementary students with significant academic difficulties—regardless of diagnosis—along with accompanying behavioral issues and to give voice to these teachers, whose have apparently been silenced (Bloomberg, 2023a; Pressley, 2025) . Also, I was especially curious about this particular school district where IEP students are routinely placed in the regular classroom during core instruction. The intent for this dissertation, then, is to fill in some of the gaps in the literature.

Theoretical Perspective

The apostle Paul advised his readers to "test everything" (New International Version, 2015, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). The Greek word for test means to "examine, interpret...[and] discern"(Goodrick & Kohlenberger III (1999). For example, the Bereans "examined the Scriptures" daily "to see if what Paul said was true" (New International Version, 2015, Acts

17:11). The Greek word for examine means to “inquire into, investigate, question” (Bible Hub, n.d.). I relate to this theoretical approach more than any of the traditional theories, and for convenience, I refer to it as the Berean Principle. The Berean Principle seeks to uncover truths by carefully examining, interpreting, discerning, and questioning phenomena. The Bereans contradicted the Religious Orthodoxy (Eisner, 2001) of not questioning or critiquing. They questioned, they examined, and they set an example for investigative inquiry. The Berean Principle partially relates to investigative theory in education (Chen & Xu, 2017), but it relates closely to critical theory.

Critical theory seeks to raise consciousness, to expose injustices and power imbalances and moves one towards action (praxis) and solutions (Miller, 2011). This also involves inquiry and close examination. While teaching, I did not always aim to expose injustices and act on those injustices (praxis), but many times I did. For example, one of my fourth-grade classes created a school-wide publication of students’ rights regarding bullying and then posted copies of these throughout the school and on the playground. Another group of fourth graders deconstructed food labels on cafeteria breakfast foods. They examined the ingredients to reveal harmful ingredients—sugar was one of the recurring “themes.” Students put sugar in small baggies, equal to the amount in a particular food—visible telltale signs of health risks. Having created a trifold poster-board display, students presented their findings and recommendations for healthier foods to school district, cafeteria staff members, and a few teachers.

Having said that, I did not seek to expose any injustices in an educational institution; that was not my intent. However, critical theory in education also “validates [teachers’] voices [and] experiences” (Zai, 2023b, p.8), and that was what I hope to do through my research questions.

Through open-ended survey questions and interviews, I investigated whose voices stand out and especially whose are silenced (Bloomberg, 2023a; Pressley, 2025).

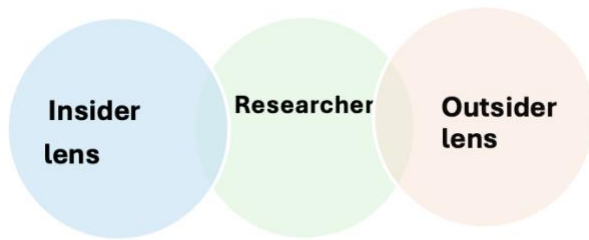
Besides the primary Berean Principle and the related critical theory and critical literacy that underlie my epistemological beliefs, I adopted parts of other perspectives, which may technically place me in the hybrid perspective camp (Koro-Ljungberg et. al., 2009) or the pragmatist group, which “allows researchers to use both qualitative and quantitative methods depending on what best addresses the research question” (Dudovskiy, n.d.) For example, I accept positivism when I ask objective questions that can be reported in means, medians, and percentages. I embrace descriptive interpretivism in that “tries to understand the social world as it is... from the perspective of individual experience.... (Rossman & Rallis, 2023, p. 98). I embrace constructivism as described in Koro-Ljungberg et. al.,(2009). Specifically, I described the interviewees’ experiences and value their “meaning-making,” their “values and beliefs” (p.689) through interviews; I sought to investigate the participants’ “perspectives, experiences, and meaning-making...[their] values and beliefs” (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009, p.689).

Much has been written about the tension between the positivist and constructivist view (Danmax, 2025); however, to be forced into one camp or the other succumbs to the false dilemma fallacy. Both views can be combined (Danmax, 2025; Premier Dissertations, 2026). In essence, the mixed-methods approach does this (Premier Dissertations, 2026). This study used qualitative methods (interviews and open-ended survey questions), a constructivist approach; and it used quantitative methods (descriptive statistics), a positivist approach.

However, the Berean Principle has guided me throughout this research, leading me to “inquire into, investigate, question,” expressed in my research questions (see pp. 4-5). Along with critical theory, I hoped to have raised consciousness and move educators to action.

Positionality Statement

Figure 1.1. *Insider-Outsider Lens*



Throughout this research, I have adopted an insider-outsider lens (Goundar, 2025). As an insider, I relate to my survey and interview participants since I was an elementary teacher and remember vividly *my* lived experiences. Therefore, I sometimes referred to my personal experience. In my conclusion, this personal experience becomes tacitly interwoven with and within the participants' personal experiences, so I write passionately, sharing deeply with their struggles. In this way, I have *constructed* my own meaning from the Venn diagram, taking some liberties in adding to this insider lens.

As researcher, I presented my literature review and the results of my research, as a neutral party. I strove to objectively present my findings from my inquiries, investigations, and questions, embracing the Berean Principle. I used my lived experience as a way of confirming my participants lived experience, the experience of teachers across the country, and the heart wrenching experience from a close relative. I strove to avoid bias in that I objectively reported the consistent experiences of my research participants and those of my relative.

As an outsider, I realize I have been out of the classroom for about four years. My doctoral studies also may position me as an outsider since none of the participants in my study held doctoral degrees. Finally, as a researcher, I remain an outsider and risk establishing power imbalances between my participants and me. To address this, I included in the consent form the voluntary nature of participating and the option to pull out of the study without any

repercussions. As a trained mediator, I used reflective and active listening to encourage openness and empathetic comments to reduce any potential power imbalances. The interviewees' candid response seemed to have lessened any potential power imbalances, too.

Overview of the Methodology

This mixed-method research consisted of a cross-sectional survey with 16-17 closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions, along with five, brief demographic questions (Appendix A). In addition to the survey questions, I conducted six semi-structured interviews (Appendix B), reflecting a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

Again, the purpose of the study was to determine what challenges general education teachers face in the classroom with students who have significant academic difficulties, what resources were available to them, and what their perceptions were about the placement process for students with IEPs; that is, what was their overall lived experiences with these students. I targeted public-school teachers in grades 1-5 in a southwestern urban school district. The specific methodological procedures are described in Chapter 3 (Methodology).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes the background and problem, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, limitations and delimitations, statement of the significance of the study, theoretical perspective, and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 covers the literature review, divided into relevant subheadings, beginning with a historical background. Chapter 3 covers the methodology. Chapter 4 encompasses the results, while Chapter 5 covers the discussion.

Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I described four IEP students with academic difficulties who were assigned to the regular classroom during core instruction and the nature of their challenges. In my experience, teachers in an inclusive classroom spent an inordinate amount of time with some special needs (SEN) students to help them understand concepts; others have expressed the same concerns (Barton, 2016; Smith & Smith, 2000). Also, many of my SEN students often lost focus, which hindered not only their learning but their classmates' learning. I examined literature related to these and other issues.

My literature review begins with the challenges general education teachers face in their classrooms working with these special needs students and then examines the views towards inclusion over time. It also covers gen-ed teachers' desire for support and issues related to academic and social achievement, pullout settings, and teachers' perceptions of placement decisions. It also includes a description of bullying in the inclusive setting directed at these special needs students. First, however, I begin with some history leading up to rights of students with disabilities.

Historical Background

Advocacy groups heavily influenced government to pass laws ensuring that students with disabilities were educated in the public schools (Yell, 2019). Some of these groups date back to the early 20th century. For instance, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) started in 1922. CEC emphasized education—not labeling—of students with special educational needs (SEN). Another advocacy group, the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps Court, originated in

1974 and consisted of parents, teachers, and others who provided educational information and promoted human rights (Yell, 2019).

Court cases also influenced laws regarding the rights of children with disabilities to an education. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was one of the earliest ones. *Brown* essentially ended discrimination in the public schools, the separate but equal viewpoint regarding black students. The *Brown* victory was based on the 14th amendment, from which came the Equal Protection Clause (Hachiya, 2022). That extended rights for children with disabilities, who were also segregated from mainstream education (Yell, 2019).

Later court cases, such as *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1971 (amended 1972) ensured a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with intellectual disabilities. The Federal Government entered the scene with such acts as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which provided “educational opportunities for disadvantaged children, including students with disabilities...” (Yell, 2019, p.43). The Education of the Handicapped Act of 1970 (EHA) provided state funding that ensured students with disabilities be given special education (Yell, 2019). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the “first federal civil rights law to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities” (p. 44).

In 1975, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) was passed. Also known as public law (P.L.) 94-142, it provided rights for students with disabilities to a “free appropriate public education” (p. 45), along with the well-known individualized education program, that is, the IEP. Later amendments renamed P.L. 94-142 to the Individual Disabilities Educational Act of 1990, commonly referred to as IDEA.

The major aims of the IDEA consist of the following:

- (a) To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living;
 - (b) To ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected;
 - (c) To assist States, localities, educational service agencies, and Federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities; and
 - (d) To assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities.
- (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, § 300.1)

The IDEA also emphasizes setting meaningful and doable goals, which require assessments to determine progress towards these goals. It identifies official categories of disabilities such as autism and intellectual disabilities (Yell, 2019). (Incidentally, in 2010, President Obama signed Rosa’s Law, which officially changed the label of mental retardation to intellectual disability; Yell, 2019). Part B of IDEA describes seven principles, including free and appropriate education (FAPE), Zero reject, which ensures FAPE for all students with a disability, and LRE—the often-misunderstood least restrictive environment^{3,4} (Yell, 2019).

Later amendments came in 1997 and 2004 (University of Washington, n.d.). The 1997 amendments increased parent participation and emphasized “student progress...through changes in the IEP process” (Yell, 2019, p. 70). Other changes took place as well. The 2004 amendments changed the IDEA title to The Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement ACT of 2004 (IDEIA). This act increased accountability measures for schools and emphasized “scientifically

³ The lower-case Roman Numerals (i, ii) were added for clarity.

⁴ See conclusions and recommendations.

based practices” (p. 72). According to Yell, other changes included modifying the IEP process. (see Antony, 2012; Yell, 2019; Martinet al.,1996).

Challenges special education (SpED) students with significant academic difficulties pose for teachers in the general education classroom.

Stressors

General education teachers face several challenges working with students with students with significant academic challenges (Alter & Landers, 2013; Amstad & Müller, 2020; Emeljanovas, et al., 2023; Forlin et al.,2008). Kerr and Zigmond (1986) surveyed both general education teachers and SpED teachers and ranked responses on a 3-point scale with a 1 as unimportant, 2 as desirable, and 3 critical. About 41% of the teachers rated students challenging classroom policies a 3 (critical). Other critical ratings included noncompliance (67%) and disruptive behavior (46%). Incidentally, SpED teachers rated these same behaviors significantly higher than the classroom teachers. Although their study was focused on high school teachers, similar results were found at the elementary level (Walker & Rankin, 1983). Busby (2012) also mentioned “ that behaviors of children with autism are atypical, complex, and potentially very disruptive of general education classrooms....” (p.32).

Forlin et al. (2008) described the issues teachers had towards inclusion regarding students with intellectual disabilities (ID). Two hundred and twenty-eight teachers in Western Australia stated several concerns (Forlin et al., 2008). Figure 2.1 replicates Forlin’s Table 3

Figure 2.1. *Forlin's Table 3: Teachers' concern regarding students with intellectual disability in the classroom*

Table 3. Issues causing the most concern for teachers when including a child with an intellectual disability in a mainstream class

Item	Issue	Mean	SD	Applies (n)	Does not apply (n)	Applicable %
20	Has a short attention span	2.67	0.99	210	18	92
23	Has poor communication skills	2.63	1.09	205	23	90
22	Has limited speech	2.54	1.12	198	30	87
56	Insufficient pre-service training	2.54	1.09	213	15	93
44	Difficulty monitoring other students when attending to the student	2.53	1.15	211	17	93
21	Displays inappropriate social skills	2.52	1.06	207	21	91
63	Reduced ability to teach other students as effectively as you would like	2.51	1.19	199	29	87

Note: Mean responses range from one (*not concerned*), two (*somewhat concerned*), three (*quite concerned*), to four (*extremely concerned*).

From: The concerns of mainstream teachers: Coping with inclusivity in an Australian context. Forlin, C., Keen, M., & Barrett, E., *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, © **copyright 2008**.

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A score of one means "not concerned" and a four means "extremely concerned." A score of 3 indicates "quite concerned." The chart depicts that all of the results were between "somewhat concerned" and "quite concerned" with the mean closer to the *quite concerned* rating. Teachers also felt they lacked the skills to work with students with ID, another major concern (a 2.54 mean).

Westling (2009) surveyed 38 SpED teachers and 32 gen-ed teachers on challenging behaviors they faced with their students. The two most challenging behaviors for both groups involved students with specific learning disabilities and students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Special education teachers also indicated that students with emotional or behavioral disorders posed a significant challenge, while gen-ed teachers indicated that students *without* disabilities presented challenges.

Keeping with much of my research, over half of the teachers in Westling's 2009 study agreed that working with these students took up much time, heightened their stress, affected their

teaching ability, and disrupted the learning of all students, including their own learning. In fact, over 80% of the teachers agreed that working with these students heightened their stress level and affected everyone's learning. Forty-four percent thought about quitting. Incidentally, special education teachers reflected similar amounts of stress.

In a Lithuanian study, Emeljanovas, et al. (2023) described specific symptoms of stress teachers experience, including anxiety, exhaustion, and depression. Alter & Landers (2013) found that "off-task behaviors" caused the most stress for teachers (p.57), followed by "verbal disruption...verbal aggression...[and] out of seat" (p.57). These researchers also determined that age and experience were unrelated to the stress teachers experienced, in line with my research.

Views Towards Inclusion Throughout the Years

Predominantly Positive Views Held by Teachers Toward an Inclusive Setting

Some teachers hold a predominately positive view toward inclusive education preferring inclusion (Avramidis et al., 1999; Idol, 2006; Garrad et al., 2018). Avramidis et al. (1999) studied *student* teachers in the U.K. They typically preferred inclusion for special educational needs (SEN) students. However, the authors noted some caveats. Teachers favored inclusion for subjects in the humanities but not the sciences. Also, they did not always favor inclusion for students with mental or behavioral disorders (Garrad et al. (2018). In other words, although many teachers predominately preferred inclusion, the teachers made exceptions for the sciences and students with mental or behavioral disorders.

Predominately Mixed Views Held by Teachers Toward an Inclusive Setting

Here, researchers pointed out more mixed views held by educators. Avramidis et al. (2000) studied mainstream teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in study taking place in England.

While most shared positive views toward inclusion, one-third of those were not willing to have SEN students in their classrooms, especially those with behavioral disorders.

In their Portuguese study, Lopes and colleagues, (2004) suggested that most resistance came from teachers, who preferred the pullout room, especially for the most challenging students, those with significant learning and behavioral problems. Idol (2006) reported that two participants felt that SEN students should be taught in a segregated setting within the school. Heflin & Bullock (2010) reported that most teachers preferred mainstreaming, along with pullout settings.

In a qualitative study of a U.S. Midwestern city, Fuchs (2010) noted that teachers were opposed to inclusion. Although they felt it was a good *idea*, mainstreaming students with disabilities into the regular classroom proved too difficult. The teachers felt that the “responsibilities and expectations of regular education teachers were unreasonable” (p. 30). They felt they lacked support from both administrators and special education staff, they did not have proper training, and they did not have the time to meet with SPED educators to plan. Large class sizes were also problematic. Fuchs stated that “teachers in this study do not favor inclusion, in its current practices, because they feel unprepared to meet the demands and responsibilities.” (p.34)

In her master's thesis, Dawson (2014) also noted mixed views held by teachers. Forty-four percent of the respondents preferred inclusion, 15% preferred a self-contained room for the entire day, and 11% preferred pullout services. Barton (2016) studied the effectiveness of pullout rooms, a study involving general education teachers, special education (SpED) teachers, parents, and students. Her conclusion: The best placement for students depended on each student's *individual needs*, which could be in the general education classroom or the pullout room.

Regarding academic achievement, Fletcher (2015) indicated that about 44% of SpED teachers felt that inclusive education (IE) would benefit students. They reported that "72.1% of general education teachers and 87.3% of special education teachers agreed with the statement that IE is effective for students with specific learning disabilities." (p.72). Yet "these same participants expressed concerns about the implementation of inclusive education...[involving] adequate training for teachers and paraprofessionals, differentiation of instruction, time resources and supports, and planning collaboration and communication" (p.72).

Fernandez and Hynes (2016) reported on two Texas schools, which consisted of 25 elementary teachers. Overall, teachers preferred a "blended approach" (p.37), in which students could be taught in both the regular classroom and in the pullout room. They noted that some students with learning disabilities benefit from the pullout setting where certain skills could be taught only in a distraction-free setting. While promoting a co-teaching arrangement in the regular classroom, they "asserted that both models (blended and pullout) were needed to reach all students' needs" (p.41). Ware (2016) surveyed 10 Tennessee elementary teachers. In general, 50% of the teachers believed that SpED students should be educated in the regular classroom, while 30% said they should not. Twenty percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Khan, et.al., 2017) reported that many teachers preferred inclusion for all children with disabilities and viewed children with *mild* disabilities positively. Yet the results of the study indicated inconsistencies. While "77% believed that all learners regardless of their disabilities should be in regular classrooms" (p.41), at the same time most respondents indicated that students with certain physical disabilities, like deafness and cerebral palsy, should *not* be in the regular classroom. Further, students with intellectual disabilities (formerly, mental retardation) were the least preferred for inclusion. In other words, they held positive views towards children

with mild disabilities, but not those with severe ones, who they felt should be in resource rooms. Like other studies (Fuchs, 2010; Harkins and Fletcher, 2015; Hernandez, et al., 2016), teachers needed more training for special education needs students.

In Malki & Einat (2018) and Williams-Brown & Hodkinson (2020), some researchers leaned more towards mainstreaming. Some teachers in Williams-Brown & Hodkinson qualitative study in England favored inclusion, but overall teachers recognized that not all students with their special needs could in the inclusive classroom. They noted several barriers to inclusion and felt that some students would be better served in a separate setting. According to Malki and Einat, most of the teachers surveyed stated that inclusion *did not* work. Special education teachers did not have enough time to work with students in the mainstream classroom—just a few times a week. Also, a lack of training, a recurring theme, limited effectiveness of regular classroom instruction.

In her doctoral dissertation, Woolverton (2021) concluded the following:

- Teachers who felt prepared to teach children with special educational needs favored inclusion.
- Teachers who felt they had administrative support favored inclusion.
- SpED teachers supported inclusion more than classroom teachers.

By implication, teachers who didn't have the preparation or the administrative support likely preferred the pullout setting.

Specifically regarding behavior, studies varied in their conclusions about general education teachers' responses to behavioral issues in the classroom (Heflin & Bullock 1999; Hieneman et al., 2005; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006). Lohrmann & Bambara (2006) reported that general education teachers lacked support and training in behavioral management but that

they desired it, especially positive behavioral support strategies (PBS). Hieneman et al., (2005) noted that PBS is effective in reducing problematic behavior. However, in a survey of teachers, some pointed out that many teachers questioned whether or not some SpED students with behavioral issues should even be in the general education classroom (Cassady, 2011; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Lopes et al., 2004; Schumm & 1992). In fact, in the Heflin and Bullock (1999) study, some teachers felt that a separate setting, like the resource room, would be the best fit. Cassady, like others (Heflin & Bullock 1999; LeDoux & Burt, 2012; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006) pushed for more preparation and training for general education teachers so that they may be more accepting of SpED students with behavioral issues.

Summary. Some teachers expressed strong concerns about inclusion (Forlin, 2008; Fuchs, 2010). While both general education teachers and special educators viewed inclusion positively for students with disabilities, they made exceptions for student with other disabilities, such as ASD and EBD (Avramidis et al., 2000; Khan, et.al., 2017b). Some teachers preferred mainstreaming or blending, where students are taught both in the general education classroom and in resource rooms (Heflin; Bullock, 2010; Fernandez and Hynes (2016). In one study some teachers preferred self-contained rooms for the entire day (Dawson, 2014).

In point of fact, making exceptions for some students to learn in a pullout setting does not reflect inclusion, which means that all children with disabilities should be in the regular classroom all the time (University of Texas at Permian Basin, n.d.). Making exceptions for some students describes mainstreaming or a blended model.

Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion

The previous section focused on *where* students with disabilities should be placed. This section focuses on attitudes toward inclusion. These attitudes covered a spectrum from negative

to positive (Avramidis et al., 2000; Monsen and Frederickson, 2004; Vaz et al., 2015; Warnes et al., 2021; Lindner et al., 2023). Scruggs & Mastropieri (1996) synthesized the research of 28 studies regarding teachers' feeling towards mainstreaming and inclusion. MacMillan and colleagues (1996) summarized Scruggs & Mastropieri's findings in a table. Figure 2.2 represents an adaption of a section of that table:

Table 2.1. *Adaptation and Partial Reproduction of MacMillan's et al. (1996) summary of Scruggs and Mastropieri's Findings.*

Survey Item	Studies	Teachers	Mean % of agreement
General Support For Inclusion	8	4523	68.2
Willingness to Include	8	1414	59.6
Negative Impact on classroom	4	363	30.3

While 68.2 % of the teachers indicated they have "*general* support for inclusion," [emphasis added] the percentage dropped to about 59.6% for those *willing* to do it. And nearly a third of the teachers reported a "negative impact on [the] classroom."

According to Avramidis and colleagues (2000), while in-service general education teachers viewed both students with ASD and non-disabled students positively, they viewed children with emotional behavioral disorders (EMD) negatively. In a large New Zealand study (63 teachers and 1729 students), Monsen and Frederickson (2004) examined the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion and mainstreaming. They found that teachers who were upbeat toward the integrated approach had better results: better student attitudes and positive behavior.

Seventy-four teachers in Western Australia were part a cross-sectional survey examining their attitudes towards inclusion (Vaz et al., 2015). Negative attitudes were typically held by

males and those 55 and older. Those who lacked confidence in their teaching also held negative attitudes. Teachers trained in special education had a more positive outlook.

Warnes et al. (2021) examined the attitudes of 93 UK educators consisting mostly of teachers and a few SpED teachers. Many of the participants held different views about inclusive education (IE), making it difficult to determine its effectiveness. Teachers expressed an overall concern about IE itself--about support services and logistics. The authors also noted that students with disabilities were a "a key contributor to excessive working hours and as a source of stress and anxiety" (p.40).

In a meta-analysis, Lindner et al. (2023) reviewed 36 recent (2009-2021) studies from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America to determine the attitudes of elementary teachers towards inclusion. They grouped the results into the following categories: positive, negative, neutral, and ambivalent. The following countries held mostly positive views towards inclusion: Pakistan, Germany, Turkey, Italy, and Slovenia. Negative attitudes prevailed in Kenya, Turkey, and the United States. Neutral attitudes came from Saudi Arabia, Greece, Germany Botswana, Germany, Ghana, Austria, United Kingdom, Ethiopia, Finland, and Germany. (Countries listed more than once consisted of different studies.)

Lindner and her colleagues created a final category, "ambivalent attitudes" (p.8). These countries contained attitudes at opposite extremes--positive or negative. These included Jordan, Malaysia, Barbadia, Trinidad, Ghana, Korea, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Finland, and Poland. They also identified variables that affected attitudes towards inclusion. Regarding age, results were mixed. Some studies indicated that older teachers were more positive than younger, and vice versa. Gender studies were also mixed although females tended to view inclusion more positively overall. Teachers who felt they had professional support viewed inclusion more

positively than those who felt otherwise. Teachers who held master's degrees viewed inclusion more positively than those who did not. Teacher experience also made a difference. Those experienced in working with SEN students had more positive attitudes than those who lacked this experience.

Summary. Teachers expressed various attitudes towards inclusion. Some favored inclusion, some did not, and others were “ambivalent” (Lindner et al., 2023, p.8). Overall, these mixed views persisted from 1996 – 2021.

Special Education Teachers' Views Toward Inclusion

While my study focused on general education teachers, I included special education teachers' views for comparative purposes, which will be discussed more in chapter 5. Special education (SpED) teachers held mixed views towards inclusion, as well. In a Michigan study (Orr, 2009), special education teachers viewed inclusion positively but felt that general education teachers did not. They implied that classroom teachers were a barrier toward inclusion. Orr noted that principals resisted inclusion, too, and concluded "how unprepared the system was to accomplish the lofty goals of inclusion" (p.237). Orr's report contradicted Lopes et al., (2004) conclusions regarding principals.

In a study that took place in a diverse southern Arizona school district, Harkins and Fletcher (2015) described the views toward students with disabilities. Participants came from different backgrounds, including teaching, special education, administration, and others. Here is what they found:

Nonetheless, special education teachers, as well general education teachers were in agreement that students with mild disabilities (e.g., speech/language impairments, specific learning disability) should be educated within the general education classroom

setting. However, both groups of teachers indicated that students who exhibit more severe difficulties (e.g., autism, emotional disturbance) should be educated within the special education classroom setting. (p.80)

Consistent with other studies, general education (gen-ed) teachers and the SpED teachers supported inclusion for students with mild disabilities but not for those with severe ones. In other words, they supported mainstreaming or a blended approach.

Recommendations remained consistent among these groups: more money, more training, and more collaboration to ensure the best results in the inclusive classrooms. Some of the specific recommendations included “training which focused on individual disabilities and effective differentiation of instruction.... [and] smaller class sizes,” (p.78). Incidentally, Chung et al. (2015) found that teachers who were certified in special education (SpED) held more positive views toward children with ASD than the general education teachers who were not certified in SpED

Ballard and Dymond (2017) conducted a literature review about views of educational staff towards the general educational curriculum and students with severe disabilities. Participants included special and general education teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents for a total of 406 respondents. SpED teachers outnumbered the rest, followed by general education teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, and administrators. Across the studies, special education teachers valued social benefits over valued academic benefits. SpED educators (and general education teachers) believed that the academic content was too difficult and needed to be “simplified” (Ballard and Dymond, 2017, p.162).

Summary. Special educators held mixed views towards inclusive education. Some supported it (Orr, 2009); others *usually* did not (Harkins and Fletcher, 2015). Others valued the

social benefits provided for students with severe disabilities in the general education classroom (Ballard and Dymond, 2017).

Administration, University Professors and Parental Views Toward Inclusion

Again, while I focused on general education teachers, I included this section for comparative purposes as well, discussed more in chapter 5. In a U.S. study, Wang (1988) indicated that some parents appreciated SpED programs (like pullout rooms) while others did not. Most administrators viewed inclusive education (IE) positively (most SpED teachers did not). Baker and Zigmond (1995) found that “teachers, parents, and administrators... [acknowledged] that some students with learning disabilities (LD) needed more than the in-class coteaching being provided .” (p.174). This was true in all five states of the study. In another study, Lopes and colleagues (2004) stated that “attitudes toward inclusion tend to be more positive the further removed from the classroom a person becomes” (p.411). They admitted that no formal research supports this statement, but newspapers and other media suggested it. Harkins and Fletcher (2015) reported that 73% of site administrators believed that inclusion provided academic benefits to students with disabilities. (However, 57% of special educators did not.)

In sum, parents held mixed views towards inclusion (Wang, 1988) as did some teachers and administrators (Baker and Zigmond (1995). Lopes et al., (2004) and Harkins and Fletcher (2015) reported that administrators and university professors tended to view inclusion positively.

General Education Teachers’ Desire for Support

General education teachers said they coveted more administrative support (Heflin & Bullock 1999; Fuchs, 2010; LeDoux & Burt, 2012; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006). These same studies indicated that gen-ed teachers expressed a strong desire for more training for students with disabilities. This would include either preservice or in-service training. Teachers felt

handicapped in the classroom by the lack of training. Forlin et al. (2008), Fletcher (2015), Malki & Einat (2018) shared similar findings.

Further, Barton (2016) expressed a strong desire for smaller classes. Because of the exceptional academic and other needs of SpED students, there was not enough time to address the needs of other students in the class, in agreement with my findings. Fletcher (2015) and Warnes et al. (2022) found similar needs regarding time constraints in working with special educational needs students. Heflin & Bullock (1999) also indicated that teachers wanted more instructional support in the classroom.

In the UK, Warnes and colleagues stressed the importance of an overall reduced workload. General education teachers lamented the extra work outside of class required for these special needs students. Evidently, a reduced workload becomes more essential if general education and SpED teachers are to collaborate in meaningful ways. Interestingly, these same challenges face schools in Turkey (KoziKoğlu & Albayrak, 2021b).

Overall, general education preferred several types of support. This involved administrative support, more training for SEN students, smaller classes, and a lighter workload.

Achievement: Inclusive, Pullout, and Separate School Settings

Affleck et al. (1988) conducted a three-year study of elementary students in grades 2-5 in the state of Washington. It compared the achievement of students with learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom with those in a resource room. Standardized tests measured pre-and post-tests in reading, language, and math. In reading and language, “no significant differences” (p.339) were made between the two groups for all three years. Although students in the inclusive setting outperformed those in the resource room in math the first year, the results remained the same for years two and three.

Regarding achievement of students with severe developmental disabilities, Cole and Meyer (1991) saw no gains in “developmental skills” (p.340). However, social skills improved in the inclusive classroom, “whereas segregated children regressed” (p. 340). Baker et al. (1994/1995) summarized the results of several studies comparing inclusive settings to segregated settings for students with disabilities. Academic and social benefits favored the inclusive rooms, although the differences were minimal.

MacMillan et al. (1996) summarized the findings of several journal articles. He cited several studies that showed negative social effects of inclusion, especially for students with significant emotional or behavioral disorders: “...children are much more likely to be rejected by their nondisabled peers” (p.149). They also cited studies showing unimpressive academic achievement and three studies indicating that students with learning disabilities did not make academic gains in the regular classroom, that the results were "neither desired nor acceptable" (Zigmond et al., 1995, as cited in MacMillan, p.152). MacMillan and his colleagues asserted that students with severe intellectual disabilities would not benefit from instruction in the regular classroom.

Klingner et al. (1998) led a study in a US southeastern elementary school consisting of grades 3-6. They found that many students with reading disabilities did well in inclusive settings, but some did not. The poorest readers did not benefit at all from inclusion, but positive gains in math were made.

Parmenter et al.(1998) compared the behavior of 406 students with intellectual disabilities (ID) in segregated schools with those in integrated schools. The study took place in New South Wales, Australia and consisted of children and adolescents with an average age of 12.2. Behavior was worse for those children in segregated schools. In the segregated schools,

only students with ID attended; in the integrated schools, these children participated in the regular classroom or in "special classes" (p. 72). While the students in the segregated school displayed more behavioral problems than those in the integrated schools, those in the regular classroom still had behavioral problems.

McDonnell et al. (2003) studied several hundred Utah students in two settings. One included a regular classroom made up of students with developmental disabilities alongside with their non-disabled peers. The other setting consisted of a regular classroom without any students with disabilities. The researchers concluded that the students with developmental disabilities did not affect the achievement of their peers without disabilities, the main focus of their study. However, the students with developmental disabilities improved their social skills, showing mixed results when compared to other studies (for instance, see MacMillan et al., 1996, recently mentioned.)

Rafferty et al. (2003) studied 96 children in a New York preschool. They analyzed inclusive settings and the segregated settings in three areas: language (both receptive and expressive), social skills, and behavior. Each setting consisted of students with different levels of disabilities, including severe disabilities. Regarding those with less severe disabilities, little differences existed in language and social outcomes. The children with severe disabilities, however, achieved higher outcomes in the inclusive setting, but behavior was worse in the integrated setting. The researchers noted significant limitations to their study: the small sample size and the predominantly white population.

Cole et al. (2004) investigated the academic performance of 429 elementary students from grades 2-5 in six Indiana school districts. They compared achievement scores of students with disabilities in the inclusive class with those in a pullout setting. The number of these

students in each setting was about 50%. Cole and her colleagues specifically looked at learning disabilities and mild mental disabilities. There were “... no significant differences between the students educated in inclusive settings and those educated in traditional settings regardless of disability” (p.140). Later they stated that her studies “makes it clear that for students with mild disabilities, the inclusive school programs in the six participating districts provided an instructional experience that was at least as good, and in many cases better, than the education these students would receive in a traditional resource/pull-out setting” (p.142).

What did “better” mean? Students *without* disabilities in the inclusive classrooms scored a mean of only 1.47 points higher than students without disabilities in *traditional* classrooms with *pullout* services. In math, students with disabilities in the traditional classroom (with the pullout services) outscored those in the inclusive classroom, although by a mean of only .24 points on the post-test. In reading, students with learning disabilities in the inclusive classroom outscored those in the pullout setting only by a .04-difference. Those with a mild “mental handicap” (Cole et al. 2004, p.141) outscored the same population in the traditional pullout classroom by only .65 points in reading.

The authors suggested that since the differences was minimal between students with disabilities in the pullout setting compared to students with disabilities in the inclusive classrooms, students with disabilities should be taught in the inclusive classroom. She and her colleagues studied students with mild mental handicaps, not severe “mental handicaps.” Students in these schools were typically middle class (at least), with only about 24% of students on a free and reduced lunch program in both the inclusive and traditional settings. Children from wealthy do better than those from poorer families. (Battle & Lewis, 2002; Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016; Dahl & Lochner, 2012; Reardon 2013, Sparks, 2025).

Incidentally, Fore et al.(2008) studied academic achievement of high school students with specific learning disabilities, covering grades 9-12 in the content areas. Essentially, inclusive placement made no difference in achievement in math and reading, suggesting a lack of effectiveness of inclusive education at any level.

Dessementet et al. (2012) looked into academic and adaptive behaviors of Swiss students with intellectual disabilities (ID). They compared those in in the regular classroom with those in a segregated school. They found no differences in math and adaptive behavior. Students in the regular classroom made a "significant difference" (p. 584) statistically. However, the effect size was minimal, making the difference trivial, or as the researchers put it, they made "slightly more progress" (p. 584).

Tremblay (2013) explored the progress of first and second-grade students with learning disabilities in Belgium. He compared the students in a co-taught inclusive setting with those in a SpED room, which had one teacher. In the inclusive classroom, the progress of first graders in reading and writing was "statistically significant,"(p. 256), but no progress was noticed with the second graders. In math, "no significant differences" (p. 256) were noted in either groups or grade levels. Progress in the special education room decreased, but there was no mention of curriculum. (This was true for most of the articles in this literature review—researchers did not mention or describe the curriculum in the pullout or resource rooms.) Tremblay acknowledged a small sample size as a limitation.

Szumski and Karwowski, (2014) conducted a study of 859 polish students ages 9-15 with mild intellectual disabilities.⁵ They examined three different settings: 1) Special schools 2)

⁵ Mild intellectual disabilities have an approximate I.Q. range of 50-69 (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015)

Integrated schools, and 3) mainstreaming schools. The integrated school classrooms consisted of three to five special needs students, a special education (SpED) teacher, and a general education teacher. The mainstreaming schools consisted of one or two special needs students.

The researchers stated, “Pupils from integrative and mainstream schools achieved significantly higher scores in the school achievement test than pupils from special schools, whereas students from special schools were significantly better integrated emotionally and socially than integrative and mainstream school students” (p.99), inconsistent with Parmenter et al. (1998). Social skills were reported *higher* in the integrative classrooms than in the mainstreamed classrooms. Between the integrated and mainstreamed classrooms, the effect size for achievement was small, however. The authors stated that while differences were "statistically significant... [they] did not necessarily have practical importance" (p.102).

Oh-Young and Filler (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of studies from 1980-2013. The students with disabilities did better in the inclusive settings. The results revealed a “significant” p-value of <0.0001 for both academic and social outcomes. However, the effect size for academic achievement was 0.31 for both Cohen’s *d* and Hedges *g* measurements, and the effect size for social outcomes was 0.26 and 0.25, respectively. While a p-value measures statistical significance, effect size measures *practical* significance. The following values explain effect size (Bhandari, 2023):

- **0.2** = Small effect size
- **0.5** = Medium effect size
- **0.8** = Large Effect size

The effect sizes for both academic and social outcomes were generally small; therefore, while the meta-analysis revealed the “statistical significance” ($p < 0.0001$), the outcomes had little *practical* significance.

In her doctoral dissertation, Taylor (2015) conducted a study in an inner-city Tennessee school. It consisted of 450 K-4 students with learning disabilities. Taylor used a mixed-method approach to compare achievement of students in the inclusive classroom with those in a pullout room. She concluded that students did not make "adequate academic gains in an inclusive setting or pullout setting" (p.54.) Both qualitative and quantitative methods supported her conclusion.

Ware (2016) and McLeskey and Waldron (2011) both found that inclusive classrooms did not meet the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN). Ware examined elementary students with reading disabilities in the Tennessee public schools. She compared achievement of fifth-graders in pullout rooms to their achievement in the sixth- grade general education classroom. She found no significant difference. McLeskey and Waldron (2011) focused on students with learning disabilities and concluded that achievement in both the general education classroom and pullout or resource rooms was inadequate.

Fernandez and Hynes (2016) noted that teachers perceived that students with dyslexia achieved more in the pullout settings but “minimal” to “mediocre” (p.39) benefits in reading and math for students with other disabilities. However, 25% of the teachers reported “highly beneficial” (p.39) results in the pullout room. According to some teachers, collaboration or poor instruction in the pullout rooms resulted in the minimal achievement, not the pullout setting per se. The inclusive classroom provided more social benefits.

Like Szumski and Karwoski (2014), Shaw (2017) determined that special schools better met the social emotional needs of special needs students, especially for students with profound

and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and emotional and behavioral difficulties (EBD). Special schools also offered a safer environment than mainstreaming schools. In her literature review of the British schools, Shaw reported “claims of improved educational outcomes being made by both special and mainstream schools,” leading to the same mixed results discussed throughout this literature review.

Scharenberg and colleagues (2019) oversaw a review of several countries in Europe, including one in the US. The review covered the years 2004, 2007, 2009, and 2014. The schools in Norway showed positive effects for students in the inclusive setting compared to those in *special schools*, but the other countries showed small differences. Although most of these minimal differences favored inclusion, one did not. As for social benefits, findings were typically *negative* for SEN students in the regular classrooms.

*Smogorzewska and others (2019) looked at children with mild intellectual disabilities (ID). She compared the theory of mind development of students in the inclusive classrooms to those in special education classrooms. "Theory of mind can be defined as the understanding that people possess and display different mental states, desires, beliefs, emotions and intentions..." and can help predict “behaviours and reactions” (Premack & Woodruff, 1978; Wellman, Cross, & Watson, 2001, as cited in Smogorzewska et al., 2019, p. 1242). Language skills were equivalent in both groups. Theory of mind was developed in both groups as well, but the students in the regular classroom developed more quickly.

The sample typically consisted of 7–9-year-olds, although the children in the special education rooms were “significantly older” (p.1245). Further, the children in the SpED room had “11 children older than nine” (p. 1245,) while the general education class had five students under

seven. Apparently, age had a bearing in this study. Gualtieri and Finn (2022) indicated that younger children learn better than older children.

Like Scharenberg and colleagues (2019), Dalgaard et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive review of literature before and after 2000. The results pre-2000 (1980s -1998) were mixed, but typically small, insignificant gains were made in the inclusive setting. For students who lacked social skills and for those with learning disabilities, the special classes "were superior to regular classes" (Dalgaard et al., 2021, p.3). From 2000 to 2013, results were also mixed. When they favored inclusion, they were minimal. Curriculum misalignment posed the greatest obstacle to the success in pullout settings (Meyers et al., 1990).

Dalgaard et al., (2022) conducted a follow-up study—a meta-analysis covering academic and social areas and well-being of students with various disabilities. It covered the years 1998-2012, and like the studies before 1998, they had mixed results: insignificant gains in academics or social skills. They concluded that “one size does not fit all” (p.3). Fuchs and colleagues (2022) showed that much of the research on the benefits of inclusive education was “flawed” (p.239) and that students with disabilities would be better served in a resource room or even a separate class.

Summary

In inclusive settings, student with disabilities made statistically significant gains but no *practical* gains (Oh-Young and Filler, 2015)—or no gains at all (Fuchs and colleagues (2022). However, in both public-school settings (inclusive and pullout) students made significant differences compared to those in *special schools* (Szumski and Karwowski, 2014). Social benefits were mixed, nearly evenly split between positive and negative social benefits in the inclusive vs. the noninclusive setting, with some of the positive benefits in segregated schools

(Lipsky and Gartner, 1995; MacMillan et al., 1996; Parmenter et al., 1998; Rafferty et al., 2003; Dessementet et al., 2012; Szumski and Karwowski, 2014; Oh-Young and Filler, 2015; Dalgaard et al., 2022).

Achievement: Shortcomings

The authors suggested that since the differences is minimal between students with disabilities in the pullout setting compared to students with disabilities in the inclusive classrooms, students with disabilities should be taught in the inclusive classroom. She suggested, too, that this was a social justice issue. First, she and her colleagues studied students with mild mental handicaps. They did not address those with severe “mental handicaps.” Second, students with learning disabilities typically should be in the regular classroom with accommodations. Third, their conclusions about the pullout setting came across as shortsighted; it was business as usual in the pullout settings and that has several drawbacks, pointed out earlier and which need to be addressed (see Recommendations for Future Research section). Fourth, student in these schools were typically middle class (at least), with only about 24% of students on a free and reduced lunch program in both the inclusive and traditional settings. Children from wealthy do better than those from poorer families. (Battle & Lewis, 2002; Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016; Dahl & Lochner, 2012; Reardon 2013, Sparks, 2025). Finally, I don’t see the inclusive debate as a social justice issue; it’s an educational issue.

Teachers had problems understanding and applying students’ Individual Education Programs (IEPs), which directly hindered academic progress (KoziKoğlu & Albayrak, 2021b). Strogilos & Xanthacou (2006b) suggested that a lack of multidisciplinary input on IEPs also affected student performance. Sometimes, a poor curriculum resulted in lower academic

performance (Wakelin, *supra* note 10, at 269-70, n.d., as cited in Koseke, 2017 and by implication, Bowen & Rude (2006).

Regarding research I cited earlier (Heflin & Bullock 1999; LeDoux & Burt, 2012; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Warnes et al., 2022), Chairunnisam & Rismita (2022) discussed many of the same issues facing academic needs of special needs students. They indicated that the following shortcomings resulted in academic challenges: teachers' lack of knowledge regarding special educational needs (SEN) students, the lack of SpED assistants in the inclusive classroom, and the lack of "school facilities" (p. 52). Other problems resulted from "differences in perceptions... between schools, communities and authorities" (p.49). In sum, these various shortcomings affected academic achievement of students.

Advantages & Disadvantages of Pullout Rooms

Meyers et al. (1990) cited several studies showing both advantages and disadvantages of pullout programs. Their own study produced similar results. The participants included classroom teachers, reading specialists, and special education staff. Individualized instruction was the major advantage. Pullout staff could focus on the individual needs of each student, providing better academic plans. The participants pointed out another advantage: Pullout staff specialized in teaching students with disabilities.

However, several disadvantages were noted. When students attended the pullout sessions, they missed regular classroom instruction. The researchers also mentioned scheduling problems and "poor... communication between the regular class and pullout teachers" (Meyers et al., p. 539). Further, curriculum misalignment was a problem; that is, a mismatch existed between what was taught in the regular classroom and what was covered in the resource room (Raisch & Simpson, 1996; Dawson, 2014). Raisch and Simpson conducted their research in a secondary

school; however, it resulted in the same conclusions as Dawson's study at the elementary level. McLeskey and Waldron (2011) indicated that resource rooms did not apply best practices for small-group instruction.

In summary, pullout settings had both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages included personal attention for students and specialist knowledge. Disadvantages included missed time in class, poor communication between SpED staff and teachers, and scheduling problems. Curriculum misalignment presented a major obstacle.

Teachers' Perception of Placement Decisions

Martin et al. (1995) remarked that teachers in the U.S. felt they had "little influence" in placement decisions for students with emotional or behavioral problems (p.106). Teachers felt that they had little or no influence in placement decisions. Forlin et al., for example, (2008) indicated that 63% of the Western Australian teachers surveyed "had no control over the placement decisions" for students with intellectual disabilities (ID) (p.256). Another 25% indicated they had little control in placement decisions. In both the U.S. and Australia, teachers believed they lacked influence in placement decisions.

Collaboration & Curriculum Misalignment

Several studies indicated that general education (gen ed) teachers desired additional support from special education (Barton, 2016; Ballard & Dymond, 2017; Idol, 2006; LeDoux & Burt; 2012; Warnes et al., 2022). With the exception of Warnes and colleagues, these studies specified directly that teachers desired more collaboration with special education (SpED).

Kritikos and Birnbaum (2003) interviewed 16 classroom teachers and 16 special education teachers about collaborating with each other. They believed that students benefited from collaboration and that teachers learned more ways to teach. They also had more resources

available. However, the amount of collaboration varied, and only about half believed collaboration was even necessary. Some of the drawbacks included personality conflicts and insufficient “planning time” (p. 93) —but collaboration did *not* include curriculum alignment.

Browder and his team (2006) discussed how to align curriculum to the state standards, providing a seven-step process. Since SpED educators often did not understand the language of state standards, Browder’s team emphasized the importance of teamwork between SpED and general education teachers. In their review, they cited several studies showing the benefits of collaboration, but this was not their primary focus. They provided examples of state standards and listed examples of how to align curriculum with those standards. They started with the most sophisticated example and then listed progressively simpler ones; the information was displayed in a chart.

Browder’s chart displayed examples of state standards for different subjects. The five-column chart also provided examples of how to make state standards accessible for students at different proficiency levels. The first column described standards for students performing at grade level, and each succeeding column simplified the examples more and more according to the student’s level of proficiency. The last column, for the most at-risk students, provided an example that hardly resembled the original state standard.

Tonga (2011) acknowledged the difficulty of curriculum alignment: “Aligning IEP goals for students with severe disabilities presents a significant challenge to special educators” (p.2). It was uncertain what classroom teachers were doing to provide “access to the general education curriculum” (p.2), so she wanted to find this out through her research. According to one participant, general education teachers had different “expectations for the students with disabilities.” (p.34). This resulted in curriculum misalignment, which denied special needs

students access to the regular curriculum. Incidentally, one of the participants in my pilot study conducted in 2023 reported the same problems—the different expectations between the general education and SpED teachers (Kinnas, 2023).

Similarly, SpED teachers pointed out obstacles in aligning curricula between general and special education. The needs of SpED students make alignment difficult. For instance, how can someone “reading at a first-grade level” tackle “a tenth-grade core curriculum” (Tonga, 2011, p. 38). According to some SpED teachers, general education teachers themselves were an obstacle: Some did not want students with disabilities in their class. Tonga (2011) doubted that these teachers had the ability to provide special needs students access to the general education curriculum.

Although there were some efforts towards curriculum alignment, “[s]ome participants felt that, by the time students with severe disabilities get to high school, working on the core curriculum would be useless” (p. 44). A functional curriculum (cooking, using transportation, and other daily routines) would be more suitable. In addition, special education teachers, the participants in Tonga’s study, did not have the academic background for core subjects, something they acknowledged. Student behavior posed another obstacle in aligning the curriculum.

In another study of four central and southern California school districts, special educational needs (SEN) students scored higher than the state average than students with “similar poverty levels” (Huberman et al., 2012, p. 64). Huberman and colleagues wanted to determine why. After conducting semi-structured interviews, they discovered two themes that all districts had in common: 1) “collaboration between special education and general education

teachers” (p.59 & 69) and 2) inclusion. This signified the importance of collaboration and apparently inclusion, according to their responses.

Collaboration was missing or weak and communication between general education and SpED was lacking (LeDoux & Burt, 2012). In the same year, Van Garderen et al. (2012) studied the effects of “collaboration... on academic and/or social or behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities” (p. 483). This literature review involved grades K-12, and the researchers considered various types of collaboration, such as “co-teaching, consultation, collaborative team, cooperative teaming...” (p.485). The study involved various parts of the United States (eastern, southeastern, midwestern, and California, for example). The results were mixed. Some studies supported collaboration, while others did not. Some studies had mixed results, while others were inconclusive.

Petersen (2015) interviewed SpED teachers about curriculum alignment. The study involved “students with significant cognitive disabilities” (p. 19). “[C]onfusion about curriculum access” (p.24) emerged as one theme. A teacher expressed uncertainty about what to teach—“the core, the alternate assessment, or ... the IEP” (p.24). The “logistics of curriculum access” (p.24) emerged as a second theme. Teaching multiple grade levels in a pullout room caused problems for one SpED teacher. She was unfamiliar with the curriculum for each grade level and did not know if she was supposed to teach them all. Another teacher expressed a similar concern about a sixth-grade student who could do only first-grade work. Her comment underscored the problem: “So, I want to know, am I doing sixth grade or first grade?” (p.26). The “need for collaboration and communication” (Petersen, 2015, p.24) surfaced as the third theme: The participants “overwhelmingly felt that curriculum access required collaboration among and across special

and general education teachers (p.24).” One (SpED) teacher wanted *a general education* teacher on her “team” (p. 26) to ensure alignment.

Barton (2016) pointed out general education teachers' desire for co-teaching, and others would like to see more SpED staff in the classroom (LeDoux & Buirt, 2012; Warnes et al., 2022). A Norwegian study (Nilsen, 2016) revealed a significant lack of coordination—and cooperation--between special education and general education. An obvious misalignment existed between the curricula in the two settings. Nilsen pointed out that collaboration is necessary for the students’ educational benefits. While this study took place in Norway, the pilot study I conducted in 2023 revealed the same problems. Fernandez and Hynes (2016) also noted the need for collaboration between general education and special education teachers.

Ballard and Dymond (2017) conducted a literature review about students with severe disabilities (SD) in the regular classroom. They examined whether or not the students had access to the general education curriculum. They scrutinized “peer-reviewed journals between 1997 and 2015” (p.155) and analyzed the stakeholders’ perceptions. Stake holders included “administrators, general and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, parents” (p. 56) Both general education and special education teachers questioned the suitability of the regular classroom curriculum for students with severe disabilities. All stake holders reported that it was “a barrier” (p.163). Special educators indicated that individual needs of students with SD were not being met, while general education teachers complained that the curriculum was too difficult.

Apparently, a lack of collaboration existed between the two groups, resulting in curricular misalignment. Insufficient time and “one way” (p.164) communication obstructed fruitful cooperation. For instance, special educators made decisions without consulting general

educators. And sometimes, the limited communication took place while crossing paths in the hallways.

Summary

Collaboration apparently determined the effectiveness of the curriculum. Weak collaboration efforts or poor collaboration resulted in curriculum misalignment (Ballard and Dymond, 2017; Petersen, 2015; Nilsen, 2016; Tonga, 2011). Problems included personality conflicts, a lack of time to collaborate, and different views between SpED and general education teachers. Some of the studies showed both negative and positive effects of collaboration regarding the effectiveness of curriculum alignment. Kritikos and Birnbaum, 2003, for example pointed out barriers like personality conflicts and insufficient time to collaborate. Van Garderen et al., 2012 pointed out mixed results of various types of collaboration, but concluded that “collaboration has the potential to improve outcomes for students with disabilities” (p.495). Nevertheless, the co-teaching model was not that effective, and nothing was said about the curriculum in the pullout rooms. Other studies pointed out the positive effects on curriculum alignment through effective collaboration (Browder et al., 2006; Huberman et al., 2012)

Bullying in Inclusive Classrooms

Luciano and Savage (2007) examined the effects of bullying on 27 students with learning disabilities in the inclusive classroom. They experienced significantly more bullying than the students without learning disabilities and reported “not having very many friends”(p.22). Ironically, their schools had anti-bullying measures in place.

Malian’s (2012) U.S. study examined bullying among fourth graders in three settings: the general education classroom, the resource room, and a separate special education school.

Bullying was worse in the segregated school, but Malian did not mention the incidence of bullying in the other two settings.

Zablotsky et al. (2013) studied the incidence of bullying in the general education classroom, specifically related to students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Bullying could refer to the victims or to the bullies. Zablotsky and his colleagues surveyed 1,221 parents across the US. The highest rates of bullying occurred with students who had Asperger's disorder and with those who had comorbid conditions, "more than one disease or condition at the same time" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023, first paragraph, first sentence, under the title Comorbidities). Middle school grades produced the highest rates of bullying. More significantly, the students with ASD experienced more bullying in the inclusive classroom than in a SpED setting. The more time these children were in the regular classroom, the more they were bullied.

Rose et.al. (2015) research consisted of 14, 508 elementary students, "Grades 6-12... in the Southwestern United States" (p. 428). About 8% had disabilities. These included specific learning disabilities (SLD); intellectual disabilities (ID) and emotional behavioral disorders (EBD); and autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Compared to students without disabilities, "students with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders tended to report higher rates of victimization in inclusive environments, whereas students with intellectual disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders reported higher rates of victimization in restrictive settings." (p.425).

The researchers also assessed the incidence of relational bullying. Relational bullying can include "spreading rumors" about a peer and excluding the peer from one's social group (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), p. 711). In the inclusive settings, students with SLD, ID/EBD, and ASD experienced more relational bullying than their peers in the segregated settings. Students with

learning disabilities in the segregated setting experienced less bullying and cybervictimization (bullying on social media) than their nondisabled peers.

Summary

Typically, students with disabilities experienced more bullying in the regular classroom than in a special education setting (Luciano and Savage, 2007; Zablotsky et al., 2013; Rose et.al., 2015, Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). With one exception, bullying was worse in a special education school (Malian, M.M., 2012) .

Chapter Summary

Preferences and Attitudes

Some teachers held mixed views about where students with disabilities should be placed (Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Fernandez and Hynes (2016; Dawson, 2014). Even those who promoted (full) inclusion made exceptions (Avramidis et al.,1999; Idol, 2006; Khan, et.al., 2017b; Garrad et al. 2018). As for teacher attitudes, views were mixed, ranging from positive to negative (Avramidis et al.,2000; Monsen and Frederickson, 2004; Vaz et al., 2015; Warnes et al.,2021; Lindner et al., 2023). These mixed views persisted from 1996 – 2021. Special education teachers held mixed views towards inclusion as well, while some supported it and others did not (Orr, 2009; Harkins and Fletcher; 2015; Ballard and Dymond, 2017). Parental views towards inclusion were mixed (Wang,1988), while administrators and university professors typically viewed inclusion positively (Harkins and Fletcher (2015; Lopes and colleagues, 2004).

Academic and Social Achievement

Regarding academic gain, the regular classroom often did better than the pullout or resource rooms; however, while the gains were statistically significant in the general education classroom, the practical gains revealed a small effect size, indicating little if any practical gains.

Social benefits were mixed but seemed to favor the inclusive classroom (Lipsky and Gartner, 1995; MacMillan et al., 1996; Parmenter et al., 1998; Rafferty et al., 2003; Dessementet et al., 2012; Szumski and Karwowski, 2014; Oh-Young and Filler, 2015; Dalgaard et al., 2022). Fuchs and colleagues (2022) noted that much of the research on the benefits of inclusive education was erroneous. (None of the articles he cited appeared in my literature review.)

Pullout rooms showed some advantages, such as individualized instruction and specialized assistance (Meyers et al., 1990), but mostly several drawbacks were noted. These included time missed in class, poor collaboration between SpED and general education, (the most significant) and curriculum misalignment (Meyers et al., 1990; Raisch & Simpson, 1996; McLeskey and Waldron, 2011). Dawson (2014) noted that best practices were not applied in the pullout rooms.

Teachers' Perception of Placement Decisions

Teachers typically felt they had little influence in placement decisions for students with disabilities (Forlin et al., 2008; Martin et al., 1995)

Collaboration & Curriculum Misalignment

Poor collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers proved to be the culprit behind curriculum misalignment (Ballard and Dymond, 2017; Petersen, 2015; Nilsen, 2016; Tonga, 2011). Among other things, a lack of time to collaborate and conflicting philosophies between general education and SpED teachers hindered progress, while the opposite was true when mutual and respectful collaboration occurred (Kritikos and Birnbaum, 2003; Van Garderen et al., 2012). Two studies confirmed student benefits when effective collaboration prevailed (Browder et al. 2006; Huberman et al., 2012).

Bullying in Inclusive Classrooms

The verdict on bullying was fairly clear. As stated previously, students with disabilities usually experienced more bullying in the regular classroom than in a special education setting (Luciano and Savage, 2007; Zablotzky et al., 2013) Rose et.al., 2015, Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). However, one study pointed out that bullying was worse in a special education *school* (Malian, M.M., 2012) .

Contribution to Knowledge

The Literature on IEP's contributes to the knowledge base in several ways. Some literature may discuss specific disabilities (learning disabilities or intellectual disabilities, for example), along with their academic or behavioral performance, and sometimes it may mention specific examples of teachers' stress working with these students. However, an apparent lack of literature exists specifically on IEP students with significant academic difficulties in general and on how these issues intersect with teacher experiences. Therefore, an important contribution was on stressing the lived experiences of classroom teachers working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties—and giving them voice. Other contributions are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

I surveyed 18 teachers in grades 1-5 in an urban southwestern school district, consisting of 10 public elementary schools. The survey was published on September 12, 2025 and submitted to teachers on October 3, 2025, through the Human Resource director. It was closed on November 15, 2025. Along with that, I conducted six semi-structured interviews to explore in-depth (Bloomberg, 2023a; Creswell, 2012) the experiences of teachers working with students on IEPs who have significant academic difficulties

The overarching research question reflects the purpose of the survey and interviews: What are the lived experiences of general education teachers working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties? To further explore this, I used the following research questions:

1. What challenges do special education (SpED) students with significant academic difficulties pose for teachers in the general education classroom?
2. What resources are available to gen ed teachers when working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

Subsidiary Question A: What kind of support would gen ed teachers desire from SpED teachers?

Subsidiary Question B: What other kinds of support would gen ed teachers desire in working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

3. What are gen ed teachers' perceptions of the placement process for students with IEPs?

Subsidiary Question A: Who participates in the placement of students with IEPs?

Subsidiary Question B: According to gen ed teachers, who has the most influence in placement of students with IEPs?

Subsidiary Question C: What settings do general education teachers feel will better serve special educational needs students with significant academic difficulties?

Subsidiary Question D: Once these students are in the gen ed classroom, how much influence do gen ed teachers feel they have in a change of placement?

4. What influence does experience, level of education, and classroom size have on gen ed teacher's perceptions of IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

Justification for Research Questions

In this southwestern urban school district I studied, *all* students receive 90 minutes of core instruction in language arts and 60 minutes of math. This means students with IEPs are educated with their non-disabled or non-SpED peers during core instruction, in addition to any pullout instructional time they may have such as intervention or other support like speech-language pathology. I was particularly interested in knowing general education teachers' lived experiences at this particular location, reflected in the first research question. The other research questions reflect specific areas of their lived experiences. Given the mandatory inclusive education (IE) during core classes, I wanted to know how they would respond to this framework—having students with IEPs in the class the entire time during core instruction. In other words, I wanted to investigate “their perspectives, experiences, and meaning-making...[their] values and beliefs” (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009, p.689). The research questions also reflect my theoretical perspective, based on the Berean Principle: to “inquire into, investigate, question” (Bible Hub, n.d.), as well as the constructivist view described by Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009).

Research Design

I selected a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative information. A mixed-methods approach can give a “better understanding of the research problem and question” (Cresswell, 2012) and enhance triangulation and validity (Doe, 2025). I blended both the explanatory sequential mixed methods design and the exploratory sequential mixed methods design. With this explanatory design, the qualitative questions and interviews are meant to support and further explain the quantitative questions, not the other way around, which is designated as the *exploratory* sequential design (Creswell, 2012). In *general*, the design followed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design insofar as the overall research question is qualitative. However, for each research question, I presented the quantitative data first, followed by the qualitative data, which in a sense gives life behind the numbers. Even so, I do not see one design dominating the other, but rather complementing each other in a sort of symbiotic relationship. Both quantitative and qualitative data are important, and the mixed-methods approach I used best fits my purpose.

Specifically, this mixed-method research consisted of a cross-sectional survey with 17-18 close-ended questions and two open-ended questions, along with five, brief demographic questions. The quantitative portion consisted of descriptive statistics, such as means, medians, and percentages, often displayed in cross-tabulation charts generated by the XM Qualtrics survey instrument that I used. In addition to the survey, I conducted six semi-structured interviews. Open-ended qualitative questions and semi-structured interviews made up the qualitative portion of the research.

I targeted the entire population of teachers grades 1-5 in relatively small southwestern urban school district with 10 elementary schools. Eighteen teachers responded to the survey and

six volunteered for interviews, reflecting convenience sampling; that is, they were “willing and available,” (Creswell, 2012, p.145), and the human resource director granted permission to conduct the interviews (Creswell, 2012).

Teacher responses in the survey were anonymous, unless they indicated they were willing to participate in an interview. Pseudonyms were used for the interview participants. I employed the standard Kansas State University (K-State) IRB protocol in designing the research, which was approved by K-State.

Procedures

General Procedures

For the purposes of this survey, inclusion means that *all* students with disabilities are *always* taught in the general education classroom (UNESCO 2023; University of Texas Permian Basin, n.d.; Harkins and Fletcher 2015; MacMillan et al.,1996). Mainstreaming means that some, most, or all students with disabilities are taught in the general education classroom some of the time and in pullout settings at other times.

As mentioned earlier, survey responses were anonymous, except for one participant who volunteered for an interview. I sought out other interview participants through emails to the principals and distributing flyers at all the elementary schools. Those interested contacted me through emails, and I assigned pseudonyms. No identifying information was disclosed, except grade level and other demographics such as degree earned and years teaching (experience).

To further enhance triangulation, I interviewed six elementary teachers representing grades 1-5 and at least three different elementary schools (Two teachers taught at the same school, and one did not indicate where she taught). Andrea (pseudonym) teaches 4th grade and has taught for seven years. Illiana (pseudonym) teaches 2nd grade and has taught for 12 years.

Danica (pseudonym) teaches 1st grade and has taught for 14 years. Elise (pseudonym) teaches 5th grade and has taught for 20 years in various stated and settings. Reese (pseudonym) teaches 1st grade and has taught for 23 years. Julia (pseudonym) teaches 4th grade but has previously taught 3rd grade for 17 years. She holds a master’s degree and is also nationally board certified. Experience ranged from 7 to 32 years, with and a mean of 18 years and a median of 17).

Table 3.1 depicts the elementary schools represented by these teachers. Julia did not indicate where she taught, and two teachers taught at the same school. To protected the teachers’ identity, I did not indicate where each teacher taught.

Table 3.1. *Elementary Schools represented*

	Enrollment	Free & Reduced Lunch	
		Free %	Reduced %
Elementary School A	532	31.38%	18.83%
Elementary School B	503	57.82%	34.69%
Elementary School C	362	64.25%	35.75%
Elementary School D	362	64.25%	35.75%
Elementary School E	375	65.87%	34.13%
Elementary School F	?	?	?

The mean enrollment of all schools is 426.8 with a median of 375. The mean for students on a free lunch is 56.71 with a median of 64.25, and the mean and median for students on a reduced lunch are 31.83 and 34.69, respectively. The median score accounts for the one outlier, Elementary School A, reflecting a more realistic picture.

In sum, I used semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data and to understand their thoughts and feelings in depth (the lived experience). Therefore, methodological

triangulation consisted of both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews) data (Bloomberg, 2023a).

Sequential Procedures

With some modifications, I followed procedures according to Thomas, (2023):

1. Define the population: public-school teachers grades 1-5 in a small southwestern urban school district.
2. Submit survey: I submitted the survey to the principals of all the elementary schools in the district, who distributed it to their teachers in grades 1-5, in other words, the entire population of public-school elementary teachers in this school district.
3. Contact Participants: I first sought permission to conduct the study. In a Zoom conference, I shared the topic of my research with the district curriculum and instruction director, and she expressed an interest and eagerness to see the results. To initiate the research, she referred me to the Executive Director of Human Resources and Support Services.

I spoke with the executive director over the phone. He stated the school district is supportive of research, so I sent him a follow-up email that included the purpose of my survey, the procedures to protect the participants, and my research questions. I also attached IRB approval from Kansas State University (Appendix C) and the letter for the principals to send to the survey participants (Appendix E). The executive director approved the study and then emailed the principals a Letter of Cooperation (Appendix D). The Letter of Cooperation summarized the purpose of my research and included the link to the survey. Shortly after, I received 4 survey responses and then sent a follow-up email to the principals of the 10 elementary schools. More survey responses trickled in.

The survey indicated a space to indicate if the respondent would volunteer for an interview. I received one response. Consequently, I delivered the flyers to each school with a \$40.00 gift card incentive (Appendix F). Eventually, I received more teachers willing to participate and interviewed six, representing grades 1-5.

Consent Forms

An informed consent statement is located in the preface to the survey (Appendix A); the first sentence reads, “Filling out this questionnaire serves as your consent to take the survey.” For the interviews, consent forms were sent out to each participant, with the option to proceed with the interview as described or with modifications or exceptions indicated by the participant (Appendix G). All participants consented without any modifications or exceptions.

As noted under the General Procedures subheading above, the participants consisted of elementary public-school teachers in grades 1-5 in a southwestern urban school district. They were categorized according to various characteristics, such as grade taught, highest level of education, and years of experience. (See the demographic questions in Appendix A.) Crosstabulation tables generated by XM Qualtrics provided data analysis, based on experience and education level.

Data Collection

As stated earlier, for the survey I used the XM Qualtrics. I conducted and recorded six semi-structured interviews through Zoom, a video-conferencing platform. I transcribed the interviews using Cockatoo transcription services (www.cockatoo.com).

4. Analyze the Data (See **Data Analysis** below.)

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

Descriptive statistics were used to report the mean (average), median, percentages, and standard deviations when necessary. The median described a more realistic statistic when outliers are present (Rumsey, 2011). The standard deviation determined how much variability exists among quantitative and categorical variables.

I sought to sample at least 30 teachers to produce or approximate a normal distribution (Rumsey, 2011; Turney, 2023). Of the 162 teachers, only 18 responded, which represented a 11.1% return rate. Because the return rate was small, I did not perform correlation analysis and therefore any inferential statistics, such as ANOVA. This also precluded other statistical procedures, except for descriptive statistics mentioned above.

To determine the social economic status (SES) of the participants' schools, I went to each school's website, which indicated the percent of students on a free or reduced lunch plan. If more than 40%, I considered that a low-income school (Yell, 2018). Again, since the response rate was small, I could not determine any correlation between teacher responses and student/ family income level.

Survey Analysis. I created 17 tables representing the questions from the survey. I filled in the tables from data gathered by the XM Qualtrics survey instrument which provided the descriptive statistics. Most of these descriptive statistics indicated the frequency and percentage of results.

Afterwards, I proofread my data entry for all 17 tables I had created. I pulled up the Qualtrics survey instrument and compared its computer-generated statistics with what I had entered. Most of the data in my tables were accurate, and I corrected any errors.

Qualitative Data

Open-ended questions on the survey provided qualitative data. Participants expressed their concerns, frustrations, or satisfaction with these special needs students in their classroom. Qualitative measures give life behind the quantitative numbers, to capture the “lived experience” of the participants (the teachers, in this case). Lived experience, essentially first-hand experience, describes what it is like to experience certain things (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). In addition, I conducted six semi-structured interviews to further explore the lived experiences of teachers. (Note that minor transcript editing was applied for readability.) I coded the text and elicited essential themes, according to Saldaña’s (2021) guidelines. The qualitative portion provided a second measure of triangulation: methodological triangulation (Bhandari, P., 2022).

Qualitative Protocol

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness entails four general concepts: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Bloomberg, 2023a; Bloomberg, 2023b⁶; Taylor, n.d.). These concepts overlap so that the same idea sometimes appeared in these different categories. For example, Bloomberg listed member checks under both credibility and dependability.

Credibility. I established credibility by using multiple resources (triangulation), including the surveys and audio-taped transcripts from semi-structured interviews. The survey consisted of 17-18 close-ended questions and two open-ended questions. I was not able to determine if the comments from the open-ended survey questions came from some of the interview participants; nevertheless, I suspected some were because they matched what an

⁶ Bloomberg 2023b refers to the online appendix of the same hard copy book.

interview participant had said, nearly verbatim. Rather than diminishing the evidence, this provided interview participants an opportunity to express their feelings and beliefs anonymously in the survey. I also established credibility through member checks (Bloomberg, 2023a; Creswell, 2012) by sending the interviewees the themes I had generated from the interview transcripts.

In addition, my research embodied qualities from three different resources (Creswell, 2012). Creswell described qualitative characteristics from Lincoln (1995), Creswell (2012), and Richardson (2000). Lincoln's standards involve philosophical criteria, which aligned with my research. For instance, I aimed for authenticity and honesty when I described my philosophical stance, such as the Biblically-based Berean Principle described in the Theoretical Perspective in Chapter 1. In alignment with Richardson's criteria, I stressed participant voices, assuring that they were heard, not silenced. This was one of my main objectives.

Creswell (2012) focused on procedural criteria that emphasizes inquiry—reflected in my theoretical perspective. Further, inquiry formed the basis my research questions—with mine specifically about the teachers' lived experience. What were those lived experiences, what were common frustrations, stressors, and themes? Creswell's criteria also consisted of a multi-layered analysis, marked by my mixed-methods approach that helped confirm accuracy by both quantitative and qualitative analyses typified by consistent codes and themes, enhancing the quantitative data.

Richardson's participatory and advocacy criteria stressed impact—the personal experiences that led to my research topic, that moved me intellectually and emotionally. It also “fleshed out a sense of lived experiences” (Richardson, 2000, as cited in Creswell, 2012, p.285). In fact, my research went beyond describing a “sense of lived experiences”; it explicitly brought

out the lived experiences—verified by my overarching research question: What are the lived experiences of general education teachers working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties? Incidentally, these traits for evaluating qualitative research enhanced triangulation as well.

Confirmability. Confirmability establishes “that the findings and interpretation are clearly derived from the data” (Bloomberg, 2023a, p.122). Although confirmability refers to qualitative research, in a sense, I established “confirmability” with the quantitative data—I created 17 tables representing the survey questions and the response types directly from the data the XM Qualtrics survey instrument produced. I carefully proofread my entries and had to correct only a few of the figures. Qualtrics also provided error-free crosstabulations regarding experience and education level.

Regarding the qualitative research, I used Cockatoo, an AI generated tool, to transcribe each interview. The Cockatoo dashboard has an icon for to uploading audio or video files, where I dropped my Zoom-recorded interviews. The software then transcribed the recording, producing text with the time-elapsed for each comment in the left margin. I copied the transcription for each interview participant and pasted it into the first column of a Word table I had created. I did a word search for each participant’s real name, and changed it to the assigned pseudonym whenever the real name was used. Afterwards, I highlighted key ideas for the first in vivo (verbatim) cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2021).

During the second cycle, I coded the in vivo comments into general categories and concepts and typed those into the second column. For the third cycle of coding, I generated themes from these codes. I did this for each interview participant, using a separate Word document for each teacher (See Appendix I for an example.)

Afterwards, I copied the themes from each participant and created a new table (See Appendix J for thematic coding). I categorized each participant's themes according to the research question it related to. Then I synthesized these into common themes, which I discussed in the Results and Findings section of this dissertation. (See Interview Protocol Appendix B.) In this way, my "findings and interpretations [were] ...derived from the data" (Bloomberg, 2023a, p.122).

At least two other ways can enhance confirmability. Checking for biases can contribute to confirmability according to Bloomberg (2023a). A few times I caught myself asking leading follow-up questions during an interview. When aware of this, I reworded the question to make it more objective. To further avoid bias, I had my main interview questions written out and read those verbatim to the teacher. Bloomberg also states that a clear description of triangulation procedures contributes to confirmability. I included a separate section for this later in this chapter.

Dependability. I established dependability by conducting "'member checks' with participants,'" that is, "taking ... themes...back to the data source people/participants for verification" (Taylor, n.d., p.11; Bloomberg 2023a; Creswell, 2012). Bloomberg (2023a) also stated that using logical procedures and creating a research question matrix may establish credibility. With few exceptions, I consistently used the same procedures for coding and theming. While I did not create a research question matrix, I organized both the survey and interview questions by my research questions, which often led to targeted responses. I also explained how I conducted both quantitative and qualitative procedures within this Methodology section.

Transferability. Transferability refers to how much the information or data gathered from qualitative research can apply in another situation or setting (Bloomberg, 2023a; Frey, 2018). It does not generalize to the general population as in quantitative research, and the reader, not the researcher, determines transferability (Bloomberg, 2023a; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Nevertheless, there are certain things the researcher can do to facilitate transferability (Bloomberg, 2023a; Bloomberg, 2023b).

Several teachers shared similar stories, and these lived experiences reflected those in my pilot study (Kinnas, 2023), which included participants from the Pacific Northwest. Other research, also reflected similar themes, discussed in chapters 4 and 5, and personal conversations with others also confirmed transferability.

Suggested sample sizes for qualitative research typically ranges from 9-20 (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Lal, 2025). However, Subedi (2021) suggested 1-20. Bloomberg (2023a) does not mention any specific number for a size in qualitative research. Also, one of my committee advisors stated that my six interviews were adequate (C. Shuman, personal communication, December 9, 2025).

Nonetheless, in qualitative research, saturation is the key element that determines sample size (Bloomberg, 2023a; Creswell, 2012; Lal, 2025; Saldaña, 2021; Subedi, 2021). In essence, saturation occurs when the interviews do not produce any more information (Bloomberg, 2023a; Creswell, 2012; Lal, 2025). Nearly all of the six interviews generated the same or similar themes for my first research question #1: *What challenges do special education (SpED) students with significant academic difficulties pose for teachers in the general education classroom?* For example, all interview participants expressed that the lack of time to meet the needs of students on IEPs with significant academic difficulties—and the frustration that went along with that.

The same can be said for the behavioral challenges these teachers faced. In fact, the quantitative data reflected these qualitative response. For Research Question 2 responses tended to mirror each other, as well. For example, in general teachers desired more assistance in the classroom and more time to provide one-on-one attention. As for Research Question 3, the interviewed teachers agreed that SpED staff and principals had the most influence in placement, again mirroring the quantitative results. While the interviewed participants held some differences in other areas, I felt I had obtained the information I was seeking for the purposes of this dissertation, especially with Research Question 1 involving challenges teachers faced, which also keenly reflected the overarching research question regarding the lived experiences of these teachers. Therefore, I decided not to interview any more teachers.

Further, The California Learning Resource Center team (CLRN, 2025) suggested that a sample of “varying levels of experience” (paragraph 3) can enhance transferability. My sample of six elementary from at least five different schools ranged in experience from 7-32 years.

Furthermore, to address transferability, I explained the methodology and design, data collection, and data analysis in detail, with transparency, and with sufficient information or “thick data” for appropriate determination regarding the potential transferability of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015, as cited in Bloomberg, 2023a, p.124). In this dissertation, I attempted to explain both quantitative and qualitative procedures sufficiently, acknowledging limitations and to provide “intricate, detailed,” or “rich data” (Fusch & Ness, 2015, as cited in Bloomberg, 2023a, p.124). Further, through analysis, I discovered common themes and described transferability of these themes and ideas, accounting for rich data (Ames, et al., 2024)

Triangulation. Triangulation refers to supporting evidence from various sources (Bloomberg, 2023a; Creswell, 2012). Bloomberg (2023a). My research consisted of three

different sources: The Qualtrics survey (about 18 total respondents), the six semi-structured interviews, and a pilot study I conducted (Kinnas, 2023). Consistent results overlapped all three studies (see more in Chapter 4, Results section, and Chapter 5 Discussion/Findings).

Methodological triangulation was also embedded within my research. Methodological triangulation consisted of the different methodological approaches, while data triangulation consisted of various data sources (Bloomberg, 2023a). Regarding methodological triangulation, my research included both quantitative and qualitative methods. As for data triangulation, I received 18 survey responses for key questions representing at least 70% (7/10) of the targeted elementary schools. I also interviewed six public school elementary teachers in grades 1-5 representing at least four different elementary schools and conducted a pilot study consisting of three participants from two different states, revealing similar themes to this study.

Interview Procedures

During the first two weeks of November (2025), I conducted six semi-structured video-recorded interviews on Zoom. I saved the video recordings to my MacBook Air desktop and to a password-protected Google drive, both of which I will delete after my program as K-State is completed. Using Cockatoo transcription software, I had each Zoom video transcribed one by one. Then I highlighted the text of each participant's transcript, copied it, and inserted it into a Word table. I changed the layout to landscape and grabbed the right border, lessened the width of the single row table, and added 3 columns for coding analysis, labeling each column. After that, I added another row. (See Table 3.1 below).

Table 3.2. *Four-column coding structure*

Cockatoo Transcribed Zoom video	1st cycle: <i>in vivo</i> coding	2nd cycle: often concept/category, and affective coding	3 rd cycle: thematic coding

The first column contained verbatim transcripts. The second column contained my first coding, which consisted of *in vivo* comments, and the third column contained my second coding, usually categorical analysis. The last column consisted of thematic coding. Also, I used the find-and-replace function to locate the participant's name (if used) and replaced it with her pseudonym. That was the process for the first video I transcribed.

Originally, I highlighted the text in the first, verbatim column that I wanted to use for *in vivo* coding and copied it into the second column for the first coding cycle, usually the categorical or conceptual classification. From there, I synthesized common categories and concepts into themes and typed those into the last column (thematic coding) as mentioned earlier. To save time coding the other interviews, I highlighted the text in the first (verbatim transcripts) column and used the highlighted text as my *in vivo* coding. That way I didn't need to copy the highlighted text and paste it into the second, *in vivo* column. I found that redundant, so eventually I deleted this column. See the example in Table 2 below:

Table 3.3. *Streamlined In-Vivo Coding with second and third coding*

Transcribed Text & In-Vivo Highlighted Text	Second, Categorical Coding	Third, Thematic Coding
I feel like sometimes it's hard for those students, and I think there's just a different range of abilities with special education students. It depends on what their current ability is. and also with what their education plan entails, I know that it can be difficult when, say,		

they have one -on -one assistance, and when the person isn't available for that, like a push and support, that can be challenging for them. And I feel like when it comes to having students have that consistent person helping them. And when they're not consistent, it makes it hard for the student to have to build like the rapport to work and to also develop like that relationship too.	No consistent one-on-one assistance from SpED or EAs Lack of rapport building	There is no consistent one-on-one push-in support from SpED.
--	--	--

While the highlighted text often contained several words, I chose to highlight enough text to understand the context of the participant's words, for myself and my readers. Sometimes I did second (categorical) and third (thematic) coding one after the other, but usually did second coding (conceptual, process, causation, for instance) during one sitting and afterwards coded for themes. For any confusing parts of the verbatim transcripts, I listened to the original Cockatoo audio, following along with its transcription to clarify those uncertain passages.

I completed the coding for all participants during the last week of November. Afterwards, I sent the themes I had generated from the interviews to all the participants, requesting feedback for accurate representation (member checks). I only sent the last column of the Word table (the themes); keenly respect for their time I did not want to bog down the participants with all the transcripts and categorical coding. As noted earlier, the four participants (66%) confirmed all the themes.

Summary

The overall purpose of this study was to capture teacher ideas, feelings, and preferences about students with IEP students with academic difficulties. I used 17-18 close-ended questions and two open-ended ones, based on my research questions. I limited the survey questions to 17 questions to increase response rate (Sandelin, n.d.; Sharma, 2022) and to respect teachers' time,

which is excessively demanding. Five demographic questions were also included, along with an option to participate in an interview.

Chapter 4 - Results

What are the lived experiences of general education teachers working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

The purpose of this mixed method study was to explore elementary teachers' lived experiences with IEP students who have significant academic difficulties. The overarching research question stated above reflects this purpose. I chose a mixed-methods approach, blending the explanatory sequential design and the exploratory sequential design (Creswell, 2012).

The mixed methods approach for this study becomes especially important since the return rate for the online anonymous survey was 11.1 %. Eighteen out of 162 elementary teachers grades 1-5 responded to the survey, and not all respondents replied to every question; however, all 18 survey participants responded to research question 2, which I consider the most important (see below).

This chapter will be organized according to the four research questions falling under the overarching research question. Although this sweeping research question is framed within a qualitative context, quantitative data will provide the hard numbers that the qualitative data often enhanced. Typically, I state the question and then present the descriptive (quantitative) statistics related to that question. This includes tables I created from the survey results along with XM Qualtrics-generated crosstabulations (two-way tables per Rumsey, 2022). The quantitative information will be followed by the corresponding qualitative data.

As a final thought, the forthcoming results in this chapter have satisfied my Berean query to “inquire into, investigate, and question, to “uncover truths” and my critical theory purpose to raise consciousness. In Chapter 5, I interpret this data and hope to move educators to action (praxis).

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What Challenges Do Special Education (SpED) Students with Significant Academic Difficulties Pose for Teachers in the General Education Classroom?

Research question 1 includes both academic challenges and behavioral challenges. Both quantitative and qualitative data reflect these challenges. Before getting to the data, I will qualify my use of percentages for the quantitative data. The sample size was small; there were only 18 total respondents, and not all 18 teachers responded to every survey question because the participants had the option to skip. Therefore, I typically reported frequency counts and occasionally to percentages. With frequency counts, I usually placed percentages in parenthesis and sometimes left them out.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative Results from Survey (closed-ended questions)

Survey Question 2. How Challenging is it Working with These Students on the Following Items? I summarized the results in Table 41 below:

Table 4.1. *The level of challenge of working with students on IEPs with significant academic difficulties*

Frequency: 18 Col.1	Not at all challenging Col. 2 Frequency & %	A little challenging Col. 3	Somewhat challenging Col. 4	Overall challenging Col. 5	Extremely Challenging Col. 6
The students' ability to keep up with the lessons	0 (0%)	3 (16.6%)	4 (22.2 %)	4 (22.2%)	7 (38.8%)
Finding time to meet these students' needs	1 (5.5%)	2 (11.1%)	5 (27.7%)	2 (11.11%)	8 (44.4%)
Carrying out the students' IEP requirements	2 (11.11%)	1 (5.5%)	5 (27.7%)	4 (22.2%)	6 (33.3%)
Academic Issues	0 (0%)	2 (11.1%)	2(11.1%)	5 (27.7%)	7 (38.8%)
Behavioral Issues	0 (0%)	4 (22.2%)	5 (27.7%)	3 (16.6%)	4 (22.2%)
MEAN (AVERAGE)*	3%	13%	23%	20%	36%
MEDIAN				22.2%	38.8%
Total Overall Challenging + Extremely Challenging Median:				55.5%	

The top row refers to the Likert-type scale and the far-left column lists the specific categories. All 18 respondents replied the first three issues, and 16 responded to the academic and behavioral issues. The frequency of responses listed in the five Likert columns is followed by the percentage that count represents, enclosed in parenthesis. For example, in column 3 row two, three teachers felt that the students' ability to keep up with the lessons was a little challenging, which represented 16.6% of the total respondents to that question.

That being said, 11 of the total 18 respondents (61%) indicated that the students' ability to keep up with the lessons was overall challenging or extremely challenging (22.2% + 38.5%=61%), representing 11 teachers. Ten respondents (55.5%) indicated that it was overall challenging or extremely challenging to find time to meet the needs of students on IEPs with significant academic difficulties. Ten (55.5%) of the teachers also found it overall challenging or

extremely challenging to fulfill the students' IEP requirements. Twelve teachers (61.5%) felt that academic issues were overall challenging or extremely challenging, compared to seven teachers (38.8%) indicating behavioral issues as a challenge.

Overall 50 responses (not teachers) fell into the overall or extremely challenging columns, representing a median percent of 55.5.⁷ In other words, over half of the survey respondents believed the five categories in column 1 were overall or extremely challenging—suggesting considerable difficulty in these areas.

The table 4.2 below shows the Likert-type scores on a 5-point scale. A one represents “not at all challenging,” while a five represents “extremely challenging.”

Table 4.2. *The Level of How challenge working with these students on the following item (Likert-scale responses/)*

Likert Scale (1 -5). 1= not at all challenging... 5 = extremely challenging				
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
The students' ability to keep up with the lessons Number of Respondents 18	3.83	2	5	1.12
Finding time to meet these students' needs Number of Respondents 18	3.78	1	5	1.27
Carrying out the students' IEP requirements Number of Respondents 18	3.61	1	5	1.30
Academic Issues Number of Respondents 16*	4.06	2	5	1.03
Behavioral Issues Number of Respondents 16	3.44	2	5	1.12
Mean (Average)	3.74	1.6	5	1.17
Median	3.78			

*The survey did not require a response for every question, so some participants may have skipped a question.

⁷ Too calculate the median, I added each row of columns 5 and 6 and plugged those values into an online mean and median calculator (Calculatorsoup.com), resulting in 55.5%. For example, I began with the first row (ability to keep up with lessons), adding 22.2 + 38.8 to get 61 Then I added the next row (finding time to meet...needs), 11.11 + 44.4, equaling 55.5. I continued these calculations for the rest of the rows (...IEP requirements, academic issues, and behavioral issues). Afterwards, I inserted the five figures (61, 55.5...) into the mean/median calculator to arrive at the median value of 55.5 (the shaded area in Table 4.1).

On the 5-point scale, the median Likert-type scale score is 3.78 with a minimum of 1 (not at all challenging) and a maximum of 5 (extremely challenging). The 3.78 exceeds the midway point of 2.5 on the 5-point scale by 1.28 points, denoting significant challenge in these areas.

Table 4.3 below displays the descriptive statistics for the overall challenge, which includes all items in Figure 4.1:

Figure 4.1. *Descriptive statistics challenge level*

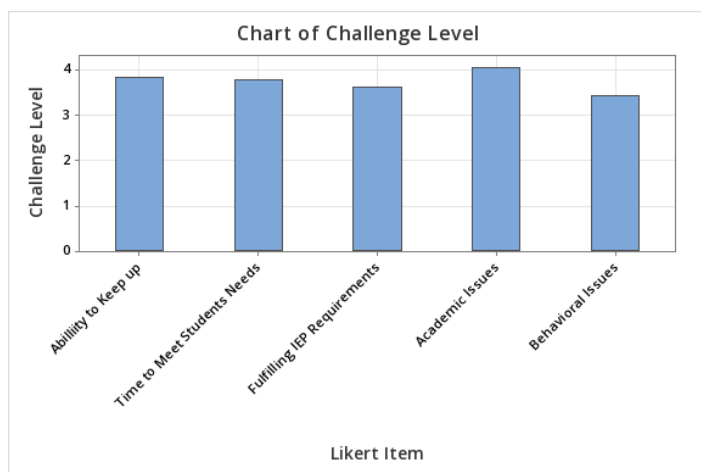
Descriptive Statistics: Challenge Level

Statistics					
Variable	Mean	StDev	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Challenge Level	3.744	0.233944	3.44	3.78	4.06

Overall, the mean Likert-type score was 3.74 with a median score of 3.78, which accounts for outliers, well above the 2.50 midway point.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the mean Likert-type scores:

Figure 4.2. *Challenges Special Education Students with Significant Academic Difficulties Pose for Teachers in the General Education Classroom*



All the scores are well above 3, the “somewhat challenging” category, again suggesting difficulty for teachers. Next, I describe the qualitative data from the two open-ended survey questions and from the interviews, which highlight the intensity of these challenges.

Qualitative Data

Before I begin discussing behavioral challenges from the qualitative responses, I need to qualify the words “behavior challenges.” The words “behavioral problems” come across as negative and judgmental. That is why I use the words “behavioral challenges.” I don’t see these as character flaws, but as something more complex behind some of the “undesirable” behaviors. For instance, if a child is experiencing abuse at home and consequently “acting out” at school, learning takes a back seat for that child, and that is not the child’s fault. Similarly, term “off-task” also emits negative connotations. However, I may use that term as matter of convenience for the audience outside my dissertation. Principals, counselors, and teachers use this term, and all tend to know what it refers to. Writers “need to be aware of the audience for whom you’re writing” (Thurman, 2003, p. 141). Nevertheless, I do not mean to denote—or connote—any judgmental attitude when using this word.

Interview Question 1B1. What Are the [academic] Challenges in Meeting the Needs of IEP Students with Significant Academic Difficulties? A recurring theme indicated that these teachers did not have the time to meet the academic needs of these special needs. All participants mentioned the time issue, reflecting the data from the quantitative survey question 2 listed in table 4.1: Out of the 18 responses, ten (55.5%) found this to be overall challenging or extremely challenging.

The comments from the interviewed teachers give meaning or “life” behind these numbers:

- From Andrea: Quite honestly, we just don't have the time to give that student what it is we know they need and it is so frustrating....Those students that you're specifically talking about need very one -on -one time.”
- From Danica: ...”also providing enough time to provide to give them any extra that one -on -one services. I think that that's hard”
- From Elise: “Their writing needs takes up so much time and rewriting....[I]f they’re meeting their goals or not, because obviously they're not meeting grade level goals....obviously, they're just never going to be quite up there....[T]hey're so far below the mainstream.”
- From Illiana: “The difficult part is how to manage that time and that aspect of energy and stuff....
- From Julia: “Many of the students who have IEPs come in with a much lower level of just the foundational skills....[T]he students are coming in still learning how to read so they are not capable of the decoding parts.”
- From Reese:

And he had about a minute and 33 second attention span....So some of them, I feel... they need... one -on -one ... so that we can focus on them and work with them

I'm a first-grade teacher and I'm by myself.... I have a low group, but there was the year I had that particular student, I had 23 students and ... it was very hard for to give him my 100%.

The following theme emerged from these highlighted codes: There is not enough time in the general education classroom to address the needs of students with significant academic difficulties.

Interview participants clearly expressed concerns about academic issues, along with accompanying sense of frustration. This qualitative data mirrors the quantitative data from the survey respondents shown in Table 4.1—12 teachers (66.5%) indicated academic issues posed a major challenge. The nature of the academic challenges helps explain the reasons for the time constraints and frustration, illustrated in the following comments from those interviewed:

- From Andrea: “...he seriously does need the one-on-one time only because he’s so far behind.”
- From Danica: “...for example, writing... it can be overwhelming to see that we're going to write a whole paragraph.”
- From Elise:

I've had life skill kids where, you know, obviously they're not going to be there... because obviously they're not meeting grade level goals....[Y]ou still have those special ed kids ...they're so far below the mainstream. When you're doing fifth grade math, and they are still struggling with subtraction... zero minus six equals six....
- From Illiana: “I had a student who was just learning her alphabet. She didn’t even know her alphabet 100%. Could not write her whole first name...At that time, it was third grade.”
- From Julia:

Many of the students who have IEPs come in with a much lower level of just the foundational skills... but the students are coming in still learning how to read so they are not capable of the decoding parts.... give these students three problems compared to the others, give them nine or whatever....I'm held to the fourth-grade standards...

this is what I'm supposed to be teaching, even though they're working... way down here... felt bad for her because everything was like... she was learning nothing at all.

- From Reese: “Some of them need one -on -one ... so that we can focus on them and work with them one -on -one.”

These comments—along with their highlighted codes—define the population of this study:

Students on IEPs with significant academic difficulties. From these codes, the following theme emerged: Students with significant academic difficulties are “so far below the mainstream,” that it is a serious challenge for elementary teachers. This theme leads into the following interview question:

Interview Question 1B2. What Are the [Behavioral] Challenges in Meeting the Needs of IEP Students with Significant Academic Difficulties? (The actual question was labeled differently in the interview protocol.) The following comments from an open-ended survey questions illustrate this challenge:

- “Some students will interrupt the learning of others with nonstop negative behavior....”
- “crying and taking away for everyone's learning time”

This theme was illustrated by one teacher’s comment: “...it is frustrating because they often become a distraction to myself and others.” (See Forlin et al.,2008.) In other words, *everyone* in the classroom environment is affected, including the teacher.

As noted earlier, more surveyed teachers (66.5%) marked academic issues as a major challenge than they did behavioral issue (38.8%. However, the teachers I interviewed reflected some of the most intense responses:

- From Andrea:

They will take a toy out or put their head down or my alphabet kid yesterday.... So when we were doing the lesson, like he was sitting there, blah, blah, blah...just making noises...play with something, snap a ruler... one of the noisiest classrooms I've ever had.

- From Danica: “....when it becomes ..like a power struggle and I think that that could be a challenge and that is a challenge for me.... The student ends up like becoming reluctant to even try or becomes like refusing to do work.]
- From Elise: “But his energy just kind of mischievous...whatever. He kind of took my other fun-loving kids and switched their behavior. I felt like he was pulling the other kids to the dark side, where they cross that line.”
- From Illiana:

I just got a new transfer in last week who has a lot of social emotional challenges.... So right now... my autistic student, who's also diagnosed ADHD, has tons of outbursts....So he's having a lot of tantrums. He's throwing himself down on the floor. It's really hard....And when you have a student like I have right now, who's having outbursts and crying and who's circling around the room, it takes just a couple seconds for another student to get distracted by that, to follow them as they're circling around the room, to not engage and listen to what the teacher is trying to instruct when all that noise is happening.... And he's huge on profanity... So I was keeping track of a lot of that at the beginning of the year. And by the end of quarter one, which was almost at the end of October, middle October, there was enough evidence that stated, I felt for everyone and me in particular also, that... maybe these are the

times he should get pulled out. And so that actually was the change of when he got pulled out for CORE. We made that decision, and that's been working great.

- From Julia:

So, I had a student who was very low performing academically and had some speech issues as well. I always felt like the other...22 aren't getting anything because I'm spending ... 80 percent of my day to refocus or to take something away or to think, how can I arrange my room so that he has the least opportunity to get in trouble with something, to get to grab something, to bother somebody or whatever.

- From Reese:

He didn't like to do anything, no writing, no reading, nothing. He didn't want you to be in his space. He would get angry. And he had about a minute and 33 second attention span....most of the ones that come to my room have to sit by themselves or sit next to me because if they sit at a table, they will do absolutely nothing.... Because they get so distracted... like this year, I have one that spins around on his chair, throws his pencil up in the air, and they know that he's not doing what he should be doing and just ignore him. And the redirection, when I have to constantly say, you need to pick up your pencil and write, please." [Regarding another student]: "He would zip up his jacket and talk like a demon. And he told me he was a demon and that he hated everybody. He never smiled. I couldn't get him to do hardly any work. He was what we call, and I hate to say it like this, but he was a code red kid.... Code red is a student who is in danger to himself or others. I was always calling code red because it would escalate.... He actually got kicked out of the school...[after]...156 days....[T]here's one child in our building that he just starts hollering... at the top of

his lungs, you know, right? [Regarding a severely autistic child] ...for example, 'I see a red dog.' It took her 45 minutes to write two words, like her attention span."

Ironically, a gifted autistic boy in Reese's class presented similar behavioral challenges: "He didn't like to do anything, no writing, no reading, nothing. He didn't want you to be in his space. He would get angry. And he had about a minute and 33 second attention span...."But it was hard because nobody in the classroom was at his level and so it was frustrating for him and frustrating for me and frustrating for the other kids."

An evident theme emerged: The behaviors of students with significant academic difficulties interfere not only with their own learning but also with that of the other students, again aligning with Westling's research (2009). Clearly, when students have "their head down" or the teacher spends "80% of ...[her] day to refocus" a child, these special needs students cannot learn during these times. Further, when a child is snapping a ruler, "having a lot of tantrums....throwing himself down on the floor," or "spins around in his chair," these actions interfere with the learning of others. Elise provides the most striking effect on other students by her comment, "I felt like he was pulling the other kids to the dark side, where they cross that line."

Emotional Toll

While the survey questions did not specifically address the emotional load on teachers, it is implied by survey *Question 3*: Regarding IEP students with significant academic difficulties, what kind of support would you desire from the special education department. Eleven of the 18

teachers wanted SpED assistance for student behavioral support, implying an emotional toll on teachers.

Julia and Reese commented on the emotional toll working with these students with significant academic difficulties:

- From Julia:

And Okay I do not like that. But we tried it anyway because nothing else was working. And it was kind of the same thing.... I told the office staff administrators... if he starts tearing up my room, like literally, he tried to pull the smartboard off my wall.... If he tries to tear anything up or go after anybody, then I'm calling student support and I expect you to show up.

- From Reese: *"That year, that year I almost walked out. [emphasis added]"*

Behavioral issues for some students on IEPs with significant academic difficulties can present pronounced challenges for teachers. The emotional toll emerged as common themes among five out of the six teachers during their interviews. Fully stated: Working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties can take an emotional toll on general education teachers. Andrea expressed considerable angst about how long she could manage to teach because of the stress. She emphatically referred to the "behavioral...crap" that can get to a teacher, like the persistent "clapping" of an IEP student.... Teachers are "extremely frustrated because we can't do our jobs. "Illiana and Danica, too, expressed that behavior issues can take an emotional toll on the teacher. Julia and Reese echoed these sentiments. Reese gave the example of a student talking in a demonic-like voice and expressed how frightening that can be to both the teacher and other students. Behavioral challenges do take its toll on general education

teachers, producing emotional and psychological stress (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Emeljanovas et al., 2023).

Research Question 2: *What resources are available to gen ed teachers when working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?*

The data for this question primarily came from the survey. The survey question (see below) included close-ended responses and an open-ended response. The open-ended comments are indicated in the table below under “other comments.”.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative Results from Survey (closed-ended questions): Support Desired

Survey Question 3: Regarding IEP Students with Significant Academic Difficulties, What Kind of Support Would You Desire from the Special Education Department? Check All That Apply. The table below illustrates the kind of support teachers desire from the special education (SpED) department.

Table 4.3. *Types of support desired from SpED*

Type of Support Number of Respondents 18	Frequency	% of Responses
Instructional support: co-teaching	11	61%
Instructional support: strategies for learning	10	56%
Student behavioral support	11	61%
Other: Please Specify (discussed later)	5	28%
Other Comments:  • SpED teacher pulling those students to work on their individual needs. • More SpED aides • More SpED teacher[s] to push in • It would be nice if the SpED teachers actually had time to work individually with the students. • Pushing in to service 5+ students doesn't work. They aren't getting the one-on-one support that they need. Everything falls on the teachers lap, with no supports whatsoever.		

Note. Percentages will exceed 100% because multiple selections were permitted.

Eleven of the 18 respondents (61%) indicated more support for co-teaching. Ten teachers (56%) would like the SpED department to show them learning strategies for this group of students. Eleven teachers (61%) specified support for behavioral issues. Five of the respondents indicated the “Other: Please Specify option,” which I discuss under qualitative data. Table 4.4 displays other types of support teachers seek:

Table 4.4. *Other Types of Support Desired*

Type of Support Number of Respondents 18	Frequency	% of Responses
Administrative Support: Principals	9	50
Parental Support	14	78%
District Support	12	67%
Othe types of Support: Please Specify (discussed later)	5	28%
Other Comments: • These students really need more 1:1 time that I cannot provide. • Additional support to help them practice their given strategies would be helpful. • Bring back aides to help for ALL elementary classrooms, not just kinder • Have enough time to work with the child's needs. • SpED teachers should be certified SpED teachers with the training needed to provide services. Most aren't certified in Special Ed.		

Eighteen teachers responded to this “check-all-that-apply” question. Nine teachers designated more administrative support from the principals, while 14 indicated more parental support. Two thirds of the responses fell into the district level support category.+-+-

Qualitative Data

Qualitative Results from Survey (open-ended questions)/Support Desired from SpED

The data below comes from the “other: please specify” portion of Table 4.4:

Other: Please Specify	5 comments	(28%)
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Other Comments: ● SpED teacher pulling those students to work on their individual needs. ● More SpED aides ● More SpED teacher[s] to push in ● It would be nice if the SpED teachers actually had time to work individually with the students. ● Pushing in to service 5+ students doesn't work. They aren't getting the one-on-one support that they need. Everything falls on the teachers lap, with no supports whatsoever.		

Each comment comes from a different teacher, and five of the responses fell into this “other” category. These responses varied regarding the type of support teachers desired from the SpED department. One teacher would like more students pulled from the regular class to work in small groups. Another desired more push-in support from SpED teachers, while one preferred more SpED aids in the classroom (LeDoux & Buirt, 2012; Warnes et al., 2022). One teacher sought more time to work with these students, in accordance with themes that emerged from Research Question 1, and another matched other themes and responses from Research Question 1: (1) that students don't receive the one-on-one support they need (Malki & Einat, 2018) and (2) that working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties can take an emotional toll on general education teachers, compatible with Warnes et al. (2021) and Emeljanovas, et al. (2023). The following comment accents this theme: “Everything falls on the teachers lap, with no supports whatsoever.”

Interview Question 2. What resources are available to you for working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

The responses follow.

- From Andrea: N/A
- From Danica:

- ...also providing enough time to provide that one -on -one support; I think that's hard....Well, we have extra support staff that are available. And we have them scheduled to work with our students so that they could get that small group or one-on -one support. And that's been going well. Unfortunately, I think that sometimes there's a lot of meetings going on where they have to attend it. They have to attend the meetings like during our scheduled time. [Regarding training] I know that if an opportunity came up, I would definitely consider it. Oh, I can't say what exactly it is that I would like. I couldn't say right now that I know what I want to be trained But I just want to know as much as I can get access to... as much information that is gonna help me with my students and so yeah, right.
- From Elise:

[Interviewer: *You mentioned tech support. And what else?*] “Grading. I grew up in California in the golden era where every elementary teacher had a full-time aide, or at least a part -time aide or something. And they were able to grade all their papers. Sometimes I have parents, sometimes I have friends from church.... I just feel like, oh, we give you 50 minutes. And then they steal it back with meetings and stuff like that to prepare.”
- From Illiana:

They're [SpED teachers] a huge resource, I think. Absolutely. [H]aving a social worker in the building is really awesome. Not only that, but having a counselor who really embeds a lot of like the relationship building, calm-down strategies. We have such a phenomenal team Our social worker and our counselor are just like really neat.

- From Julia:

So you come in and you don't really know the students and having copies of the IEP that's letting you know how the students what happens when the students are successful you know either like they sit at the front of the room or they sit with a peer or those kinds of things or their visual learners or that kind of thing. Having that at the beginning of the school year, I think would be very helpful. And then actually having time to plan with the special education teachers so I could say, hey, look, this is what we've got coming up where let's think of how we can work together you know, whatever goals they have, and then what we have to get done, how can we work together so that we can help, you know, the student be successful.

- From Reese:

So just that support from the parent.” I'm trying to do reading groups with four or five students, focusing on that for 20 minutes, and the rest are out there.... If I had the kids that need that extra support, if they were out there working independently, but they needed help with that, that's the area I'd need that. Is if somebody could be in there making sure that child is doing their assignment correctly, helping them that way. That's how I would look at it. So someone circulating around. Yeah, because I don't have that. Yeah, while you're working with the group. [Interviewer: Parental support, anything else?] “Yeah, if a parent would [but] “that’s nonexistent.”

Danica would like to see more one-on-one or small-group support provided in the classroom and would like to have more training. Elise would like grading assistance. Illiana said that the social worker and counselor provide wonderful support. Julia would like to have access to the students' IEPs, especially at the beginning of the year. Julia desired time to plan with the

special education teachers. Reese mentioned the absence of parental support, but would like a parent in the classroom “making sure the child is doing their assignment correctly...circulating,” while she could work with a small group.

Elise’s and Reese’s comments indicated similar themes regarding the desire for more support in the classroom during small-group instruction, especially parental support. Other than this similarity, the type of support varied from teacher to teacher.

Two overall themes emerged from these comments. Teachers would like more help in the classroom. This included parents and part-time or full-time aides or “somebody” in the classroom to assist teachers. Concerning parental support, Elise expressed an implied need, while Reese blatantly denied there was any support from parents. This coincides with the quantitative results, which showed that 78% called for parental support, and with other research (Allen, et al., 1997; Pressley et al., 2025)

Besides additional aides (professional and parental), teachers also desired other types of support, such as more time to provide individual attention (Barton, 2016; Fletcher, 2015; Warnes et al, 2022) and time to plan with SpED teachers (Kritikos and Birnbaum, 2003). Although only one teacher indicated she would consider more training, Fletcher (2015) found that many teachers desired more training. I ran out of time with Andrea and did not address this survey question with her.

Survey Question 4: What other support would you find helpful when working with IEP students who face significant academic difficulties...? The data below comes from the “other: please specify” portion of Table 4.5 and adds to many of the responses from the previous question.

Other Types of Support Desired

Other Comments:

- These students really need more 1:1 time that I cannot provide.
- Additional support to help them practice their given strategies would helpful.
- Bring back aides to help for ALL elementary classrooms, not just kinder
- Have enough time to work with the child's needs.
- SpED teachers should be certified SpED teachers with the training needed to provide services. Most aren't certified in Special Ed.

Two survey respondents desired more time to work one-on-one with students on IEPs with significant academic difficulty. One would like more help with learning strategies. One indicated that she wanted aides in all grades, not just kindergarten. However, one teacher stressed the need for more certified SpED teachers, suggesting that some were not certified.

Research Question 3 What Are General Education Teachers' Perceptions of the Placement Process for Students with IEPs?

This question was subdivided into four subsidiary questions, beginning with subsidiary question 3A below.

Quantitative Data

Research Subsidiary Question 3A. Who Participates in the Placement of Students with IEPs?

Survey Question 7. To the Best of Your Knowledge, Who Participates in the Placement of Students With IEPs? Check All That Apply.

Table 4.5 displays the responses to this question, expressed in frequency and corresponding percentages.

Table 4.5. *Participants in the Placement of Students with IEPs? Check all that Apply*

Number of Respondents 18	Frequency	% of Responses
Special education teachers	13	72%
Principals	15	83%

Educational Psychologists	8	44%
Parents	8	44%
General education teachers	10	56%
I don't know	3	17%
Other: There is supposed to be a group, principals, parents, teachers, SpED teachers working together to create the IEP. In my experience, the SpED teacher comes with an IEP already prepared and goes over it with the group. There isn't much say as to what goes in the IEP from other members of the group. • Sometimes the counselor • diagnosticians	3	17%

All 18 survey participants responded to this multiple-option question. Overall, most responses revealed that the individuals listed in the table above participated in the placement process, with the exception of the “I don’t know” and “other” category with 3 teachers each. Teachers were most nearly certain about principals participating in the placement process, 15 out of the 18 responses (83%), and then SpED teachers close behind with 13 responses(72%) General education teachers received just over half of the responses, 10, while educational psychologists and parents received under half (44%).

Qualitative Data

Subsidiary Question 3A: Who Participates in the Placement of Students with IEPs?

Qualitative Results from Interview. The “other” category elicited a textbook response from one survey respondent. She acknowledged the required members that must make up the IEP team, which includes the parents (or guardian), the special education teacher, the general education teacher, a school representative who knows about special education, curriculum, and existing resources, and one who is knowledgeable about learning related to the educational goals set out by the team (while the latter two individuals can be served by the principal or another

qualified person listed (Yell, 2019). Diagnosticians and counselors were also mentioned. (In my pilot study, one participant who was certified in both SpED and classroom teaching indicated placement was determined solely by one test.)

The following comments for Subsidiary Question 3A come from the interviews:

- From Danica: "...there's definitely a process that I really don't know specifically ... what that is." [Re regular IEP meetings]: So, well, they would ask her questions like, does your child, like just different questions...."
- From Illiana: "And typically meetings when I sit in through regular IEP meetings], it's just the, who is a part of ... our school, honestly, principal, vice principal, social worker."

Neither Danica nor Illiana knew who participated in the initial IEP placement process, quite at odds with the surveyed participants. I did not get to this question with the other interview participants.

Quantitative Data

Research Question Subsidiary Question 3B: According to General Education

Teachers, Who Has the Most Influence in Placement of Students with IEPs?

Table 4.6 captures who teachers believed had the most influence in placement decisions.

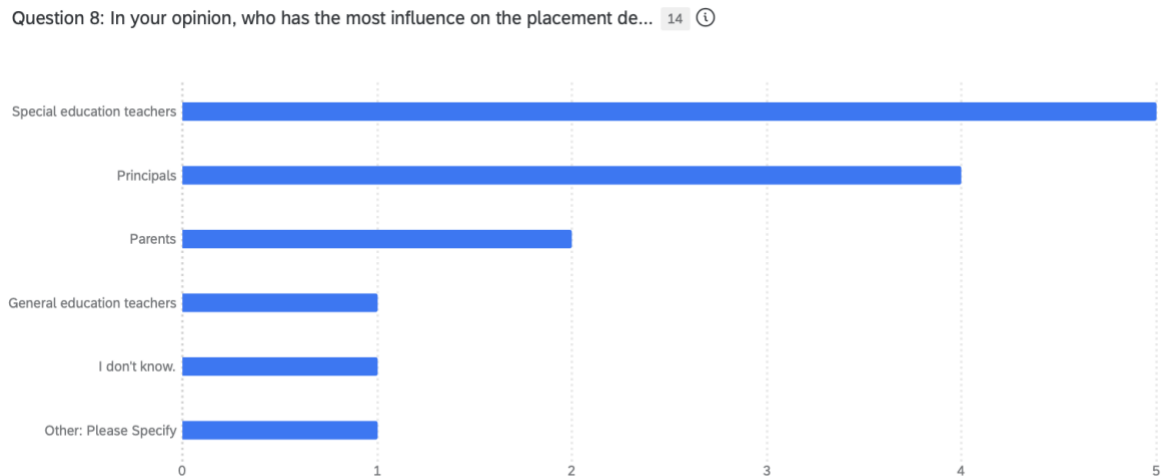
Table 4.6. *Most Influence on the Initial Placement Decisions*

Number of Respondents 14	Frequency	% of Responses
Special education teachers	5	36%
Principals	4	29%
Educational Psychologists	N/A	N/A
Parents	2	14%
General education teachers	1	7%
I don't know	1	7%
Other:	1	7%

it is a combination of people such as SpED teachers, principal, parents, general teachers, and SAT.\		
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Fourteen out of the total 18 survey participants responded to this question. Five of the respondents (36%) felt that special education teachers were the most influential in placing students with IEPs, while four respondents (29%) gave the nod to principals, for a combined total nine teachers (65%). Gilliam & Coleman (1981) and Ruppert & Gaffney(2011) indicated the same predominant influences, although Ruppert & Gaffney expressed this by implication. Two respondents felt that parents had the most influence, while one respondent each indicated that general education teachers had the most influence or didn't know. One survey participant indicated that an IEP team had the most influence, congruent to the legal requirements outlined by Yell (2019) and the IDEA (2004). (I indicated N/A for the educational psychologist option because it was not on this survey question.) The figure below displays a horizontal bar graph of the responses for this survey question.

Figure 4.3. Bar graph showing who has the most influence of initial placement for students with IEPs



Qualitative Data

Subsidiary Question 3B: According to General Education Teachers, Who Has the Most Influence in Placement of Students with IEPs?

In the “other” category for this question, one respondent wrote that “it is a combination of people such as SpED teachers, principal, parents, general teachers, and SAT.” This comment aligns with IEP regulations, which requires a multi-disciplinary team to make the placement decisions (Yell, 2019).

Here are the interview comments for this question:

- From Danica: “I think teachers do.” [Re regular IEP meetings] ...”definitely led heavily from the SpED teacher, I think.”
- From Elise: “Quick answer is administration, the district actually.” “...yeah, everything is being decided by the district.”
- From Illiana: “My thoughts are it has to be the special education.”
- From Julia: “...It’s our administration that has a little bit more say than the special education teacher. But I think if they were at odds... the administrator would probably win out.”
- From Reese:

I think it’s the principle....I’m thinking it’s a mixture of the principle and maybe the SpED teacher or something. I wrote down principal, counselor, and social worker, but I don’t know. I know the principal has the biggest one [influence], and she does a really good job placing students....To be honest, Pete, I don’t know. I think it’s the principal.”[Re regular IEP meetings]: So it's usually ... this bad teacher that's running the show.

The results varied from participant to participant. Danica believed the teachers had most influence in the placement of students, while Julia and Reese felt that the principals carried the most influence. Elise believed the district did, but Illiana named special education.

Overall, these qualitative results suggest some similarity to the quantitative results and other research; however, the interviewed teachers' comments mostly signified uncertainty, unlike the quantitative data from the survey and other research indicated earlier (See Gilliam & Coleman, 1981; Ruppert & Gaffney, (2011)

Quantitative Data

Subsidiary Question 3 C. What Settings Do General Education Teachers Feel Will Better Serve Special Educational Needs Students with Significant Academic Difficulties

Table 4.57 below shows the survey participants' responses to this question.

Table 4.7. Settings that better serves IEP students who have significant academic challenges

Placement Preference Number of Respondents 16	Frequency	% of Responses
Choice 1 Inclusion: In the regular classroom for <i>all</i> of the core subjects	4	25%
Choice 2 Mainstreaming: In the pull-out or resource for room <i>some</i> of the core subjects	10	63%
Choice 3 Mainstreaming: In the pullout or resource room for <i>all</i> of the core subjects	2	13%

Out of the 16 respondents for this question, ten (63%) felt that the mainstreaming model would better serve these students with significant academic difficulties. With mainstreaming, special needs students are “mainstreamed” into the regular general education classroom for some classes but also spend some time in small-group pullout or resource rooms. Only four teachers felt these students should be in the regular classroom all of the time and even fewer (2) believed they should be in a small-group pullout setting for all of the core classes.

Qualitative Data

Subsidiary Question 3C: What Settings Do General Education Teachers Feel Will Better Serve Special Educational Needs Students with Significant Academic Difficulties?

The following comments came from the interviews:

- From Andrea: N/A. This question was not covered with Andrea; we did not get to it.
- From Danica:

... if it were a pullout and there's someone who's trained or has more information and has the training for being that person to pull them out then I would be in support of that because I think ... it takes like a village ... to support the child and if there's someone who's an expert in a field or in some something else and I would love for them to help me with the student if I couldn't do if it was more than what I am able to provide so if it was let's say a student who needs behavior, like has behavior needs as in like a behavior classroom; I feel like if it was best for the student to. Let's say there was a specialist that will come and support him or her, then if that's in the best interest of the student, then I would support that.

- From Elise:

Mainstreaming... and I'll say a few years ago when I had like that group of kids when I had five or six really low kids that qualified for SpED, and she came in and she helped during our core language arts time and ... she would read to them the books or... keep them focused so that I could focus on my other 20 students while she focused on those....But then at the same time, at the end of the day, I felt like when it was kind of like our intervention time, I was really grateful that she could take those four [other] students back with her and focus on ... finishing up....I feel like mainstreaming ... because we're trying to do full inclusion right now, and it's still,

it's still a struggle... and I suppose technically we are supposed to be, but I've got a little boy right now where he's so far behind.... but he's a blurter and he's constantly blurting out. And for him to be out of the classroom for an hour so that everybody else can have their focus and their quiet time.

- From Illiana:

Pullout during those core instruction times.... I don't think there's a one -fits -all situation. If I'm speaking to this student in particular, I think the pullout method, the mainstream method, would be a lot more suitable for him. Whereas last year, the kids who I had who had IEPs, who had different needs and services, they did well in in an inclusion sort of classroom, right?

- From Julia: "It's going to come down to skill level and so it's almost a case-by-case... which it truly should be if you're really doing individual education plans, which I have found that that's not really happening much anymore."

- From Reese:

I don't know. I would prefer inclusion, as long as I have support....because I think inclusion is important....they deserve to have the same education..... any other...child....But it depends on the severity though because like I said... we have that life skills classroom....So I would prefer inclusion. *[Interviewer probe: I'm sorry, when you say you prefer inclusion, did I hear you say there may be some exceptions with some of these severe...?]* Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah.... And that's... the reason I say that is because of the distractions, like... there's one child in our building that he just starts hollering... at the top of his lungs, you know, right? Oh, my, there was some, we've had some interesting situations.... I won't tell you."*[Interviewer checking for*

understanding: I also heard you say, you...prefer inclusion with the support?] That would be. When there's enough support.

Julia indicated that decisions about placement should be made on a "case-by-case" basis. This is not only consistent with the research (Barton; 2016; Hocutt, 1996; IRIS Center, n.d.; Wrights Law, n.d.; Zigmond, N., 2003) but also with the IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

While Reese generally preferred inclusion, she did allow for exceptions. Since inclusion means that all students with IEPs and disabilities are educated in the general education setting, allowing for exceptions technically places her position in the mainstreaming camp. The other teachers typically indicated a mainstreaming preference. (Again, I did not get to this question with Andrea.) These teachers implied that the pullout setting is appropriate for some students, as evidenced by a comment from Illiana: "But I find that the success with him right now currently is when he's in an isolated room, when he has that one-on-one support, when he's able to kind of go off task, but then is brought back on." So, it seems that the qualitative responses support the quantitative ones.

Quantitative Data

Subsidiary Question 3D: Once these students are in the gen-ed [general education classroom], how much influence do gen-ed [general education] teachers feel they have in a change of placement?

Survey question 9: If an IEP student's academic needs are not being met in the general education classroom, how much support from the IEP team do you feel you would receive in recommending a change in placement, such as a pullout or resource room? Table

4.8 shows the amount of support general education teachers (grades 1-5) would receive if they requested a change of placement for a special needs child in their classroom.

Table 4.8. Support Regarding a Change of Placement

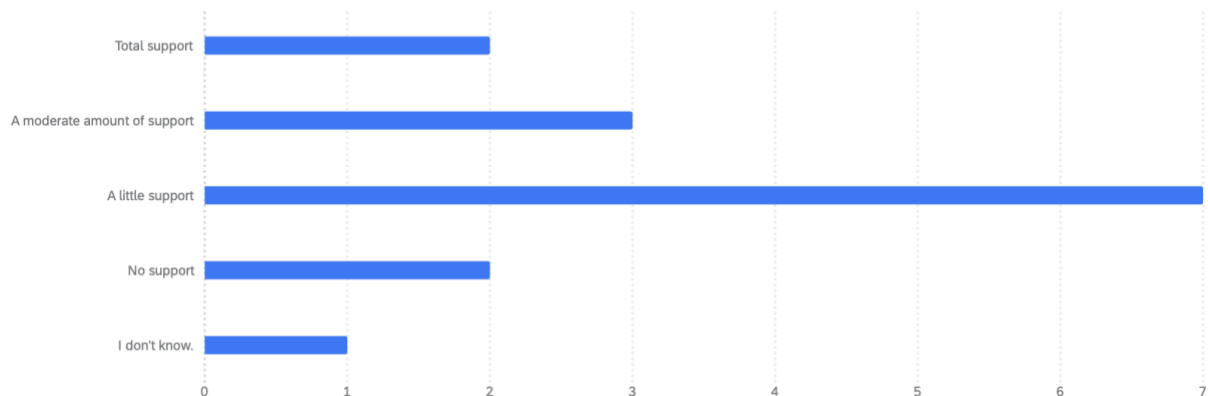
Amount of Support	Frequency	% of Responses
Number of Respondents 15		
Total support	2	13%
A moderate amount of support	3	20%
A little support	7	47%
No support	2	13%
I don't know	1	7%

Two out of the 15 respondents to this question felt that they had total support, and two also felt they would have no support. Three teachers felt that they had a moderate amount of support. The most striking figure is that almost half (seven) of the teachers believed they had only a little support. That figure rises to over half (60 %) when combining little or no support.

The following graphic (Figure 4.4) displays these results

Figure 4.4. *Perceived Support for Change of Placement Request*

Question 9: If an IEP student's academic needs are not being met in the general education classroom, how much support from the IEP te... 15



Qualitative Data

Subsidiary Question 3D: Once these students are in the gen ed classroom, how much influence do gen ed teachers feel they have in a change of placement?

Interview Question. Do you know how much influence you would have in getting support to make that move? Here are the interview responses:

- From Julia:

My next-door ...teacher...did not leave [a meeting] feeling like here concerns were heard.... So to make a change of placement you have to hold a whole new IEP meeting which they often don't want to do and New Mexico has had several lawsuits with students in pull -out rooms. So they've gone super-fast and super heavy on inclusion. So getting a student placed in a more restrictive environment is very, very difficult right now....

- From Reese:

I've never had that personally, but another colleague did last year, and it was rough. It was so hard. I think that we definitely should have [influence in changing placement]....I think that we should have...[a] say as to whether the child is capable...of...being in the gen-ed classroom...and it was rough for...her....It was ... rough I remember that... and... it was months and months; and it took it finally happened, but it took everything and all kinds of observations and all kinds of people the head of the behavior or whatever and... it was then they were probably [able to get that] change of placement.... I think that it should because we're with that child eight, seven and a half hours a day ... where we know this child. We know ... more than any of the other people; it's like ...we're not making this up.... Yeah, it's like sometimes I think they don't believe us. It's still IEPs and all that stuff... and there's

new...laws or requirements or whatever, but I just wish that our voices were heard, the support part....we're responsible for so much and we're not heard.... [T]here's a ton of us that feel our voices aren't heard...and we do a lot...and our reputation of...being a teacher is...negative.

While Reese stated that she had not requested a change of placement for a student, earlier she described one of her students who talked like a demon and was “danger to himself or others,” the code red kid. After 156 days, the student was finally kicked out of school. Along with the Reese’s and Julia’s account of the two other teachers trying to move a student out of their classroom, both Julia and Reese indicated that it was a formidable and laborious task. The difficulty of changing placement reported here corresponds with the quantitative data, where nine of the of the 15 respondents indicated that they would receive a little support or no support (60%). (Julia did not indicate where she taught, so I could not determine if Julia and Reese attended the same school and spoke about the same teacher and student or if there were two teachers involved in requesting a change of placement.)

Summary Statement. The interviews generally support the quantitative data but also spotlight the teachers’ experience. They illustrate the intensity and reality of their experiences and a need for change.

Research Question 4: What influence does experience and level of education have on general education teacher’s perceptions of IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

This section addresses the research questions; however, they are analyzed based on experience and educational level. The research questions will be listed below for reference

Research Question 1 based on experience and educational level. What challenges do special education (SpED) students with significant academic difficulties pose for teachers in the general education classroom?

Quantitative Results from Survey (closed-ended questions): Crosstabulations. Table 4.9 reflects the responses to the survey (and research) question, “How challenging is it working with these students on the following items?” As a reminder, the population consists of students on IEPS who have significant academic challenges.

Table 4.9. Comparison of Experience Level to Various Academic Challenges

			Q1D29: Question 2: How long have you been a teacher?					
			Total	0-1 year	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Q25: Question 2 How challenging is it working with these students on the following items:	The students' ability to keep up with the lessons	Not at all challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat challenging	4.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
		Overall challenging	4.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	2.0
		Extremely challenging	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0
	Finding time to meet these students' needs	Not at all challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0
		Somewhat challenging	3.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	2.0
		Overall challenging	2.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
		Extremely challenging	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
	Carrying out the students' IEP requirements	Not at all challenging	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
		Somewhat challenging	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0
		Overall challenging	3.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	1.0
		Extremely challenging	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0
	Academic issues	Not at all challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		Somewhat challenging	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
		Overall challenging	4.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	2.0
		Extremely challenging	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
	Behavioral issues	Not at all challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		Somewhat challenging	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	4.0
		Overall challenging	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		Extremely challenging	4.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	2.0

This crosstab compares years' experience with the items in survey question 2 (see second column). Based on this data, either there were no first-year teachers who participated in the survey, or they may have chosen not to respond to the demographic questions.

In the two-to-three-year group of teachers, one survey participant felt that it was overall challenging for these students to keep up with the lessons. Another response indicated it was overall challenging for students to find time to meet the needs of these student. One indicated not at all challenging to carry out the IEP requirements. Another response indicated that

academic issues teachers faced was over all challenging, and another indicated extremely challenging dealing with behavioral issues.

In the four-to-five-year group, one teacher felt it was somewhat challenging for a student's ability to keep up with a lesson, and another teacher felt it was overall challenging. The same pattern occurred for finding the time to meet the student's needs. In regard to carrying out the IEP requirements, two teachers felt it was overall challenging. One response indicated academic issues were overall challenging, and another indicated that behavioral issues were extremely challenging.

In the six-to-ten-year group, one response showed that it was somewhat challenging to for the students' ability to keep up with the lessons, and another response indicated that it was somewhat challenging to find the time to meet these special needs students' needs. One response indicated a little challenge to carry out the students' IEP requirements. Another response showed that academic issues were somewhat challenging, and another response indicated the same for behavioral issues.

The most responses fell into the group of teachers having more than 10 years' experience. Regarding the students' ability to keep up with the lessons, two teachers indicated that it was somewhat challenging, two indicated that it was overall challenging, and four felt it was extremely challenging. Regarding the time to meet needs of these students, one teacher felt that it was a little challenging, two felt it was somewhat challenging, and five indicated that it was extremely challenging. To fulfill students' IEP requirements, three teachers marked somewhat challenging, one selected overall challenging, and four believed it was extremely challenging. Regarding academic issues, one teacher felt it was a little challenging, two felt it was overall challenging, and five felt it was extremely challenging. Regarding behavioral issues, one teacher

selected “a little challenging,” four indicated behavioral issues were somewhat challenging, one marked overall challenging, and two extremely challenging. *These figures do not necessarily mean that the most experienced teachers expressed the most challenges; it could be that they were mostly the ones who responded to this survey.*

The crosstab, Table 4.10 below, displays the crosstabs comparing educational levels (degrees earned) to the same topics. Again, this refers to Survey Question 2: How challenging is it working with these students on the following items?

Table 4.10. Comparison of educational level to various academic challenges

			Q031: Question 5: What is your highest degree earned? - Selected Choice							
			Total	Bachelor's degree + Altern	Bachelor's Degree + Tradit	Master's Degree + Alternat	Master's Degree + Tradit	Doctor's Degree + Alternat	Doctor's Degree + Tradit	Other: specify
Q25: Question 2: How challenging is it working with these students on the following items:	The students' ability to keep up with the lessons	Not at all challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat challenging	4.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Overall challenging	4.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		Extremely challenging	4.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Finding time to meet these students' needs	Not at all challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	2.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat challenging	3.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Overall challenging	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		Extremely challenging	5.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Carrying out the students' IEP requirements	Not at all challenging	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		A little challenging	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat challenging	3.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Overall challenging	3.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Extremely challenging	4.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Academic Issues	Not at all challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat challenging	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Overall challenging	4.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		Extremely challenging	5.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Behavioral Issues	Not at all challenging	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		A little challenging	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Somewhat challenging	5.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Overall challenging	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Extremely challenging	4.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	1.0

Based on this data, one respondent in the Bachelor's degree + Alternative License group felt it was somewhat challenging for students to keep up with the lessons. One response showed that it was a little challenging for teachers to find time to meet the needs of these students and another response indicated the same level of challenge to carry out the IEP requirements. One response indicated that academic issues teachers faced was somewhat challenging, and same held true for behavioral issues.

In the Bachelor's Degree + Traditional Teaching License, one teacher felt it was somewhat challenging for a student's ability to keep up with a lesson, and another teacher felt it was overall challenging, and two felt it was extremely challenging. To find the time to meet the

student's needs, one survey respondent considered it a little challenging, and three respondents felt it was extremely challenging. In regard to carrying out the IEP requirements, one teacher felt it was a little challenging, another felt it was overall challenging, and two believed it was extremely challenging. One teacher felt that academic issues were a little challenging, and three felt designated extremely challenging. Regarding behavioral issues, one teacher each felt it was a little challenging, somewhat challenging, overall challenging, and extremely challenging.

In the Master's Degree + Alternative group, there was one overall challenging response regarding the ability to keep up with lessons, one somewhat challenging response for meeting students' needs, and one for carrying out IEP requirements. In addition, academic issues revealed on overall challenging response and one somewhat challenging designation for behavioral issues.

In the Master's Degree + Traditional Teaching group, two teachers felt that it was somewhat challenging to for the students' ability to keep up with the lessons, and one indicated that it was overall challenging, and two believed it was extremely challenging. Two teachers felt it was somewhat challenging to find the time to meet these special needs students' needs, one felt it was overall challenging, and two felt it was extremely challenging. One teacher felt it was somewhat challenging to carry out the students' IEP requirements, two teachers indicated it was overall challenging, and two felt it was extremely challenging. Two teachers thought that academic issues were overall challenging, and two considered it extremely challenging. Regarding behavioral issues, two teachers saw that it was somewhat challenging, and two found it extremely challenging. No survey respondents held doctorate degrees.

One survey respondent fell in the Other Specify category. That person held a master's degree in special education, and she indicated that it was overall challenging for students to keep up with the lessons and for her to meet the needs of these students. It was not all challenging for

her to meet the IEP requirements. However, this special education teacher felt that academic issues were overall challenging, and behavioral issues were extremely challenging.

Research Question 2: What resources are available to gen ed teachers when working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

This question was subdivided into two questions, subsidiary questions 2A and 2B.

Subsidiary Question 2A: What kind of support would gen ed teachers desire from SpED teachers? Crosstab Table 4.11 reflects the responses to Subsidiary Question 2A based on years of experience:.

Table 4.11. *Support Desired from Special Education Based on Experience*

Support Desired		QID29: Question 2: How long have you been a teacher?					
		Total	0-1 year	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Q28: Question 3: Regarding IEP students with significant academic difficulties, what kind of support would you desire from the special education department? (Check all that apply.) - Selected Choice	Total Count	13.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	8.0
	Instructional support: co-teaching	8.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	5.0
	Instructional support: strategies for learning	7.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	6.0
	Student behavioral support	8.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	6.0
	Other: Please Specify	3.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0

Teachers could indicate more than one choice, so the numbers in each columns may not necessarily indicate different teachers. With that in mind, in the two-three-year group, a respondent preferred a co-teaching model. In the four-to-five-year group, one response also desired a co-teaching approach, and one indicated behavioral support from SpED. In the six-to-ten-year group, there was one response each for co-teaching, for support with learning strategies, and support for behavioral support. Five teachers with more than 10 years teaching indicated they preferred a co-teaching approach, six indicated they desired learning strategies from the SpED department, and six wanted help dealing with behavioral issues.

Based on the same question, the data in Table 4.12 below reflects education level.

Table 4.12. *SpED Support Desired Based on Educational Level*

Support Desired		QID31: Question 5: What is your highest degree earned? - Selected Choice						
		Total	Bachelor's degree + Altern	Bachelor's Degree + Traditi	Master's Degree + Alternat	Master's Degree + Tradition	Doctor's Degree + Alternat	Doctor's Degree + Tradition
Q28: Question 3: Regarding IEP students with significant academic difficulties, what kind of support would you desire from the special education department? (Check all that apply.) - Selected Choice	Total Count	13.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	6.0	0.0	0.0
	Instructional support: co-teaching	8.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	3.0	0.0	0.0
	Instructional support: strategies for learning	7.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
	Student behavioral support	8.0	1.0	4.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0
	Other: Please Specify	3.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0

In the Bachelor's degree + Alternative License group, there was one response each for a co-teaching approach, for more learning strategies, and for behavioral support. In the Bachelor's Degree + Traditional Teaching License, two respondents desired a co-teaching approach, three wanted assistance with learning strategies for these special needs students, and four would like assistance with behavioral issues these students may present. In the Master's Degree + Alternative License, there was one response each for co-teaching and learning strategies. In the Master's Degree + Traditional Teaching license group, there were three responses for a co-teaching support, two for learning strategies, and three for behavioral support. There were no survey participants at the doctorate level, but one in the other category with a master's degree in special education, who indicated a co-teaching model.

Research Question Subsidiary Question 3B: According to General Education Teachers, Who Has the Most Influence in Placement of Students with IEPs?

The next Qualtrics-generated crosstab table shows responses to this question as it relates to years of experience.

Table 4.13. *Most Influential in Placement Decisions Regarding Students with IEPs based on experience*

		QID29: Question 2: How long have you been a teacher?					
		Total	0-1 year	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
QID14: Question 8: In your opinion, who has the most influence on the placement decisions for students with IEPs? - Selected Choice	Total Count (All)	13.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	8.0
	Special education teachers	4.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
		30.8%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100.0%	25.0%
	Principals	3.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
		23.1%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
	Parents	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		7.7%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	General education teachers	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	I don't know.	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	Other: Please Specify	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%

Again, most responses came from the most experienced teachers (10 + years). In this category, two teachers felt that special education teachers had the most influence in placement, and two other teachers felt that principals had the most influence.

In the actual survey, 14 out of the 18 respondents answered this question (see Table 4.11), while the crosstab indicated that 11 respondents answered the question (adding the column under the total count of 13: $4 + 3 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 11$). Some teachers may not have answered the demographic question related to years teaching, which can explain that discrepancy. Another discrepancy exists within the crosstabulation (Table 4.12). The crosstab shows a discrepancy between total count of 13 and the actual count of 11. Again, Qualtrics crosstab calculations include only the respondents who answered the demographic questions, which may be fewer than the actual survey total of 13 (Qualtrics, n.d.). Or thirteen teachers may have seen the question, but only 11 chose to respond to it.

With this in mind, in the 2-3 years' group, one teacher indicated that principals had the most influence in the initial placement of students with IEPs, and another felt that parents had the most influence. (The 50% in that column indicates that out of the 2 respondents, one chose principals, and other chose parents; therefore, one out of the two response = 50%). In the 4-5 years' group, one teacher felt that SpED teacher had the most influence, and the same held true for the 6-10 year-group. However, in the 10+ plus group, two teachers felt that SpED teachers held the most influence, and another two believed principals held the most influence. One teacher felt that the general education teacher had the most influence, and one did not know. One teacher in the "other" category stated that "it is a combination of people such as SpED teachers, principal, parents, general teachers, and SAT (Student Assistance Team)."

In summary, four (30.8%, 4/13) teachers believed that SpED teachers had the most influence on initial placement for students on IEPs. Three teachers (23.1%) indicated that principals had the most influence, for a combined total 7 teachers (or 54%.) One teacher showed that general education teachers held the most influence, and another one did not know who had the most influence. Still another teacher included the “other please specify” category, who referred to a comprehensive IEP team having the most influence.

Table 4.14 represents the same question based on educational level.

Table 4.14. *Most Influential in Placement Decisions Regarding Students with IEPs based on education level*

		Q1231: Question 5: What is your highest degree earned? - Selected Choice							
		Total	Bachelor's degree + Alternative	Bachelor's Degree + Traditional	Master's Degree + Alternative	Master's Degree + Traditional	Doctor's Degree + Alternative	Doctor's Degree + Traditional	Other: specify
Q1214: Question 8: In your opinion, who has the most influence on the placement decisions for students with IEPs? - Selected Choice	Total Count (All)	13.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
	Special education teachers	4.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	30.8%	100.0%	25.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Principals	3.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	23.1%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Parents	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	General education teachers	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	I don't know.	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	7.7%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other: Please Specify		1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		7.7%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

One teacher in the Bachelor’s Degree + Alternative Licensure felt that special education (SpED) teachers had the most influence placement of students on IEPs. In the Bachelor's Degree + Traditional Teaching Licensure, one teacher selected SpED teachers as having the most influence, one selected principals, and one did not know. The one teacher in the “other please specify” option held a master’s degree in SpED and indicated that a multi-disciplinary team had the most influence.

In the Master's Degree + Alternative Licensure the one respondent felt that the general education teacher had the most influence in placement. The Master's Degree + Traditional Teaching Licensure had the highest number: Four teachers felt that both SpED and principals evenly held the most influence in placement decisions. No one in this group indicated that an IEP team, parents, or principals had any influence. One teacher in the other category indicated that

parents had the most influence. (Again, no one who participated in the survey had a doctorate degree.)

In other words, based on experience and educational level, teachers marked choices that indicted they had little influence in placement decisions. This aligns with the research. Forlin et al. (2008) and Martin et al. (1995) revealed that teachers had little or no influence in placement decisions. Forlin’s study took place in Australia, so the problem extends beyond the U.S.

Subsidiary Question 3 C. What Settings Do General Education Teachers Feel Will Better Serve Special Educational Needs Students with Significant Academic Difficulties

Crosstab table 4.15 describes years of experience related to this question.

Table 4.15. *Settings that better serves IEP students who have significant academic challenges based on experience level*

		Q/D29: Question 2: How long have you been a teacher?					
		Total	0-1 year	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Q/D18: Question 10: For IEP students with significant academic difficulties, which setting do you believe would serve these students the best during core instruction? (math, science, social studies/history, writing, and reading)	Total Count (All)	13.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	8.0
	Choice 1 Inclusion: In the regular classroom for all of the core subjects	4.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
		30.8%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	12.5%
	Choice 2 Mainstreaming: In the pul-out or resource for room some of the core subjects	7.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	6.0
		53.8%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	75.0%
	Choice 3 Mainstreaming: In the pul-out or resource room for all of the core subjects	2.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		15.4%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%

Thirteen survey participants out of the total 18 responded to this question. In the 2-3-year group, one respondent felt students with significant academic difficulties would be better served in the regular classroom for all core subjects, in other words, inclusion. Another teacher believed opposite—that these special needs students would be better served in a small group pullout setting for all core subjects. In the 4–5-year group, one teacher felt that inclusion would better serve these students, and one felt mainstreaming would be the better fit for some of the core subjects. In the 6-10-year group, the lone respondent selected inclusion for all core subjects. In the more-than-10-years-teaching group, one teacher opted for inclusion, respondents, while six (75%) in this group preferred the mainstreaming option for some core subjects. One selected the pull-out setting for all core subjects.

In summary, four teachers believed that the regular education classroom would better serve the students with significant academic difficulties for all core subjects, that is, the inclusion model. In contrast, seven (53.8%) believed that that these special needs students would be served better for some of the core subjects in the pullout setting, in other words, the mainstreaming model. Finally, two teachers felt that students with significant academic difficulties should be in the small-group pullout room for all core subjects.

As for the research gleaned from the literature review, it is hard to say how that corresponds to my research. Mixed views persisted throughout several decades, but even those who preferred inclusion made exceptions, as did some of the interviewed teachers. To reiterate, making exceptions technically does not support the inclusive (full inclusion) model, but boils down to mainstreaming.

The table below relates to the same survey question based on educational level.

Table 4.16. *Settings that better serves IEP students who have significant academic challenges based on educational level*

		QID31: Question 5: What is your highest degree earned? - Selected Choice					
		Total	Bachelor's degree + Altern	Bachelor's Degree + Tradit	Master's Degree + Alterna	Master's Degree + Traditic	Other: specify
QID18: Question 10: For IEP students with significant academic difficulties, which setting do you believe would serve these students the best during core instruction? (math, science, social studies/history, writing, and reading)	Total Count (All)	13.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	6.0	1.0
	Choice 1 Inclusion: in the regular classroom for all of the core subjects	4.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	1.0
	Choice 2 Mainstreaming: in the pull-out or resource room some of the core subjects	7.0	0.0	3.0	1.0	3.0	0.0
	Choice 3 Mainstreaming: in the pull-out or resource room for all of the core subjects	2.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
		15.4%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%

In the bachelor's degree + Alternative License group, one teacher selected inclusion. In the Bachelor's Degree + Traditional Teaching License, three teachers opted for mainstreaming Choice 2, with some core subjects taught in the regular education classroom and others in the small-group pullout setting. One teacher in this group opted for the pullout setting for all core subjects. In Master's Degree + Alternative License, one teacher selected the mainstreaming option 2, in which core subjects are taught in both the regular setting and in the small-group pullout room. In the Master's Degree + Traditional Teaching License, two teachers decided on

inclusion, while three selected mainstreaming for some core subjects but not all (choice 2). In the “other specify” category, the SpED teacher chose inclusion.

Subsidiary Question 3D: Once these students are in the gen-ed [general education] classroom, how much influence do gen-ed [general education] teachers feel they have in a change of placement?

Survey question 9: If an IEP student’s academic needs are not being met in the general education classroom, how much support from the IEP team do you feel you would receive in recommending a change in placement, such as a pullout or resource room? The crosstab below (Table 4.17) shows the descriptive data regarding survey question 9:

Table 4.17. *Support general education teachers feel they would receive requesting a change of placement, based on experience level*

		QID29: Question 2: How long have you been a teacher?					
		Total	0-1 year	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
QID17: Question 9: If an IEP student’s academic needs are not being met in the general education classroom, how much support from the IEP team do you feel you would receive in recommending a change in placement, such as a pullout or resource room?	Total Count (All)	13.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	8.0
	Total support	2.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		15.4%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	A moderate amount of support	2.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
		15.4%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	A little support	6.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	4.0
		46.2%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100.0%	50.0%
	No support	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
		15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
	I don't know.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

In the 2-3-years teaching group, one teacher felt he or she would receive total support, and another selected a moderate amount of support. In the 4-5-year group, one teacher believe that a little support would be provided, while another teacher in this group apparently did not respond to this question (The crosstab in this group indicates 2 teachers, but one response was shown). In the 6-10-year group, again one teacher sensed that only a little support would be provided.

As usual, most responses occurred with the teachers who had more than 10 years’ experience, which may merely mean that most teachers who took the survey were in that group. Only one teacher believed total support would be provided, and the same held true for moderate support. Most strikingly, four teachers believed they would receive only a little support, while

two of the teachers indicated they would receive no support, for a combined total of 75% in this group.

The next table refers to the same question based on education level.

Table 4.18. *Support general education teachers feel they would receive requesting a change of placement, based on education level*

		QID31: Question 5: What is your highest degree earned? - Selected Choice						
		Total	Bachelor's degree + Altern: Bachelor's Degree + Traditi		Master's Degree + Alternat:	Master's Degree + Traditio	Other: specify	
QID17: Question 9: If an IEP student's academic needs are not being met in the general education classroom, how much support from the IEP team do you feel you would receive in recommending a change in placement, such as a pullout or resource room?	Total Count (All)	0	13.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	6.0	1.0
	Total support	0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0
	%	%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	100.0%
	A moderate amount of support	0	2.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
	%	%	15.4%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%
	A little support	0	6.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	0.0
	%	%	46.2%	100.0%	25.0%	100.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	No support	0	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	%	%	15.4%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	I don't know.	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	%	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

In the Bachelor's degree + Alternative License, one teacher felt he or she would receive a little support for requesting a change of placement out of the regular classroom. In the Bachelor's Degree + Traditional Teaching License, a teacher felt a moderate amount of support would be received, and another teacher felt a little support would be received. However, 2 out of the 4 respondents in this group believed they would receive *no* support. In the Master's Degree + Alternative License, one person a little support would be received. In the Master's Degree + Traditional Teaching License, one person felt total support would be received, and another felt a moderate support would be given. Three out of the six in this group felt that only a little support would be provided. In the “Other: specify” category, the teacher with the master’s degree in special education felt she would receive total support.

Summary

Over half of the surveyed responses indicated that it was overall challenging or extremely challenging working with students with significant academic difficulties. The majority of responses came from teachers with most experience and the most education. Qualitative responses mirrored these challenges. Many the survey respondents desired co-teaching support

and strategies for learning from the special education teachers, along with support from parents and all levels of administration. They declared that behaviors of these special needs students interfered *everyone's* learning and felt worn out emotionally. Most survey respondents and interviewees felt special education teachers and the principals had the most influence in placement. Most participants also believed that the mainstreaming model would better serve students with significant academic difficulties but that they had a little or no support in changing placement for a special needs student once in their classroom. The implications and recommendations of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

“I just wish that our voices were heard.”

~Reese, first grade teacher, 23 years' experience

Detailed Summary of Chapter 4

Fifty-five-point five percent of the surveyed responses indicated that it was overall challenging or extremely challenging working with students with significant academic difficulties. These areas of challenge included the students' ability to keep up with the lessons, teachers finding time to meet their students' needs, the difficulty in fulfilling the IEP requirements, along with academic and behavioral issues. The majority of responses came from teachers with most experience (more than 10 years) and the most education. Qualitative responses mirrored these challenges. For example, the consensus of the interviewed teachers was that they “just don't have the time to give that student what ... they need....”

Eleven of the survey respondents (61%) indicated they desired co-teaching support and 10 desired strategies for learning (56%) from the special education teachers. As for behavioral issues, the “off-task” behaviors covered a spectrum of levels, from mild (doodling) to significant (constant talking, bouncing around, hitting, yelling). They felt that behaviors of these special needs students interfered not only with their own learning but also with that of the other students. Teachers felt worn out emotionally. Eleven of the survey respondents (61%) expressed a need for student behavioral support from special education (Table 4.6). Regarding other types of support, half of the responses desired support from principals, and well over half sought parental and district support (Table 4.9). The challenges teachers faced and the support they desired shows up in other research (Barton, 2016; Fletcher, 2015; Warnes et al, 2022), along with planning time with SpED teachers (Kritikos and Birnbaum, 2003).

Regarding participation in the IEP process, respondents checked off all the required staff members at least once, although principals and SpED teachers received the most responses. Three teachers indicated they did not know who participated in the IEP process (Table 4.10). As for placement, most survey respondents felt that special education teachers had the most influence in placement, with principals a close second (Table 4.11). The most experienced teachers believed special education teachers and the principals had the most influence, and the same held true regarding educational level (Tables 4.12, 4.13). Most teachers interviewed felt administration (district officials or principals) had the most influence in placement, with SpED teachers after that. The interviewed teachers typically indicated that they did not know who participated in the initial placement of students with IEPs.

Ten of the surveyed teachers (nearly two-thirds) believed that the mainstreaming model would better serve students with significant academic difficulties (Table 4.14). Based on experience, a little over half opted again for mainstreaming, but six (75%) of the most experienced group preferred mainstreaming (Table 4.15). Based on educational level, mainstreaming again got the nod (Table 4.16). Of those interviewed, mainstreaming was also the overall pick, although two teachers selected inclusion—*as long as* certain conditions were met.

Nine (60%) of the surveyed teachers indicated that they had a little or no support in changing placement for a special needs student in their classroom (Table 4.17). Six out of the eight teachers with most experience believed they would receive only a little or no support (Table 4.18). The figures held for bachelor-degree/traditional license group. In the corresponding master's degree group, about a third believed they would receive moderate or total support, while half felt they would receive a little support (Table 4.19).

Summary of Theoretical Perspective

The Berean Principle guided this study from its inception. To "inquire into, investigate, question" (Bible Hub, n.d.) — this disposition shaped not only the research questions but also the interpretation of findings. Through careful examination of both quantitative and qualitative data, this study sought to uncover truths about the lived experiences of general education teachers working with IEP students who have significant academic difficulties. The findings did exactly that: they revealed the challenges teachers face, gave voice to their frustrations, and exposed systemic tensions between legal mandates and classroom realities.

Critical theory complemented this inquiry by providing the lens through which those truths carry broader meaning. Critical theory "validates [teachers'] voices [and] experiences" (Zai, 2023b, p.8) and seeks to raise consciousness in order to move people toward action — praxis (Miller, 2011). The teachers in this study felt unheard, marginalized in placement decisions, and unsupported in meeting the significant demands placed on them. By surfacing these experiences, this study does what critical theory demands: it makes the invisible visible. The hope is that this raised consciousness moves administrators, policymakers, and educators at every level toward the collaborative, student-centered solutions outlined in the recommendations above.

Constructivism provided the framework for understanding how teachers make meaning from those experiences. Through semi-structured interviews and open-ended survey questions, this study investigated participants' "perspectives, experiences, and meaning-making...[their] values and beliefs" (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009, p.689). The teachers' words — their frustrations, their preferences, their sense of marginalization — are not simply data points; they are constructions of lived reality that deserve to be heard and understood on their own terms.

Implications for Practice & Recommendations

Mixed views towards inclusion have persisted throughout through the last three decades according to my research, as have many of the challenges teachers face working with IEP students who struggle with significant academic problems. Student achievement in the inclusive classrooms has remained mixed but mostly with no meaningful progress. In other words, nothing has changed. We can't expect to do the same things over and over again and expect different results. Hopefully, I've addressed some ways of disrupting the pattern in what follows.

Research Question 1: What Challenges Do Special Education (SpED) Students with Significant Academic Difficulties Pose for Teachers in the General Education Classroom?

The challenges general education teachers face include the students' ability to keep up, the time to meet the students' needs, the struggle to fulfill IEP requirements, as well as substantial academic and behavioral issues. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that teachers ordinarily rank these matters as overall challenging or extremely challenging and that the emotional toll on teachers can be serious, consistent with some of the findings by Valeo (2008). The implications are far-reaching.

Potential Legal Ramifications. While the buzz is all about "full" inclusion (Forlin, et al., 2008, Gibb, et al., 2007; Taneja-Johansson & Singal, 2021; University of Texas: Permian Basin, n.d.), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) suggests a cautionary approach (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2018). Without doubt, it does state that special education students should be educated in the general education as much as possible; however, it has specific qualifications regarding the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):

To the maximum extent *appropriate* [italics added], children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services *cannot be achieved satisfactorily*” [italics added], (p.2677)

It is clear that the IEP team should first consider the LRE, the general education classroom; however, later the wording becomes ambiguous:

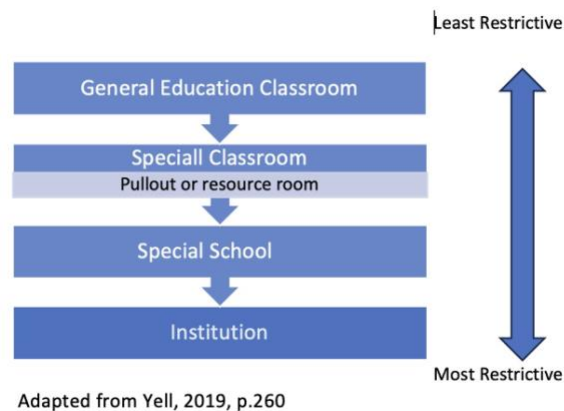
...other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services *cannot be achieved satisfactorily*.

Does this mean that the child should always first be placed in the general education classroom with supplementary aids and services? And *then* remove the child it doesn’t help? Or does this mean that children could first be placed in the more restricted environment if the IEP team believed the child would not benefit from the use of supplementary aids and services in the regular classroom?

Yell (2019) points out that some schools to routinely practice (full) inclusion, like the school district in this study. It’s understandable given the ambiguity of the wording. On the other hand, the U.S. Supreme Court apparently recognized that initial placement could be in the alternative setting, like a pullout setting (Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson School District v. Rowley, 1982).

MacMillan and colleagues (1996) pointed out that those who insist on inclusion violate the IDEA, which allows for placement in a variety of settings. These settings move from the least restrictive environment (the classroom) the most restrictive (an institution). See Figure 5.1 below:

Figure 5.1. *Least Restrictive Environment, a continuum of placement settings.*



MacMillan and others (1996) clarified the meaning of *full* inclusion:

From an empirical perspective, however, it is essential that there be a clear specification of what constitutes full inclusion. If it only means that regular class placement should be available for some children with disabilities, then it has been available for years, and there is no need for a specific term 'full inclusion.' If it refers to the placement of all children with disabilities in age-appropriate regular classes all day in their neighborhood schools, then its adoption requires the abolition of the continuum of placements provided for in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA. (p.147).

MacMillan and his colleagues stated that the "position of inclusionists is that 'least restrictive environment' (LRE) is synonymous with regular school and regular class placement of all children with disabilities" (p. 150). That is, there is no continuum of placement settings: Place all students with disabilities the regular classroom, no matter what. According to

MacMillan and his colleagues, the IDEA does not say that. Automatic placement would mean “the abolition of the continuum of placements provided for in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act”; that would violate the IDEA in MacMillan’s view. Consistent with this MacMillan, Elizabeth Beacher Wright (1999), an attorney working for the special education law department, also indicated the problem of “full inclusion with the IDEA.

In a “full” inclusion model, teachers would have to accept all students with disabilities in their general education classrooms. A parent remarked, "I have no quarrel with inclusionists if they are content to insist upon inclusion for *their* children. But when they try to force me and other unwilling parents to dance to their tune, I find it highly objectionable and quite intolerable. Parents need placement options" (Rimland, 1993, as cited in MacMillan et al., 1996, p.154). The IDEA backs up her claim; it *requires* parents to be involved in placement decisions (Yell, 2019).

When parents as well as other members of the IEP are involved in placement—and should be according to the IDEA (2004)—it implies that best interest of the student becomes the priority. The students’ ability to keep up, the time to meet the students’ needs, the struggle to fulfill IEP requirements, as well as substantial academic and behavioral issues—these challenges become difficult to meet in the regular classroom, according to my survey and interviews. Many research participants indicated that the pullout room during (some) core instruction would serve the best interests of the students, where these needs could be met. If the needs of these special needs students are not being met, they suffer academically and, by implication from my research, emotionally.

Some things, however, are clear from my research and the law. One of the coded themes from my interviews reads, *the behaviors of students with significant academic difficulties interfere not only with their own learning but also with that of the other students*. Every student

has a right to a quality education (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Any behavior by *any* student can interfere with this right, raising serious legal implications. In *fact*, the Office of Civil Rights declared, “where a handicapped student is so disruptive in a regular classroom that the education of other students is significantly impaired, the needs of the handicapped child⁸ cannot be met in that environment. Therefore, regular placement would not be appropriate to his or her needs and would not be required by § 104.34” (Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance, 1980). In these cases, the small-group pullout setting would ensure their right to learn, that is, their Free Appropriate Public Education (IDEA (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 2004); and it would ensure the other students’ right to learn and the teachers’ right to teach (Weishart, 2022).

The problem occurs when removal becomes difficult and time consuming. When the problem is identified, the solution must become the focus, and this will take teamwork: Everyone works together, in other words, a multidimensional IEP team, including parents and students, when appropriate (Smith et al., 2018; Stroggilos & Xanthacou, 2006b; Yell, 2019.)

While my bias becomes clear about placement, I am not passing judgment on schools or districts that routinely place all students with disabilities in the regular classroom. However, the implication is that schools and school districts should take a precautionary stance when determining placement, consult with IDEA legal experts, and proceed with the best interests of the student. And from personal experience, I know that the school district in my study is very concerned about all the students best interest, and student achievement is their number one goal. It’s just a matter of everyone at every level working together to figure these things out.

⁸ I would add any student.

A Note on the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

While the IDEA does not explicitly say that the IEP placement is a process, some educators describe it that way (Breeskin, 2019; Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2022; Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, n.d.; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Although not explicitly stated, the IDEA description of the LRE implies a process (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Placement is not a one-and-done decision, but may change according to the IEP team, based on the student's progress. In other words, the best placement depends on each student's *individual needs* (See Barton, 2016; Fernandez and Hynes, 2016, in the literature review).

Emotional and Psychological Ramifications. As stated earlier in the Findings section, most of the teachers believed that behavioral and other issues were overall challenging or extremely challenging, and these beliefs came from the *most experienced* teachers. Although this finding cannot be generalized to the general population, nor is it meant to be as qualitative research, the experienced teachers in this study suggest that things have not gotten better with time. The emotional toll is not limited to the teachers in this study. All over the U.S (and other countries), teachers are experiencing extreme stress, burnout, and often demoralization (Herman, et al., 2017; Pressley, et al., 2025; Walker, 2019). Just how bad is it? Here are two teachers' comments from Pressley's study (p.7):

- "I'm waking up and dreading going to work in the morning and all day." (Teacher 12)
- "The personal stress that teachers are going through right now is ridiculous. It affects people's families, how it affects the people in teaching. We just had another teacher at another school took their own life." (Teacher14)

Teachers in my study described the emotionally wearing effect of the behavioral issues exhibited by some students on IEPs, including those with significant academic difficulties—the “off-task” behaviors like talking and yelling and “pulling” upbeat children “to the dark side” or “having a lot of tantrums,” wanting teachers “to walk out” and even leading to teachers resigning—in other words, “the behavioral crap’ [that] can get to a teacher” and the extreme frustration because teachers “can’t do ...[their] jobs,” according to one participant. (See Avramidis et al., 1999; Avramidis et al., 2000; Cassady, 2011; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Khan, et.al., 2017b; Warnes et al., 2021.) Add to this the behavioral disruptions of students who are *not* on IEP students (personal communications with friends, family, and acquaintances; Westling, 2009).

Given some of their backgrounds, it is understandable why they may “act out”; it is understandable that learning may take a back seat in their lives (Johnson, et al., 2018; Tomkunas, et al., 2025). It is vital that support systems are in place for students on IEPs—and for general education teachers (Buell, et al., 1999; Mahmood &, 2024; Valeo, 2008), as well as for special education teachers, for all other students—and for parents.

Support for teachers can take various forms, including mental health services, workload reduction, and administrative support (Herman, et al., 2017; Pressley, et al., 2025; Walker, 2019). Pressley (2025) remarks, “Retention efforts should center on policies that protect teachers’ time, amplify their voices, and value their professional expertise” (p.9). Both survey and interview participants spoke about the tyranny of time to meet the students’ needs. And as for amplifying “their voices” and valuing “their professional expertise,” that is exactly what one of the interviewees, Reese, described, venting her frustration: “I just wish that our voices were heard.” Pressley adds, “Addressing these challenges will require concerted efforts at the school,

district, and state levels” (p.9). It’s important to note the challenges that teachers face transcend years of experience and levels of education. All teachers need continuous support throughout their teaching careers.

Funding could be one way to respond to teachers’ pleas. Funding must go primarily to teachers and students, providing teachers with more SpED support—more SpED teachers. Many times, the funding is there but not going to the primary stakeholders—teachers and students; however, court decisions have been favoring equity in funding for low-income and minority students (Darling Hammond, 2010).

Research Question 2: Subsidiary Question A: What kind of support would gen ed teachers desire from SpED teachers?

Teachers in this study indicated they coveted various types of support from SpED teachers, specifically for co-teaching, learning strategies, and behavior management, like some of findings in Valeo (2008). These sought-after types of support remained consistent among the most experienced and educated teachers. Special education teachers could provide behavioral management during professional learning communities (PLCs), making some PLCs more meaningful. This implies the need for more SpED teachers, again implying the need for more funding—or at least more targeted funding (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

While teachers in this study and elsewhere desired more support and training (Fuchs, 2010; Harkins and Fletcher, 2015; Hernandez, et al., 2016), apparently this is not happening, at least not to the point of effectiveness, again implying the need for more special education teachers and new ways of providing support. Nevertheless, in some cases where support was provided, teachers viewed inclusion more positively, an implication for best practices (Lindner et al., 2023).

The most at-risk students need the most qualified SpED (and general education) teachers (not aides). Regarding the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, Japan scored second in math and science and third in reading. Interestingly, the U.S. spends 11.5% on aides, while Japan spends *nothing* (Darling-Hammond, 2010) p.274). Japan relies on licensed special education teachers—who are also qualified general education teachers (UNESCO, 2021)—not on SpED aides. While correlation does not necessarily mean causation, there is something to be said about Japan’s educational system, in which students are receiving a top-notch education from highly-qualified SpED and general education teachers. Incidentally, while the U.S. spends 51.2% on teachers, Japan spends 88.9%. Although the IDEA (2024) recognizes paraprofessionals, it stresses the need for highly qualified special education (SpED) teachers. The need for highly-qualified teachers echoes Danica’s sentiments: “... if it were a pullout and there's someone who’s trained or has more information and has the training for being that person to pull them out then I would be in support of that [pullout]” (Danica was also supportive of highly qualified SpED teachers in the classroom as well.)

The classroom teachers in my research also sought support from principals, parents, and the district (Table 4.9), which is consistent with Herman, et al., (2017); Pressley, et al. 2025), and Valeo’s findings (2008) (See also Heflin & Bullock 1999; Fuchs, 2010; LeDoux & Burt, 2012; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006). A lack of administrative support is one of the major reasons teachers leave the profession, among other reasons like workload and working hours (Greg & Andrews, 2025). (This question was not analyzed by experience and educational level.) Interestingly, teachers from my study with the most experience felt they received less support than those with less experience, a respectful reminder to administrators to not overlook experienced teachers’ needs.

Again, my purpose is not to assign blame, but to propose solutions (see Recommendations). Many administrators probably step into their roles and carry on business as usual—the problem may be systemic. At every level of education—the state, the district (including superintendents), and school principals—teaching and student improvement must be the main focus (Wagner, et al., 2012). And everyone at every level—including teachers—must adopt an attitude of caring, which can reduce stress all around. A caring attitude can lead to healthy well-being (Pellicer, 2008).

Collaborative and shared leadership can reduce the tension between administrators and teachers, provide a positive work environment, and result in improved student Achievement (Bush, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Glickman, 2017, Lambert, 2003; Wagner, et al., 2012). Sharing responsibility may also lessen the burden when there is only one predominant decision maker. That is, with a shared leadership, stressful situations can be absorbed by everyone and not just one person, lessening the impact.

But the paradigm has to change since several schools follow the old way of thinking—bureaucratic, top-down administration, which has several weaknesses (Bush, 2020); most notably, an intimidating us (teachers) vs. them (principals) atmosphere. It may be that some very nice teachers who step into an existing hierarchical system inadvertently become very mean—again, a systemic problem, not necessarily a people problem. That perception comes from my lived experience.

Principals often get caught up in the business of running a school, like attendance and behavioral issues, putting out fires, and the like, whereas their main focus should be on improved student instruction (Wagner, 2012). Announcements predominate school meetings, but as Wagner and his colleagues pointed out, “[C]reating a system focused on the ongoing

improvement of instruction must be the central aim of any education improvement effort... [O]ur core business is teaching, and our product is student learning” (Wagner et al., 2012, Chapter 2, Creating a Vision of Success, paragraph 2). Collaborating with teachers can provide the support teachers desire (Berebitsky et al., 2014; Ebmeier & Nickalus, 1999; Tomlin, M. J. 2022).

In addition, research participants desired district support: Eighteen respondents marked district support 12 times (67%), aligning with Pressley and colleagues (2025). This involves support from superintendents, as well. Wagner and coauthors (2012) mentioned one superintendent from a highly successful school district (outside of my study) “changed [meetings with principals] from a time for announcements to opportunities to learn together and to create new knowledge about how to improve teaching and instructional leadership” (Wagner, Chapter 1, subheading Accepting the Challenge and the Risks: Moving Toward Communities of Practice Via Collaborative Learning, paragraph 6). Another superintendent was

committed to spending the equivalent of one day a week in classrooms and actively participated in all teacher and administrator professional development programs. He made it clear that he, too, needed to learn what good instruction looks like and, more important, what the central office had to do to support teachers and principals in this work (Wagner, 2012, Chapter 1, subheading Accepting the Challenge and the Risks: Moving Toward Communities of Practice via Collaborative Learning, paragraph 2).

As indicated by these comments, student learning becomes the primary focus at all levels of the educational system. In other words, *it takes a village to raise a child* (African proverb).

As stated earlier in the Findings section, teachers in this study desired more support in the classroom, including more SpED aides and SpED teachers (LeDoux & Buirt, 2012; Warnes et al., 2022), parental support, more push-in and pullout services, and more time to work one-one-

one with these special needs students. A co-teaching model was an option specified in my study and confirmed by outside research (Barton, 2016). This would be one way to address some of these issues. However, while co-teaching has been promoted by research, a blended model where special needs students are taught both in the regular classroom and in a pullout room, would better meets the needs of all students with disabilities (Fernandez and Hynes, 2016).

Nevertheless, classroom teachers must decide which model they prefer and are most comfortable with—a co-teaching model, for instance, cannot be imposed on an unwilling teacher who may prefer pullout services. Teachers’ voices must be heard (Pressley, et al., 2025).

As for parental support, one interviewed teacher expressed that it did not exist, although in my personal experience I had some very supportive parents and only two non-supportive ones (two too many). To gain more parental support, schools could reach out and support parents. Selected as an outstanding principal, Tara Desiderio reached out to parents during the Covid-19 shutdown, making sure their needs were being met (Riddell, 2022). It’s important that schools—especially teachers—connect with parents, inviting them to watch student demonstrations of their work and to participate in the classroom, aiding the teacher in providing some of that one-on-one help sought by teachers in my study and other studies as well (Bergström, et al., 2015; Stipek, 2012; Valeo, 2008).

Further, recruiting parents or guardians of special needs students supports that IDEA requirement that parents participate significantly in the IEP. Having them in the classroom can enhance their child’s development under the guidance of both the general education teacher and the special education teacher.

Finally, Fletcher (2015) and Warnes et al. (2022) highlighted time constraints as significant problems, mirroring the “tyranny of time” theme from my interviews. It follows that

Warnes and colleagues stressed that a reduced workload is an essential need, implying the same need from participants in my study.

Research Question 3: Subsidiary Question 3A: Who Participates in the Placement of Students with IEPs?

According to this study, teachers were generally unaware that a multi-disciplinary team must determine placement of students. Administration or the SpED department can provide teachers with a list of the IEP team that determined their students' placement, a quick fix to this issue. Further, this gives teachers a resource—the IEP team members—to consult with about any questions regarding their special needs students. This interaction can provide teachers with more insight in working with their students, enhancing students' educational experience.

Subsidiary Question 3B: According to General Education Teachers, Who Has the Most Influence in Placement of Students with IEPs? (Survey Question 7).

Based on experience and educational level, teachers perceived that SpED teachers and principals primarily had the most influence in placement, with other members playing little or no role. This perception harmonizes with research indicating that teachers have little or no influence in placement decisions (Martin et al., 1995). In one study, some members of the IEP meeting withheld their views when they disagreed with other members who held more power because they did not want to come across as less competent (Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011), thus hindering the IEP process. Further, Ruppar & Gaffney (2011) indicated that the “special education director used the IEP documents as a guide for leading the meeting and....in so doing, she exerted a great deal of power over the creation of the IEP,” (p.20). This pattern “may have hindered collaboration and discouraged parental contribution,” (p.20). In essence, the team members with the most power influenced the decision making, limiting the necessary shared leadership of the

team. Other studies indicated parents did not share in the decision making (Debelak, 2017; Salembier & Furney, 1997). These problems may also be systemic, so school leaders must emphasize shared decision-making.

The Individual Educational Program (IEP) *team* should determine placement, not any particular individual (Smith et al., 2018; Yell, 2019). The team *must* include parents or guardians, a SpED teacher, a general education teachers, a qualified overseer knowledgeable about the general education curriculum and schools resources, and someone who “can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results” (Yell, 201, p.227); the latter could be one of the existing members listed.

All these members provide a vital role in determining the IEP based on the evaluation results, and the child when appropriate (Smith et al., 2018; Yell, 2019). Teachers and parents play no small role. Regarding parents, Yell (2019) indicated that “[t]he most basic of all requirements of the IDEA is that parents are full and equal participants...in the development of their child’s IEP” (p. 228). The school’s leadership can see that these requirements are fulfilled, perhaps providing a checklist to all IEP members, accenting their participation. This shared responsibility may take some of the burden off the SpED teacher, who usually facilitates the meeting, and it can contribute “to better decisions and increases the likelihood those decisions will be implemented” (Glickman et al., 2017).

Subsidiary Question 3C: What settings do general education teachers feel will better serve special educational needs students with significant academic difficulties?

Ten of the 16 respondents for this question (63%) believed the mainstreaming model would better serve these students with significant academic difficulties; moreover, six of the eight of the most experienced teachers (75%) preferred mainstreaming. Those with the most education

(bachelors or masters with traditional licensure) also preferred mainstreaming (or blended model). Research tends to support this view: While mixed attitudes towards inclusion persisted over time (Lindner et al., 2023), some teachers preferred mainstreaming or blending; and others, who preferred inclusion, always made exceptions (Avramidis et al., 2000; Khan, et.al., 2017b), as did two of my interviewed teachers. Making exceptions for some students to learn in a pullout setting implies mainstreaming, not inclusion. In other words, those who preferred inclusion technically supported mainstreaming because of the exceptions they made.

Regarding students with severe disabilities, Ballard and Dymond (2017) in their review of the literature some studies found mixed results: Some general education and special education teachers believed the general education classroom was the best setting, but others doubted the suitability of the regular classroom curriculum students with severe disabilities. In one of the studies they reviewed, all stake holders reported that the general education curriculum was “a barrier” (p.163), SpED teacher more so than regular classroom teachers; besides SpED and general education teachers, other stake holders included administration, paraprofessionals, and parents. Both general and special education teachers felt “that the general education curriculum may be too complex and abstract” (p.163). “Full” inclusion is an illusion, not a reality. I say this as a matter of fact, not sarcasm.

Nevertheless, in many cases, like the southwestern urban school district where this study took place, mainstreaming (or blending) does not appear to be happening as much *during core instruction*, unless one includes intervention times when some students are pulled out. Careful consideration of the Least Restrictive environment indicates that “full” inclusion is not always the best option (IDEA, 2004), so school leaders must be attuned to this and provide the best setting for students according to their needs. (See Potential Legal Ramifications above.)

Incidentally, as noted in the literature review, SpED teachers, along with parents, held mixed views towards inclusion (Harkins & Fletcher, 2015; Orr, 2009); Wang, 1988). As indicated in the Findings section, the general education setting was fine for students with mild disabilities, but not for severe ones. In Ballard and Dymond's (2017) study of 406 SpED teachers, SpED teachers, along with gen-ed educators, believed that academic content was too difficult and needed to be "simplified" (p.162). A final point here, some SpED teachers valued social benefits over academic ones (Ballard and Dymond's, 2017), which raises the following question: What is the *main* purpose of education, learning or developing social skills?

Typically, administrators and university professors tended to view inclusion positively, those furthest away from the classroom (Harkins and Fletcher 2015; Lopes et al., 2004). Those closest to the students—general education teachers, SpED teachers, and sometimes principals, should have the most influence making decisions regarding placement, backed up, of course, by other IEP members, especially the parents or guardians.

I need to point out a *seeming* inconsistency within my study. It is curious that this 63% preference for mainstreaming (Table 4.14) seems at odds with the 61% of survey respondents (Table 4.6) who desired instructional support for-coteaching. Does this represent an inconsistency? Or does it mean that inclusion was the typical practice, so teachers asked for more co-teaching for the existing model, not necessarily that they preferred it?

Subsidiary Question 3D: Once these students are in the gen ed classroom, how much influence do gen-ed teachers feel they have in a change of placement?

Survey question 9: If an IEP student's academic needs are not being met in the general education classroom, how much support from the IEP team do you feel you would receive in recommending a change in placement, such as a pullout or resource room? Based

on the data I have gathered and on my personal experience, appropriate removal from the regular classroom may not always be happening. The most experienced and educated believed they had a little support or no support, signifying little influence. Two teachers I interviewed indicated how difficult a change of placement can be. They recounted the experiences of two of their colleagues who requested a change of placement for their particular students. They asked that they be moved to a more restricted environment, a small group setting outside the classroom. It was a long, difficult process. A teacher I interviewed, Reese, had a student who regularly disrupted class, the one with the demonic-like voice. It took about 5 months before this student was removed. She said, "... there's new...laws or requirements or whatever..." In a recent and confidential discussion, a district official attributed the long arduous process to the legal system, a lengthy process that can sometimes involve litigation (Holland, n.d.; Tatgenhorst, 2022).

Reese expressed her frustration with the process. She felt that general education teachers, who spend most of time with special needs students and know them the best, have such little influence. Her words are worth repeating: "I just wish that our voices were heard we're responsible for so much there's a ton of us that feel our voices aren't heard..." Buell et al. (1999) echoes Reese's feelings and arrives at the following conclusion:

Additionally, school systems should maximize teachers' participation in the decisions made about students with special needs educational plans. This is particularly critical for general education teachers, who need a voice in decisions that will affect their classrooms, if they are to feel effective (p. 153).

Even for initial placement, teachers felt they had little control (Forlin et al., 2008; Martin et al. 1995). In their quantitative study, Forlin and co-researchers indicated that "63% indicated they had no control over the placement decision" (p.256). In their qualitative interview, Martin

and others (1995) indicated that the “primary reason that teachers gave to explain their lack of influence on placement decision making that they simply were not given the opportunity to participate fully” (p.113). In Martin’s study, one of his subjects :

The school psychologist, the social worker, and the resource person will come to me prior to the meeting that they're having with the parents. They'll kind of feel me out to see which way I'm going to sway as far as where I want the child to be. And, if it meshes with them, then I'm invited to the meeting. If it doesn't mesh ... I'm not asked to be there” (p.113).

Research Q 4: What influence does experience and level of education have on general education teacher’s perceptions of IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

The most experienced and educated teachers typically indicated that all areas of concern were overall or extremely challenging. Again, these areas involved the students’ ability to keep up with the lessons, teachers finding time to meet their students’ needs, the difficulty in fulfilling the IEP requirements, along with academic and behavioral issues. As will be pointed out in the conclusion, solving these issues will require a collaborative effort from everyone in the school district, from everyone involved in education—general and special education teachers, counselors and social workers, parents, students, and administrators at all levels.

Other Considerations

Academic and Social Achievement

Although some studies show academic and social benefits of inclusion (Dewi, 2024); Jardinez, & Natividad, 2024), other studies show that the positive effects of inclusion are questionable or mixed (Lindsay, 2007; Malhotra, 2023; McCarty, 2006’ Oh-Young and Filler, 2015). For example, in inclusive settings, student with disabilities made statistically significant

academic gains but *no practical* gains (Oh-Young and Filler, 2015). Other studies showed no difference in academic gains between inclusive and pullout settings, and McLeskey and Waldron (2011) felt both settings were inadequate.

Overall, from the 1980s -1998 and from 1998-2021 and beyond, mixed results have been prevalent in the research (Dalgaard et al., 2021; Dalgaard et al., 2022; Lindner et al.; 2023). That's four decades. According to some researchers, in the inclusive settings, there were no practical gains or no gains at all, (Oh-Young and Filler, 2015; Fuchs and colleagues, 2022). In other words, *nothing* has changed—in time or place. (Similar mixed results were found in Europe (Tremblay, 2013; Scharenberg et al, 2019). Business as usual won't cut it.

Social benefits were mixed, too. Although Lipsky and Gartner (1995) reported positive results in the general education classrooms, Scharenberg and colleagues (2019) reported *negative* social benefits in the regular classroom, again raising the question about the main purpose of education—academic or social? Giving the benefit of doubt to Lipsky and Gartner, I believe that social skills can be developed in the non-core classes (specials) just as well. All things considered, placement should be based on the individual needs of each student (Barton; 2016; Hocutt, 1996; IRIS Center, n.d.; Wrights Law, n.d.; Zigmond, N., 2003). Although the IDEA (2004) promotes inclusion “to the maximum *appropriate*” [emphasis added] (p.2677), it all boils down to what is in the best interest of the student—and sometimes the other students.

Collaboration and Curriculum Misalignment

As indicated in the literature review, Browder and his team (2006) created a 5-column chart showing how to align the curriculum to state standards. The first column matched the state standard, the other columns simplified the curriculum more and more, and the last column, for the most at-risk students, hardly resembled the original state standard. This may have

implications for aligning content standards with IEP students with academic difficulties. In other words, how realistic is it for some students with severe academic difficulties to have access to the general curriculum, as mandated by the IDEA (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 2004)? (See also Tonga (2011).) For instance, some students with significant intellectual disabilities will have limitations in how much they can learn, but that is for another study.

As stated in the literature review, McLeskey and Waldron (2011) found both settings (IE and pullout) fell short in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. This does not necessarily mean that there is anything wrong with pullout setting per se, but the problem may be rooted in what is happening in pullout settings. (The same argument could be made for the classroom. Why not improve both?) Tonga (2011) and Petersen (2015) both indicated that curriculum in pullout settings were not aligned with the general education setting. Petersen exposed the confusion about what curriculum should cover, illustrated by one the one teacher's comment, "So, I want to know, am I doing sixth grade or first grade?" (p.26). In Petersen's study of special education teachers, participants emphatically pointed out the necessity of collaboration between general education and SpED teachers. In fact, one SpED teacher craved for a general education teacher to be on her "team" (p.26) to provide SpED students access to the general curriculum; the spirit is willing. Regrettably, in some cases when collaboration did take place, curriculum alignment was not even discussed (Kritikos & Birnbaum, 2003).

Regardless, more studies support collaboration between gen-ed and SpED to align curriculum, either explicitly or implicitly (Browder et al., 2006; LeDoux & Burt, 2012; Kritikos and Birnbaum; 2003; Huberman et al., 2012; Nilsen, 2016; Ballard and Dymond (2017). Additionally, when meaningful collaboration occurred, students benefited (Browder et al. 2006; Huberman et al., 2012). That is why I proposed a pilot study addressing curriculum misalignment

and collaboration (see Recommendations for Future Research section). It could yield vital information and data.

Bullying in Inclusive Classrooms

Students with disabilities usually experienced more bullying in the regular classroom than in a special education setting (Luciano and Savage, 2007; Zablotsky et al., 2013) Rose et.al., 2015, Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). This must also be considered in placement of students with disabilities. This does not mean that students with disabilities should not be in the regular classroom. As stated above, placement should be based on individual needs of the students. If that is in the general education classroom, then schools must provide a safe environment for these students and take whatever means to provide that—ethically and legally, of course. Restorative justice may be an effective option. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

In this chapter, I have expressed the implications for practice and my recommendations. Again, my intent was not to judge but to be honest and transparent. It also may sound personally situated, but in this chapter “the voice of the researcher is heard...” (Taylor (n.d., p.12). See the positionality statement in chapter 1.

Limitations of the Study

Gaining more survey respondents posed a significant challenge, despite follow-up emails to the principals. The survey response rate was 11.1%, so it is not known how the other 88.9% of the teachers would have responded. The 11.1 response rate translated to 16-18 participants (depending on who answered the questions), so the results cannot apply to the general population. Also, limiting the interviews to 30 minutes may have restricted more in-depth responses and limited other possible information. Further, this study represents only one southwestern state’s school district, not the entire school districts or even a sample of the other

districts. Additionally, as stated Chapter 1, the potential for organizational bias and social desirability bias may exist for both survey and interview respondents. Finally, because of my assumption that teachers will respond in certain ways or in ways that I hoped, especially to Research Question 1 and Research Question 3C⁹, I asked a few leading questions or biased probes during the interviews, seeking to hear the response I had wanted.

To address the limited survey response rate, I relied on triangulation, most significantly a mixed methods approach. Regardless of the small response rate on the survey, the six interviews could stand on their own as qualitative research. Further, the qualitative interview responses amplified the survey responses, giving life, so to speak, to the quantitative numbers. Further, the pilot study that I conducted included participants from a Northwest school district, yielding similar results. In addition, research studies also confirmed similar results. For instance, teacher challenges across several studies show similar results not only nationally but also internationally. (Emeljanovas, et al., 2023; Herman, et al., 2017; Pressley, et al., 2025; KoziKoğlu & Albayrak, 2021b; Walker, 2019).

Regarding organizational bias, I didn't do anything to address this limitation, but perhaps in another study, I could make participants aware of this so that they may be less likely to express a biased response. Another limitation that could not be addressed was that no males participated in the interviews. As for social desirability bias, again raising awareness of this another study could reduce the social bias effects. Finally, I caught myself twice asking leading

⁹ **Research Question 1:** What challenges do special education (SpED) students with significant academic difficulties pose for teachers in the general education classroom? **Subsidiary Research Question 3C:** What settings do general education teachers feel will better serve special educational needs students with significant academic difficulties?

questions during a spontaneous follow-up question in an interview, so I immediately re-phrased the questions to reflect a neutral stance.

Regarding placement preferences, the results of this study showed that teachers, especially the most experienced teachers, usually preferred mainstreaming or a blended approach, also in agreement with some of the research (Heflin; Bullock, 2010; Fernandez and Hynes, 2016). However, the interviews appeared to offer mixed results, like other studies that suggest a preference for the inclusive classroom (Avramidis et al., 1999; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Idol, 2006). I must reiterate that even in those studies and in my interviews exceptions were made, technically supporting the mainstream model. As such, I don't see this seeming inconsistency as a limitation. Further, while in theory inclusion prevailed (in a sense), in practice, mainstreaming or blending took precedence. Scruggs, & Mastropieri (1996) provide telltale signs of this discord: While 68.2 % of the teachers professed "general support for inclusion," only 59.6% were willing practice it.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the triangulation involved in this dissertation, it would be worthwhile to broaden the scope of this study to the state level, using mixed a methods approach, which “captures the best of both quantitative and qualitative data,” (Creswell, 2012, p. 543). A sampling of the various school districts could yield a larger response rate, allowing for more comprehensive statistical procedures to determine deeper relationships.

Teachers in this study, along with those in other previously cited research, felt students would benefit from a blended or mainstreaming model, where students learn in both the general or education classroom and in a small-group pullout setting. As stated in my literature review, curriculum misalignment posed a significant problem in the small-group setting—a mismatch

between what was taught in the regular classroom and what was taught in the small group setting (Raisch & Simpson, 1996; Dawson, 2014). Poor collaboration between the general education and SpED teacher complicated the matter; in fact, it could even be the cause of the weaknesses of the pullout setting (Ballard and Dymond, 2017; Petersen, 2015; Nilsen, 2016; Tonga, 2011).

Future research could involve pilot studies to address curriculum misalignment and other issues involving collaboration, such as a lack of time to collaborate, personality conflicts, and differing views or philosophies between SpED and general education teachers (Ballard and Dymond, 2017; Petersen, 2015; Nilsen, 2016; Tonga, 2011).

One such pilot study could involve a general education teacher working in the small-group pullout room with the special education *teacher* (not an aide)—one grade-level gen-ed teacher with the same grade of students. In this model, the general education teacher can ensure that the special needs students have access to the general curriculum (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 2004). Then both the general education teacher and SpED teacher can work together—collaboratively—aligning curriculum to provide the students with the best learning opportunities. This could support the need expressed by one special education teacher, who wanted a general education teacher on her “team” to ensure alignment (Petersen, 2015, p.26).

Further, when the curriculum is carefully aligned with the general education class, students will not be missing out on the regular classroom instruction during core instruction, an issue brought up by Meyer et al. (1990). In fact, they would receive more intense, tier 2 instruction in the pullout setting. This model could also solve the lack of communication between the SpED and general education teacher (Meyer et al., 1990). Both teachers should know and apply best practices, another shortfall of the pullout setting (Dawson, 2014; McLeskey

& Waldron, 2011; Raisch & Simpson, 1996;). As for personality conflicts (Kritikos & Birnbaum, 2003), school leaders could carefully match the SpED and general education teachers. Better yet, everyone can be trained in collaborative procedures.

This model could also address challenges teachers reported in this study, for instance, not enough one-on-one time with their IEP students. A recurring theme indicated that these teachers did not have the time to meet the academic needs of these special needs students with significant academic challenges (Fletcher, 2015; Harkins and Fletcher, 2015; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). These time constraints posed problems for both the teacher and the students. My study suggested that teachers felt frustrated and inadequate because they could not meet the time demands of these students, and these special needs students suffered from not having their needs met.

A related theme from my study indicated the severity of these students' academic achievement, that they were "so far below the mainstream." The gen-ed teacher and the SpED teacher working together in a small-group pullout setting would ensure the students are receiving a high-quality curriculum from highly-qualified staff.

Another theme signified that behaviors of students with significant academic difficulties interfered not only with their own learning but also with that of the other students. Every student has a right to a quality education (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Any behavioral distractions by *any* student can hamper learning. It can hinder the learning of the student with behavioral challenges and the learning of others. Working side-by-side with the gen-ed teacher in the proposed pilot, the SpED teacher would provide the expertise in behavior management,

Further, the SpED teacher can ensure IEP requirements are being met—a serious problem brought out in this study and in others—difficulty fulfilling the IEP requirements (Butrymowicz & Mader, 2018; KoziKoğlu & Albayrak, 2021b; Rashid & Wong, 2022; Sacks & Halder, 2017;

Smith 1990b; Stroggilos & Xanthacou. About 56% of the survey respondents in my study indicated that fulfilling IEP requirements was overall or extremely challenging. These problems extend beyond the classroom and into the courts, which have ruled against schools and school districts (Yell, 2019) for failing to carry out the IEP requirements. The pilot study described above could address this problem at least in a pullout setting. For the regular classroom, special education teachers and general education can work in tandem, backed by administrative support to ensure that the legal requirements of the IEP are met. SpED teachers would be an excellent resource regarding the law and special education. The teacher with SpED background in my study said that it was not at all challenging to meet the IEP requirement of her students. This makes sense since SpED teachers are most familiar with the IEP. Moreover, students would benefit from the expertise of both teachers.

Also, the IEP could (and should) be streamlined and easy to read for both teachers and parents. A one-page list of the IEP requirements and accommodations for each student, a cheat sheet of sorts, could assist teachers in meeting the student's academic and/or behavioral needs. In a push-in model, special education teachers could facilitate the IEP process to ensure the fulfillment of the IEP requirements.

Another issue that came up in my study and others involved a lack of participation of all IEP team members. All members of the IEP team must contribute to the development of the IEP. As Stroggilos & Xanthacou (2006b) suggested, the lack of multidisciplinary input affected student performance. In my study, teachers were generally unaware of who the IEP members were and felt that principals and SpED teachers had the most influence in developing the IEP—all members must participate in decision-making process.

Behavior issues must also be addressed. Even the teacher with the SpED background in my study found behavior to be a challenge. School leaders could establish a unified, collaborative, and research-based approach for behavioral intervention. If states are receiving funds under the IDEA's 'Subpart 1—State Personnel Development Grants—those funds can be used to “improve the knowledge of special education and regular education teachers and principals and...[when] appropriate... paraprofessionals, concerning effective instructional practices, and provide training in methods of... positive behavioral interventions and supports to improve student behavior in the classroom....” (IDEA, 2004, p.2771).

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

To “inquire into, investigate, question”—the Berean Principle led me to my research questions (Bible Hub, n.d.). (See Theoretical Perspective in Chapter 1). Beginning with the literature review, this principle has guided me in my investigation. Through critical theory and critical literacy, I hoped to have uncovered truths underlying practices in education, to raise consciousness of classroom teachers' experiences, and, through the implications for practice and my recommendations, to move educators and administrators to act (praxis). I hoped to have given voice to teachers—who feel they have no voice (Buell et al., 1999; Pressley, 2025; Zai, 2023b).

In this chapter, I have been expressing the implications for practice and my recommendations. Some of it may sound personally situated, but in this chapter “the voice of the researcher is heard...” (Taylor (n.d., p.12). See the positionality statement in chapter 1.

My intent was not to judge or criticize but to be honest, to reveal the systemic issues affecting teachers. Through an internship at the district level, I have realized that workplace stress affects everyone and at all levels—including principals. District staff is working hard to

bring about the best interests of the students and for teachers. It will take a collaborative effort at the district and school levels to bring about changes in the best interests of both students and everyone else in education, to create an all-inclusive supportive environment. An immense task, but challenges are opportunities for solutions, and through shared leadership (Bush, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Glickman, 2017, Lambert, 2003; Wagner, et al., 2012), many things are possible.

Contribution to Knowledge

The primary contribution to knowledge was *accenting* the lived experiences of classroom teachers working with IEP students who have significant academic difficulties. This study put the spotlight on these experiences, revealing the dark nature, as it were, often associated with the classroom. This study also gave teachers an *explicit voice* about these experiences and their sense of marginalization. It clarifies their desire for a blended approach for teaching students with significant academic difficulties. It also *discloses the tension* between the legal meaning of the least restrictive environment and differences in interpretation. The study stressed *the lack of change* over time regarding attitudes towards inclusion and the mixed results of achievement over time, as well. It stressed other research findings about *curriculum misalignment* between the general education classroom and the pullout room; it recognized that pullout settings are not necessarily a problem; instead, it pointed out the shortcomings—primarily the curriculum misalignment as well as other issues. Yet this study also offered *a potential solution*. Finally, this study synthesized the issues raised in other studies regarding the experiences of elementary teachers in public schools, here and abroad.

Conclusion

The overall purpose of this study was to explore elementary teachers' lived experiences with IEP students who have significant academic difficulties. Following the Berean Principle, and critical theory approaches, I sought to inquire and to examine the public-school setting in which these teachers worked, to raise consciousness. The teachers in this study expressed substantial academic and behavioral challenges working with these special needs students and sought support from virtually every area of education—special education teachers, counseling and social services, principals, and district leaders.

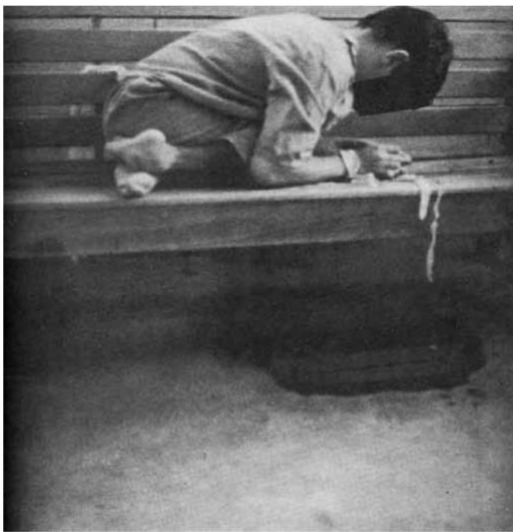
Like other teachers here and abroad, they experienced stress, burnout, and sometimes demoralization (Herman, et al., 2017; Pressley, et al., 2025; Walker, 2019). As one former colleague recently told me: “There’s not a teacher shortage; teachers are being driven out” (former colleague, personal communication, February 6, 2024).

To reiterate the widespread prevalence of these concerns, I want to share the experience of a close relative who taught 5th grade in a southeastern school in the United States. Before the semester began, Katina (pseudonym) was warned by administration that her 5th-grade class would throw chairs, and administration told her goal would be to “just get them through the school year.” How does one begin to teach under these circumstances? But there were other things besides throwing chairs—as if that’s not enough. She made a list: fighting, making racist comments, shouting, turning desks upside down, throwing objects, yelling at teacher, bullying. Katina summarized the outcome: the “inability to effectively carry out lessons and create a safe learning environment for the students that did want to learn.” And these behaviors included both IEP and non-IEP students (Katina, personal communication, February 14, 2026).

There's still more. She was told to F-off on occasion with little meaningful consequences for the student. To help with the chaos in the classroom, an interventionist might sit next to one student periodically, and students sometimes met with the school psychologist outside of class, only to return and continue the behaviors. Students who couldn't read "goofed off during the day." Katina acknowledged the need for more SpED teachers. Of interest, these "social-emotional concerns" plagued students of all racial backgrounds. Katina resigned mid-year.

I am reminded of Blatt & Kaplan's (1966) *Christmas in Purgatory: A Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation*. See Figure 5.2 below:

Figure 5.2. Image from Blatt & Kaplan's *Christmas in Purgatory*



Note the isolation, despair, anguish.

Originally self-published in 1966, *Christmas in Purgatory* was republished in 1974. So, what is my point here? *Christmas in Purgatory*, a photographic essay, portrayed the dark ages of mental institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. In a sense, in *some* contexts, we remain in the dark ages of public education in the United States, where teachers experience isolation, frustration, despair, and anguish. Even so, Seymour B. Sarason of Yale University, who wrote the forward the 1974 edition of *Christmas in Purgatory*, stated, "The purpose of this

book is to present our findings in the hope that they will inspire constructive action among those in responsible positions” (Sarason, 1974, p. ii).

Likewise, I share that purpose in this dissertation. I recounted some unpleasant stories of the participants in my research, other teachers, friends, and a relative to emphasize the seriousness of these issues, to raise consciousness. It is not to judge—there is enough stress for *everyone at every* level in public education. It is to move us towards solutions.

However, the solution doesn’t come from one person or one department; it takes a village. Through a collaborative approach, we can find solutions, solutions to improve student outcomes and provide a supportive environment for everyone—general education teachers, special education teachers, students, support staff, principals, parents, and district officials. Even the state public education department highlights a collaborative approach, a shared leadership.

The issues I wrote about span time and space. We can sit and do nothing at all— business as usual—or we can begin to make changes. Providing a safe, supportive, and caring environment—along with evidence and research-based practices— will take courage and *humility*. We need to shed our egos and look to the interests of others. As educators—and I mean everyone involved in education—we must relentlessly pursue the truth and teach our students to do that as well, to expose the systemic problems and then reach inside ourselves to muster up the courage to change, to move out of the darkness and into the light.

Chapter 6 - References

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Appendix A - Survey Questions

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Contact Information

- Graduate Student conducting survey: Pete N. Kinnas / pnkinnas@ksu.edu / (505-701-9989)
- Principal Investigator & Major Advisor: Spencer Clark, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum & Instruction | College of Education | Kansas State University / jspencerclark@ksu.edu | 785-532-555
- Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224, rubin@ksu.edu
- Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224, comply@ksu.edu.

Future Use The information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent. Again, the survey is anonymous, and neither the school nor district will be named. The location will be referred to “a southwestern school district” or something of that nature. If you desire to be interviewed, a pseudonym will be used, and neither your school nor school district will be named.

Preface to Survey This research survey is about students who have significant academic difficulties in the general education (gen ed) classroom and are under an Individualized Education Program (IEP). These students may comprehend literal questions (locating facts) but not beyond their reading level. They struggle with finding main ideas, making inferences (reading between the lines), and drawing conclusions. They also struggle with mathematical operations, and word problems present additional difficulty. Writing can pose further challenges. In addition, these special needs students often tend to lose focus. This survey seeks to understand what resources are available to you and what kind of support you would desire working with these special education

needs students. It also explores what challenges you have teaching these students during core instruction (math, science, social studies/history, writing, and reading).

Informed Consent: Filling out this questionnaire serves as your consent to take the survey. It is expected to take about 15 minutes. As a thank you, participants will receive a small token of appreciation after completing the survey. You may terminate the survey at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. While the actual survey is anonymous, if you volunteer to do an interview, your name and any other identifying information will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the interview write-up. Use the forward arrow  to advance to the next question or back arrow  to return to previous questions.

Page _____

Break

Question 1: In a given year, how many IEP students with significant academic difficulties do you have in your classroom? (Please do not count the same student twice.)

- ☐ **0** (1)
- ☐ **1-2** (2)
- ☐ **3-4** (3)
- ☐ **5 or more** (4)

Question 2 How challenging is it working with these students on the following items:

	Not at all challenging (1)	A little challenging (2)	Somewhat challenging (3)	Overall challenging (4)	Extremely challenging (5)
The students' ability to keep up with the lessons (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Finding time to meet these students' needs (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Carrying out the students' IEP requirements (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic Issues (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Behavioral Issues (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 3: Regarding IEP students with significant academic difficulties, what kind of support would you desire from the special education department? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ **Instructional support: co-teaching** (1)
 - ☐ **Instructional support: strategies for learning** (2)
 - ☐ **Student behavioral support** (3)
 - ☐ **Other: Please Specify** (4)
-

Question 4 What other support would you find helpful when working with IEP students who face significant academic difficulties? Check all that apply.

- ☐ **Administrative Support: Principals** (1)
 - ☐ **Parental Support** (2)
 - ☐ **District Support** (3)
 - ☐ **Other types of support: Please Specify** (4)
-

Question 5: What special education model does your school provide? Check all that apply.

- ☐ **Push-in** (1)
 - ☐ **Pull-out** (2)
 - ☐ **Co-teaching** (3)
 - ☐ **Other: Please Specify** (4)
-

Question 6: Which of the following special education models would you favor?

- ☐ **Push-in** (1)
- ☐ **Pull-out** (2)
- ☐ **Co-teaching** (3)
- ☐ **A combination of models: Please Specify (You may include other models not listed.)** (4) _____

Question 7: To the best of your knowledge, who participates in the placement of students with IEPs? Check all that apply

- ☐ **Special education teachers** (1)
- ☐ **Principals** (2)
- ☐ **Educational psychologists** (3)
- ☐ **Parents** (4)
- ☐ **General education teachers** (5)
- ☐ **I don't know.** (6)
- ☐ **Other: Please Specify** (7) _____

Question 8: In your opinion, who has the most influence on the placement decisions for students with IEPs?

- ☐ **Special education teachers** (1)
 - ☐ **Principals** (2)
 - ☐ **Parents** (3)
 - ☐ **General education teachers** (4)
 - ☐ **I don't know.** (5)
 - ☐ **Other: Please Specify** (6)
-

Question 9: If an IEP student's academic needs are not being met in the general education classroom, how much support from the IEP team do you feel you would receive in recommending a change in placement, such as a pullout or resource room?

- ☐ **Total support** (1)
- ☐ **A moderate amount of support** (2)
- ☐ **A little support** (3)
- ☐ **No support** (4)
- ☐ **I don't know.** (5)

Question 10: For IEP students with significant academic difficulties, which setting do you believe would serve these students the best during core instruction? (math, science, social studies/history, writing, and reading)

- ☐ **Choice 1 Inclusion: In the regular classroom for *all* of the core subjects** (1)
- ☐ **Choice 2 Mainstreaming: In the pull-out or resource for room *some* of the core subjects** (2)
- ☐ **Choice 3 Mainstreaming: In the pull-out or resource room for *all* of the core subjects** (3)

Skip To: QID22 If Question 10: For IEP students with significant academic difficulties, which setting do you believ... = Choice 1 Inclusion: In the regular classroom for all of the core subjects

Skip To: QID20 If Question 10: For IEP students with significant academic difficulties, which setting do you believ... = Choice 2 Mainstreaming: In the pull-out or resource for room some of the core subjects

Skip To: QID22 If Question 10: For IEP students with significant academic difficulties, which setting do you believ... = Choice 3 Mainstreaming: In the pull-out or resource room for all of the core subjects

Question 11: Which subjects would you want covered in the pullout or resource room? Check all that apply.

- ☐ **Math (1)**
- ☐ **Science (2)**
- ☐ **Social Studies/history (3)**
- ☐ **Writing (composition) (4)**
- ☐ **Reading (5)**

Question 12: Overall, how much special education (SPED) support is available within the classroom?

- ☐ **No support (1)**
- ☐ **A little support (2)**
- ☐ **Moderate support (3)**
- ☐ **Full support (4)**

Question 13: Do you think you would have desired an inclusive setting if significant support was provided? If you chose choice 1 in question 11, select N/A (not applicable)....

- ☐ **Definitely yes** (1)
 - ☐ **Probably yes** (2)
 - ☐ **Might or might not** (3)
 - ☐ **Probably not** (4)
 - ☐ **Definitely not** (5)
 - ☐ **N/A: I selected inclusion for question 11.** (6)
-

Page

Break

Question 14: Please explain your reasons for the setting you chose in Question 11. Question 11 for your reference: For IEP students with significant academic difficulties, which setting do you believe would serve these students the best during core instruction? -Choice 1 Inclusion: In the regular classroom for all of the core subjects -Choice 2 Mainstreaming: In the pull-out or resource room for some of the core subjects -Choice 3 Mainstreaming: In the pull-out or resource room for all of the core subjects (To see your response to Question 11, use the back arrow.)

Question 15: If any of your IEP students with significant academic difficulties struggled with staying on task or focusing, please describe these behaviors.

Question 16: When these students struggle to focus, how much does it affect the learning of other students in the classroom?

- ☐ **Not at all** (1)
- ☐ **Mildly** (2)
- ☐ **Moderately** (3)
- ☐ **Significantly** (4)

Question 17: When IEP students with significant academic difficulties struggle to focus during lessons or activities, how much does this affect their own learning?

- ☐ Not at all (1)
- ☐ Mildly (2)
- ☐ Moderately (3)
- ☐ Significantly (4)

Page _____

Break

End of Block: Default Question Block

Demographic Questions These 5 questions ask about your experience, grade taught, and the like. This will be helpful for data analysis. You're almost done!

Question 1: What grade do you currently teach?

- ☐ **1st** (1)
- ☐ **2nd** (2)
- ☐ **3rd** (3)
- ☐ **4th** (4)
- ☐ **5th** (5)

Question 2: How long have you been a teacher?

- ☐ **0-1 year** (1)
- ☐ **2-3 years** (2)
- ☐ **4-5 years** (3)
- ☐ **6-10 years** (4)
- ☐ **More than 10 years** (5)

Question 3: For the current year, what best describes your average class size?

- ☐ **1-10 students** (1)
- ☐ **11-20 students** (2)
- ☐ **21-25 students** (3)
- ☐ **26- 30 students** (4)
- ☐ **31 students or more** (5)

Question 4: The following table shows what percent of students are on a free or reduced lunch plan. Please select your school. (Your selection will be anonymous.)

- ☐ Animas Elementary School: 76% (1)
- ☐ Apache Elementary School: 68% (2)
- ☐ Bluffview Elementary School: 65% (3)
- ☐ Country Club Elementary School: 35% (4)
- ☐ Esperanza Elementary School: 65% (5)
- ☐ Ladera Elementary School: 46% (6)
- ☐ McCormick Elementary School: 71% (7)
- ☐ McKinley Elementary School: 58% (8)
- ☐ Mesa Verde Elementary School: 55% (9)
- ☐ Northeast Elementary School: 62% (10)

Question 5: What is your highest degree earned?

- ☐ **Bachelor's degree + Alternative License** (1)
- ☐ **Bachelor's Degree + Traditional Teaching License** (2)
- ☐ **Master's Degree + Alternative License** (3)
- ☐ **Master's Degree + Traditional Teaching license** (4)
- ☐ **Doctor's Degree + Alternative License** (5)
- ☐ **Doctor's Degree + Traditional Teaching License** (6)
- ☐ **Other: specify** (7) _____

★ Would you be willing to participate in an interview? If yes, provide your email address in the box. Thank you!

☐ **Yes** (1) _____

☐ **No** (2) _____
Page
Break

Contacts

Graduate Student: Pete N. Kinnas pnkinnas@ksu.edu (505) 701-9989

Principal Investigator & Major Advisor: Spencer Clark, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum & Instruction | College of Education | Kansas State University / jspencerclark@ksu.edu | 785-532-555

IRB Chair: Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224, rubin@ksu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: **IRB Office, Kansas State University, 203 Fairchild Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506, or 785-532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu**

You're done! Thank you very much! I hope to use this information to enhance teacher experience.

Please follow-up with an email if you are interested in seeing the results: **pnkinnas@ksu.edu**

Pete Nicholas Kinnas, Doctoral student

Kansas State University

Former 4th-grade Teacher, Farmington, NM

Keep on truckin' ?

Page Break

Appendix B - Interview Protocol

Name _____

Date _____

☐ Consented to Interview, recording, and other conditions:

☐ Tell me what grade do you currently teach?

☐ How long have you taught?

- In case you didn't do the survey—or a review if you did: This interview focuses on IEP students with significant academic difficulties in the regular gen-ed classroom. They struggle with abstract thinking and inferential questions.... They may also struggle with mathematical operations, and word problems present additional difficulty. These students often are easily distracted, as well, and may demonstrate difficulty with memory.
- Any questions before we start? Keep in mind there are **NO** right or wrong answers—everything you say is valid and important

BEGIN BOTH RECORDINGS

OK, here's the first main question: What challenges do special education students pose for teachers in the general education classroom? Lack training, differential instruction

I.

- A. Can you tell me about a time when you had success working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?
- B. What are the challenges in meeting the needs of IEP students with significant academic difficulties? (*ask a, b, and/or c if not brought up*)

1) Academic?

Regarding IEP students with significant academic difficulties, could you provide a specific example or experience with the learning struggles of your students?

[Restate as needed and ask follow-up questions as needed]

☐ How did you address this issue?

☐ Could you describe the effect this had on the other students?

Behavioral? Could you provide a specific example or experience with the behavioral issues of these students?

☐ How did you address this issue?

☐ Could you describe the effect this off-task behavior had on the other students? Negative effect ; complaints from parents

2) Loss of focus/off task

☐ Could you provide a specific example or experience with the any off-task behavior of these IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

☐ How did you address this issue?

☐ Could you describe the effect this off-task behavior had on the other students?

C. inclusion means *all* students with disabilities are taught in the general education (gen-ed) classroom at *all* times. Mainstreaming means that students with disabilities are taught in the gen-ed classroom *some* of the time and in pullout settings at other times.

Which program would you prefer and why?

II. What resources are available to you for working with IEP students with significant academic difficulties?

A. If any, what are some supports you wish you had access to when working with students with IEPs?

B. Is there anything else you would like to add?

☐

☐ What do you think should be the maximum amount of IEP students in the classroom?

III. In your school, who has the most influence in placement of students with IEPs?

[Pete, restate/summarize what you just heard for each question]

[Follow-up questions as needed]

A. Could you describe the placement process?

B. What are your thoughts and feelings of how much influence the regular classroom teacher should have in placement?

C. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding placement?

Appendix C - IRB Expedited Approval



TO: J. Spencer Clark Curriculum and Instruction Manhattan, KS 66506 Proposal
Number IRB-13070

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 09/02/2025

RE: Proposal Number IRB-13070 Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Dissertation
Survey/EDCI999."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.

APPROVAL DATE: 08/25/2025

EXPIRATION DATE: 08/24/2028

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 09/02/2025 1:37 PM ET

Appendix D - Letter of Cooperation

September 11th, 2025

Pete N. Kinnas:

I give permission for you to conduct your study to determine what challenges special education students with significant academic difficulties pose for teachers in the general education classroom, what resources are available to them, and what their perceptions are about the placement process for students with IEPs. (Kansas State University Dissertation Survey / EDCI999, Proposal Number IRB-13070).

As part of this study, I authorize you to anonymously survey and/or interview XXX* elementary teachers in grades 1-5.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include granting permission for a letter to be shared electronically with XXX*teachers inviting them to participate in the optional survey.

I understand that our organization will not be named in the doctoral report.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

Thank you,

Signature of Executive Director of Human Resources and Support Services*

Identifying information left out to protect identity

Appendix E - Letter to Principals to Submit to Teachers

Dear educator,

I ...¹⁰ am completing my doctoral studies in curriculum and instruction through Kansas State University. The purpose of the study is to determine what challenges special education students with *significant academic difficulties* pose for teachers in the general education classroom, what resources are available to them, and what their perceptions are about the placement process for students with IEPs. *The goal of this study is to help enhance teacher experiences and, ultimately, improve student outcomes.*

The survey consists of 16-17 close-ended questions and two open-ended questions, along with five, brief demographic questions. The survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete. While the actual survey is anonymous, if you volunteer to do an interview, names and any other identifying information will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the interview write-up. In the dissertation, the setting will be referred to as “an urban school district in the Southwest.”

I would greatly appreciate your time in completing the survey (link below). Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Link to survey: https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3k3oi84YTHmb2RM

Kind regards

Pete N. Kinnas

Pete N. Kinnas, ABD.

¹⁰ I deleted where I lived to protect identity of school district.

Curriculum & Instruction

pnkinnas@ksu.edu

505-701-9989

Appendix F - Flyer to Recruit Teachers for Interviews



**Graduate student needs 3-5
teachers* to interview. Receive a
\$40.00 credit card for participating!**



Please text or email Pete Kinnas:

505-701-9989

pnkinnas@ksu.edu

(Provide grade and school)

*(Please fill out the survey emailed to you if you haven't
already. Participating schools will receive treats ☺ .*

Thank you!)

*The goal of the interview and survey is to help enhance
teacher experiences and improve student outcomes.*

**Only for grades 1-5, no K or special teachers.*

Appendix G - Informed Consent

To save time, I am sending this consent form to look over and sign before the interview—although we can certainly go over this during the interview if you prefer. The KSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), which approved my survey, still requires that participants are fully informed about the interview purpose and conditions. This interview does not contain any sensitive, personal information, but I still want you to feel comfortable with this interview. Therefore, you may indicate any exceptions to the conditions near the end of this document.

Thank you again!

Pete N. Kinnas

Pete N. Kinnas, ABD

Doctoral Student, Curriculum & Instruction

Kansas State University

(505) 701-9989

Name:

Date:

Grade:

Years Taught:

Informed Consent:

Contact Information

- Graduate Student conducting survey: **Pete N. Kinnas** / pnkinnas@ksu.edu / (505-701-9989)
- Principal Investigator & Major Advisor: Spencer Clark, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum & Instruction | College of Education | Kansas State University / jspencerclark@ksu.edu | 785-532-555

- Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224, rubin@ksu.edu

Interview Procedures

The interview should take about 30 minutes, but if for any reason you want to stop, that is fine; there will be no repercussions. We will use Zoom to conduct the interview. I would like to record this interview and use a backup audio recording on my cell phone, the Easy Voice application. Recording ensures accuracy in my write-up. It also allows me to focus on our conversation, and it will *save* time. Nevertheless, you may stop the recording at any time. I will be using Cockatoo transcription to transcribe the audio recording into words.

Pseudonyms

I will not use your real name in the dissertation, or any other identifying information, such as your school name or city. I will refer to the location as “a southwestern urban school district” or something of that nature. You may choose a pseudonym yourself, or I can make one up. If you choose your own pseudonym, please write it in the space below:

Participant-chosen pseudonym _____

Future Use

When I complete the project, I will delete both recordings (Zoom & the Easy Voice ap on my cell phone) and the transcript. However, I hope to keep my analysis of the interviews, in which I “code” for topics and shared or contrasting themes. I could use the results for future research or journal publication. Again, pseudonyms will be used, and neither your school nor district will be named.

Benefits

This research study intends to highlight teachers’ first-hand experience with these special needs children. The results could enhance teacher experience and improve student outcomes. For local benefits, the Farmington Municipal School District would like me to present my findings, so this could lead to direct benefits to you and other teachers in the district and to the students, ideally within the near future. Again, your name would remain confidential.

Know that you may stop the interview at any time without penalty of loss of benefits.

Post-Interview

I will categorize (code) your comments. You may see my analysis to ensure everything is accurate. You may add or delete something to better reflect your thoughts and feelings. Would you prefer to see this analysis? Yes No

Consent

Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw your data at any time. If anything in the interview was uncomfortable or raised concerns, you are welcome to contact the Office of Research Compliance at Kansas State University:

- Email: comply@ksu.edu.
- Phone: (785) 532-3224

Please select one of the following:

- ☐ I consent to the conditions of this interview.

Name:

Signature*:

Date:

- ☐ I consent to the conditions of this interview with the *following exceptions*:

Exceptions:

Name:

Signature*:

Date:

Thank you again for your time and valuable contribution to educational research!

*You may simply type your name in a different font, or use an “authentic” signature if you are familiar with that process. Or you may print and fill out the form and scan it back to me.

Appendix H - Audit Trail

Pete Kinnas

During the first two weeks of November (2025), I conducted six semi-structured video-recorded interviews on Zoom. I saved the video recordings to my MacBook Air desktop and to a password-protected Google drive, which I will delete after the dissertation is completed. Using Cockatoo transcription software, I had each Zoom video transcribed one by one. Then I highlighted the text of each participant's transcript, copied it, and inserted it into a Word table. I changed the layout to landscape and grabbed the right border, lessened the width of the single row table, and added 3 columns for coding analysis, labeling each column (see Table __ below). After that, I added another row

Table __

Four-column coding structure

Cockatoo Transcribed Zoom video	1st Coding: In Vivo	2nd Coding: often concept & and affective	The third column contained thematic coding

The first column contained verbatim transcripts. The second column contained my first coding, which consisted of In Vivo comments, and the third column contained my second coding, usually categorical analysis. The last column consisted of thematic coding. Also, I used the find-and-replace function to locate the participant's name (if used) and replaced it with her pseudonym. That was the process for the first video I transcribed.

Originally, I highlighted the text in the first, verbatim column that I wanted to use for In Vivo coding, and referred to the highlighted text and generated the second coding, usually categorical or concept analysis. From there, I synthesized common categories and concepts into themes and typed those into the last column (thematic coding). From then on, to save time, I highlighted the text in the first (verbatim transcripts) column and used the highlighted text as my In Vivo coding. That way I didn't need to copy the highlighted text and paste it into the second column, In Vivo column, which I then deleted,

To save time, for the other videos, I highlighted the text I wanted to use for In Vivo coding in the first column so that I didn't need to copy and paste text from the first column into the second column. That way, I could delete the original second, In Vivo coding column. See the example in Table below:

Streamlined In-Vivo Coding with second and third coding

Transcribed Text & In-Vivo Highlighted Text	Second, Categorical Coding	Third, Thematic Coding
I feel like sometimes it's hard for those students, and I think there's just a different range of abilities with special education students. It depends on what their current ability is. and also with what their education plan entails, I know that it can be difficult when, say, they have one -on -one assistance, and when the person isn't available for that, like a push and support, that can be challenging for them. And I feel like when it comes to having students have that consistent		

person helping them. And when they're not consistent, it makes it hard for the student to have to build like the rapport to work and to also develop like that relationship too.	No consistent one-on-one assistance from SpED or EAs Lack of rapport building	There is no consistent one-on-one push-in support from SpED.
---	---	---

Note, I prefer highlighting enough text to understand the context of the participant's words.

Sometimes did second (categorical) and third (thematic) coding one after the other, but usually did second coding (conceptual, process, causation, for instance) and afterwards coded for themes. I completed the coding for all participants during the last week of November.

Afterwards, I sent to all participants, along with the themes I generated from their interviews, requesting feedback for accurate representation (member checks). I only sent the last column of the Word table (the themes) because did not want to bog down the participants with all the transcripts and categorical coding. If there were any confusing parts of the verbatim transcripts, I listened to the original Cockatoo audio, following along with its transcription for clarification.

Pete N. Kinnas

Appendix I - Coded Transcript Example

Andrea 4 th Grade; 7 years' experience	2 nd Coding: Concept & Affective (Type of coding in parenthesis)	3 rd Coding: Theming
November 13, 2025 at 11:05 AM		
1x		
Speakers		
Cockatoo Editor		
2		
0:02		
OK, so first question. There are three main questions and then sub questions, and sometimes the participants start answering another question, so I try to adjust for that too. So I don't go, whoa, wait, we're not there yet. Unless it's sequential and it's coming up. And if I try to move it along, I'm not trying to be rude. I just want to respect your time.		
1		
0:29		
OK, no worries.		
2		
0:30		

OK. So first main question, what challenges do special education students pose for teachers in the general education classroom?		
1		
0:40		
And we're focused on IEP students who have significant academic difficulties. Right, right. What significant problems do they pose? Quite honestly, we just don't have the time to give that student what it is we know they need and it is so frustrating. You know, I mean, I have in numerous meetings have said, when somebody can show me how to present one lesson, Right now I have 19 students in my class 19 separate ways at the same time.	Time constraints (concept) Frustration (affective)	Teachers are overloaded Some non-IEP students have significant academic needs. Some IEP students can have significant academic needs.
2		
1:33		
I'll be happy to do it Individualized instruction isn't everything is cracked up to be right Right, right.		
1		
1:45		
So go ahead. Um, it's it's just you know It's so hard because a lot of those students that you're specifically talking about need very one-on-one time. And if that was even a remote possibility, I would sign up.	IEP Student Needs (concept)	

2		
2:14		
You know, if I could have a classroom of, like, five students that just needed good, solid help, you know, like, I would be down, you know?		
1		
2:26		
Yeah, talking about this small group. Yeah, because even when you have an opportunity where you can have a small group, you still have those other 14, 15 students that have questions, need help, you have to redirect, you know, so you're still constantly, okay, yes, that's right, or try this, and then, hey, you over here, you need to be doing that, you know, like you're still not giving the time to each student that you need to.	Non-IEP Student needs (concept)	
2		
3:03		
You're doing the best you can, but it still poses a challenge even when you have an opportunity where you can have a small group.		
1		
3:16		
Right, or that one -on -one that you mentioned.		

2		
3:19		
Exactly. We're going to get to this question later, but since you brought it up, it seems pretty relevant right now.		
1		
3:26	Research Question 4c	
Well, where do you, if you had your choice, where would you want this small group instruction or this one - on -one instruction to happen in the regular classroom or in a pullout room? If I had my choice and I was in You're looking at me as the gen ed teacher. I would much rather have it in the classroom because there are things that are happening in the classroom. that if it's something super important or pertinent that you know that that student's going to need, at least if they're in the classroom in the small group, then you could say, hey, you know, I need your attention for a second. We need to, you know, discuss this.	Reasons for gen-ed classroom (Causation) "super important or pertinent [things] that you know that that student's going to need" Addressing small group needs in the gen ed class.	
10		
4:14		
Whereas if the if the student is Pulled then you don't even really remember what this student has missed or not missed of Any lecture or anything like	Reasons con'd	

1		
6:13		
And her and I sat back in the back and like kind of celebrated and I high - fived her. And it was so awesome.		
2		
6:21		
And once she truly felt like she had some success, it was easier to get her to try On that next word, whatever that one and and I honestly only remember the word said That's being that that key word that she got and understood um But I will say at the by the end of the year with help She was able to read a paragraph out of our Shakespeare a random paragraph and like I said with help and probably with a lot of help but she was able to read this paragraph and I explained to her how this was like this is heavy -duty text that she was reading.		
1		
7:24		
Was the Shakespeare passage adapted? No. In fifth grade, they do Midsummer Night's Dream, and a lot of it is based on how he writes it and what he means by it in the book. that, but it's, I mean, it's CKLA. So, you know, I mean, I'm sure you could pull the lesson up somewhere, you		

know, because that was something that we were actually very shocked at too, is that it really is not, it's not like the Don Quixote where it is adaptive.		
2		
8:07		
It is, it's, Pretty straightforward Shakespeare stuff.		
1	Research Question 3	
8:13		
Yeah, I'm sorry for this student that Like a major milestone. Oh, absolutely. And, you know, and the SpED teacher was with me when we did it. It was, I had the rest of the class doing stuff.	"much rather have it in the classroom"	
2		
8:27		
So it was the three of us and we were reading the paragraph and I don't remember exactly, but I would say, you know, she probably read somewhere between 60 to 70 % of the paragraph.		
5		
8:40		
Okay.		
2		
8:41		

Okay.		
1		
8:43		
With, with, with help or without? What that was the part that she was able to the words that she was able to kind of pick out.		
2		
8:53		
So it might have been like, she read a word, I read a word, she read two words, I read a word, that kind of thing.		
1		
8:59		
Got it.		
2		
9:01		
But the fact that she read any of the paragraph was where I was really kind of focusing on and letting her know the importance of that.		
1		
9:14	Interview Q 1A	
So the successful strategy, was it just like alternating reading words with her or anything else?	Successful strategy	
12		

9:24		
Um, you know, it was it was so few and far between when I was able to work with her one on one, that it was really and truly whatever strategy I could use at that moment.		
1		
9:37		
Okay.		
2		
9:39		
So at this particular time it you know we when we sat down to read it I was like I want you to read when you start having trouble with the word I'm gonna help you or you know miss Johnny's are gonna help you or whoever But I want you to read as much of it as you can try, you know to sound out the words, whatever it is that you needed to do.		
1	Research Question IB1 Academic	
10:06		
So related to that, what are some of the challenges in meeting the needs of these IEP students with significant academic difficulties? I mean, I'm really and truly going to go back to just having the time to really sit down and work with this student. Because even with her, it was so like just	Academic challenges (concept)	It is difficult to fit 1-1 time in the regular classroom with IEP students with significant academic difficulties Addressing needs of some IEP students involve heavy cueing.

trying to fit it in [time to work 1-1] wherever I could, because her and I were getting somewhere. And so I didn't want to like break that Trust might not be the word I'm looking for right there, but that partnership that her and I had developed that, you know, she knew that I was really truly trying to help her. And, you know, so there were even times like in this particular lesson with this student that we did a lot of partner work, but it was as a group. you know, kind of thing. And I would always just partner up with her so her and I could kind of discuss it, go over the things.		IEP students with significant academic difficulties pose great challenges for the general education teacher.
1		
11:34		
So when she had to voice something orally, I would always kind of like put my paper up and I would kind of feed her the answer.	Addressing needs	
2		
11:43		
So nobody else in the class knew that she didn't fully do the assignment.		
1		
11:54		
Right, right. So besides that student you mentioned, let's see so i have a student in my class this year that um the i i know that you're you're very		

specifically talking about students with ieps but here's the challenge that i have with this student is that um they came to bluff you mid -year last year as a homeschooled student and only knew the letters s s and n And when I got him this year, he could only say his alphabet to the letter G. And I was really and truly just told that he's going to have to give oral responses. I didn't fully understand the impact of this. Now, the problem that we have is that this student is showing progress. So it's my understanding that we can't even get him truly tested for an IEP because he is showing progress. So he isn't on an IEP right now. It doesn't like he's not in any type of a process of getting on an IEP. And but I	Academic challenges (concept) Research Question 3 IEP Placement Frustration (affective) Student needs (concept)	
16		
13:30		
say in in our defense we're doing what we can do like he's getting pulled 15 minutes at the end my ELA block is is divided into we have like a morning session, lunch, and then a p.m.		
1		
13:48		

session, and he's getting pulled at that 15 minutes right prior to our break for recess to sit with the third graders in their 95 % small group. So		
2		
14:05		
he is getting extra help the best we can give it to him without him being on an IEP. So		
1	Research Question IB1 Academic	
14:13		
do you think he should? Beyond iep and this he needs he seriously does need the one -on -one help only because he's so far behind , but he's far behind because he's You know was homeschooled. So it's it's not necessarily a learning disability I don't that I know of it is just he's so far behind right? Okay,	Student needs (concept)	IEP students with significant academic difficulties need 1-1 help beyond what's the classroom teacher can provide.
15		
14:41		
so Let's see yeah you know so get him on a 90p let's get him up to speed and then letting be an active you know student right right okay so um we can now say his alphabet by the way i just want to add that we we had a couple students some of the academic issues that come in and they Hardly no part of the alphabet, you know, yeah, and that's honestly a		

far more problem with you know more students than people probably truly realize in some of these upper elementary grades.		
12		
15:25		
Right.		
2		
15:25		
Wow. Wow. OK. What about behavioral with these students, these IEP students?		
1		
15:34	Research Question IB12 Behavioral	
What are some of the behavioral issues?		
14		
15:37		
Could you provide specific examples?		
1		Gifted students present the most "behavioral issues"
15:40		
Do you want me to?		
13		
15:42		
Oh, wait.		
1		
15:42		

I'm going to be truly honest with you.		
2		
15:44		
Yeah. Seen it's been my experience most of my behavioral issues with any type of the student are My gifted students.	Sources of behavioral problems (concept)	
1		
16:00		
Okay. Well, okay, I And I know what you're saying.		
2		
16:05		
Okay, so As far as just a regular Like run of the mill IEP student who has learning difficulties... I really don't have that many issues with them. OK, so I'm going to go back to. I'm going to come back to that. Well, that one was really all we need to say there. You kind of covered that. I want to go back just follow up on the academic issues when you were working one on one or something. How did that affect?		
1		
16:44	Research Question 1 B (academic) effects on other students	Some

	Insignificant effect	
Could you describe the effect it had on the other students? You mentioned something about the time, the time that it takes. Right. I, you know, honestly, I try to do it in such a way that the other students don't even realize what I'm doing.		
2		With Andrea, working 1-1 with IEP students is done without drawing attention to the student, so the others don't notice it.
17:10		
And I'm not even sure if I can explain how that, you know, where I just try and when I see the class kind of really working on something or whatever then i take that opportunity to sit with that one student one-on-one okay um so i try to do it in the least Evasive way, right?	Insignificant time way from other students	
4		
17:40		
Right, so it sounds like the time when you were spending wasn't taking time away from the other students.		
2		
17:48		
Is that correct or right?		
8		
17:51		
OK, right?		

2		
17:52		
Yeah, I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but I think that's what I was sensing.		
1		
17:56		
So yeah, yeah, yeah. OK, so what about any off task behaviors of some of these students? They, you can clearly tell when we are doing stuff that they really have no concept of they will, you know, take a toy out or put their head down or my alphabet kid yesterday. Gosh, I don't even remember what it was we were talking about. I think it was during math. He's got a little bit better concept of numbers, but really is not at all on a multiplication level. So when we were doing the lesson, like he was sitting there, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, ... just making noises...play with something, snap a ruler on ...one of the noisiest classrooms I've ever had.	Off-task behaviors (concept)	

Research Question 1 , 2		
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it's talking, but it's other, I've got a kid who claps all day long. I'm like, stop.		
12		
19:22		
So they do things to occupy their time.		
2		
19:32		
But self-contained, if that makes sense.		
1		
19:43		
Yes. So how do you address this issue of clapping? Oh, the kid with the clapping, I am like, stop, stop clapping right now. No more clapping the rest of the day. You got to stop. Like, I just I mean, this particular student, I really cannot give any kind of leeway with. And then, of course, he starts clapping again.		Behaviors of some IEP students with significant academic difficulties do irritate Andrea—persistent clapping of one student and the others take over. The clapping “makes...[her] crazy.”
		“Auditory overload” took Andrea over the edge one day; she “lost it.”
2		
20:16		
And I'm like, stop it.		
1		
20:18		

So it is just constant redirection, right? So could you describe the effect of this kind of behavior has on the other students? Well, when he stops clapping, then somebody else starts clapping because they know that it bugs Miss W. Yeah, oh, it's so fun. So so then I get to deal with that. you know, or he will start doing something else. Like today when I told him to stop clapping, he has a little fidget cube that has a clicker on it and he starts clicking that. And I'm like, you have to find something that doesn't make noise.		
1		
21:10 "....and he's swinging it around like this."		
So he's got one of the stretchy ones, And I'm like, you're making me relive some of my memories. Um, you know, you you try to pick whatever battles that you can pick. to, you know, do the clapping makes me crazy because it is all day. So I get auditory overload, which that's a whole nother discussion because I get that these kids need very specific things. I'm an adult. I should be able to regulate. I should, but you		

know what? I've got my issues too. And at some point, the teacher issues also need to be addressed. And I know that's a whole nother subject, but like I lost it yesterday because it was just all day of auditory overload. And I finally at one point was like, put your heads down.		
2		
22:27		Some of the behavior of IEP students actually does disrupt the learning of others! Andrea feels that the kids and parents need to be more accountable.
I do not want to hear a sound. And my little clapper dude was tapping on his desk the whole time.		
1		Andrea prefers inclusion but likes the way it's set up during <i>parts</i> of the day.
22:40		
So, if you could wave a magic wand and say, okay, what would you like to see when these students are disrupting not just their own learning, but it sounds like they're disrupting the others learning as well.		
2		
22:55		
Is that true? At times, yes, for sure. So, do you, I mean, where do you see these students?		
1		
23:04		

Do you see them could they benefit from, you know, not because of academic, but behavior to be pulled out sometimes, or what are your thoughts on that?		
12		
23:13		
Yeah, oh, for sure.		
1		
23:16		
I honestly, the kids, the parents, the whoever, need to be somewhat accountable. Yeah. You know, I mean, I I had an almost stepson who was autistic and he patted his belly a lot. It was his tick. I get that. But at some point, these and unfortunately, I think we're seeing more and more students with ticks, things like this. My Clapper student talking with mom, this is apparently sometimes some things that he does. The problem I'm having is I can't necessarily equate it to one specific thing. You know, like, is he clapping because the class is noisy? Is he clapping because the class is, you know?		
2		
24:22		
So I'm playing a little bit of detective to figure out why he's doing this.		

But then the precious little angel that he is, I know there's times that he's doing it because he just wants the attention and he knows that he's under my skin already. Right. Okay.		
7		
24:48		
Well, that's going to lead into the second main question.		
11		
24:52		
I mean, well, let's see.		
2		
24:57		
Wait a minute. Let's see. Oh, okay. So, inclusion, technically, the word inclusion means that all students with disabilities, especially those that affect their learning are taught in general education classroom. at all times. That's, you know, some people refer that as full inclusion, but that's technically that's a redundant term, because inclusion means everyone at all times. Mainstreaming, as you're probably familiar, means that students, and it's an older term, students with disabilities are taught in the gen ed classroom part of the time and in the pullout room at other parts of time. Now with the academic, You already		

answered the question, but now let's bring in the behavioral things.		
1		
25:49		
What program would you prefer and why? So even now, considering the behavioral stuff, would you prefer that they still remain in the classroom all the time or that they could be pulled out some of the time? So I'd like a mainstreaming aspect or, you know, for lack of a better term, full inclusion, right? So I'm still going to go with full inclusion. With the assumption that our intervention time ...helping the students when they need it, we switch. The way that we're doing it now, the student has the possibility of going to another teacher. And I like that because it gives them a break. It gives you a break. The problem with that is then you get the other students from the other classrooms. So I kind of like the		

model that we're using right now, which we have inclusion for parts of the day.		
1		
27:18		
And then the students also go to other classrooms for the intervention time that we have throughout the day. You know, we have one for ELA and one for math.		
2		
27:36		
I like that because it gives them kind of a pull out, but it's not necessary. Like, they're not getting pulled out from Missing like a core.		
1		
27:50		
They're getting pulled out with a whole group that they're more Hopefully more in lined with so you can address some of those Polishing needs right that that makes sense. I totally understand what you're saying so We're all ready our times up. I mean, can you go a little longer? Oh, yeah.		
2		
28:10		

Yeah. No, I'm good. I Yeah, I'm good for as long as you are.		
1		
28:14		
Okay, great. So, because you're getting, I'm getting a lot of really helpful feedback from you. So what, this is a second main question, what resources are available to you for working with these IEP students with significant academic difficulties? So I have, I have I don't know, you know, a good handful of IEP students in my classroom. One of the other fourth grade classrooms has the other handful of IEP.		
2		
28:49		
So the SpED department kind of switches with who has inclusion for some part of the day or whatever, but they're kind of like 30 minute blocks.		
1		
29:06		
I also have a student in my classroom who is a life skills student and pushes into my classroom a couple times a day or several days a week. Friday is pretty much kind of an all day thing with this young lady, but I have times where somebody		A classroom teacher cannot meet the needs of life skills students who attend part of the day in the general education classroom when the aid is not there.

from life skills comes in and sits also, but it's not necessarily all the time.		Push-in SpED assistance would be “superb” if they were in the classroom for the entire 45-minute block. Andrea would like to see a co-teaching model. Andrea unsure of what help administration can provide. Andrea worries that she is not meeting all the IEP requirements for the students.
So when SpED comes in like for 30 - minute blocks how often during the day or week or is it once daily or So they just kind of changed the schedule. So it's I'm still trying to kind of get used to it.		
2		
29:57		
I have My life skills person Monday Wednesday, and I think Friday for like my first block of ELA and Um, and then my, um, then I have some inclusion in with math two, two times a week, I think like Wednesday, Friday, maybe.		
1		
30:30		
Um, and then I have, um, the gifted teacher pushes in twice a week.		
2		
30:40		
Also, I think, um,		
1		
30:44		
For ELA, how long was it?		
2		
30:49		

For the life skills, it's, I want to say it's 45 minute block.		
1		
30:54		
Okay. The SpED blocks are more like 30. And how often do they come in for like ELA, like, is it like the others, two or three times a week or?		
2		
31:07		
The, I really want to say I don't get much help with ELA because I have the the life skills one in there.		
11		
31:18		
So, during ELA, I think they're in the other classroom.		
2		
31:21		
I tend to see more inclusion during my math time.		
1		
31:27		
Okay. So, I'm just curious. I'm just curious. When I was at McKinley and I thought of life skills, I was thinking students who are like really non-commutative.		

9		
31:49		
And what are the... So, my... Yeah.		
1		
31:53		
So my little girl, she doesn't, she's not super talkative, but she can talk. Um, she just doesn't, she's, um, I honestly don't know what, like all of her diagnosis are her or whatever. I mean, I've looked at her IEP, but they don't always necessarily put a diagnosis on it. Yeah.		
2		
32:19		
Um, so I'm thinking that she's pretty, She's autistic, but pretty functioning autistic. And I have told LifeSkills, I would take a whole entire classroom of her. know she's compliant she does what she needs to do she you know may not complete it you know but she you know it's hard to ask her questions sometimes you might just get a thumbs up or a you know like a yes or you know things like this so Um, but she's, you know, very functioning in whatever it is that, you know, I don't have to remind her where to put her folder or where to stand in line or, you know, she can get to and from the classrooms, things like this. So, which I'm sure is		

why she is in some gen ed some of the time. Right.		
1		
33:34		
So what. Besides the whoops besides the support you mentioned what? What are what would you like to see? What kind of support?		
2		
33:48		
How much more support would you like and what are some of the other kind of so with?		
1		
33:55		
with the inclusion time Quite honestly, they're not always in there at the best time of doing things, right? so Ideally, it would be superb if that inclusion time was the entire block. [45 minutes] So they're there for lecture or for whatever it is that we're doing. Hang on just a second, Pete. OK. thank you okay so when he comes in the house the dog will start barking so you were saying that ideally you would like to see someone In like in the inclusion like for the whole 45 minute block, right? Because they might be in there while I'm lecturing. So they pretty much just kind of sit there,		

you know, you know, and then they're gone. And now it's time to do the actual activity. And I'm trying to scatter all across the, you know, 19 students. So, I mean, ideally, even more of like a co teaching thing, I will say that the two ladies that the older grades had at McKinley probably		
2		
36:30		
you were there, were probably two of the better ones as far as, like, they would join in the discussion, they would, you know, say things, they would add to the classroom versus just kind of sitting there when that student needed needs that help.		
1		
36:56		
It's definitely structured differently in my classroom now than I've had in the past. Even if, like, for example, at McKinley, when I'm going to go ahead and just use her name, but when Miss Patty was in the classroom, Like I said, I could ask her a question, and she would join in the discussion. So it was the whole entire class looked at her as help and things like that. [push-in SpED aid]. It wasn't that she was just in there for one or two or three students.		

Right. So in addition to the SpED support, are there any types of support you'd like to see for these students? You know, I have to give our title person some a little bit of credit because my student who my homeschooled student, when we had our APTT, she actually brought some books for that particular student to be able to take home. So that was nice. And that was one of the first times I've seen someone like that. So clearly, you know, like title can help, you know, things like that. If any administrative support, I mean, that you would like to see or, you know, I mean, That is honestly a good, good question, because honestly, outside of the behavioral side of it, honestly, I'm not 100 % sure what true help admin can give.		
1		
39:15		
And that sounds bad, and I don't mean it in a bad way. Because they've got so many other things going on.		
10		
39:25		
Um, but having them, so one of the things that____ and I have talked about now that I'm, I'm thinking about it is they have to do like		

instructional coaching rounds or something like that.		
2		
39:42		
And she's still trying to kind of figure out how exactly that looks and when to put it in. But because her and I have such a great working relationship, level of respect, that kind of thing.		
1		
39:59		
We are, yeah, so we're talking about her coming in and doing that in my classroom.		
2		
40:06		
We have not been able to truly set that up, but that is one of those things that I am looking forward to because it's, she's not necessarily looking at the lesson, anything else,		
9		
40:20		
it's my understanding that it is strictly like classroom management type stuff like what is working what isn't working so having somebody in my room that can objectively look at what we're doing, what I'm doing,		

what the students are doing, and realistically giving pointers to not only myself, but to the students, that would be amazing.		
2		
40:56		
Right.		
1		
40:57		
So just quick question, what do you think should be the maximum amount of IEP students in the classroom? I don't know.		
5		
41:07		
Honestly, I think when you start getting into over half, it's too much.		
1		
41:16		
Wow. And half is a lot. Yeah.		
2		
41:20		
I have three.		
1		
41:23		
But I want to say I have students, fine baby. I have 19 students and I		

really think I've got something like 9, 10, 11 kids on IEPs.		
2		
41:41		
Wow.		
1		
41:43		
Okay, to some degree, you know, I mean, they're not all necessarily severe. And I will say that I'm kind of lumping in like, because I've got a student on like a 504.		
2		
41:57		
I mean, so I'm kind of lumping in all of that together, because they're all legal documents that you have to handle, right? With with these students, you say 911?		
1		
42:14		
Yeah, I think so. was going to pull it up real quick, because I really think I'm at 11.		
2 New Question: How do you address their individual educational plan that each student has?		

Okay, so how do you address their individual educational plan that each student has? I'm telling you, I just kind of do the best I can do and. I honestly hope like hell I'm hitting it as much as I possibly can, which is not a good place to be at all. I hear you, I hear you.	Concerns (affective)	
1		
42:43		
So, well, speaking about IEPs and placement, could you, oh, I'm sorry.		
2		
42:50		
Five, six, seven, eight.		
1		
42:54		
So I have 10 between IEPs gifted, five of four out of 19 students. Okay, wow.		
2		Andrea is unsure of the initial placement process of IEP students.
43:05		
Are you familiar with the placement process?		
1		
43:08		
And I don't mean placing students at the end of the year, like where they're going to go, what teacher		

they're going to see. I mean, with the placement, actually, when students are placed in the beginning in the gen ed class or in a pullout room all of the time or part of the time? Not 100%. That's fine. I only know really and truly those kinds of things that we talk about.		
2		Andrea does not feel that she has much influence during IEP meetings. Andrea has considerable angst about how long she can manage to teach because of the stress.
43:36		
In the IEP meetings, right? How much, during those meetings, how much influence do you as the Gen Ed teacher, you know, carry? I really don't feel like a whole lot.		
1		Actually, the "behavioral crap" can get to a teacher, like the persistent clapping of an IEP student.
43:55		
You know, it's more of just like, yeah, I agree with, you know, that goal or whatever, you know, I mean, and I'm not 100 % sure that I've ever really disagreed with it. the goal. I think there was one time I was like, I kind of think that's a little high, but I also want to say that it was already like the bare minimum. They couldn't go any lower with whatever percentage it was for that anyway. So, yeah, I'm going to go back. We're going to wrap it up real quick here, but let's go back to original placement. How much influence do you think a teacher should have in		

the original placement of a student into a regular classroom or in a pull - out part or all the time? You know, that's hard to say because if Because a lot, I feel like a lot of the IEP stuff happens prior, that placement part of it happens typically in a younger grade. Now, I mean, I do have a student in my classroom right now that needs to probably be in the SAP process, and we've been kind of talking about it. So, I mean, because I'm the one that he's with right now, I do feel like I should have quite a bit of say -so in it, but my experience in the past when I've had other students like this, I don't really feel like I've got a lot of say -so.		
1		
45:52		
Cesar, you're fine.		
2		
45:54		
You're fine. I'm so sorry. So Ms. WXYZ, is there anything else that you'd like to add? No, I think the process is working as just as it can right now. But it needs some help. It definitely needs some thinking.		
1		
46:21		

And until the people that are making the decisions truly are sitting in a classroom and seeing how this functions on a day -to -day basis, Basis, I don't think they're truly going to understand what we, as teachers are going through.		
2		
46:45		
Right. Right.		
1		
46:46		
I get it. Yeah, this has been really good. Thank you so much. It's nice to see you again. Yeah, it was good to see you too. And someday, I actually hope to get back in the classroom somehow.		
2		
47:03		
But after some changes have taken place. Right. And I, I honestly, every the last couple years, I truly have been like, I don't know if I can I don't know if I can continue to hang and considering that I'm this new in the profession is Really sad.		
1		
47:26		

Well, you've already I think outlived the lifespan of teachers I mean, it's around five years or under so that kind of makes sense You know and my first year of teaching was the year we got shut down with kovat.		
2		
47:42		
So yeah, I mean like It's amazing. I think if anybody is kind of sticking in with it, but it's it's more the behavioral, you know, crap that you can't even really. Really put your finger on like my kid clapping, you know I'm sure if I said that to somebody they'd be like, okay, so he's clapping Okay, you sit here and try to do your job for six and a half hours when that is all you are hearing, right? so And this this this child has an IEP. Yeah, he's one of my gifted so just And this is just confidential too, between you and me, because I don't want to say, oh, that person doing the survey is a rebel rouser and stuff.		
1 Spontaneous Question: “How familiar are you with the Individuals with Disability Education Act, the IDEA?”		
48:36		

But how familiar are you with the Individuals with Disability Education Act, the IDEA?		
		Andrea is unfamiliar with the IDEA
8		
48:47		
I'm not.		
2		
48:48		Teachers are "extremely frustrated because we can't do our jobs."
So maybe you can just Google this on your own. But it says, and it's a federal law that that students on IEPs that have behavioral issues, they need to have a positive behavioral intervention support in place, you know, so it has to be science -based. And that would probably be this bed person coming in and developing that. And then if the student doesn't respond to that after they've given it all, then they say that the regular classroom is not the appropriate setting for the student. So that's just a little bit of the IDEA, the federal law.		
2		
49:32		
OK. All right.		
1		
49:34		

You don't know. I mean, yeah, I mean, if you want to kind of look into that your own, you can.		
2		
49:40		
But that's just something, you know, and when I the district, when I'm done with my write up, I mean, they want me to present at the district and and I'll try to I may bring that up, but I have to be very, very diplomatic because, you know, I I appreciate the district.		
1		
49:57		
I mean Nathan for sending out the surveys and stuff and I'm really supportive of the teachers.		
2		
50:03		
You know I'm supportive of the district and stuff, but anyway, that's just. The food for thought. OK, I know I appreciate that. I will look it up for sure. So yeah, and then you can go out. Look what I found. OK, right, right? Yeah, I mean, yeah, because I I just you know, I really feel for teachers. Cause I know you know this is my second year. It's like I start experiencing all the stressors.		

1		
50:29		
My colleagues were going and like was just barely hanging into.		
2		
50:34		
You know, yeah, at the end of the semester and I go, that's what led me to this program.		
1		
50:39		
You know, I, I want to be able to work at a level where I can make some positive changes and it's all research based. I mean, so I'm learning a lot of stuff.		
2		
50:48		
And so anyways, I'm glad I was able to share that with you. Haven't had that.		
1		
50:54		
Kind of time. Yeah, no, I I appreciate it because I mean the teachers that are in the classroom that are doing this because This is truly what they want to do are getting Extremely frustrated because we can't do our		

jobs You know that it would be awesome if I can get several teachers together in a focus group to talk about that very issue Tell you what Pete you do that then you let me know I will be there. I will do that Okay, I'll let you know for sure Okay, you take care.		
2		
51:34		
Hang in there, you know, stay healthy and I'm trying I actually have had some medical issues going down here. So yeah So it gets hard, you know, you're not feeling good and you know		

Appendix J - Thematic Coding for All Participants

Andrea 4 th Grade; 7 years' Experience	Danica 1 st Grade 14 years' experience	Elise 5 th -Grade 20 years' experience	Illiana (2 nd grade) 12 years' experience	Julia 4 th -grade 32 years' experience	Reese 1 st -grade teacher 23 years' experience
Research Q 1 Some of the behavior of IEP students actually does disrupt the learning of others! Research Q 2A Andrea feels that the kids and parents need to be more accountable. Research Q 4C Andrea prefers inclusion but likes the way it's set up during <i>parts</i> of the day. Research Q 1 A classroom teacher cannot meet the needs of life-skills students who attend part of the day in the general education classroom when the aid is not there.	Research Q 4 There is no consistent one-on-one push-in support from SpED Research Q 1 IEP students with significant academic difficulties pose challenges in the gen-ed classroom. There is not enough time for teachers to provide 1-1 support for IEP students with significant academic difficulties Behavioral issues IEP students with significant academic difficulties pose challenges in the gen-ed classroom.	Research Q 1, 4D Some students needing the most help are those that slip through the cracks, needing SpED services but not receiving them. Research Q 4D Some students needing SpED services are not receiving it. Research Q 4 Classroom teachers have little influence in placing students Research Q 4D Some students needing SpED services are not receiving it. Research Q 1 General education classroom do not	Research Q 1 New transfer students lack educational records, making it difficult to determine educational planning. Research Q 2 A strong support staff consisting of SpED, Social Services, and Counseling provides support for teachers. A collegial atmosphere supports teachers, student learning, and shared decision-making; and builds community	Research Question 1 & 2 IEP students with significant academic difficulties present academic challenges for teachers Some academic challenges are so severe that these students would be better served in a pull-out room during core instruction. Some academic challenges are so severe that these students would be better served in a pull-out room	Research Q 2A Some teachers would like more training with inclusion, with strategies for students with disabilities. Research Q 1 Students with IEPs behavior issues pose challenges for teachers in the gen-ed classroom, including gifted autistic children. A gifted student did not feel his needs were being met in the gen-ed classroom, leading to frustration for everyone in the classroom.

Research Q 4C Push-in SpED assistance would be “superb” if they were in the classroom for the entire 45-minute block. Research Q C Andrea would like to see a co-teaching model. Research Q 2 Andrea unsure of what help administration can provide. Research Q 4A Andrea is unsure of the initial placement process of IEP students. Research Q B Andrea does not feel that she has much influence during IEP meetings. Research Q 1 Andrea has considerable angst about how long she can manage to teach because of the stress.	Behavioral issues with IEP students with significant academic difficulties pose challenges in the gen-ed classroom. Off-tasks behaviors of IEP students with significant academic difficulties become noticeable to others Research Q 4c Pullout preferences are conditional. Research Q 4 Push-in support often limited because of other priorities (attending meetings). Research Q 2a Danica would consider outside training in SpED areas, but often self-educates There’s a need for gen-ed teachers	meet the needs of IEP students with significant academic difficulties. IEP students take time away from other students. Behavior often disrupts learning for not only IEP student but also for other students and interferes with teaching Behavioral disruptions effect and influence other students, changing their behavior negatively. Addressing behavior of some IEP students affects the learning of others. Behavioral disruptions effect and influence other students, changing their behavior negatively. Behavioral disruptions effect and influence other students,	Research Q 1 Behavior issues can interfere with other students learning. Behavior issues can take an emotional toll on the teacher. Behavior issues can interfere with other students learning. One-on-one attention be academically beneficial for students on IEPs. Behavior issues can take an emotional toll on the teacher Behavioral issues for some students on IEPs with significant academic difficulties can	during core instruction. Both academic and behavioral traits challenge teachers Research question 3 Teachers lack support from parents, admin, and the SpED system. RQ 1, 2 Trying to meet the needs of IEP students with significant academic challenges takes time away from the other students Balancing IEP student needs with the needs of the others students presents a philosophical dilemma	Success is a relative term. Needs of some IEP students with significant academic difficulties cannot be met in the inclusive classroom. Research Q 2B Teachers would like to have more parental support Teachers would like more SpED support in the classroom. Research Q 1 IEP students with significant academic difficulties can take an inordinate amount of time to do partial work.
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Research Q 1 Actually, the “behavioral crap” can get to a teacher, like the persistent clapping of an IEP student. Research Q 1 Andrea worries that she is not meeting all the IEP requirements for the students. IDEA K. Andrea is unfamiliar with the IDEA Research Q 1 Teachers are “extremely frustrated because we can’t do our jobs.”	to be trained in SpED areas to provide the best for the students. Research Q 4A Danica is unaware of the initial IEP placement	changing their behavior negatively. Research Q 4c Marie prefers mainstreaming model, where students spend some of the time in the gen-ed classroom and other times in the SpED pullout room Research Q 1, 4D The general education classroom does not meet the needs of students with significant academic difficulties The general education classroom does not meet the needs of students with significant academic difficulties Research Q 1 Addressing needs of IEP students takes time away	pose pronounced challenges for teachers. <i>A collegial atmosphere can enhance teacher and student experience.</i> Behavior issues can interfere with other students learning. Behavioral issues for some students on IEPs with significant academic difficulties can pose pronounced challenges for teachers. Pullout settings can facilitate academic success for IEP students with significant academic difficulties Research Q 4 C	Behavior modification has temporary effects. (grounded theory) Behavioral challenges of some IEP students with significant academic difficulties take its toll emotionally on teachers Some teachers prefer the pullout model to meet IEP students’ academic needs Behavior modification has temporary effects. (grounded theory) Administration does not always meet the teachers’ needs Behavioral challenges take its toll on gen-ed teachers,	Time spent with special needs students take time away from other students. Research Q 2A Some teachers feel bad and frustrated that they can’t meet the academic needs of IEP students with significant academic difficulties. Research Q 1 Borderline students take time away from other students. There’s a lack of involvement for some students. Teachers reach out to counseling for support
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		from the other students Research Q 4D The district has the most influence in placement	Placement should be determined on a case-by-case basis, sometimes preferring the pullout room and sometimes the general education classroom Research Q 1 Chronic absenteeism of students with IEPs poses problems for a student's Research Q 2 Support from SpED, Social Services, and Counseling is valuable and appreciated. Research Q 4B Special Education "next level people" have the	producing emotional and psychological stress Trying to meet the needs of IEP students with significant academic challenges takes time away from the other students ê Grounded theory: Behavior modification has temporary effects. (grounded theory) Research Q 1 Some academic challenges are so severe that these students would be better served in a pull-out room	Some behaviors of students with significant academic difficulties are very disruptive, like spinning around in the chair or throwing their pencils up in the air. One's attire can irritate a teacher. Some behavior, such as talking in a demonic-like voice can be frightening to both the teacher and other students. Some students with significant academic difficulties will not do any work. Changing placement or expelling a student with
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			most influence in placement. research Q 4A Illiana does not know who participates in the initial placement of students. Research Q 1 Some behavioral issues are significant (like outbursts and flipping chair over) Research Q 1 Behavior of some IEP students with significant academic difficulties and drastically affect student achievement of other students. Research Q 4C	during core instruction. Research Q 4C Some teachers prefer the pullout model to meet IEP students' academic needs. Some teachers feel it's philosophically wrong to keep students in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE). LRE is often misinterpreted.(LRE is not always the gen-ed classroom; it's a continuum. Trying to meet the needs of IEP students with significant academic challenges takes time away from	extreme disruptive behavior takes an inordinate amount of time. Some behavior, such as talking in a demonic-like voice can be frightening to both the teacher and other students. Even students with BIPs can remain out of control, like throwing. Some behaviors have a clear negative effect on other students. Research Q 4B Teachers lack influence for changing a student's placement once
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			Inclusion preference is conditional.	the other students Research Q 2 Some teachers may feel there's a lack of administrative support for IEP students with significant academic difficulties RQ 4B Admin most influential in placement	they're in the class. Persistent resistance or negative behavior can push a teacher to a breaking point. Observers can inhibit learning of some students with IEPs. Research Q 4 A teacher may prefer inclusion to provide a student with the "same education." Life skills students may be an exception to inclusion. A teacher may prefer inclusion but with some exceptions, such as the severely disabled as with man life skills students
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					Research Q 1 Some behavior like hollering presents an extreme distraction. Trying to meet the needs of students with significant academic difficulties can take time away from the rest of the class. Research Q 2 Some teachers desire more support in the classroom for a child with significant academic difficulties. A lack of parental support can hamper a teacher's classroom objectives.
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					Some teachers desire more parental support. Principal has the most influence in placement of students with IEPs and is the ultimate decision-maker. In IEP meetings, parental input reduced to responding to questions, often close-ended ones. Parental reports sometimes contradict a teacher's observation. Research Q 4D Teachers have little influence in changing the placement of an IEP student in her classroom. Teachers are the most qualified to determine a
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					change of placement for an IEP student. Teachers know the academic and behavioral traits of the students the best, so they should determine change of placement within the classroom. Teachers' voices are silenced. Or: Teachers feel their voices are not heard.. "I just wish that our voices were heard"
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