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INCLUSION:

A QUESTION OF PRACTICE, STANCE, VALUES, AND CULTURE

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Orlando, Florida

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ABSTRACT

Exclusionary practices based on a deficit perspective of disability are not supported by law and are inconsistent with the rigorous standards for teaching, learning, and accountability in our public schools. Moreover, consequences of failed change will continue to have significant negative effects on the performance of educational organizations. The purpose of this mixed-methods phenomenological research (MMPR) study was to explore the lived experience of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion, including their views, perceptions and appraisal of the status of inclusion in a large urban school system. The research questions were designed to generate insight and recommendations for establishing norms, values, practices and policies that might mitigate teacher resistance to inclusion, support and reinforce inclusive culture, and position the organization (school district) itself as a facilitator of implementation and agent of change in cultivating positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusion as a social justice imperative in the public schools. The lived experiences of teachers who have this distinct perspective and insight into the phenomenon of inclusion were explored through focus group sessions and individual interviews. The results of the study suggest that (1) organizations can build and strengthen a culture of inclusion by identifying individuals who demonstrate a commitment and competency for supporting inclusion, by supporting them as they promote change through coaching, educating, networking and mentoring efforts and embed and reinforce inclusive values throughout the system; and (2) educational organizations must be responsive to norms, values, practices and policies that both support and work against inclusive organizational culture. The findings suggest that this type of research may be of value to organizations in identifying contextual factors which either facilitate or inhibit inclusive education and therefore either advance or diminish educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

For Sally:

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving wife Sally, whose love, support and belief in me made this, and “all the rest of it” possible.

I love you.

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"If I have seen further, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants"

Sir Isaac Newton

Although this is undoubtedly one of the most frequently used quotations in scientific inquiry the metaphor contains no excess of overstatement in recognizing that this endeavor would not have been possible without those mentioned herein.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Inclusion

Inclusive education is “a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from the culture, community and curricula of schools” (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Participation in classrooms requires “learning to be active and collaborative for all” (Black-Hawkins, 2010, p. 28) and “based on relationships of mutual recognition and acceptance” (Black-Hawkins, 2014, p. 397).

The landmark 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act effectively mandated inclusion by requiring that all students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum, by assuring that

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 not disabled, and that 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 is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (IDEA, 1997)

Today, inclusion in general education is the expected norm when it comes to meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities. Yet, despite the equitable education promised by federal law, teachers have been resistant to the inclusion of children with disabilities in public school classrooms since the initial mandate for compulsory school attendance in the early 1900s

(Connor & Ferri, 2007; Ferguson, 2014; Franklin, 1994; Spring, 2005). Although the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms has been heralded as a moral imperative since the 1990s (Biklen, 1991; Stainback & Stainback, 1989; Stainback, Stainback, & Ayres, 1996), and some progress has been made, students with disabilities are still not welcomed in an overwhelming number of general education classrooms (Connor & Ferri, 2007; Lalvani, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

One of the most pressing problems opposing the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings is that students are often considered by both general education teachers and special education teachers to be in a wholly different category than “*regular students*” (Giangreco & Doyle, 2000; Lalvani, 2012, p. 24), and as Giangreco and Doyle (2000) stated, “embedded in that sentiment is the inference that the needs of ‘regular’ students come first” (p. 56). Sapon-Shevin (2007) raised the concern that many teachers have the notion that students need to be ready for inclusion, in contrast to the philosophical underpinning of inclusion, which holds that the educational environment should be engineered or “ready” to accept all students.

Teachers share a mix of reservations about having students with disabilities in their classrooms, ranging from being unprepared, being unwilling, lacking the time to plan for students with special needs, to the belief that inclusion is simply not appropriate or best for all students with disabilities (Connor & Ferri, 2007; D’Aniello, 2008, Darling-Hammond, 2002; Skiba et al., 2006; Timberlake, 2014). For many teachers, conceptually, special education still remains a “separate institution” (Conner & Ferri, 2007, p. 64) and a place where students with disabilities are better off. The continued existence of divided teacher preparation programs for general

education and special education further reinforces the idea of general education and special education as separate systems.

Whatever the rationale, the exclusion of students with disabilities from general education environments, or the marginalization of students with disabilities within general education environments, represent a paradox (Connor & Ferri, 2007; Skirtic, 1991) when new measures of accountability such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and ESEA Flexibility (USDOE, 2012) require that students with disabilities receive the same high quality educational services provided to students without disabilities, including access to and progress within a curriculum that incorporates state educational standards. The provisions and hard accountability set forth in ESEA Flexibility (2012) require public schools to graduate all students on time and ready for college and career. What has been shown statistically (Kortering & Braziel, 2002; Kortering & Christenson, 2009; Wilson & Michaels, 2006) is that the outcome of a special education model based on exclusionary educational practices continues to leave students with disabilities behind despite the equitable education promised by federal law (IDEA). Exclusionary practices have resulted in excessive numbers of students with disabilities not graduating from high school, holding jobs, or living independently (Kortering & Braziel, 2002; Kortering & Christenson, 2009; Wilson & Michaels, 2006). These outcomes echo the historic declaration that *separate is not equal* (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954) and position inclusion squarely as a social justice and civil rights issue.

Today, such outcomes for students with disabilities are inconsistent with the rigorous, exacting, inclusionary standards for teaching, learning, and accountability that have been set before our nation's public school systems. Unless mitigated, the consequences of this failed

change will continue to have significant negative effects on the educational outcomes of students with disabilities and the performance of educational organizations (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Miller (1998) asserted that organizations should reinforce existing resources for change as an alternative to attacking areas of resistance. The rationale is that organizations can build and strengthen a culture of inclusion by identifying individuals who have already adopted inclusive values, by capitalizing on their commitment and competency for supporting change, by supporting them as they promote change through coaching, education, networking, and mentoring efforts, and as they embed and reinforce inclusive values throughout the system (Chrusciel, 2006; Miller, 1998; Villegas, 2007).

In any organization change is not optional; it is essential (Bridges & Mitchell, 2008) and can significantly impact organizational performance (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004). People are recognized to be an organization's greatest asset, providing the talent and energy needed to successfully achieve organizational objectives (Cable & Derue, 2002). Therefore, if people are an organization's greatest asset, insight into what motivates those who demonstrate a commitment as well as a sense of urgency toward change efforts (Chrusciel, 2006) is of paramount interest. Villegas (2007) stated that attending to the dispositions of teachers who enact inclusive practices will be of value and may serve an important function for organizations in identifying ways to overcome some of the stumbling blocks to creating inclusive classrooms and an inclusive organizational culture. Understanding what motivates individuals who quickly move from the status quo to embrace and take on change and challenge is of critical importance to organizations that must quickly embrace and influence change in order to succeed.

Considering the Council for Exceptional Children's (2012) statement that "the most significant challenge will be in preparing and further developing the knowledge and skills of not only special educators, but all teachers who share the instructional responsibilities for students with disabilities" (para. 18), insight into the lived experience of teachers for whom the inclusion of students with disabilities is part of their belief system and practice (Chrusciel, 2006) is of critical importance. Although it is evident that teachers continue to resist the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Corbett, 2001; Ford, 2007; Lalvani, 2012), there *are* teachers who work to transform the status quo and enact practices of inclusivity; who are able to connect with students who have disabilities and view their abilities over their limitations, enact inclusive instructional strategies to help student learn and success, and view inclusive education as an issue of social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Skirtic, 1991) and civil rights (Winzer & Mazurek, 2000). Henderson referred to teachers with these characteristics as *champions of inclusion*:

Champions of inclusion are people who exemplify first and foremost that they can connect, communicate, challenge, and collaborate appropriately when dealing with students who have disabilities. They are certainly also people who have developed and/or creatively implemented specialized skills, but they recognize that this expertise must be accompanied by appropriate beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in order for the skills being utilized to prove most beneficial. Indeed what makes champions of inclusion extraordinary is that they are demonstrating on a regular basis how ordinary it can be for students with disabilities to participate successfully in a wide range of activities with their peers. (Henderson, 2007)

This study is centered on the position that inclusion is more than the placement and provision of supports and services to students with disabilities in general education classes, and more than a set of instructional strategies; as Taylor (as cited in Fisher & Ryndak, 2001) precisely stated, “inclusion has to do with belonging and membership” (2001, Forword, n.p.). This study examined the lived experiences of teachers who identify as a champion of inclusion. For the purpose of this study, a *champion of inclusion* is defined as:

3. a teacher who supports *inclusive practices*, for whom the inclusion of students with disabilities in “chronologically age-appropriate general education classes” (Halvorsen & Neary, 2009, p. 1) in their home schools is part of their belief system and practice (Chrusciel, 2006), whose attitudes, accommodations, adaptations, and instructional practices occur in the interest of restructuring the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students (Lalvani, 2012).
4. a teacher who maintains an *inclusive stance*, who tends to question the labeling and leveling of students with special needs and rejects a deficit perspective of students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow, Howes, Farrell, & Frankham, 2003).
5. a teacher who holds *inclusive values*, valuing difference and diversity as a natural condition and viewing the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms as a fundamental matter of civil rights and social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Skirtic, 1991; Winzer & Mazurek, 2000).
6. a teacher who, on a consistent basis, actively demonstrates the commitment and competency for cultivating an *inclusive organizational culture* (Miller, 1998) and who believes he or she can and must act as an *agent for change* (Rylatt, 2013) to cultivate *inclusive values* through educating, coaching, networking, mentoring and collaborating

with other educators (Henderson, 2007).

The primary focus of this inquiry was to examine the phenomenon of inclusion through the lived experiences of teachers in a public school system who identify as a *champion of inclusion*. Of interest to this study are the experiences, views, and opinions of these individuals in regard to the cultivation of their views on inclusion as a civil rights and social justice imperative in our public schools, how the culture of their organization currently facilitates or inhibits an inclusive culture, and their views and recommendations on how their organization might capitalize on their commitment and competency by utilizing them as mechanisms for transformative change (Chrusciel, 2006; Miller, 1998; Villegas, 2007).

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed for this study:

1. To what extent do classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches, who are recognized by their school principal as understanding, embracing, and/or promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, identify as a champion of inclusion (e.g., enact inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and actively cultivate an inclusive culture)?
2. What are the lived experiences of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion?
 - a. What shaped their identity? (personal experience, teaching experience, teacher preparation program, in-service training or professional development, influence of colleagues, leadership, and organizational culture)
 - b. Why do they support/enact inclusive practices?
 - c. Why do they maintain an inclusive stance?

- d. Why do they hold inclusive values?
 - e. Why do they champion inclusion; i.e., what drives them to cultivate inclusive culture?
3. In what ways do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion act as agents of change?
 4. What are the views and opinions of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion in regard to the culture of their organization?
 5. What recommendations do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion have for establishing and advancing an inclusive organizational culture?

Overview of Research Design and Methodology

A mixed-methods phenomenological research (MMPR) design (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014) was used to examine the phenomenon of inclusion in a public school system, through the lived experiences of teachers who self-identified as a champion of inclusion. The extant phenomenon of inclusion was measured by the extent to which schools in this large, urban school district educate their students with disabilities in general education settings with their peers without disabilities. Federal law requires that states and school districts report their performance in providing a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE), known as providing FAPE in the LRE (34 C.F.R. s. 300.115). Each student with a disability is entitled to receive FAPE in the least restrictive environment that will enable the student to progress in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible (Florida Department of Education, 2014). LRE data for all schools, K-12, in the district were collected and analyzed to identify schools that had the highest percentage of students with disabilities

included in general education settings in relation to the schools' entire population of students with disabilities.

The study was conducted within a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. The entire study (Phases 1, 2, and 3) took place over the span of approximately three months. In Phase 1 of the study, classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who were recognized by their school principal as educators who understand, embrace, and promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings were invited to participate in a survey designed to capture their views and opinions on inclusion and the current phenomenon of inclusion in their organization. The survey was aligned to the research questions and included specific criteria designed to screen for teachers who support inclusive instructional practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and actively demonstrate a commitment to building inclusive culture as an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking, and mentoring other educators (Henderson, 2007). The survey design served as a sampling scheme (Stage 1) for the Phase 2 focus group sessions. Teachers who emerged from the survey data as champions of inclusion based on specific criteria were selected through purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) to participate in a focus group session (Phase 2).

In Phase 2, purposive criterion sample of teachers who identified as a champion of inclusion based on study criteria were invited to a focus group session to share their insight into the current phenomenon of inclusion in a large urban public school system, how the organization might position and use them as agents for change, and how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture and position itself as an agent for change and cultivator of inclusive values and culture. The focus group (Phase 2) also served as a sampling

scheme (Stage 2) for the Phase 3 individual interview sessions, to yield a specific sample of teachers who identified as a champion of inclusion with a strong ideological orientation relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

In Phase 3, a purposive sample of teachers who emerged from the focus group based on the extent to which they strongly exemplify the characteristics of *champion of inclusion* were individually interviewed to gather a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. The purpose of the interview was to explore the experiences and moments that influenced their views and opinions about inclusion and led them to support inclusive practices, adopt an inclusive stance, embrace inclusive values, and make them a champion of inclusion. The interview also explored their views in regard to the success of inclusion in their organization, their role as an agent of culture change, and their organization's role establishing and advancing an inclusive organizational culture.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions are provided to promote understanding:

Adopters of Inclusion: Teachers for whom the inclusion of students with disabilities in chronologically age-appropriate general education classes in their home schools is a part of their belief system and practice (Chrusciel, 2006).

Agents for change/change agent: Individuals who:

- stand apart in grasping and leveraging sources of power and authority to increase the capacity for generating meaningful outcomes (Rylatt, 2013)

- act as a “meaning maker” and have the “consistent ability to articulate compelling reasons for change” (Rylatt, 2013, p. 74)
- become energized by, and take responsibility for, resolving difficult challenges (Rylatt, 2013)
- hold themselves accountable, and positively leverage power and relationships to hold others accountable for their actions (Rylatt, 2013)

Champions of Inclusion: Educators who demonstrate on a regular basis that they can connect, communicate, challenge, and collaborate appropriately when dealing with students who have disabilities; who demonstrate how ordinary it can be for students with disabilities to participate successfully in activities with their peers (Henderson, 2007); who embrace *inclusive practices*, maintain an *inclusive stance*, hold *inclusive values*, and actively cultivate an *inclusive culture*.

Inclusion: “The practice of educating students with disabilities in general education classes with the provision of supports needed” (Lalvani, 2012, p. 15).

General or Regular Education: The educational experience children would receive upon entering a school or school district if they were not labeled as having a disability or in need of special services (Lilly, 1988).

Inclusive education, aka inclusion: The practice of educating students with disabilities as “supported members of chronologically age-appropriate general education classes in their home schools, receiving the specialized instruction delineated by their IEPs, within the context of the core curriculum and general class activities” (Halvorsen & Neary, 2009, p. 1).

Inclusive organizational culture: a “pattern of shared assumptions which are considered valid; are reinforced internally and taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, act, and feel” (Schein, 1985, p. 9); and which:

- welcome and enable contributions from a broad range of “styles, perspectives, and skills” (Miller, 1998, p. 152);
- embrace diversity as a valued resource;
- view diversity and inclusion as contributory to the “total human energy available to the organization” (Miller, 1998, p. 151);
- view diversity and inclusion as contributory to a “greater range of available routes to success” (Miller, 1998, p. 152).

Inclusionary practices/inclusive practices: Attitudes, accommodations, adaptations, and instructional practices that occur in the interest of restructuring the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students (Lalvani, 2012).

Inclusive stance: A held belief in equity in education for all children, combined with a personal stance that assumes and anticipates human difference and values, and values those differences and what they can teach us; a proclivity for questioning the labeling and leveling of students and rejecting a deficit perspective of students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2003).

Inclusive values: A value system that regards difference and diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource; a value system within public education that situates inclusive education as an issue of social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Skirtic, 1991), as a fundamental issue of civil rights (Winzer & Mazurek, 2000).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Defined by IDEA as the education of children with disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate, with children who are non-disabled; 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 supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997).

Mainstreaming: Referred to by Halvorsen and Neary (2009) as “dual-citizenship” (p. 1), where students with disabilities who are excluded from general education classes move between general education and segregated settings based on their ability to perform at or near grade level.

Social Justice: The concept and “exercise of altering [institutional and organizational] arrangements by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining, and advancing inherent human rights of equity, equality, and fairness in social, economic, educational, and personal dimensions” (Goldfarb & Grindberg, 2002, p. 162).

School Administrator or school leader: A school principal, assistant principal, or other individual who holds state certification or licensure in the field of educational leadership and serves in a leadership capacity.

Special Education, aka exceptional student education (ESE): Specifically designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability provided at no cost to the parents (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997).

Student(s) with a disability: A student who has been diagnosed as having one of the following handicapping [sic] conditions: mental retardation [sic], hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, specific learning

disabilities, deaf-blindness, multiple disabilities, and who because of those impairments need special education and related services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997).

Delimitations

It is important to acknowledge the concern and apprehension many general education teachers have in regard to the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Giangreco and Doyle (2000) affirmed that teachers' concerns are "real" (p. 55), valid, and should be taken seriously. Although the following are not the focus of this study, this study is in no way meant to diminish the importance of teacher preparation, the development of instructional skills and strategies, the importance of time for intentional planning and preparation in regard to teaching students with special needs, and the need for appropriate supports and services. As Kavale and Forness (2000) pointed out, carefully examining both the "rhetoric [ideology] and reality [research evidence]" of inclusion, and finding a balance is of critical importance. The authors recommended that a "rational solution will require the consideration of all forms of evidence if the best possible education for all students with disabilities is to be achieved" (p. 79).

This study proposes to get at the core of a problem facing many students with disabilities and their families; namely, that students with disabilities are viewed as being in a completely different category as "other" students, and that the needs of those "other" students come first (Giangreco & Doyle, 2000, pp. 55–56). This purpose of this study is to join the discourse on inclusion that is evolving from a focus on educational placements and strategies to one of inclusion as (1) a *practice* that assumes and prepares for learner variability, (2) as a *stance* that questions exclusionary practices and rejects a deficit perspective of disability, (3) as a *value* that holds inclusion as a civil rights and social justice imperative, and (4) as a culture of belongingness, sensitivity, and fairness (Sosu, Mtika, & Colucci-Gray, 2010).

Assumptions

This study assumes that teachers who were nominated for the study honestly identified the level to which they embrace or resist inclusion and identified themselves as adopters of inclusion and as champions of inclusion. This study assumes that the representative samples of teachers accurately shared the experiences that led to the emergence and continued development of their practice, stance, values and actions as an adopter of inclusion or champion of inclusion. This study assumes that teachers were honest about the extent to which they support and enact inclusive practices and that they evaluated themselves with fidelity in regard to the characteristics of a *champion of inclusion*. This study assumes that teachers accurately shared their lived experiences as champions of inclusion and their views on the extent to which their organization facilitates or inhibits an inclusive organizational culture. This study also assumes that teachers provided reliable insight into how their organization facilitates the implementation of inclusion and addresses the resistance of other teachers to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. This study assumes teachers will have valid insight into how the dispositions held by champions of inclusion might be cultivated in other educators, as well as the ways in which organizations can cultivate these dispositions in those who are resistant to inclusion.

“Barriers can be as invisible as air... but to those who confront them daily, these barriers can be demeaning, discouraging and insurmountable” (Miller, 1998). This quote represents a key element in the positionality of the researcher, and consequent assumptions must also be disclosed. The researcher, as a gender non-conforming female and member of a historically marginalized population (LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender]), has an intimate understanding of the paradoxical concepts of inclusion and exclusion and can direct a highly

focused lens on the critical importance of recognizing diversity and inclusion as a moral, civil right and as social justice imperatives. The lens of this researcher is akin to Baker's (2002) discourse on the politics of inclusion, which calls for us to challenge and rethink assumptions and educational practices that reinforce *able* as a norm and have led to a current prevailing view of disability as an "outlaw ontology" (p. 663). The researcher joins Baker (2002) in positing that the dividing, sorting, and classifying practices typical of current educational practice are merely a more palatable form of "eugenics" (p. 664) and, like Baker, in calling for the reexamination and reconsideration of issues of "sameness, difference, equality, and democracy" (2002, p. 664) in our public school systems and beyond. Therefore, an overarching assumption of this study is that the voice of the researcher, whose personal and professional stance is that inclusion is a belief system, not just an educational placement or a set of strategies, was undoubtedly a significant and contributing voice during the implementation of this study.

Limitations

This study was limited to a large urban district in the state of Florida. Teachers who participated in this study may not represent the true features and individualities of the total national population of teachers. Participation was dependent on the nominations of school principals and was voluntary, which may have impacted the total number and dispositions of respondents. Personal, school and district priorities may have prevented principals from agreeing to participate in the study, who otherwise may have had strong candidates to nominate for the study. In turn, nominees may have had time constraints and conflicting priorities that prevented them from completing the survey or responding to the request to participate in a focus group, therefore this study may not be inclusive of the total population of teachers in the school system who identify as champions of inclusion.

It is important to disclose that at the time of this study, the researcher served in an administrative position at the district level. Although the researcher did not discuss their role in the organization during any phase of the study, it is possible, for various reasons, that this could have had an impact on the study. The researcher's known position in the school district could have impacted the number of principals who agreed or declined to participate, the number of teacher nominees who responded to or did not respond to the request to participate in the survey (Phase 1), or the focus groups (Phase 2), and could have impacted the extent to which the focus group participants did or did not demonstrate the criterion for selection for an individual interview (Phase 3). The responses to the survey items, focus group and interview questions were dependent on the accuracy and truthfulness in self-reporting, environmental factors, and respondents' current state of mind in terms of their responses to the survey and interview questions, all of which could have been impacted by the participants' recognition of the researcher's connection to the district as an administrator. Other possible limitations of the study are the reliability and validity of the heretofore untested survey, focus group, and interview protocols.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Inclusion, the education of students with disabilities in general education settings rather than as segregated placements, varies in how it is understood and implemented (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999). The literature reveals that moving from a primarily segregated system of educating students with disabilities to one that educates students with disabilities alongside their peers without disabilities for most of—or all—day is fraught with complications and subject to wide variations on the theme of inclusion.

Slee (2012) referred to the “flawed ...yet distinctive and recognisable [sic]” (p. 3) vocabulary of inclusive education. Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) declared that inclusion means “different things to people who wish different things from it” (p. 299). Graham and Slee (2008) contended that the term *inclusion* tends to illicit a “multiplicity of meanings” (p. 279) and an even wider array of discourses. Lalvani (2012) simply defined inclusion as “the practice of educating students with disabilities in general education classes with the provision of supports needed” (p. 15). Researchers Villa and Thousand (2003) defined inclusion as “the principle and practice of considering general education as the placement of first choice for all learners” (p. 19), along with an approach that encourages in-class provision of supplemental supports, aids, and services instead of removing students from the classroom to receive services. Similarly, the Florida Inclusion Network (n.d.) offered that inclusion involves providing specialized instructional services to students with disabilities in the general education classroom, rather than

moving the student to the services. Finally, Grima-Farrell, Bain, and McDonough (2011) described inclusion as an approach that responds to the diversity of student needs in ways that are beneficial to all students, with or without disabilities.

Lalvani (2012, p. 15) discussed how the term *inclusion* is often used synonymously with *mainstreaming* and how the two differ significantly in concept and practice. Mainstreaming, which originated in the late 1970s, was primarily focused on the opportunity for students with and without disabilities to interact. Kauffman, Gottlieb, Agard, and Kykic (1975) defined mainstreaming as the “temporal, instructional, and social integration of eligible exceptional children with normal peers based on an ongoing, individually determined educational planning and programming progress” (p. 3). While mainstreaming requires a student with a disability to demonstrate some measure of “eligibility” (p. 3), often based on meeting a certain threshold of independent functioning, inclusion “involves placement in classrooms that have been restructured to meet the educational needs of all its students” (Lalvani, 2012, p. 15).

Lalvani (2012) pinpointed the critical distinction between mainstreaming and inclusion, as “the difference between visiting a classroom versus having full membership in it” (p. 15), and in doing so revealed the essence of inclusion and the guiding principle of this study. This study is centered on the discourse of inclusion that is increasingly evolving from one of educational placements and instructional strategies to one of inclusion as a belief system. Kunc’s (1992) definition of inclusion focused more on inclusion as an “achievable goal of providing all children with a sense of belonging” (pp. 38-39). Similarly, Udvari-Solner (1997) situated inclusion as a social justice issue and a natural outcome of “more human, just, and democratic learning communities” (p. 142). In this vein, Graham and Slee (2008) argued that true inclusion must invite the “denaturalization of ‘normalcy’” (p. 280) and adopt a stance that rejects any norm that

causes us to “think in terms of exceptionalities” (p. 280). Graham and Slee (2008) discussed the typical model of providing inclusive education and got at the core of the dilemma on inclusion, which centers on “regular school” (p. 280) and which allows “others...[only] conditional entry and tenure” (p. 280). Baker (2002) went so far as to liken the labeling and sorting of children to provide “special and different services” (p. 664)—and therefore decisions and prophecies about their futures—to a modern-day eugenics movement. In the same vein, Brantlinger (2004) referred to practices of “labeling, ranking, exclusion” as “natural responses to flaws in affected children” (p. 11). With that said, it must be stated that authentic inclusion presumes learner variability (and therefore disability) as a natural condition; expects, prepares for, and responds to learner diversity (including students with disabilities); and views inclusion as a universal responsibility necessary to providing an equitable education for all students (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

Inclusion Research

Is a land of milk and honey waiting beyond those doors? ... I’ve asked that very question, you know—who’s raising the bar for them in that classroom? ... Because I always worry—if I were put into a room with someone, with—with five people who didn’t speak, I think my language would suffer. ... I don’t know—who’s stimulating their wanting to be more than, or really aspiring to be more than they could be, other than their own inherent desire to be. Yeah, I don’t know. Not having been in that room, I don’t know. That would just be my concern, if I could state one for the record. (Lalvani, 2012, p. 23)

Exclusion, the segregation of students with disabilities into homogeneous groups to provide them with specially designed instruction and services, was once thought to be the ideal

approach to educating students with disabilities (Crawford, 2005; DeRuvo, 2010; Porter, 2008). Inclusion began to evolve in the 1980s, as studies revealing correlations between practices of segregating students with disabilities and negative learning outcomes began to influence education policy (Sailor & Roger, 2005). The merger of general education and special education systems in an effort to correct outdated and inadequate practices of segregation based on disability became known as inclusion (Gordon, 2010).

Categorical labels and segregated settings have never been required by federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and are now recognized as having contributed to the achievement gaps we have today (DeRuvo, 2010; Kortering & Christenson, 2009). As early as 1988, Mallory and Kerns pointed to the questionable value of categorical labels and the damaging crisis of opportunity that occurs when prejudicial assumptions about children's abilities result in inappropriate segregated placements. Research by Kerns (1987) revealed that parents of children who were labeled as having a disability felt forced to assume a deficit perspective of their children, focused on the disability, and with the false expectation among the adults working with their children of limited and impaired development.

Research shows that students with disabilities who are placed in separate programs are less likely to have non-disabled friends, less likely to have goals tied to the general education curriculum, and more likely to drop out of school; as adults they have lower rates of successful outcomes (Crawford, 2005; Kortering & Christenson, 2009; Telzrow & Tankersley, 2000). Early research on inclusion showed positive outcomes for all students, including positive academic, behavioral, and social outcomes for students with disabilities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). Studies examining the outcomes of students without disabilities in inclusive settings revealed that the presence of students with disabilities, as well as the interaction with peers with disabilities, had

no negative impact on the quantity and quality of education afforded to students without disabilities (Fishbaugh & Gum, 1994; Hollowood, Salisbury, Rainforth, & Palombaro, 1995). Studies that focused on the impact of attitudes and relationships in inclusive classrooms showed that inclusion fostered social relationships between students with and without disabilities (Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, & Goldberg, 1994; Hall, 1994; Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, 1994). Research involving general and special education teachers and administrators with experience in inclusive settings also revealed positive changes in educators' attitudes toward full inclusion (Rainforth, 1992), especially when accompanied by training and support (Phillips, Alfred, Brulli, & Shank, 1990) and even when initial placement of students with disabilities was received cautiously or negatively (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993).

Overall, the early evidence on inclusion showed that inclusion has benefits for students and educators. According to a 1993 *Report of the Inclusive Education Committee: Findings and Recommendations*,

When one contrasts such [positive] indicators [regarding inclusion] with the fact that there appears to be little, if any evidence in research to support superior student outcomes as a result of placement in segregated settings, one must seriously question the efficacy of spending ever-increasing sums of money to maintain dual systems. (State of Michigan Department of Education, 1993, p. 198)

Lipsky (2005) also underscored the dismal outcomes produced by dual systems of general and special education. Yet, despite the research supporting the “positive derivatives” (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012) of inclusion (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Sapon-Shevin, 2003, 2007; Stainback & Stainback, 1989; Stainback, Stainback, & Ayres, 1996), there are those who continually debate its efficacy and value (Kauffman, 1995; Kauffman, Bantz, &

McCullough, 2002; Kavale, 2010; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Mock & Kaufmann, 2002). Among researchers and professionals in the field of education, there is considerable resistance to the inclusion of all students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Kauffman, 1995; Kauffman et al., 2002; Kavale, 2010; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Mock & Kaufmann, 2002). Brantlinger (2004) referred to these individuals as “champions of the special education status quo” (p. 11) who seek to protect segregated placements and learning environments regardless of the obviously “stratified and inequitable” (p. 18) conditions therein and the positive evidence for inclusive settings. An example is Kauffman (2007), who cautioned against viewing conceptual models, such as inclusion, as the actual practice itself. Kauffman (2007) posited that conceptual models represent the way we think about things, and while useful in guiding our thinking, conceptual models must, in turn, provide guidelines for practice that by design identify and resolve problems (2007). Taylor’s (2011) advice that embracing inclusion involves an understanding of the law, finding ways to make “reasonable accommodations,” embracing adaptive technology and “resources” (p. 51), and consulting with school district staff, presents a simplistic model of inclusion, and such examples serve to justify skepticism about the efficacy of inclusion.

Skeptics assert that there is far too little of the empirically justified technical assistance needed to effectively serve and meet the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive general education settings (Kauffman, 1995; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Kauffman, Bantz, & McCullough, 2002; Mock & Kaufmann, 2002; Kavale, 2010), yet Nieto (2003) offered that touching a teacher’s heart, even more so than equipping teachers with the latest techniques, is the real way to improve educational outcomes for typically marginalized and excluded populations of students. Similarly, Cochran-Smith (2006) asserted that “good teaching” (p. 12) characterizes the

teacher as a caring professional first, respecting students as human beings who naturally and subsequently act out their commitment to ensuring that all students have rich and equitable opportunities to learn and grow academically toward improved life outcomes.

These contrasting assessments of inclusion represent an ongoing and often contentious debate, a debate between those who worry that inclusion seeks to undo special education services for students with disabilities (Diamond, 1995; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995), those who see inclusion as a cost-cutter (Cook et al., 1999) or illegitimate fad (Kauffman, 1999), and those who see inclusion as “way of living together, based on a belief that each individual is valued and belongs” (Villa & Thousand, 1995, p. 11). These contrasting points are made to emphasize that while researchers and practitioners debate the merits of inclusion, the achievement gap for students with disabilities widens.

It is important to note that one can always act in light of the evidence or in spite of the evidence. What *is* known is that the practice of educating students with disabilities in segregated settings, with slower paced and lower levels of instruction, is not supported by research (Kauffman 2000; NASP, 2012; Reschly, Tilly & Grimes, 1999; Telzrow & Tankersley, 2000). Add to that the alarming achievement gap for students with disabilities and special education’s track record of poor academic results (Skirtic, 1991). Kortering and Christenson (2009) pointed out that students with disabilities have a difficult time completing their high school education, and that “nearly 800 students with disabilities ... leave high school as an ‘official’ dropout every single school day” (p. 5). For students with disabilities, the road leading to graduation and college and career readiness is paved with challenging standards and accountability (Council for Exceptional Children, 2012). Far from the promise of more intensive educational services, all too often the false tautology (Mallory & Kerns, 1988, p. 47) of a disability label amounts to a dismal

prognosis and an explanation for limited development. The “baggage of negative labeling” and danger of “misidentification” (Osgood, 2006, p. 143) can lead to the removal and exclusion of students with disabilities from general education and often meaningful participation in all aspects of school life, negatively impacting their academic and social readiness at all levels.

Inclusion Legislation

IDEA regulations now call for the least restrictive environment (LRE), requiring a *demonstration* that a student cannot be educated in a general education setting (Kavale, 2010). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 directly addresses inclusion by requiring that:

Each public agency shall ensure (1) that 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 (2) that 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 is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (34 CFR 300.550). (Florida House of Representatives, 2011)

IDEA 2004 also states: “Regular education teachers need to be trained to work with children with disabilities to ensure that their inclusion in the regular classroom is successful as well as keeping a strong curriculum and rigor for the non-disabled students” (34 CFR 300.135).

New measures of accountability further require that school administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers significantly change their mental model of providing educational services to students with disabilities from exclusion to inclusion.

However, in practice, many students with disabilities continue to be educated in fully self-contained learning environments, such as segregated, smaller classroom for most or part of the day, or separate schools exclusively for students with disabilities (Lalvani, 2012). Thurlow (2000) cautioned against such potential work-arounds to full inclusion (and accountability) that often surfaces as philosophical resistance, veiled in the false kindness of low expectations and concealed in the belief that students with disabilities should be protected from harm. In far too many schools special education is still viewed as a necessarily separate system, which continues to serve as a mechanism for the marginalization of certain populations of students (Osgood, 2006) and the perpetuation of a culture of exclusion.

Historically, students with disabilities were excluded from early standards-based reform and accountability measures (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Thurlow, 2000). According to Connor and Ferri (2007), students with disabilities were “positioned as literally unworthy of counting” (p. 70). Even when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 and No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) called for students with disabilities to participate in the general education curriculum and in testing programs, it was with the caveat “to the maximum extent possible for each student.”

U.S. Department of Education initiatives such as Race to the Top (Lee, 2010) and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility (2012) include the mandate to prepare all students for success in their post-school lives in a competitive, 21st-century, global economy. ESEA Flexibility (2012) requires public schools to graduate all students on time and ready for college and career. The new expectation is improved learning outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities, without exception or provision for exclusion. With this hard accountability, policy, and evidence, why is it that many educators do not agree that all

students with disabilities should be educated in the general education classroom, even though the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings has become the dominant school service delivery model, and research, legislation, and proponents of inclusion have clearly articulated the need for fundamental change (Gordon, 2010; Sarason, 1991; Skirtic, 1991; Slee, 1993)?

Strategic Culture Change

For Peterson and Deal (1998), culture is the stream of “norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals built up over time” (p. 28). In Fullan’s (1982) change model, there are three broad phases of the change process: adoption (initiation), implementation, and continuation. Initiation refers to the process of leading up to and making a decision to adopt a change. Implementation simply refers to the attempt to put the adopted change to practice. Continuation is the phase to integrate the change into the system if found useful; otherwise, the idea is discarded (Fullan, 2001). Whether the phases will move forward smoothly depends on whether the problems or obstacles affecting these phases are successfully resolved or not. After conducting a thorough review on the efficacy and implementation of inclusive education, Salend (2011) concluded that it is difficult to compare because of the lack of experimental research, diverse student skills, multifaceted inclusive education programs, and differences in implementation.

We will know that inclusive education has fully arrived when designations such as “inclusion school,” “inclusion classroom,” or “inclusion student” are no longer needed as part of our educational vocabulary because everyone is included (Giangreco et al., 1998).

It is important to remember that the civil rights discourse of the 1950s was foundational to the inclusion of students with disabilities in public education and the bedrock of a free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities (Skiba et al., 2008). When

advocates for inclusion, undesirable student outcomes, educational policy, and law clearly articulate the need for significant change, why has inclusive education been so challenging to adopt? The extent to which educational organizations influence and support educators in recognizing, adopting, embracing, and advancing the inclusion of students with disabilities and other marginalized student groups as a moral imperative is a critical mission, yet organizations often ignore or fail to recognize the barriers to implementing major cultural shifts such as inclusion.

Hulgin and Drake (2011) cautioned against underestimating the “entrenchment” (p. 390) of traditional assumptions and practices related to the education of students with disabilities in the public schools. Symptoms of entrenchment include a superficial acceptance of inclusion, yet no significant or visible shift in traditions such as ability grouping, mechanistic part-time or full-time removal from general education for specialized instruction, and a reticence to question assumptions about existing exclusionary structures (p. 391). Hulgin and Drake (2011) assert that the consequences of such superficial change can, in fact, be significant. The authors cite American philosopher and education reformer John Dewey’s early effort to bring about democracy in education, and Dewey’s 1927 caution that “if human beings do not consciously determine social ends and work towards their fulfilment, other cultural forces will take over” (as cited in Hulgin & Drake, 2011, p. 389).

So how do organizations mitigate such entrenchment? Success factors related to organizational change are found in the literature; however, they are rarely studied in educational organizations engaged in multiple change processes and initiatives, especially relating to organizational practices of inclusion (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014, p. 236). Although studies have explored teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness for inclusive education and their attitudes

towards it, there is little research on how *organizations* work to shape and change teachers' conceptualizations of inclusion and even less on whether their conceptualizations are viewed in the context of civil rights, democracy, and social justice.

Educational scholars are increasingly positioning social justice as a “grounding principle of inclusion” (Obiakor et al., 2012, p. 478) and emphasizing that serious attention must be given to organizational issues that impact the sustainability of efforts that make general educational settings more responsive and inclusive of all students (Grima-Farrell, Bain, & McDonagh, 2011; Lalvani, 2012; Obiakor et al., 2012; Sosu et al., 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Sapon-Shevin (2003) asserted that we cannot separate inclusive schooling practices from social justice. According to Ainscow and Miles (2008):

Inclusive education is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings; ... however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity among all learners [and presumes] that the aim of inclusive education is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability. (p. 16)

Miller (1998) stated that *diversity* refers to the “make-up” (p. 151) of a group, whereas the concept of *inclusion* “describes which individuals are allowed to participate and are enabled to contribute fully in the group” (p. 151). With the diversity and the variability of learners in the public schools, educational organizations must perceptibly move beyond the obsequious constructs of *tolerance* and *acceptance* which carry the tacit tag-lines of *in spite of* and have embedded within them the elements of *approval* and *permission*. What is needed is a culture of *welcoming*; and public education will have arrived when the curriculum no longer dictates who

belongs and inclusion is no longer mentioned (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 289) and is no longer a *thing*.

Champions of Inclusion

The research on inclusion indicates that inclusionary practices require careful thought, preparation, and a focus on more than just access to general education, but also the assurance that inclusion is implemented with proper attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations in place (Deno, 1994; King-Sears, 2008; Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998). Skirtic (1991) wrote about the overwhelmingly negative evidence on “educational excellence [and] equity” (p. 179) pertaining to inclusion of students with disabilities in the public schools, as well as evidence of schools that surpass the expectations set forth in federal laws such as Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA, 1975) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To this assertion, Skirtic and others also add that there are schools, and therefore classrooms and teachers, who view inclusive education as an issue of social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Lalvani, 2012; Nieto, 2003; Sapon-Shevin, 2003; Skirtic, 1991) with the belief that each individual is valued and should belong (Skirtic, 1991; Villa & Thousand, 1995).

Lalvani (2012) found that “teachers who expressed a strong willingness to implement inclusive practices held beliefs about inclusive education as related to democratic societies, equitable education, and social justice” (p. 14). Henderson (2007) discussed the importance of supporting teachers such as those, who make inclusion “happen” (p.7); individuals who not only make inclusion possible, given that special skills are certainly required when providing educational services to students with disabilities, but those who consistently and naturally demonstrate on a regular basis how ordinary it is for students with disabilities to meaningfully

participate in all aspects of school life. Henderson (2007) referred to these individuals as *champions of inclusion* (p. 7). According to Henderson one of the foremost characteristics of these individuals is they make inclusion “extraordinarily ordinary” (p. 7). These individuals maintain what will be referred to in this study as an *inclusive stance*; characterized by a core belief in equity in education for all children, a personal stance that assumes and anticipates human difference, and values those differences and what they can teach us, and who have a proclivity for questioning the labeling and leveling of students, and rejecting a deficit perspective of students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2003).

The extent to which educational organizations utilize and support champions of inclusion to accelerate transformative change is an area worth exploring (Lalvani, 2012). To what extent do educational organizations take the lead in enacting the shift from a “medical model” of disability that legitimizes the segregated education of individuals with disabilities, to a “social model” that rejects the focus on impairments and limitations and seeks to illuminate “institutional practice and policies that oppress and marginalize some students” (Lalvani, 2012, p.16)?

First, is it possible for an educational organization to mitigate resistance to the inclusion of students with disabilities by seeking out, supporting, and reinforcing the efforts of its existing champions for change, those who are adopters and champions of inclusion? Second, is it possible that resistance to the inclusion of students with disabilities can be mitigated by an organization that uses its own power (policy and structures), as well as its built-in capacity (champions of inclusion), to turn the discourse on inclusion from being exclusively about disability to one of inclusive education as foundational to democracy, education reform, and social justice, and the

belief that each individual is valued and should belong (Ainscow et al., 2006; Ballard 2003; Skirtic, 1991; Slee 2001; Villa & Thousand, 1995; Ware 2003)?

Champions of Inclusion—Champions of Culture Change

Building a culture of inclusion requires a commitment to enact structures, behaviors, operating procedures, human resource systems, formal and informal rewards systems, and leadership practices that cultivate a culture of inclusion within the organization (Hulgin & Drake, 2011; Miller, 1998; Udvari-Solner, 1997). As stated in Chapter 1, organizations can benefit from reinforcing existing resources for change (Miller, 1998), as a counter-strategy to using valuable resources to directly confront areas of resistance. Schein (1999) discussed the need to identify the “learning processes and mechanisms” (p. 163) involved as individuals learn within an organization in the interest of enhancing and improving organizational performance.

The rationale for this study is that organizations can build and strengthen a culture of inclusion by identifying and utilizing individuals who have already adopted inclusive values, by capitalizing on their commitment and competency for supporting change, by supporting them as they promote change through coaching, educating, networking and mentoring efforts, and by supporting them as they embed and reinforce inclusive values throughout the system as mechanisms for transformative change (Bennis, 1993; Hamner, Cohen Hall, Timmons, Boeltzig and Fesko, 2008).

Ortlieb and Sieben (2014) applied Giddens’ theory of structuration to analyze how organizations become inclusive in regard to combating discrimination and promoting equal opportunity and social justice in their organizational practices. Giddens’ theory of structuration (1984) is centered on the reciprocal relationship between human agency and social structure.

Agency, within a social structure such as an organization, refers to *how any action is possible*; therefore agency refers to and relies on individuals within an organization and their capacity to act, intervene, and create change (Jones, 2007). Ortlieb and Sieben (2014) explored the relationship between the practices of an organization and the actions of individual and collective agents relative to shaping and making an organization more inclusive. The authors' findings suggest that Giddens' theoretical framework holds promise for future study of how organizational practices and the mobilization of *agents* who reinforce or "shape" (p. 236) inclusive organizational practices by cultivating and continually reinforcing a culture of inclusion (p. 237) contribute to the making of an inclusive organization.

Bennis (1993) also explored the relationship between the organization and individuals who act within an organization in a discussion of the role of "innovative change agents" (p. 18) and their symbiotic relationship with a system. Bennis (1993) characterized change agents as influencers who communicate, transmit, and reinforce values, through both word and action, that contribute to a value system of "concern for our fellow man, experimentalism, openness, honesty, flexibility, cooperation, and democracy" (p. 19).

Rylatt (2013) further defined the change agents as individuals who stand apart in grasping and leveraging sources of power and authority to increase the capacity for generating meaningful outcomes, who act as "meaning makers" with the "consistent ability to articulate compelling reasons for change" (p. 74), who become energized by, and take responsibility for, resolving difficult challenges, who hold themselves accountable, and who positively leverage power and relationships to hold others accountable.

In support of these ideas, Kotter (2007) recognized several elements of organizational change that rely directly on the interaction between the organization and key individuals within

an organization who act to underpin and establish urgency for the change; make up and propagate a supportive coalition for the change; enact and encourage shared vision; execute short-term wins; align initiatives, make improvements, and enact more change; and standardize and systematize new approaches (Kotter, 2007). The findings of Hamner, Cohen Hall, Timmons, Boeltzig and Fesko's (2008) reveal the importance of agents of change, referred to as "bridge-builders," in creating and sustaining positive change in the field of disability (p. 161). The findings of Hamner et al. support Gidden's theory of structuration and illustrate the reciprocity of organizational structures and conditions, and agents of change who reinforce and advance organizational practices. Hamner et al (2008) found that when favorable organizational conditions were coupled with a certain type of individual, "champions emerged" who helped the organization move in new and innovative directions (2008, p. 172).

The Organization as Champion

Street-level bureaucracy theory: within a context of policy ambiguity, workers on the front lines of social or human service delivery shape policy outcomes as they organize their work (Lipsky, 2010). Street-level bureaucracy theory proposes that professionals on the front lines of social service delivery essentially create policy by their daily actions and decisions (Lipsky, 2010). In the absence of detailed criteria, when decisions require professional discretion, workers' interpretation of policy is revealed. Discovering what educators believe, value, and understand about the general education curriculum is essential to understanding how the "access to the general education curriculum" provision is implemented and what students with significant cognitive disabilities receive in the name of access.

Applied to a strategic culture change such as inclusion, these findings highlight the potential power of synergy between an organization as cultivator of change and individuals within organizations, in this case champions of inclusion, who emerge and are empowered to act as champions of change. Theorists suggest and studies increasingly show that organizational culture is a strategic resource and can be leveraged as a strategic asset (Barney, 1986, 1991; Michalisin, Smith, & Kline, 1997; Peteroff & Shanley, 1997).

Jones (2007) argued that the capacity of agents to “act and make change” (p. 398) is both facilitated and inhibited by organizational culture. Therefore if agency refers to and relies on individuals within an organization and their capacity to act, intervene, and create change (2007), equally, attention must be given to maximizing the conditions for creating a culture under which agency becomes possible (2007). This need for attention provides a strong justification for educational organizations to identify champions of inclusion, embrace, employ and deploy them as agents of culture change, and systemically optimize the conditions necessary for them to create culture change.

Recent research encourages organizations to seek out and use built-in capacity for change. Buono and Subbiah (2014) discussed the concept of change capacity and its constituent factors: the people who are willing and able to embrace change; the structure, framework and resources for pursuing change efforts; and the elements of organizational culture (Figure 1). Buono and Subbiah (2014) asserted that an organization’s culture must provide the foundation and supports for change efforts. According to Buono and Subbiah (2014), shifting an organization’s culture must provide the foundation and support for change through “(1) open-mindedness, (2) a pluralistic viewpoint on issues and matters of concern, (3) a commitment to

experimentation and learning, and (4) the creation of a shared purpose among all stakeholders” (p. 39).

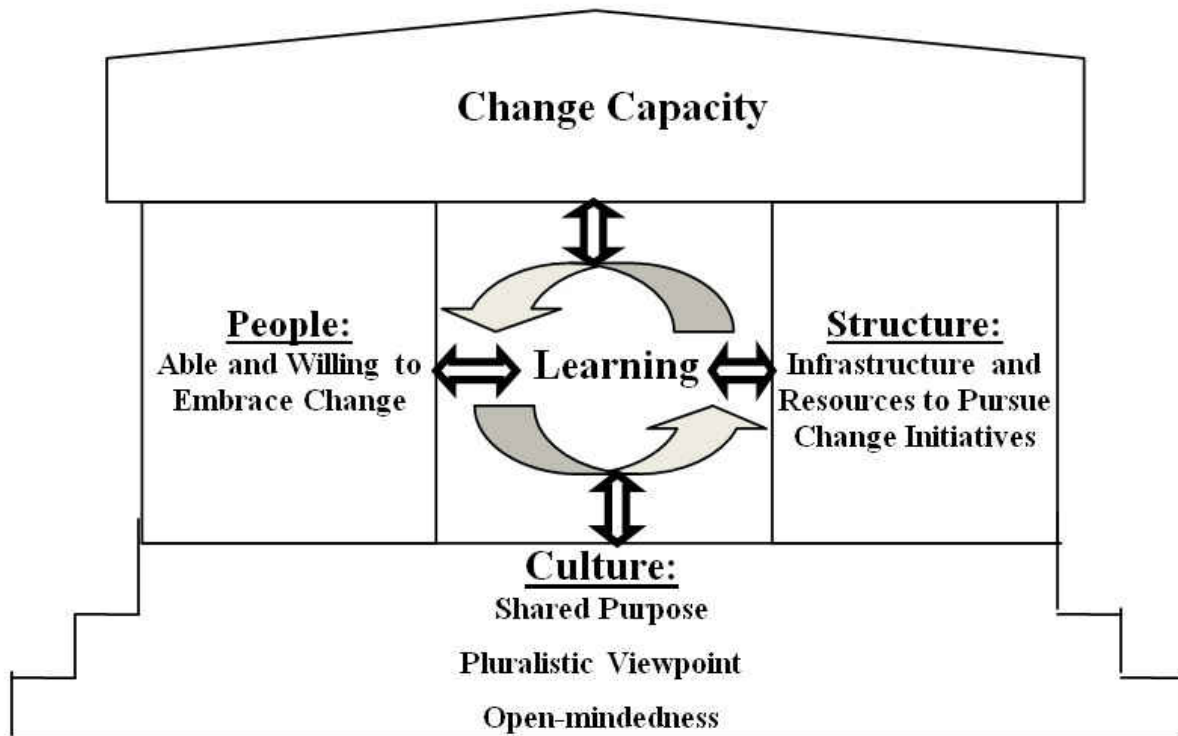


Figure 1: Change Capacity and Its Constituent Factors

Barratt-Pugh, Bahn, and Gakere (2013) explored the complexities involved in reshaping the culture and values of organizations and found that promoting new values may involve the “destruction and re-construction” of an organization’s culture (p. 748). Schein (1985) defined organizational culture as:

the pattern of shared basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be

taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 9)

Barratt-Pugh et al. (2013) found that culture “change begins within and is dependent on, the relational fabric of the organization where negotiation and involvement recruits staff and encourages change” (p. 760). Smith, Richards-Tutor and Cook (2010) uncovered the importance of such relationships, negotiations, and interactions among teachers relating to the application of research-based practices in their classrooms. The authors found that both general and special education teachers rated information about teaching as “more usable” when reported by a teacher. Survey responses indicated that teachers prefer information from other teachers and viewed this information as being from a “trusted insider” (p. 68). This finding is in accord with Jones’ (2007) findings about how change agents operate within organizations, effectively serving as insider, critic, and even “double agents” and “secret agents” (p. 389) in the interest of promoting a culture of inclusion, equitable education, and social justice. Such change agents are able to operate within the organization as internal consultants, able to engage in what Voronov (2008) referred to as “sensegiving” (p. 213). Sensegiving is described as the delegitimization of certain practices and the legitimization of others. This concept is aligned to Rylatts’ previously mentioned characterization of change agents as “meaning maker[s] ... [who have the] consistent ability to articulate compelling reasons for change” (Rylatt, 2013, p. 74). Barratt-Pugh and colleagues (2013) identified this capability of change agents as an essential function within the phenomenon of reconstructing an organization’s culture.

Summary

While practitioners debate the merits of inclusion, exclusionary practices will continue to prove detrimental to student outcomes. As state and national policies demand greater accountability for the educational outcomes of students with disabilities, the socially and academically enriched environments of the general education classroom will become the norm for students with disabilities. At the cusp of the 21st century, Peltier (1997) proclaimed that inclusion “is not a fad that is going to go away” (p. 234).

The literature on inclusion, progressive educational policy and law, and the data on outcomes for students with disabilities portend significant changes for educational organizations. Those changes include efforts to shape and make the culture of public school systems more inclusive and welcoming to all learners, establish a visible commitment to educational equity as a social justice imperative, and a commitment to cultivating inclusive values of support, belongingness, sensitivity, and fairness (Sosu et al., 2010). According to Artilles (2003) “researchers must conduct participatory research with teachers, families, and students and focus explicitly on the role of institutional forces in their lived experiences in schools, households, and communities” (p. 192). Hulgín and Drake (2011) suggested that this type of research within educational organizations is essential for clearly identifying contextual factors that either facilitate or inhibit the capacity for strategic culture change and therefore either advance or diminish educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

This study explored the lived experiences of teachers in a public school system who self-identified as champions of inclusion, in order to gain insight and understanding as to the ways in which educational organizations can enhance the capacity for change.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the methodology used to answer the research questions. It includes a discussion of the research design chosen and the rationale for choosing it, a restatement of the research questions, the criteria for the selection of participants, a description of the instruments used to collect participant data, data collection procedures, and the approach to data analysis. To improve the flow of the narrative, from this point on, the population of classroom teachers, instructional support/resource teachers, and/or instructional coaches targeted in this study will be referred to as “teachers.”

Mixed-Methods Phenomenological Research

In this study, a mixed-methods phenomenological research (MMPR) design (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014) was used to examine the lived experiences of classroom teachers, instructional support/resource teachers, and/or instructional coaches in a public school system, who support inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and identify as champions of inclusion. A recognized strength of mixed-methods research employed in this study lies in the use of numerical data to orient and add precision to data collected via qualitative methods and the use of words and narrative to add meaning to the quantitative data and to provide a deeper and more complete understanding and knowledge of phenomena to inform theory and practice (Ary, Jacobs & Sorenson, 2010, p. 567). In an examination of studies using

MMPR, Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2014) revealed the value and suitability of the MMPR approach, in particular when studying “complex academic sub-disciplines that rely on the voice of human experience to inform practice” (p. 6).

Mixed-Methods Research

Although there are strengths, weaknesses, and implications with any research approach (Ary et al., 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004a), Maykut and Morehouse (1994) captured the power of qualitative research in their proposition that “the Human instrument is the only data collection instrument which is multi-faceted enough and complex enough to capture important elements of a human or human experience” (p. 27). Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, and Richardson (2005) defined qualitative research as “a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context” (p. 196). In qualitative research, words and experiences are used to provide a “descriptive account” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 29) of phenomena using methods of data collection such as interviews and observations, while quantitative research involves “the study of samples and populations [which rely] heavily on numerical data and statistical analysis” (Gall, Gall, & Borg 2010, p. 15). A mixed method approach enabled the researcher to capture the extant phenomenon of inclusion in the organization of interest and to combine the quantitative analysis and interpretation of survey data with the rich data gathered during the qualitative phase of this study, for the purpose of illuminating and informing a complex problem of practice.

Rationale for the Methodology

MMPR designs require two primary decisions; *priority* and *sequence* (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). Decisions are based on the relationship between the methodological components and their status as either the principal or complementary component (2014). The principal or *priority* methodological component in this study was the phenomenological phase due to phenomenology's positioning of personal experience and multiple realities as important to resolving complex problems of practice (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014; Van der Zalm & Bergum, 2000).

The decision regarding sequence positioned the quantitative phase of the study as Phase 1, which "set the stage" (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014, p. 7) for qualitative Phases 2 and 3. The sequence afforded a concentrated focus on a distinct phenomenon, from a distinct perspective, prior to engaging in data collection during the phenomenological enquiry phases (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014; Thornton, Baker, Johnson, & Kay-Lambkin, 2011). In *Phase 1*, the quantitative survey data served an "orientating" (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014, p. 10) function. The *Phase 1* survey was *Stage 1* of a multi-stage purposeful criterion sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007, p. 287) for the purpose of generating a sample of individuals with a distinct perspective and insight into the phenomenon. The quantitative survey phase allowed participants to self-identify as candidates for *Phases 2* and *3* based on criteria specific to the phenomenon, in order to yield an "information-rich" (p. 10) sample for the qualitative phases of the study. This multi-stage purposeful criterion sampling scheme enabled the phenomenological methodology in *Phases 2* and *3* to focus on a specific sample of classroom teachers, instructional support/resource teachers, and/or instructional coaches with an ideological orientation relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

Phenomenological Research

Attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives are instrumental to and affected by phenomena. Many aspects of phenomena can be described quantitatively, such as participant demographics, years of teaching experience, level of education, and certification; however, certain aspects of phenomena, such as the extent to which students with a disability are being accepted and supported in the educational environment, “defy numeration” (Dunn, 2014). Ary et al. (2010) described three critical characteristics of phenomenological research that set this method apart from other qualitative research methods, and are central to the purposes of this study: (1) the positioning of a common human experience or activity as the center of inquiry (p. 471); (2) the examination of a common human experience or activity “from the perspective of particular participants” (p. 471); and (3) its quest to get at the essence of an experience as “perceived by the participants (p. 472).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2008) is used to explore the details of both shared experience (Phase 2), and lived experience (Phase 3) of teachers who self-identified as champions of inclusion. In IPA, as emphasized by Smith and Osborn (2008), “meaning is central, and the aim is to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings rather than measure their frequency” (p. 66). As stated in Chapter 2, inclusion means “different things to people who wish different things from it” (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994, p. 299), can be difficult to translate into practice, and can be shrouded in philosophy and prone to non-specific conceptual constructs. IPA is particularly suited to and will be of value in exploring and analyzing the “individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an

attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53).

Lived Experience

For this study, the process of phenomenological research allowed the researcher to examine the extant phenomenon of inclusion in a public school system and to view the phenomenon of inclusion through the *lived experience* (Van Manen, 1990) of specific teachers, for whom inclusive practices, an inclusive stance, inclusive values, and the cultivation of an inclusive culture, are a part of their belief system and practice, i.e. *champions of inclusion*. Van Manen (1990) proposed that “the lifeworld, the world of lived experience, is both the source and object of phenomenological research” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 53). Van Manen also affirmed the value of searching for meaning in related experiences, which upon examination and analysis might yield valuable insight into the nature of the phenomenon (1990, p. 53). Graham and Slee (2008) described norm as a “fiction” (p. 281), while acknowledging that normalization is a “man-made grid of intelligibility that attributes value to culturally specific performances and in doing so, privileges particular ways of being” (p. 281). This phenomenological research process allowed the researcher to “interrogate the normative assumptions” (Graham & Slee, 2008) of teachers who champion inclusion and the references and experiences that influenced the construction of their norm, namely inclusivity vs. exclusivity.

What are the lived experiences of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion? What shaped their identity? Why do they support inclusive practices? Why do they maintain an inclusive stance? Why do they hold inclusive values? What drives them to cultivate inclusive culture? Why do they affirm and include when many teachers are prone to deny and exclude? These questions, explored through this methodology, enabled study participants to examine their

role as agents for change, to evaluate the current status of their organization as an agent for change and as a cultivator of inclusive values and culture, and to make recommendations for removing barriers to inclusion, and establishing norms, values, practices, and policies that support an inclusive organizational culture.

Research Design

As described above, a mixed-methods phenomenological research (MMPR) design (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014) was used to examine the lived experiences of public school teachers who identify as a champions of inclusion. In mixed-methods research, both quantitative and qualitative techniques are used for data collection and analysis, and they can be used either concurrently or sequentially (Gall et al., 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004b). A sequential exploratory strategy (Terrel, 2011) was used to collect and analyze the quantitative and qualitative data (see Figure 1). The sequential explanatory strategy allowed the results from qualitative phases of the study to expand upon the findings from the quantitative phase of the study (Morse, 2003) in the interest of illuminating a complex problem of educational practice (Gall et al., 2010, p. 15).

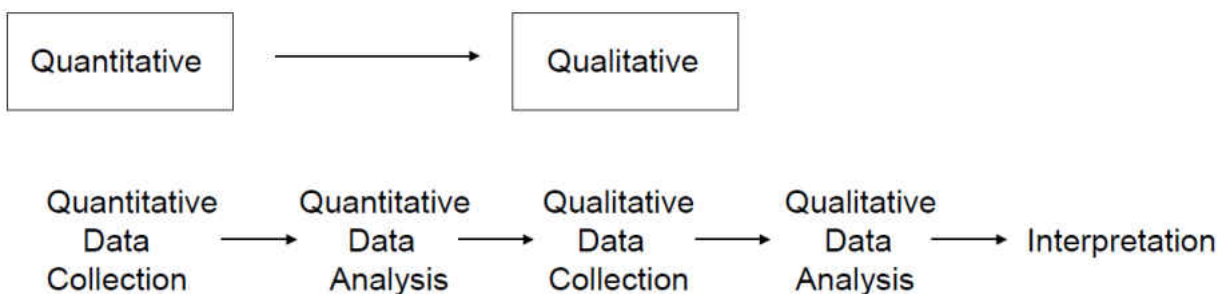


Figure 2: Sequential Explanatory Strategy

Research Questions

The research questions that were developed for this study:

1. To what extent do classroom teachers, instructional support/resource teachers, or instructional coaches, who are recognized by their school principal as understanding, embracing and/or promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, identify as champions of inclusion (e.g., enact inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and actively cultivate an inclusive culture)?
2. What are the lived experiences of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion?
 - a. What shaped their identity? (personal experience, teaching experience, teacher preparation program, in-service training or professional development, influence of colleagues, leadership, and organizational culture)
 - b. Why do they support/enact inclusive practices?
 - c. Why do they maintain an inclusive stance?
 - d. Why do they hold inclusive values?
 - e. Why do they champion inclusion; i.e., what drives them to cultivate inclusive culture?
3. In what ways do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion act as agents of change?
4. What are the views and opinions of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion in regard to the culture of their organization?

5. What recommendations do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion have for establishing and advancing an inclusive organizational culture?

Phase 1—Survey

In *Phase 1* of the study, classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches, who were recognized by their school principal as people who understand, embrace, and/or promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, were invited to participate in a survey designed to capture their views and opinions on inclusion and the current phenomenon of inclusion in their organization. The survey was aligned to the research questions and included criteria designed to screen for teachers who support *inclusive instructional practices*, maintain an *inclusive stance*, hold *inclusive values*, and actively demonstrate a commitment to building *inclusive culture* as an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking, and mentoring other educators (Henderson, 2007). The survey was also *Stage 1* of the sampling scheme for the *Phase 2* focus group session, enabling teachers to self-identify as champions of inclusion, based on specific criteria. Teachers who emerged from the survey data as champions of inclusion were selected through purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) to participate in a focus group session (Phase 2).

Phase 2—Focus Group

In *Phase 2*, the sample of teachers who identified as champions of inclusion were invited to participate in a focus group session. The purpose of the focus group session was to solicit teachers' shared experience in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion and the current state of inclusion in their organization, including their shared insight into how the organization might

position and utilize them as agents for change, and uncover how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture and position itself as an agent for change and cultivator of inclusive values and culture.

Focus groups allowed participants to interact with each other vs. only responding to the researcher, possibly revealing more about their perspectives and point of view than in a “researcher-dominated interview” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 381). The focus group (Phase 2) also served as a *Stage 2* of the sampling scheme for the individual interview sessions (Phase 3), yielding a specific sample of teachers who identified as champions of inclusion, with a strong ideological orientation relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

Phase 3—Individual Interview

In *Phase 3*, a purposive sample of teachers who emerged from the focus group session with a strong, pro-inclusion orientation was invited to participate in the individual interview phase of the study, and the teachers were individually interviewed to gather deeper understanding into their lived experiences. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the experiences and moments that influenced their views and opinions about inclusion and led them to support inclusive practices, adopt an inclusive stance, and embrace inclusive values, and made them champions of inclusion. The interviews also explored their views in regard to the success of inclusion in their organization, their role as agents of culture change, and their organizations’ role establishing and/or advancing an inclusive organizational culture.

Procedures

Setting

The study was conducted within a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. The entire study (Phases 1, 2, and 3) took place over the span of approximately three months. Nominees who chose to participate were able to access the survey (Phase 1) on-line, anywhere they had access to their school district email. The focus groups (Phase 2) were convened at a central location and scheduled at a time that was as convenient as possible for all participants. The face-to-face, individual interviews (Phase 3) were scheduled at the convenience of the participants, at agreed upon times and locations.

Population and Sample

At the time of the study, the school district provided exceptional student education services to approximately 22,000 students with a documented disability. A 2012-2013 program evaluation (Evergreen Solutions, 2013) of the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) department indicated that 77% of students with a disability were served in regular class placements, receiving instruction in general education classrooms, 19% were receiving instruction in resource room and separate class placements, and 2% of students with a disability were served in specialized placements (separate schools only for students with a disability).

State Local Educational Authority (LEA) profile data for 2015 reported data for the 2013-2014 school year as follows: 80% of students with a disability were served in regular class placements, receiving instruction in general education classrooms, 16% received instruction in resource room and separate class placements, and 3% of students with a disability were served in

specialized placements (separate schools only for students with a disability). State targets for 2015-2016 (FLDOE, 2014) are $\geq 79\%$ of students with a disability served in a regular class placement, $< 9\%$ of students with a disability were served in resource and separate class placements, and $< 1.75\%$ of students with a disability were served in specialized placements (separate schools only for students with a disability).

Selection of Participants

Sampling is an important step in the research process. According to Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007), the process of selecting groups and individuals based on certain characteristics “helps to inform the quality of inferences made by the researcher that stem from the underlying findings” (p.281). For this mixed methods phenomenological research study, each phase of the study is part of a multi-stage purposeful criterion sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007, p. 287). This method lends itself to mixed methods studies in which quantitative and qualitative research approaches are undertaken sequentially, as in this case, with each stage yielding a selection of groups or individuals with dispositions and perspectives suited to the focus of the study.

Following approval from the University and school district Institutional Review Boards, the Phase 1 survey served as Stage 1 of a multi-stage purposeful criterion sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007, p. 287). The sample population for Phase 1 selection consisted of teachers, instructional support teachers, and instructional coaches in a large urban school district in the state of Florida, who were recognized and nominated by their school principals as people who understood, embraced, and/or promoted the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings.

Phase 1—Survey Participant Selection

The school district required a copy of the university IRB approval prior to granting permission to conduct research. Once approval was obtained from the UCF IRB (See Appendix A), an Application to Conduct Research was submitted to the school district's department of research and evaluation. Given that nominations were sought from principals at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels for maximum variation, the possibility that more than 10 principals would agree to participate in the study required an additional layer of approval from the Superintendents' Administrative Leadership Team. Once the final approval was granted (see Appendix B) the district department of Research and Evaluation sent an email to school principals notifying them of an opportunity to participate in research. The email included a voting feature that enabled principals to *accept* participation in the study, *decline* participation, or *request more information*.

The district department of Research and Evaluation sent the notification of opportunity to participate in research to 189 principals, blind copying the researcher. Of these principals, 17 agreed to participate, 5 requested more information, 36 declined to participate, and 132 did not respond to the request. Following the guidelines of the district Research and Evaluation department, the researcher was not permitted to contact any principal who declined participation or did not respond. Following the guidelines of the district Research and Evaluation department, three separate attempts were made via email to prompt the principals who agreed to participate, or requested more information, to submit their nominations. Of the 17 principals who initially agreed to participate, a total of 15 submitted nominations.

Target Population

The target population for Phase 1 of the study was classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, and instructional coaches who were recognized by their school principals as people who understood, embraced, and/or promoted the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings.

Recruitment of participants began with school principals, who were invited to nominate up to two classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who, they felt strongly, understood, embraced, and/or promoted the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. To ensure maximum variation (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007, p. 285), participant nominations were sought from principals at the elementary, middle school, and high school level. Each principal was sent a *Request for Nominations to Participate in Research* letter (Appendix C) via email, with an overview of the study design, timeframe and location, procedures for consent and confidentiality, and a link to a secure survey through which to submit their nominations. A detailed summary of the study was attached to the email, including overview, abstract, guiding questions, research questions, the domains and descriptors for the target sample of participants, and the guidelines for making recommendations. Principals were given criteria for nominations in order to ensure to the greatest extent possible that individuals who were nominated resulted in a sample of teachers with specific dispositions relative to the phenomenon being studied.

The criteria for nominations were categorized into the following four domains, with key descriptors gleaned from the literature and aligned to the research questions. These descriptors were designed to identify and yield a target sample of teachers with specific dispositions relative to the phenomenon being studied. Principals were asked to nominate classroom teachers,

instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who consistently exhibited one or more of the following characteristics:

- Supports inclusionary practices/inclusive practices: promotes attitudes, accommodations, adaptations, and instructional practices that support the restructuring of the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students (Lalvani, 2012).
- Maintains an inclusive stance: a belief in equity in education for all children, combined with a personal stance that assumes and anticipates human difference and values those differences and what they can teach us; a proclivity for questioning the labeling and leveling of students, and rejecting a deficit perspective of students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2003).
- Holds inclusive values: a value system that regards difference and diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource; a value system within public education that situates inclusive education as an issue of social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Skirtic, 1991) and as a fundamental issue of civil rights (Winzer & Mazurek, 2000).
- Actively cultivates an inclusive organizational culture: consistently demonstrates both commitment and competency for supporting inclusive culture (Miller, 1998); exemplifies on a regular basis the ability to connect, communicate, challenge, and collaborate appropriately to advance and improve education services for students who have a disability; acts as an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking, and mentoring other educators (Henderson, 2007).

As a result, 33 instructional staff members were nominated to participate in the survey phase (Phase 1) of the study.

Notification of Nominated Instructional Staff

With approval from the district Research and Evaluation department, nominated participants were sent *Invitation to Participate in Research* letters via their district email (Appendix D), with an overview of the study design, timeframe and location, procedures for consent and confidentiality, and a secure link to the survey. The invitation included an explanation of the three phases of the study, the voluntary and confidential nature of the study, what would be expected of them, and the possible extent of their involvement given the three phases of the study and the sampling scheme. A secure link to the survey was generated using the survey software Qualtrics©.

Once potential participants clicked the link to access the survey, they were immediately taken to an *Introduction* page thanking them for their participation, reiterating the objectives of the survey and its voluntary nature, outlining the possible extent of their participation, explaining the process for withdrawing from the study at any time without penalty, and the provisions for managing data and protecting privacy. Once participants read through the introduction they were given the choice to *agree* and proceed to the survey, or *decline* and exit the survey. If potential participants declined to participate in the study, a message displayed thanking them for their time, and their contact information was removed from the list of potential participants. If the potential participants accepted the invitation to participate, they were taken to the first section of the survey to enter their demographic information, including current position, years of teaching experience, settings they have taught in (e.g., general education classroom, self-contained ESE classroom), path to teaching (e.g., traditional teacher preparation, alternative certification), teaching credentials (certifications), and degrees earned. Participants who had not responded after one week were sent a follow-up email as a reminder. A total of three attempts were made to

prompt nominees to complete the survey. Of the 33 nominated participants, 25 completed the survey.

Phase 2 – Focus Group Participant Selection

The *Phase 1* survey included criteria designed to screen for teachers who self-identified as champions of inclusion, based on the strength of their individual responses in the four domains: inclusive practices, inclusive stance, inclusive values, and inclusive culture. Some survey items were pro-inclusion statements, where the desired responses were strongly agree, somewhat agree, agree; some responses were pro-exclusion statements, where the desired responses were strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree.

The sample of teachers who emerged from the *Phase 1* survey data as champions of inclusion were chosen via random purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to participate in a focus group session (Phase 2). The Phase 1 survey represented Stage 1 of the multi-stage purposeful random (probability) sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007), which generated a sample of individuals with a distinct perspective and insight into the phenomenon for the phenomenological phases (Phase 2 and 3) of the study.

To the greatest extent possible, the focus group was composed of a purposive sample of teachers varying in gender, age, school level assignment(s), settings (e.g., inclusive and/or separate class settings), content certification area(s), level of education, years of teaching experience, and path to teaching (e.g., traditional teacher preparation or alternative preparation program). The focus group dynamic was employed to gather deeper understanding into teachers' lived experiences, as participants interacted and “incorporate[d] the viewpoints of others in structuring their own understandings” (Gall et al., 2010, p. 381).

The sample of teachers who identified as champions of inclusion were prompted to express their shared insight into how the organization might position and utilize them as agents for change, how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture, and how it might position *itself* as an agent for change and cultivator of inclusive values and culture. The focus group protocol was semi-structured and designed to capitalize on the dynamic of collective engagement in answering questions related to the research questions and designed to gain more of a nuanced understanding of the survey completers' dispositions toward inclusion than could be gained from the survey responses alone.

Phase 3—Individual Interview Participant Selection

Initially, a purposive sample of teachers who participated in the *Phase 2* focus groups was to be chosen to participate in *Phase 3* of the study, the individual interview sessions. The criteria for participation in the focus group were to be (1) a strong positive ideological orientation relevant to the phenomenon of inclusion, including (2) a view of inclusive education in the context of civil rights, democracy, and social justice, and (3) a strong and positive vision of how the organization could position itself as an agent of culture change. Given these criteria, each of the three focus group participants in focus group #1 (FG1) met the criteria for participation in an individual interview to explore their lived experience as champions of inclusion.

Sample Size

The literature was consulted for recommended sample sizes in studies containing both quantitative and qualitative components. Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) asserted that sample

size is important because it determines the extent to which statistical and/or analytical generalizations can be made (p. 287).

Phase 1—Survey

Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) method for determining a statistically appropriate sample size for a given population, based on an approximate population of 11,000 teachers in the public school system of interest, a statistically appropriate sample size would be somewhere between 370 and 375 survey responses. However, given that the school district in this study does not allow the distribution of "census"-style instruments, a sampling scheme that originated with principal nominations, resulted in 33 nominees, with 25 completing the survey.

Given the small sample size, teacher nominees that were submitted in excess of the two requested nominees were sent the survey based on the determination that this would not necessarily skew the survey data, and might positively contribute to the number of possible focus group participants and candidates for the individual interviews.

Phase 2—Focus Group

Based on a review of the literature, the recommended size for focus groups ranges from 6 to 10 participants (Krueger, 2000; Langford, Schoenfeld, & Izzo, 2002; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009), and the recommended number of focus group sessions ranges from 3 to 6 (Krueger, 1994; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The results of the survey yielded seven individuals whose survey response data met the desired criteria. One individual did not respond to requests for participation in the study; leaving six remaining candidates for Phase 2. Initially, one focus group session was planned, however, two individuals, despite a three-week window, could not

align their schedules to any of the proposed focus group dates, times or locations. Thus, two focus groups were convened, each with three individuals.

Phase 3—Interviews

In phenomenological research designs, sample sizes should be small enough to afford a “deep, case-oriented analysis” (Sandelowski, 1995), yet be of sufficient size to provide an information-saturated experience regarding the phenomenon (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Thornton et al., 2011). Based on a review of the literature, the minimum sample size recommended for the interview phase in a phenomenological research design is 10 interviews (Creswell, 1994; Langford et al., 2002; Morse, 1994; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). However, when conducting an interpretive phenomenological analysis, Smith and Osborn (2008) recommended interviewing as few as three individuals, in order to achieve “sufficient in-depth engagement” (p. 57) and to set the stage for a detailed examination of “similarity and difference, convergence and divergence” (p. 57). Smith and Osborn (2008) also made this recommendation for researchers who are new to this method of data collection and analysis due to the potential for a vast and unwieldy amount of data that would be generated by a larger sample.

In the final phase of the study, all three individuals who participated in focus group #1 (FG1) were invited to and agreed to participate in an individual interview.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study were a survey, focus group questionnaire, and interview questionnaire. They were developed by the researcher to fit the research questions. Prior to submitting the instruments to the university and school district Institutional Review

Boards for approval, the survey, interview questionnaire, and focus group questionnaires were presented to a panel of experts within the field of special education and educational administration.

Expert Protocol Review Panel and Delphi Technique

An Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP) comprising experts in the field of special education was recruited to vet the sample items in the survey, focus group, and individual interview protocols through an iterative process known as a Delphi Technique. A Delphi Technique was used to obtain consensus from the EPRP concerning the suitability and alignment of the survey, interview, and focus group items to the objectives of the study.

The Delphi technique is a recognized method of building consensus of opinion on a specific topic within a reasonable time frame (Hsu & Sanford, 2007). For an item to be included in the protocols, a majority of the EPRP members had to rate the question as Acceptable. The Delphi process consisted of consists of a series of *rounds*, where the protocols were sent to the EPRP, which reviewed the items and returned them with feedback. All feedback shared between members of the EPRP was anonymous so as not to inhibit candid feedback and in order to circumvent the impact of dominant individuals on group consensus. In each iteration, the researcher collected, edited, and returned the protocols with revisions and a summation of the reasons for changes based on the expert feedback (Hsu & Sanford, 2007).

Nine experts were recruited for this task, all known by the researcher, who are recognized for their commitment to inclusion and to promoting inclusive values in the public school system. Their expertise was solicited based on one or more of the following characteristics:

- professional educator (classroom teacher, district/school support staff)

- knowledgeable practitioner in the phenomenon of inclusion
- stakeholder with a vested interest in the topic of inclusion in education
- highly credentialed expert in the field of education (M.Ed., Ed.S. Ed.D. or Ph.D.)
- principal/administrator/executive administrator interested in the findings of this study

Individuals were contacted by the researcher via email to verify their willingness to serve on the EPRP. The email notification (Appendix E) contained a brief explanation of the study and Delphi process; what was expected of them as members of the EPRP; their role in reviewing the items for errors in syntax, bias, ambiguity, vagueness, and alignment; and the criteria for rating the items. Recruits for the EPRP were able to use a voting feature through which they could indicate that they would (yes) or would not (no) be willing to participate.

The Delphi process was executed electronically via Google Survey. Once affirmative replies were received, the members of the EPRP were sent an email thanking them for their support, with a more detailed explanation of the Delphi technique and the purpose and objectives of the study and contact information for the researcher. The email included an attached summary, conceptual framework, research questions, descriptors of a champion of inclusion (see Appendix E), and an electronic link to a Google Survey containing the survey, focus group questionnaire, and interview questionnaire. By clicking on the link the EPRP members were taken to Round 1 of the Delphi (see Appendix E) which included detailed instructions for completing Round 1, the study abstract, and the protocols in order: survey, focus group, and interview. On the Google landing page for Round 1, the EPRP was presented with the following guideline:

Thank you for consenting to serve on my Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP).

You have been chosen to serve on this panel based on your recognized commitment to

inclusion, and to promoting inclusive values in the public school system. Thank you for your time and participation! You are being asked to evaluate items for the following protocols: Survey (50), Focus Group (10) and Individual Interview (10). You are not being asked to respond to the items. You are not necessarily being asked if you agree or disagree with the statements in the items; however, you could disagree with the way a statement or question is written based on its misalignment with the objectives of the study. You are being asked to review the items for errors in syntax, bias, ambiguity, vagueness, and vet them based on their suitability and alignment to the research questions and objectives of the study.

For each potential item in the protocols, members of the panel were able to select one of two options: “Acceptable” or “Revision/Rewording Suggested.” For example, question #1 was: “Many of the things general education teachers do in their classrooms for students without disabilities are appropriate for students with disabilities.” The choices were as follows: “Acceptable,” “Revision or rewording suggested (see q. 1a).” Each item in each protocol was followed by a repeat of the same question with an open text field and the instructions: “If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to the next question.” Members who chose “Acceptable” would skip question 1a., leaving the text field blank and advance to the next item, in this example, question #2. If they chose “Revision/Rewording Suggested,” they advanced to question 1a, and typed their suggested revision or rewording of the question before advancing to the next question.

Once the members of the EPRP submitted feedback on the proposed items in Round 1, the researcher collected and consolidated the feedback and sent an email with further instructions and an electronic link to the Google Survey for Round 2.

On the Google landing page for Round 2, the EPRP was presented with the following guideline:

Welcome to Round 2. Thank you for continuing to serve on this Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP). Each member of the panel offered suggested revisions to the survey items that are now available review in Round 2 of the Delphi Process. In respect of your time: Survey items from Round 1 that were accepted by the entire panel without revision will not be included in Round 2, thus the numbering of items in this survey round will not be consecutive; Items that only needed a simple part of speech omitted, changed or added for clarity and /or syntax are not included in this round; whereas a part of speech changed and clarified the meaning of an item, it is included for review. Please note it was suggested that several items be separated into two different items for clarity and quantifiable analysis. Those additional items are included in Round 2 for the panel's review and comment. Thank you again for your continued support of this research study.

In Round 2, members of the panel were reminded of their objective to review the questions for errors in syntax, as well as for bias, ambiguity or vagueness, and to evaluate each item based on its suitability and alignment to the research questions and objectives of the study. EPRP members were also reminded that they were not being asked to respond to the item statements as a study participant; however, EPRP members were instructed that if they felt an item would not clearly elicit or elucidate a participant's disposition toward inclusion, a text box was provided for comments following the item. Items in Round 1 that were accepted by the entire panel without revision were not included in Round 2. After reading the original item and its suggested revision, EPRP members were able to select one of the 3 options: "Prefer Original,"

“Prefer Revision,” or “Comments or Additional Revision Suggested.” The third option was followed with a text box for suggested revision or comments.

Once the members of the EPRP submitted feedback on the proposed items in Round 2, the researcher collected and consolidated the feedback and sent an email with further instructions and an electronic link to the Google Survey for Round 3. Following Round 2, the EPRP was very close to reaching consensus on the Protocol items. On the Google landing page for Round 3, the EPRP was presented with the following guideline:

Welcome to Round 3. Thank you for continuing to serve on this Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP). Each member of the panel offered suggested revisions to the items that are now available for review in Round 3 of the Delphi Process. In respect of your time: Survey items from Round 2 that were accepted by the entire panel without revision will not be included in Round 3, thus the numbering of items in this round may not be consecutive; Recommendations may also have been made for revising the order of the questions to improve the flow of the protocol. Following Round 3, a draft of the final protocols with all changes will be provided for your review. Thank you again for your continued support of this research study.

Items in Round 2 that were accepted by the entire panel without revision were not included in Round 3. After reading and comparing the original item and its suggested revision, EPRP members were able to select one of the 2 options: “Revision Acceptable” or “Comment or Additional Revision Suggested” followed by an open text field for the comment or additional suggestion.

Consensus was reached within three rounds, with the entire process completed in approximately 8 weeks.

Survey

Using the Delphi Technique, the researcher developed a draft survey instrument (see Appendix O) to capture teachers' views regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in general education settings. Some survey items were adapted with permission from a survey instrument used in a previous study published by Taylor & Ringlaben (2012). Taylor and Ringlaben adapted items from the following instruments with permission, for their 2012 study, *Impacting Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusion*. One survey used by Taylor and Ringlaben (2012) was based on the Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) Scale (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995), which was a revised version of the Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming Scale originally developed by Larrivee and Cook (1979). Sample items included a) students with disabilities can best be served in general education classrooms; b) students with disabilities are likely to create confusion in the general education classroom; and c) students with disabilities will not monopolize the general education classroom teacher's time.

Another instrument used for Taylor and Ringlaben's 2012 study was the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This scale consisted of 24 items that respondents rated on a nine-point scale ranging from "nothing" to "a great deal." Sample items included a) how well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom; b) how much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom; and c) how much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?

The researcher categorized the survey items for this study into the following four domains, with key descriptors gleaned from the literature, aligned to the research questions. The researcher expanded upon Henderson's (2007) construct of the Champion of Inclusion, with

permission, and incorporated ideology from the following researchers (Winzer & Mazurek, 2000; Ainscow et al., 2003; Ainscow, 2005; Lalvani, 2012), to identify constituent elements of inclusion: practice, stance, values and culture. These descriptors are designed to screen for a target sample of teachers with specific dispositions and ideological orientations relative to the phenomenon being studied.

- Inclusionary Practices or inclusive practices—Attitudes, accommodations, adaptations, and instructional practices that occur in the interest of restructuring the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students (Lalvani, 2012).

Key descriptor(s): *Restructuring the classroom environment to meet the needs of all students*

- Inclusive Stance—A held belief in equity in education for all children, combined with a personal stance that assumes and anticipates human difference and values and values those differences and what they can teach us; a proclivity for questioning the labeling and leveling of students and rejecting a deficit perspective of students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2003).

Key descriptor(s): *Belief in equity for all children; anticipates and values human difference; questions labeling and leveling of students with special needs; rejects a deficit perspective of disability*

- Inclusive values—A value system that regards difference and diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource; a value system within public education that situates inclusive education as an issue of social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Skirtic, 1991) and as a fundamental issue of civil rights (Winzer & Mazurek, 2000).

Key descriptors: *Values difference and diversity as a natural condition; views inclusion as an issue of civil rights and social justice*

- Inclusive Culture—An educator who consistently demonstrates both commitment and competency for supporting inclusive culture; who exemplifies on a regular basis the ability to connect, communicate, challenge, and collaborate appropriately to advance and improve education services for students who have a disability; and acts an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking, and mentoring other educators (Henderson, 2007).

Key descriptor(s): *Commitment and competency for supporting inclusive culture; change agent*

Focus Group Protocol

Using the Delphi Technique, the researcher designed a draft focus group instrument (Appendix H) to solicit insight into how the organization might position and use educators as agents for change, and how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture and position itself as an agent for change and cultivator of inclusive values and culture. The focus group protocol was semi-structured, with ten open-ended questions designed to solicit views, feelings, and opinions related to themes of the research questions, including recommendations for their organization to:

- Effectively communicate a compelling organizational imperative for inclusion
- Overtly value teachers who have an inclusive stance
- Establish a *community of practice of champions of inclusion* to be positioned and used by the organization as an agent for culture change
- Support and reinforce inclusive values

- Remove constraints and barriers to inclusive values
- Build capacity to cultivate an inclusive culture

Individual Interview Protocol

Using the Delphi Technique, the researcher developed a draft individual interview protocol (Appendix I) to solicit a deeper understanding of the lived experience of teachers who identify as a champion of inclusion. The protocol was semi-structured with ten open-ended questions designed to solicit views, feelings, and opinions related to themes of the research questions including:

- Personal and professional experiences with individuals with disabilities
- Professional experience in articulating a compelling reason for inclusion and promoting inclusion through coaching, educating, networking, and mentoring
- Professional experience within the organization as an agent of change (“double agent” and/or “secret agent”) in the interest of promoting a culture of inclusion, equitable education, and social justice
- Feelings and opinions about:
 - The extent to which their organization has communicated a compelling organizational imperative for inclusion
 - The extent to which their organization values their inclusive stance
 - The extent to which teachers, leaders, and the organization hold inclusive values
 - Being positioned and used by their organization as agents for culture change
 - The capacities of leadership in leading an inclusive culture

Data Collection.

Phase 1—Survey

Survey Protocol

The researcher drafted survey items questions designed to capture teachers' views in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion. A Likert-scale survey (Phase 1) instrument was used to answer research question 1 (RQ1):

1. To what extent do classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches, who are recognized by their school principal as understanding, embracing, and/or promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, identify as champions of inclusion (e.g., enact inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and actively cultivate an inclusive culture)?

An Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP) was convened and a Delphi Technique was used to gain a consensus from the EPRP in terms of the suitability and alignment of the survey items to the objectives of the study. For a question to be included in the survey protocol, a majority of the EPRP had to rate the question as Acceptable.

The survey contained 50 items aligned to the objectives of the study and included criteria designed to screen for characteristics of a *champion of inclusion* (Henderson, 2007), who supports/enacts *inclusive instructional practices*, maintains an *inclusive stance*, holds *inclusive values*, and actively demonstrates a commitment to building *inclusive culture* as an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking and mentoring other educators. The survey was Stage 1 of the sampling scheme to identify champions of inclusion through purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) for participation in the focus group phase of the study (Phase 2).

Survey Procedures

A letter (Appendix D) with an overview of the study design, the potential scope of their involvement including timeframes and locales, procedures for consent and confidentiality, and a secure link to the survey was sent to the nominees via their district email. The invitation included an explanation of the three phases of the study, the voluntary and confidential nature of the study, what would be expected of them and the possible extent of their involvement given the three phases of the study and the sampling scheme. The secure survey link was generated using the survey software Qualtrics©. Participants who clicked the link were immediately taken to an *Introduction* page thanking them for their participation, reiterating the objectives of the survey and its voluntary nature, outlining the possible extent of their participation, explaining the process for withdrawing from the study at any time without penalty, and the provisions for managing data and protecting privacy.

Once participants read through the introduction, they were given the choice to *agree* and proceed to the survey, or *decline* and exit the survey. If potential participants declined to participate in the study, a message displayed thanking them for their time, and their contact information was removed from the list of potential participants. If the potential participants accepted the invitation to participate, they were taken to the first section of the survey to enter their demographic information including current position, years of teaching experience, settings in which they had taught (e.g., general education classroom, self-contained ESE classroom), path to teaching (e.g., traditional teacher preparation, alternative certification), teaching credentials (certifications), and degrees earned. Participants who had not responded after 1 week were sent a follow-up email as a reminder. A total of three attempts were made to prompt nominees to complete the survey. Of the thirty-three nominated participants, twenty-five completed the survey (see Table 3).

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, names were held confidential and known only to the researcher. All data was encrypted and stored in password-protected databases. Participants who responded to the electronic survey were identified only by their numeric work email. Once the survey data were downloaded, the researcher cross-referenced the numeric email format with a district provided email directory to identify potential participants, only for the purpose of contacting them for subsequent phases of the study. Each participant was then assigned a new alpha-numeric alias. All data in this publication, including that of principals who nominated teachers and their schools, are reported using an alias. The cross-referenced, identifiable data were then stripped from the working data-file. The matching file of names to aliases has been stored by the researcher in a separate, password-protected file. All files are stored in a secure password-protected database, in a password protected computer, in a locked office.

Phase 2—Focus Group

In Phase 2 of the study, a purposive criterion sample of teachers who self-identified through their responses to the survey as champions of inclusion were invited to attend a focus group session. Chosen focus-group participants were initially contacted via email, and asked for a convenient time at which they could be contacted by the researcher via phone. Subsequently, the researcher phoned each potential focus group participant and restated the purpose of the study, the procedures, the voluntary nature of the study, its risks and benefits, the compensation, and assured confidentiality of each participant. At that time, the researcher inquired as to a convenient window of time and preferred location, documenting each for future scheduling

purposes. Once each potential focus group participant had been contacted, an online scheduling tool (Doodle©) was used to propose dates, times, and locations for the focus group. A Doodle© poll was sent to each potential participant, and the responses were aggregated to determine the options that worked best for everyone.

Keeping all variables constant, at the beginning of each focus group session the researcher restated the purpose of the study, the procedures, the voluntary nature of the study, its risks and benefits, compensation, and the assured confidentiality of each focus group participant. Focus group data were collected using a Sony ICD-PX333 digital voice recorder, and notes were taken by the researcher. Participants' responses and dialog during the focus group session were transcribed word-for-word. Well-designed focus groups typically last between 1 and 2 hours (Morgan, 1997; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996), and the focus group session was scheduled accordingly. At the end of the session participants were thanked for their time and participation. All focus group session transcripts and materials were secured in a locked cabinet in a locked office in a secure building with badged entry.

To protect the confidentiality of participants, all focus group participants were provided with a hard copy of the *Summary Explanation for Exempt Research—Focus Group* that was approved by the University Institutional Review Board. The focus group session was not initiated until each participant read the summary and was given a chance to ask questions. The names of the focus group participants are confidential and only known to the researcher and to each other. Each participant was assigned an alpha-numeric alias and all data are reported herein using the alias. The matching file of names to aliases has been stored by the researcher in a separate, password-protected file. All focus group transcript files are password-protected and

stored in a secure password-protected database, in a password protected computer, in a locked office

Phase 3—Individual Interview

In Phase 3, a purposive sample of teachers who emerged from the survey and focus group session with a strong, pro-inclusion orientation were invited to participate in the individual interview phase of the study. The target group was interviewed using qualitative interview techniques in a semi-structured interview format. All teachers were asked open-ended questions designed to solicit their views, feelings, and opinions related to themes of the research questions and a deeper understanding into their lived experiences. Chosen interview participants were initially contacted via email and asked for a convenient time at which they could be contacted by the researcher via phone. Subsequently, the researcher phoned the potential interviewee and restated the purpose of the study, the procedures, the voluntary nature of the study, its risks and benefits, compensation, and the assured confidentiality of each participant. At that time, an appointment was scheduled for a face-to-face interview at the participant's convenience, at the participant's preferred location.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher restated the procedures, the voluntary nature of the study, its risks and benefits, compensation, and the assured confidentiality of each interview. Interview data were collected using a Sony ICD-PX333 digital voice recorder, and notes were taken by the researcher. Each participant's responses and dialog during the interview were transcribed word-for-word. The interviews were scheduled to last approximately 1 hour. Participants were thanked for their time and participation.

To protect the confidentiality of participants, all interviewees were provided with a hard copy of the *Summary Explanation for Exempt Research—Interview* that was approved by the University Institutional Review Board. The interview was not initiated until each participant read the summary and was given a chance to ask questions. The names of the interview participants are confidential and only known to the researcher. Each participant was assigned an alpha-numeric alias and all data are reported using the alias. The matching document of names to aliases has been protected as confidential by the researcher in a secure and locked database. The matching document file of names to aliases has been stored by the researcher in a separate, password-protected file in a secure database. All interview transcript files are password protected and stored in a password-protected database, in a password-protected computer, in locked office

Data Analysis

Phase 1—Survey

Upon completion of the survey in Phase 1, data were disaggregated, analyzed, summarized, and coded. The survey results served an “orientating” (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014, p. 10) function as part of a sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007, p. 287). The analytics feature in the survey software Qualtrics© was used to organize and interpret the survey responses, based on the strength of the participants’ individual responses to survey items that were pro-inclusion statements (where the desired responses were strongly agree, somewhat agree, agree) and those that were pro-exclusion (where the desired responses were strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree).

Spreadsheet software was used to disaggregate participants' responses to separate out teachers who emerged from the *Phase 1* survey data as candidates for the Phase 2 focus groups, based on the strength of their responses to the established criteria.

Survey completers were ranked based on the number of desired responses, yielding 7 potential individuals for the focus group phase of the study.

Phases 2 and 3—Focus Group Session and Individual Interview

Data analysis can be one of the most time consuming and potentially arduous processes in a qualitative research study (Ary et al., 2010). The data analysis phase of this study employed Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2008) to explore the details of both lived experience (interview) and shared experience (focus group) of individuals who self-identified as champions of inclusion. As emphasized by Smith and Osborn (2008), in IPA “meaning is central, and the aim is to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings rather than measure their frequency” (p. 66). As stated in Chapter 2, inclusion means “different things to people who wish different things from it” (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994, p. 299), can be difficult to translate into practice, and can be shrouded in philosophy and prone to non-specific conceptual constructs. Given the divergent interpretations of the construct of inclusion, IPA is viewed as particularly suited to this exploration and analysis of an “individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53). According to Smith and Osborn (2008), IPA is best utilized when interviewing a defined, homogenous group of individuals for whom the research questions are of particular significance. Smith and Osborn (2008) heralded the power of IPA in generating links between the findings of a study, the

collective experience of the participants, and the literature. This method of analysis seeks to generate deeper understanding into the essence of inclusion, and the norms, values, practices, and policies that reinforce and sustain a culture of inclusion.

Reliability

Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy (2013) contended that a “thick” (i.e., thorough, precise, and detailed) description of the research methodology allows readers to examine the process and means of reaching end results and contributes to the credibility of a study. Creswell (2003) asserted that researchers must specify the steps that are taken in order to establish the credibility and validity of the research process and underwrite its significance.

The survey, focus group, and interview protocols used were developed specifically for this study and were heretofore-untested instruments. The researcher convened an Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP) of experts in the field of special education to execute a Delphi Technique, to solicit, collect feedback on, and revise the protocols based on their expert feedback (Hsu & Sanford, 2007). The semi-structured focus-group and interview protocols were followed closely to elicit responses that stayed within the bounds of the research questions, with as little variation as possible, in order to facilitate and legitimate the process of analysis and enhance reliability.

In this study, reliability was achieved through use of a peer reviewer, triangulation of data between the survey, focus group, and interview, and accurate documentation. Sampling processes, data collection, and analysis were undertaken with integrity, precision, and fidelity to the established methods described and cited herein. All phases of data collection are described and documented. Charts have been created to document the phases of the study data and analysis. A peer reviewer provided inter-rater reliability to reduce bias during the data sampling and data analysis phases.

Validity

Husserl (1970) contended that phenomenological research is as rigorous as any other method. Methodological Triangulation (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012) was employed to strengthen the internal validity of this study through the use of different methods of collecting information, and different sources of information, to answer the research questions.

Methodological triangulation is an acceptable method for increasing validity and enhancing the understanding of studied phenomena (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012, p. 40). Furthermore, it contributes to the comprehensiveness and completeness of the data relative to the phenomena (Jick, 1979; Shih, 1998).

In this study, three different sources for information and methods of collecting information were used:

- Instructional staff nominated by principals based on criterion
- Instructional staff who completed survey and self-identified for focus group session based on criterion
- Instructional staff who participated in focus group session and were individually interviewed

The research process began with a survey of instructional staff nominated by their school principal, based on specific criteria. The focus group sessions were comprised of a random purposive sample of individuals who met the criteria specified, and were conducted using an open-ended questionnaire. The individual interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of individuals who participate in the focus groups, who met the criteria specified for recruitment of the individual interviews.

During the analysis stage, feedback from the survey, individual interviews, and focus group were compared to determine areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence. Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2002) offered that this type of triangulation, using different sources, is popular due to its ease of implementation.

Strategies to reduce bias, ensure the accuracy of responses, and evaluate discrepant information such as member-checking and a peer review, were employed during the data sampling and data analysis phases (Creswell, 2003). Member checks were conducted to allow participants to review a transcript of their responses and verify their accuracy and authenticity. According to Creswell (2003), these strategies along with triangulation contribute effectively to enhanced internal validity.

External validity refers to the transferability of a study (Creswell, 2007). The external validity of this study is underwritten by its rich description, depth, and attention to detail of the participants' first-hand experience and knowledge in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion in a public school system (Creswell, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Limitations

An attempt was made to ensure maximum variation (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007, p. 285) within the sample population of teachers who were recruited for this study, in regard to demographic information, years of teaching experience, path to teaching, credentials, etc. The small initial sample size per the constraints of the district Research and Evaluation department study recruitment guidelines, could be considered a limitation.

Other possible limitations of the study are the survey, focus group, and interview protocols, given that this study was the first attempt at using these heretofore-untested instruments. In addition, the responses to the survey, focus group, and interview protocols are

dependent on the accuracy and truthfulness in self-reporting, environmental factors, and respondents' current state of mind at the time of participation. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorenson (2006, p. 24) emphasize that when using qualitative methods such as the ones in the study, limitations may exist in the truthfulness and comprehensiveness of the participants' responses as well as the researcher's ability to ask the right questions. A considerable limitation is that there are many additional variables, actors, and theories that influence the phenomenon of inclusion explored in this study.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who readily accept, embrace and/or promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, including their view of the current phenomenon of inclusion within their organization. A mixed methods phenomenological research design (MMPR) was used to obtain data related to the lived experience of teachers who identify as a champion of inclusion. The research design employed a survey, focus group, and individual interview to triangulate findings and increase the rigor, reliability and validity of the results.

Five research questions (RQ1-RQ5) were developed for this exploration into the phenomenon of inclusion in a large urban school district, which occurred in 3 Phases: survey, focus groups, and individual interviews. The researcher drafted survey items for Phase 1 (RQ1), crafted guiding questions for Phase 2 (RQ4 and RQ5) and Phase 3 (RQ2 and RQ3), and assembled an expert panel to help develop and validate the survey items, focus group questionnaire, and the individual interview questionnaire. A mixed-methods phenomenological research (MMPR) design (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014) was used to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches, who are recognized by their school principal as understanding, embracing,

and/or promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, identify as champions of inclusion (e.g., enact inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and actively cultivate an inclusive culture)?

2. What are the lived experiences of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion?
 - a. What shaped their identity? (personal experience, teaching experience, teacher preparation program, in-service training or professional development, influence of colleagues, leadership, and organizational culture)
 - b. Why do they support/enact inclusive practices?
 - c. Why do they maintain an inclusive stance?
 - d. Why do they hold inclusive values?
 - e. Why do they champion inclusion; i.e. what drives them to cultivate inclusive culture?
3. In what ways do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion act as agents of change?
4. What are the views and opinions of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion in regard to the culture of their organization?
5. What recommendations do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion have for establishing and advancing an inclusive organizational culture?

In Phase 1, participants who were nominated by their school principals were invited to participate in a survey designed to yield a sample of individuals with a strong, positive ideological orientation toward the phenomenon of inclusion. The survey yielded six individuals who self-identified as champions of inclusion based on their responses to the survey items. The

six individuals who scored within a desired range based on the number of *desired values* (DV) in their survey responses were invited to participate in a focus group. Focus group participants with (1) a strong positive ideological orientation relevant to the phenomenon of inclusion, including (2) a view of inclusive education in the context of civil rights, democracy, and social justice, and (3) a strong and positive vision of how the organization could position itself as an agent of culture change, were invited to participate in an individual interview to explore their lived experience as champions of inclusion.

Through the analysis of the focus group and interview data the researcher identified commonalities and themes. A sequential explanatory design was employed to explicate the quantitative and qualitative phases of this study and yield insights that may have been missed with only one single method. The intention was to maximize the respective strengths of each method and overcome some of the weaknesses in each. The intention was to generate a more complete understanding of the lived experiences of the target population of teachers who self-identify as champions of inclusion.

Quantitative Research Process

This section includes information about the individuals who agreed to participate in the study, including principals who nominated teachers for the study and the teachers who participated in the Phase 1 survey, in order to provide a context for the data analysis. To add to the context to the discussion, the data presented in this section include demographic information for the principals who agreed to participate in the study, enrollment data from each participating school, including the percentage of students served in the regular class setting, resource setting, and separate class settings, known as LRE (least restrictive environment), and demographic

information of the nominees who were invited to participate in Phase 1 of the study and who followed through with completing the survey.

Phase 1—Survey

Principal Nominations

Seventeen principals (see Tables 1 and 2) agreed to participate in the study, and fifteen followed through to submit nominations. The district Research and Evaluation department sent a *notification of opportunity to participate in research* via email to 189 principals at the elementary, middle school, K-8, and high school level, copying the researcher. Principals were able to use a voting feature set up in the email invitation, which enabled them to respond easily to the request and enabled the researcher to identify principals who chose to “accept,” “decline,” or “request more information.” Following the invitation, 36 declined to participate; 132 did not respond to the request. Per the guidelines of the district Research and Evaluation department, the researcher was not permitted to contact any principal who declined to participate or did not respond. Per the guidelines of the district Research and Evaluation department, three separate attempts were made via email to prompt the principals who agreed to participate and the principals who requested more information to submit their nominations.

Table 1: Principal Demographic Information

Principal alias	Gender	Ethnicity	School level
P1	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P2	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P3	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P4*	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P5	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High
P6	Female	Black	Elementary
P7	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P8	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	Middle
P9	Female	Hispanic	Elementary
P10*	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P11	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High
P12	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P13	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P14	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P15	Male	Hispanic	High
P16	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary
P17	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary

* Agreed to participate in study but did not submit nominations

Table 2: School Demographic Information

School/ principal alias	School level	Total enrolled	Total SWD	% SWD	# Regular class	# Resource room	# Separate class
S1_P1	Elementary	553	72	13.0	48	1	23
S2_P2	Elementary	796	101	12.7	68	0	33
S3_P3	Elementary	613	103	16.8	50	3	50
S4_P4*	Elementary	692	97	14.0	54	0	43
S5_P5	High	2060	265	12.9	239	2	23
S6_P6	Elementary	282	22	7.8	22	0	0
S7_P7	Elementary	841	88	10.5	83	0	5
S8_P8	Middle	1060	163	15.4	129	0	33
S9_P9	Elementary	516	68	13.2	46	0	22
S10_P10*	Elementary	1143	115	10.1	62	3	48
S11_P11	High	2856	300	10.5	240	16	43
S12_P12	Elementary	832	124	14.9	60	18	46
S13_P13	Elementary	970	84	8.7	51	7	26
S14_P14	Elementary	615	95	15.4	78	0	17
S15_P15	High	3228	344	10.7	317	7	20
S16_P16	Elementary	785	95	12.1	45	1	49
S17_P17	Elementary	638	63	9.9	62	0	1

*Agreed to participate in study but did not submit nominations

Principals who agreed to participate were sent an email thanking them for their interest in the study and requesting the nomination of up to two classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who readily accept, embrace, or promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. The email included a link to a secure survey through which they could submit their nominations, and included a brief outline of the study and an attachment with a detailed summary of the study that included an Overview, Abstract, Guiding Questions for the Study, Research Questions, and the Domains and Descriptors of a Champion of Inclusion.

A total of 15 principals submitted nominations: 11 principals submitted the required two nominees; 1 principal offered 3 nominees; 1 submitted 6 nominees and 2 submitted 1 nominee for a total of thirty three nominees.

Teacher Nominees

Thirty-three teachers (classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, and instructional coaches) were invited to participate in the study, and 25 followed through to complete the Phase 1 survey. In the final analysis, of the principals who submitted nominees in excess of the two requested, the group of six from one school principal yielded one candidate (SC14) who met criteria for the focus group session, and the group of three nominated by another school principal yielded two teachers (SC 15 & SC 17) who met criteria. Each of these three survey completers who met criteria were scheduled together for one of the two focus group sessions; however, SC14 withdrew from the study just prior to the scheduled focus group session.

Survey Data

The survey items were designed to capture teachers' views in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion and to answer research question 1 (RQ1):

1. To what extent do classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches, who are recognized by their school principal as understanding, embracing, and/or promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, identify as champions of inclusion (e.g., enact inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and actively cultivate an inclusive culture)?

The 50 survey items aligned to the objectives of the study and included criteria designed to screen for characteristics of a *champion of inclusion* (Henderson, 2007), who supports/enacts *inclusive instructional practices*, maintains an *inclusive stance*, holds *inclusive values*, and actively demonstrates a commitment to building *inclusive culture* as an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking and mentoring other educators. The survey was Stage 1 of the sampling scheme to identify champions of inclusion through purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) for participation in the focus group phase of the study (Phase 2). Of the thirty-three nominated participants, twenty-five completed the survey (see Table 3).

Table 3: Survey Completer Demographic Information

Survey completer alias	Gender	Ethnicity	School level	Current position	Highest degree attained	Years teaching
SC1_P1	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	ESE Resource	Master	3-5
SC2_P1	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	3 rd Grade ELA	Bachelor	3-5
SC3_P2	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	SLD Teacher	Bachelor	11-20
SC4_P3	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	1 st Grade Teacher	Bachelor	3-5
SC5_P3	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	ESE Teacher	Master	6-10
SC6_P5	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	English Teacher	Bachelor	21-30
SC7_P6**	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	5th Grade Teacher	Bachelor	11-20
SC8_P7	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	Reading Coach	Bachelor	30+
SC9_P8	Female	Hispanic	Middle	ELA/ESOL Teacher	Master	1-2
SC10_P8	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Middle	Literacy Coach	Bachelor	3-5
SC11_P9	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	ESE Teacher	Master	3-5
SC12_P9	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	3 rd Grade Teacher	Bachelor	11-20
SC13_P11	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	ESE Teacher	Master	21-30
SC14_P11†	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	High	Reading Coach	Bachelor	6-10
SC15_P12	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	4th Grade Teacher	Master	11-20
SC16_P12	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	ASD Teacher	Master	6-10
SC17_P12	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	3 rd Grade Teacher	Bachelor	3-5
SC18_P13*	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	Inclusion Specialist	Specialist	11-20
SC19_P14	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	MTSS Coach/Behavior Specialist	Bachelor	6-10

Survey completer alias	Gender	Ethnicity	School level	Current position	Highest degree attained	Years teaching
SC20_P14	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	3rd Grade Teacher	Bachelor	6-10
SC21_P15	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	ESE Resource	Bachelor	30+
SC22_P15	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	Math Teacher/Department Chairperson	Master	21-30
SC23_P16	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	5th Grade Teacher	Master	6-10
SC24_P16	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	SLD Teacher	Bachelor	1-2
SC25_P17	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	Extended Day	Bachelor	3-5

*Withdrew from study after survey due to personal reasons

**Did not respond to invitation to participate in focus group

†Withdrew from study prior to scheduled focus group session due to time commitment

Quantitative Data Analysis

This section includes information about the 25 nominated teachers who followed through to complete the Phase 1 survey. Demographic data for each of the survey completers are displayed in this section. All survey completers were given alpha-numeric aliases to maintain confidentiality.

Of the 25 teachers who followed through to complete the survey, none were first year teachers. The majority of teachers surveyed (28%) had 3-5 years of experience, followed by teachers with 6-10 (24%) years of experience, teachers with 11-20 (20%) years of experience, and teachers with 21-30 (12%) years. Two of the teachers had 30+ (8%) years of experience, both of whom met criteria for Phases 2 and 3 of the study. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: Overall Years of Teaching Experience

Years teaching	# Responses	%
1st year teacher	0	0
1-2	2	8
3-5	7	28
6-10	6	24
11-20	5	20
21-30	3	12
30+	2	8
Total	25	100

Of the 25 teachers who followed through to complete the survey, the majority of teachers indicated they had experience teaching in a general education classroom (84%), followed by ESE Resource classroom (40%), and Self-Contained ESE Classroom (28%). (See Table 5.)

Table 5: Teaching Settings

Setting	# Responses	%
General education classroom	21	84
Self-contained ESE classroom	7	28
ESE resource classroom	10	40
Other	5	20

Note: Responses and percentages add up to more than 25 and 100, respectively, since some respondents chose more than one category.

Of the 25 teachers who followed through to complete the survey, the majority became teachers through a Traditional Teacher Preparation Program. (See Table 6.)

Table 6: Path to Teaching

Path	# Responses	%
Traditional teacher preparation program	17	68
Alternative certification program	8	32
Total	25	100

Of the 25 teachers who followed through to complete the survey, almost half were Dually Certified in Elementary Education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) (40%). (See Table 7.)

Table 7: Teaching Credentials

Certification	# Responses	%
Elementary Education	10	40
Dually Certified in Elementary Education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE)	11	44
Certified only in Exceptional Student Education (ESE)	1	4
Certified in one or more secondary content areas	5	20
Certified in one or more secondary content areas and Exceptional Student Education (ESE)	3	12
Certified in Educational Leadership	2	8
Reading Endorsement	9	36
Gifted Endorsement	1	4
Autism Endorsement	4	16
Other certification or endorsement	12	48

Note: Responses and percentages add up to more than 25 and 100, respectively, since some respondents had multiple certifications or endorsements.

Data Analysis of Research Question 1

To what extent do classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches, who are recognized by their school principal as understanding, embracing and/or promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, identify as champions of inclusion (e.g., enact inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and actively cultivate an inclusive culture)?

The survey contained 50 items made up of pro-inclusion and anti-inclusion statements. The 50 items were grouped into four domains: Practice (9 survey items), Stance (11 survey items), Values (9 survey items), and Culture (21 items).

Qualtrics© survey software was used to collect the survey responses. Survey completers self-identified as champions of inclusion based on the number of Desired Responses (DR) they submitted for pro-inclusion statements (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree) and the number of desired responses to anti-inclusion statements (strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree). The reporting feature in Qualtrics© displayed the submitted responses to the survey items along with an assigned numerical value (see Table 8).

Table 8: Qualtrics® Survey Answer Choices and Numerical Values

Qualtrics® # Value	Answer choice
1	Strongly agree
2	Agree
3	Somewhat agree
4	Somewhat disagree
5	Disagree
6	Strongly disagree

For pro-inclusion statements *strongly agree* was Desired Response #1 (DR1) with a Value (V) of 3; *agree* was Desired Response #2 (DR2) with a Value (V) of 2; and *somewhat agree* was Desired Response #3 (DR3) with a Value (V) of 1 (see Table 9).

Table 9: Desired Responses and Assigned Values

Qualtrics® # Value	Answer choice	Desired response to pro-inclusion statements	Value	Desired response to anti-inclusion statements	Value
1	Strongly agree	DR1	3		
2	Agree	DR2	2		
3	Somewhat agree	DR3	1		
4	Somewhat disagree			DR3	1
5	Disagree			DR2	2
6	Strongly disagree			DR1	3

For anti-inclusion statements *strongly disagree* was Desired Response #1 (DR1) with a Value (V) of 3; *disagree* was Desired Response #2 (DR2) with a Value (V) of 2; and *somewhat disagree* was Desired Response #3 (DR3) with a Value (V) of 1. Responses outside the range of Desired Responses (DR) for either pro-inclusion or anti-inclusion statements were given a Value (V) of zero (0).

Analysis of the survey data from teachers (survey completers) who were recognized and nominated by their school principal as someone who understands, embraces, and/or promotes the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, yielded the following results:

Table 10: Reported mean percentages of survey items for Inclusive Practice – Pro-inclusion items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% DR1, DR2, DR3
32	36	21	5	5	0	89

Table 11: Reported mean percentages of survey items for Inclusive Practice – Anti-inclusion items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% DR1, DR2, DR3
6	12	21	16	33	13	62

Table 12: Reported mean percentages of survey items for Inclusive Stance – Pro-Inclusion items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% DR1, DR2, DR3
46	32	15	5	2	0	93

Table 13: Reported mean percentages of survey items for Inclusive Stance – Anti-inclusion items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% DR1, DR2, DR3
0.02	8	9	13	24	41	78

Table 14: Reported mean percentages of survey items for Inclusive Values – Pro-Inclusion items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% DR1, DR2, DR3
45	36	12	3	3	0	94

Table 15: Reported mean percentages of survey items for Inclusive Values – Anti-inclusion items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% DR1, DR2, DR3
5	4	13	20	32	25	77

Table 16: Reported mean percentages of survey items for Inclusive Culture – Pro-Inclusion items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% DR1, DR2, DR3
49	37	10	2	0.8	0	97

Table 17: Reported mean percentages of survey items for Inclusive Culture – Anti-inclusion items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% DR1, DR2, DR3
6	16	22	12	40	4	56

Summary of Research Question 1

Champions of Inclusion

The extent to which nominated teachers identified as a champion of inclusion was measured by the overall alignment of their survey responses to the established Desired Responses (DR) (See Table 56). The seven survey completers who met criteria for the focus group phase of the study are indicated in bold font.

Spreadsheet software was used to disaggregate survey responses by individual survey completer, and responses were assigned corresponding point Values (V). Point Values were tabulated and summed *overall* and by *domain*: Practice, Stance, Values, and Culture. Each survey completer earned a *Total Score – Overall* for all domains, and a *Total Score* for each individual domain (See Table 8). Survey completers were ranked based their overall score. The highest score possible, based on the maximum number of Desired Responses, was 150. The highest score out of all the survey completers was 130.

Table18: Survey Completer Scores Overall and by Domain

Survey completer alias	Total score—overall	Total score—practice	Total score—stance	Total score—values	Total score—culture
Highest possible score (DV1)	150	27	36	39	48
SC1_P1	87	14	22	25	28
SC2_P1	92	6	25	32	29
SC3_P2	70	10	15	24	21
SC4_P3	102	18	24	29	31
SC5_P3	112	21	31	36	24
SC6_P5	124	21	29	38	38
SC7_P6**	128	22	30	30	46
SC8_P7*	108	17	24	31	36
SC9_P8	76	9	18	26	23
SC10_P8	100	9	23	24	44
SC11_P9	109	16	36	33	25
SC12_P9	47	6	11	14	16
SC13_P11	65	7	12	20	26
SC14_P11†	130	24	27	35	44
SC15_P12	127	17	31	34	45
SC16_P12	102	9	18	28	47
SC17_P12	117	15	27	36	39
SC18_P13*	111	18	22	31	40
SC19_P14	80	3	17	26	34
SC20_P14	61	8	9	14	30
SC21_P15	126	23	29	33	41
SC22_P16	88	12	17	26	33
SC23_P16	97	11	17	28	41
SC24_P16	109	17	24	31	37
SC25_P17	71	10	12	23	26

*Withdrew from study after survey due to personal reasons

**Did not respond to invitation to participate in focus group

†Withdrew from study prior to scheduled focus group session due to time commitment

A sample of seven teachers (Table 57) emerged from the survey data as champions of inclusion and qualified for the focus group phase of the study (Phase 2). The criteria for champions of inclusion were based on a review of (1) each teacher’s individual *Total Score – Overall* and the range of their Desired Responses, taking into consideration (2) each teacher’s individual score in the respective domains (Practice, Stance, Values, and Culture), and (3) each teacher’s number of responses outside the range of Desired Responses (DR) for either pro-inclusion or anti-inclusion statements generating a point Value (V) of zero (0).

Table 19: Champions of Inclusion – Focus Group Candidate Scores

Survey completer alias	Total score—overall	Total score—practice	Total score—stance	Total score—values	Total score—culture
Highest possible score (DV1)	150	27	36	39	48
SC5_P3	112	21	31	36	24
SC6_P5	124	21	29	38	38
SC7_P6**	128	22	30	30	46
SC14_P11†	130	24	27	35	44
SC15_P12	127	17	31	34	45
SC17_P12	117	15	27	36	39
SC21_P15	126	23	29	33	41

**Did not respond to invitation to participate in focus group

†Withdrew from study prior to scheduled focus group session due to time commitment

Qualitative Research Process

This section includes information about the individuals who participated in the focus group (Phase 2) and individual interview (Phase 3) of the study, including the process for the selection of candidates, protocols, and procedures for each phase.

The data for Phases 2 and 3 of this study were analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA was chosen due to its appropriateness for studies conducted with small sample sizes (p. 55) and its suitability to studies that use purposive sampling (as opposed to random or representative sampling) involving a defined group for whom the research questions(s) would be of particular significance.

The focus groups and interview protocols were semi-structured in order to give the participants the opportunity to “tell their own story” (Smith & Osborn, p. 59), with the questionnaires guiding the focus groups and interviews rather than controlling them. This flexibility allowed the researcher to elicit general views and funnel the discussion into specific areas when warranted, as well as allowing the researcher to refrain from asking a question, to eliminate redundancy when a previous question may have led the respondent to address the targeted issue (p. 62). IPA and a semi-structured approach to the focus groups and interviews allowed the researcher to act as facilitator and guide, giving the participants a strong role in determining how the focus groups and interviews proceeded. At times the researcher moved away from questions and allowed the participants to venture into unprompted yet relevant areas, while ensuring that the discussion did not wander too far afield. The researcher also paid close attention to body language and was sensitive to how questions were phrased and how explicit they were based on how the participants were responding.

Phase 2—Focus Group

Selection of Candidates for Phase 2- Focus Groups

Teachers self-identified for the focus group phase of the study based on the overall alignment of their responses to the established Desired Responses (DR) to pro-inclusion and anti-inclusion statements in the four domains of the Phase 1 survey: Practice, Stance, Values and Culture. Survey completers were ranked based on their overall score. The selection of participants for the focus group was based on their *Total Score – Overall* for all domains, also taking into account their *Total Score* for each individual domain (See Table 8). The survey was stage 1 of a sampling scheme to seek out teacher candidates with a strong, positive ideological orientation toward the construct of inclusion. Candidates who self-identified as champions of inclusion were targeted for the focus group, and potentially for the interview phase of the study, in order to capitalize on their distinct perspective on the phenomenon of inclusion in their organization.

Following the scoring and analysis of survey data, teachers who self-identified as champions of inclusion were invited to participate in a focus group to solicit their shared experience in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion in their organization. A total of seven teachers (see Tables 57 and 58) emerged from the survey data as champions of inclusion and qualified for the focus group phase of the study (Phase 2).

Table 20: Champions of Inclusion – Focus Group Candidate Demographics

Survey completer alias	Gender	Ethnicity	School level	Current position	Highest degree attained	Years teaching experience
SC5_P3	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	ESE Teacher	Master	6-10
SC6_P4	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	English Teacher	Bachelor	21-30
SC7_P6**	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	5th Grade Teacher	Bachelor	11-20
SC14_P11†	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	High	Reading Coach	Bachelor	6-10
SC15_P12	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	4th Grade Teacher	Master	11-20
SC17_P12	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	3rd Grade Teacher	Bachelor	3-5
SC21_P15	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	ESE Resource	Bachelor	30+

**Did not respond to invitation to participate in focus group

†Withdrew from study prior to scheduled focus group session due to time commitment

Focus Group Protocol

The researcher drafted focus group questions designed to solicit insight into how the organization might position and utilize teachers who identify as champions of inclusion as agents for change, and how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture and position itself as an agent for change and cultivator of inclusive values and culture. The focus group questions were developed as a guide to answer research questions 4 and 5:

4. What are the views and opinions of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion in regard to the culture of their organization?
5. What recommendations do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion have for establishing and advancing an inclusive organizational culture?

An Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP) was convened and a Delphi Technique was used to gain a consensus of opinion from the EPRP, in terms of the suitability and alignment of the focus group questions, to the objectives of the study. For a question to be included in the protocol, a majority of the EPRP had to rate the question as Acceptable. The focus group questions were designed to elucidate the current state of inclusion in the organization through the shared insight of teachers who identified as champions of inclusion. With the assistance of the EPRP, the researcher developed a semi-structured focus group protocol with ten open-ended questions designed to solicit teachers' views and perspectives related to themes of the research questions, including how the organization might position and utilize them as agents for change, how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture, and how the organization might position *itself* as an agent for change and cultivator of inclusive values and culture.

Focus Group Procedures

After the selection of potential focus group candidates for Phase 2, the researcher contacted the candidates via email (APPENDIX I) thanking them for taking part in the study, and informing them that based on their responses to the Phase 1 survey they had been selected to participate in a focus group. The email contained a brief overview of Phase 2 and a link to a brief, three-item Qualtrics® survey that enabled them to indicate their preference of day(s), time(s), and area(s) of town that would be most convenient for them to participate in a focus group.

Once the candidates accessed the survey they were presented with a *Summary Explanation of Exempt Research – Focus Group* and given the choice to either “agree” to or “decline” further participation in the study. If they declined they were thanked for their time and no further contact occurred between the researcher and the potential participant. Once they agreed they were able to access the survey. Within one week of initial email contact, 6 of the 7 candidates responded to the survey, indicating their willingness to participate in Phase 2 of the study. Two reminders, two weeks apart, were sent to the individual who did not respond and then contact was terminated.

Based on the survey responses, the researcher used an online scheduling tool (Doodle®) to propose dates, times, and locations for the focus group. A Doodle poll link was sent to each potential participant, and the responses were reviewed to determine the options that worked best for everyone. Despite having surveyed the candidates for their availability and preferences, the logistics of family obligations, varying work schedules of teachers who taught at the elementary, middle school and high school level, and geographical restrictions resulted in two weeks of unsuccessful attempts to convene the six candidates for a focus group. After consulting with the dissertation committee chair, the researcher opted to convene two different focus group sessions

in different areas of town to mitigate logistical issues. Each candidate was then contacted by phone to work through and accommodate barriers to participation. After three weeks (19 days), two agreeable dates, times, and locations were established for two focus group sessions with three participants in each, and a confirmation email was sent to each participant (see Tables 59 and 60).

Table 21: Focus Group 1—Demographics

Alias	Gender	Ethnicity	School level	Current position	Highest degree attained	Years teaching experience
FGP3_SC5_P3	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	ESE Teacher	Master	6-10
FGP1_SC6_P4	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	English Teacher	Bachelor	21-30
FGP2_SC21_P15	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	High	ESE Resource	Bachelor	30+

Table 22: Focus Group 2—Demographics

Alias	Gender	Ethnicity	School level	Current position	Highest degree attained	Years teaching experience
DNP_SC14_P11†	Male	White/Non-Hispanic	High	Reading Coach	Bachelor	6-10
FGP1_SC15_P12	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	4th Grade Teacher	Master	11-20
FGP2_SC17_P12	Female	White/Non-Hispanic	Elementary	3rd Grade Teacher	Bachelor	3-5

†Withdrew from study prior to scheduled focus group session due to time commitment

Here it is important to mention a significant dissimilarity between the two focus groups, which were arranged to have three participants each. As noted previously, one of the selected candidates for focus group 2 (FG2) withdrew from the study just before FG2 convened, expressing concern about the amount of time required outside of work hours. The individual was thanked for his time, reminded of the voluntary nature of the study, and reminded that participants were free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Given that scheduled date for FG2 was imminent, the focus group session convened anyway. It must be noted as a potential limitation that the two remaining participants in FG2 were from the same school, possibly yielding a distinct perspective dominated by a similar point of view.

Keeping all variables constant, at the start of each focus group session the researcher thanked the teachers for agreeing to participate and briefly explained the purpose of the study. Each participant was provided with a hard copy of the *Summary Explanation of Exempt Research – Focus Group* and the *Champion of Inclusion – Domains and Descriptors* as a reference. The researcher explained that the focus group session would last between 1 and 2 hours and reminded the participants that their participation in the focus group could result in an invitation to participate in Phase 3 of the study, an individual interview.

With the permission of the participants, the focus group sessions were recorded using a Sony ICD-PX333 digital voice recorder, and the researcher's iPhone voice recorder as a backup. Once each of the two sound files were safely uploaded into a password-protected computer, each audio file was deleted from the iPhone and the digital voice recorder. The researcher informed each interviewee that a password-protected transcript of the focus group would be provided for their review (member-checking) within a week after the focus group session.

Phase 3—Individual Interviews

Selection of Candidates for Phase 3—Individual Interviews

The survey and focus group phases of the study served as a funneling strategy to first identify teachers with a strong positive ideological orientation in favor of inclusion (survey), and second identify teachers with: (1) a strong positive ideological orientation toward the phenomenon of inclusion, (2) a view of inclusive education in the context of civil rights, democracy, and social justice, and (3) distinct insight into how the organization could position itself as agent of culture change (focus group).

The two focus group sessions were completed during a one-week period, and within one week of the sessions the focus group recordings were transcribed and reviewed. Upon review of the transcripts, the researcher determined that the three teachers who participated in focus group 1 (FG1) met the criteria for Phase 3 and were invited to participate in an individual interview to explore their lived experience as champions of inclusion. To the greatest extent possible, the sample varied in gender, age, school level assignment(s), settings (e.g., number of years of teaching experience in general education, inclusive and/or separate class settings, content certification area(s), level of education, years of teaching experience, and path to teaching, e.g. traditional teacher preparation or alternative preparation program (see Table 59).

Interview Protocol

The researcher drafted individual interview questions designed to solicit insight into the lived experiences of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion. The interview questions were designed to explore the lived experience of individual teachers who identified as champions

of inclusion through their responses to the Phase 1 survey and their insight during the Phase 2 focus group sessions. The questions sought to answer the following research questions:

2. What are the lived experiences of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion?
 - a. What shaped their identity? (personal experience, teaching experience, teacher preparation program, in-service training or professional development, influence of colleagues, leadership, and organizational culture)
 - b. Why do they support/enact inclusive practices?
 - c. Why do they maintain an inclusive stance?
 - d. Why do they hold inclusive values?
 - e. Why do they champion inclusion; i.e., what drives them to cultivate inclusive culture?
3. In what ways do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion act as agents of change?

An Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP) was convened and a Delphi Technique was used to gain a consensus of opinion from the EPRP, in terms of the suitability and alignment of the interview questions, to research questions 2 and 3. For a question to be included in the protocol, a majority of the EPRP had to rate the question as Acceptable.

With the assistance of the EPRP, the researcher developed a semi-structured interview protocol with ten open-ended questions designed to solicit teachers' views and perspectives related to themes of the research questions including how the organization might position and utilize them as agents for change, how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive

organizational culture, and how the organization might position *itself* as an agent for change and cultivator of inclusive values and culture.

Interview Procedures

After the selection of potential interview candidates for Phase 3, the researcher contacted the candidates via email (APPENDIX J) thanking them for their continued participation in the study and their input at the focus group session. The email informed the candidates that they had been selected to participate in the final phase of the study, an individual interview. The candidates were asked to respond with permission to contact them at the phone number they provided to establish a time and location that would work for them, with minimal disruption to their schedule. The candidates were given the liberty to choose a location that gave them a sense of privacy and confidentiality, including, but not limited to their school site, other district work location, public place, or other appropriate and safe place of their choosing. Each candidate was informed that the individual interview (Phase 3) would last no more than 1-1½ hours.

Within 24 hours, each of the candidates responded affirming their agreement to participate in Phase 3 of the study. Two of the interviews took place at each teacher's work locations after their duty day, and one took place at the location of the teacher's focus group session at their request, due to close proximity to their home.

Keeping all other variables constant, at the start of each interview the researcher thanked the teachers for their continued participation and contribution to the study and briefly explained the purpose of the study. Each participant was provided with a hard copy of the *Summary Explanation of Exempt Research – Interview* and the *Champion of Inclusion – Domains and Descriptors* as a reference. The researcher explained that the interview would last between one and two hours. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were recorded using a

Sony ICD-PX333 digital voice recorder, and the researcher's iPhone voice recorder as a backup. Once each of the three sound files were safely uploaded into a password-protected computer, each audio file was deleted from the iPhone and the digital voice recorder. The researcher informed each interviewee that a password protected transcript of the focus group would be provided for their review (member-checking) within a week after the interview.

Qualitative Data Analysis

This section includes a detailed description for the method of data analysis (IPA), a detailed presentation of the stages used in the analysis of the focus group (Phase 2) and interview (Phase 3) data, followed by the analysis of research questions 2 – 5. Research question 2 (RQ2) and research question 3 (RQ3) were addressed in the individual interviews (Phase 3), and RQ4 and RQ5 were addressed in the focus groups (Phase 2).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Description

The data for Phases 2 and 3 of this study were analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) recognizes research as a “dynamic process...complicated by the researcher's own conceptions” (p. 53). Moreover, IPA views the researcher's conceptions as a requirement for making sense of the participant's personal world; in short, “the participants are trying to make sense of their world [and] the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (p. 53). In the words of Smith and Osborn:

Consistent with its phenomenological origins, IPA is concerned with trying to understand what it is like, from the point of view of the participants, to take their side. At the same time, a detailed IPA analysis can also involve asking critical questions of the texts from participants, such as the following: What is the person trying to achieve here? Is something leaking out here that wasn't intended? Do I have a sense of something going on here that maybe the participants themselves are less aware of? (p. 53)

Stages

Smith and Osborn (2008) emphasized that there is no specific way to approach Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is not a “prescriptive methodology” (p. 67). IPA allows researchers to adapt the method to their own particular way of working and the specific topic they are investigating; however, one distinguishing feature of IPA is the process of interpretation through sustained engagement with the text. In this process the study implemented the following stages:

1. Word-for-word transcription of digitally recorded focus session and interviews
2. Detailed reading, rereading, and annotation of each individual transcript with comments, associations, connections, and preliminary interpretations
3. Line-by-line encounter with the text, transforming notes, and identifying commonalities and preliminary themes
4. Identification of themes from each focus group
 - presentation of commonalities
 - grouping of themes into clusters (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008)
 - master table of themes for the focus groups
5. Identifications of themes from each individual interview

- presentation of commonalities
- grouping of themes into clusters
- master table of themes for the interviews

Qualitative Research Questions and Outcomes

This mixed methods phenomenological study used four research questions to examine the lived experience of teachers who identified as champions of inclusion (RQ2 – Phase 3) and solicit their insight into how the organization might position and use them as agents for change (RQ3 – Phase 3), how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture (RQ4 – Phase 2), and how the organization might position itself as an agent for change and cultivator of inclusive values and culture (RQ5 – Phase 2).

The four qualitative research questions were presented as they were addressed in the sequence of the study phases: the Phase 2 focus groups addressed research questions 4 and 5 and the Phase 3 individual interviews addressed research question 2 and 3. Following each research question are the commonalities that were revealed within the focus groups and individual interviews, respectively. Following the presentation of commonalities for each research question in Phase 1 and Phase 2, divergent and outlier units of input will be presented, meaning input that contrasted to the views of others (divergent) or a singular perspective which emerged from only one focus group or individual interviewee (outlier).

Phase 2—Focus Groups

As Harrell and Bradley (2009) explained, focus groups are often employed to explain results found through other data collection methods (2009). Two focus groups were convened to answer research questions 4 and 5. A semi-structured focus group protocol was utilized,

containing descriptive questions designed to expand on the quantitative data elicited from the survey questions.

Field Notes

Focus Group 1

For Focus Group 1 (FG1) the researcher pre-arranged three different possible locations within the preferred area of town participants had indicated on their surveys and presented them to each of the three candidates. Options included a local neighborhood elementary school, local district learning community office, an area high school work location of one of the candidates who offered to secure a room, or they could propose an alternate location. With the consensus of the group, FG1 was convened at the neighborhood elementary school that was in close proximity to one of the candidate's home due to the varying school schedules of candidate's children and the needs of parents who were also in their care. Each member of FG1 was amenable and willing to accommodate the candidate.

The researcher had contacted the school principal prior to contacting the candidates and they kindly offered their conference room. The focus group convened on time. Each participant was thanked for their support of the study, reminded of the voluntary nature of the study and of the possibility of being selected for an individual interview in the final phase of the study. The group was reminded that their responses were being recorded and that they would have a chance to review the transcript for accuracy. All indicated agreement, and the researcher started the recording.

Each participant was asked to briefly share their professional background and their path to teaching. Focus group participant #1 (FGP1) was an educational major with a bachelor's degree in English Literature from a local 4-year university. A stint studying abroad necessitated

an add-on program to obtain a teaching credential once she returned. FGP1 has been teaching for 28 years and has been in her current school assignment for 7 years.

FGP2 graduated from the same local 4-year university in the 1970s with a degree in special education at a time when there were specific degree tracks aligned to disability labels. She was certified in special education K-12 for specific learning disabilities. FGP2 has been teaching for 32 years and has been in her current school assignment for 15 years.

FGP3 did not come to teaching through a traditional teacher preparatory program. FGP3 initially obtained a bachelor's degree in business and then obtained teacher certification and a master's degree all-in-one, through an evening program at a small school in a northeastern state. FGP3 has been teaching for 11 years and has been in his current school assignment for 5 years.

Focus Group 2

For Focus Group 2 (FG2) the researcher pre-arranged two possible locations within the preferred area of town they had indicated on their survey and presented them to the group.

Each participant was thanked for their support of the study and reminded of the voluntary nature of the study and of the possibility of being selected for an individual interview in the final phase of the study. The group was reminded that their responses were being recorded and that they would have a chance to review the transcript for accuracy. All indicated agreement, the researcher started the recording.

Each participant was asked to briefly share their professional background and their path to teaching. Focus group 2, participant #1 (FGP1 – FG2) did not come to teaching through a traditional teacher preparatory program. FGP1 – FG2 initially obtained a bachelor's degree in business, then obtained teacher certification through the local school district's alternative certification program, and subsequently obtained a master's degree and state endorsement for

teaching students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) all-in-one through a grant funded program at a local university. FGP1 – FG2 has been teaching for 11 years and has been in her current school assignment for 5 years.

Focus group 2, participant #2 (FGP2 – FG2) was an educational major with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from a state university. FGP2 - FG2 is currently in the same aforementioned grant funded program as FGP1 – FG2, working toward a master's degree that includes state endorsement for teaching students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). FGP2 - FG2 has been teaching for 5 years and has been in her current school assignment for 3 years.

As noted previously, both focus group participants work at the same elementary school, which is a traditional elementary school that also serves as one of several district “ESE cluster schools” for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It must be noted that the focus group discussion is based on a somewhat singular view of inclusion specific to the culture at their school. In addition, in relation to the responses of FG2, it should be noted that FGP1 – FG2 was the leading voice throughout the discussion, with FGP2 – FG2 most frequently adding to or concurring with the lead response of FGP1 – FG2.

Analysis of Focus Group Data – Research Questions 4 and 5

Analysis of the transcribed focus groups revealed several commonalities among the participants related to each research question. Commonalities are presented for each research question, following the sequence of the focus group questions accompanied by examples of direct quotations from the transcribed focus groups, to support the identified commonality. The focus group transcripts in their entirety can be found in Appendix U.

The two research questions addressed in Phase 2 (4 and 5) are presented along with the commonalities that were revealed among the focus group participants. For each question, following the presentation of commonalities, divergent and outlier units of input—input that contrasted (divergent) to the views of others or a singular perspective that emerged from only one of the focus group participants (outlier)—will be presented.

Research Question 4: What are the views and opinions of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion in regard to the culture of their organization?

Commonality #1: Inclusion is the expectation; however, inclusion is “voluntary” and teachers can “opt out.” This was a common theme in both focus groups; however, among the focus participants in FG1 there was an obvious consensus, whereas in FG2 the initial consensus was that their school was “fully inclusive.” However, as the discussion continued that assertion was couched with “as much as it possibly can,” revealing how inclusion can be prone to divergent interpretations of the construct.

Inclusive education is increasingly viewed as more than a set of instructional practices and includes increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from all aspects of school culture at large (Booth & Ainscow 2011). The following exchange, however, illustrates the extent to which this can be misinterpreted. Here we see an aforementioned qualifier again, “as much as possible” along with the contradictory statements about students not being in a separate wing and then admittedly, in a separate wing, but suggesting that this is an inclusive structure because it is in a central location that everyone has to walk by.

FGP2 - FG2: Because they were so heavy on including everyone together as much as possible, even in the hallways that we travel our school is enclosed. We all travel the

same hallways. They are not kept separate in a separate wing. In fact, our wing is actually on a wing everybody has to go by.

FGP1 - FG2: A central place.

The consensus of FG1 was that while some inclusion was happening, they felt inclusion was not an explicit expectation that was non-negotiable, but that when it came to assigning students with disabilities to certain classes, a recurring response was that inclusion was voluntary and teachers could “opt out.”

FG1

Researcher: Let me ask you, [stated previously] you have a number of students with disabilities in one particular class?

FGP 1 - FG1: Yes, it is not labelled as such. There are three non-disabled students and everybody else is ESE...

Researcher: So you feel like those students are scheduled in your class because they know that you have the capacity?

FGP 1 - FG1: I know they are. I have already been told. Someone said I won't take so and so, OK I will take [student name].

Researcher: So that is where that organizational message is not coming through?

FGP1: Yes, and sometimes it is not just the students with disabilities who are difficult. I have ELL [English Language Learners] kids in that class because I am certified. No problem, but it is a lot to balance. I don't think it is right for me or anybody like me to do that, and others get the right to say no.

Researcher: It [inclusion] is voluntary?

FGP 1 - FG1: Right but at the end of the day I would rather take them than for them to get their little hearts broken and not have their needs met somewhere else. We have had that too. I am a little squeaky wheel.

At another point in the discussion...

Researcher: So does it [inclusion] still seem optional for some teachers?

FGP 3 – FG1: Yes, I think it [inclusion] is kind of a double-edged sword. If you kind of make it known that you are not going to be happy about it, then the administrator is kind of left with, “do I force this on a teacher who I know is going to end up doing a bad job or do I go to a teacher that I know will be accepting and not do a bad job?” So you can almost get an easier route by not being open-minded and inclusive.

In this exchange we see that while there appears to be an explicit expectation for full inclusion from the school leader (principal), in reality the implementation is not to that level:

FGP 3: - FG1: OK, so at [FGP 3’s work location] we worked with the [state discretionary project focused on inclusion], right, so I have really seen a change since the couple three years ago...since then so it has shifted to...more of an inclusive friendly school. I can say at least from an administrative level they have made it clear that it is going to be a fully inclusive school. It is an autism cluster school so of course there is not quite a full inclusion there, but I think that’s sometimes where the message does not get mixed but then in the reality...so you tell the teachers it is going to be inclusive and everybody kind of smiles and says, “ya, sure,” but then the reality on a day-to-day basis is there are certainly some teachers who definitely are not quite as pleased about it happening. They definitely look at those students as “my” students and almost

reluctantly teach them during the times that I am not there because they are really...do my job for me type of deal...is the sense that I get if I am not there the whole time. Sometimes it is, unfortunately, but it seems like the scheduling is such that they will all be clustered into one class and there might be 8 or 9 VE [varying exceptionalities] students just because my schedule kind of drives their placement, when really in reality it would be better for them if they were mixed amongst all of the class and less of a ratio. So that is unfortunate. I understand why it is the way it is.

FG2

Although the teachers in focus group 2 were not as explicit in their message, both participants' responses revealed evidence that despite their insistence that they were an "inclusive school" and the evidence they provided in support of their strong, positive, inclusive culture, there may be teachers, to some degree, for various reasons, for whom inclusion may be "optional." For instance, at one point the comment was made that "some teachers...take it on more than others," and recurring references were made to their "inclusion class" and to themselves as 'the inclusion teachers.'

Researcher: It does sound like you really have an inclusive culture in place but we know it is not that strong at a lot of schools. There is still a lot of resistance and a lot of separating students out and labeling and leveling.

FGP1 - FG2: And it is not perfect. There are some teachers, those who take it on more than others.

Researcher: Is there a pretty equitable distribution of students with disabilities? I know sometimes schools cluster students so that you can provide more support.

FGP1 - FG2: Those that will get more. Those that are willing to get more. [Colleague, FGP2] and I tend to get the majority on our grade levels because I am 4th grade and she is 3rd grade. We have kind of stepped as hey, we are people who want to.

FGP1 - FG2: We are kind of known as the inclusion teachers. If you take on the children with autism, yes again SLD and language impaired are spread out a little more but if you have stepped up as the ASD inclusion teacher you get...

FGP2 - FG2: Depending on how high a population.

Researcher: So you all are known as the inclusion teachers?

FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

The phrase “to avoid changing” in the following quote seemed to imply that that a teacher could “opt out” of having a student with a disability in their classroom.

FGP2 - FG2: A lot of times, like [colleague] said, at the beginning of the year administration knows that so they will place them already in our class to avoid changing.

And again, referencing their identity as the “inclusion teachers” and affirming that the situation at their school is “a little different than inclusion for all”:

FGP1 - FG2: Last year we had 7 or 8 in 4th grade so there had to be another teacher who took them. I had 5 and she had 2. We are known as the inclusion teachers. A little different than inclusion for all.

Commonality #2: Resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through collaboration, mentoring, coaching and support.

When asked focus group question #2 (FGQ2), in what ways do you positively counteract resistance [to inclusion]? (a) In what ways could your organization positively counteract this [to

inclusion] resistance?, several commonalities emerged among FG1 and FG2 in regard to counteracting resistance to inclusion. As mentioned, although FG2 indicated that their school was fully inclusive they were asked of FGQ1 since they did share that there were teachers who were resistant. When asked about the ways in which they counteract resistance, participants in FG1 and FG2 all indicated that their primary strategy for counteracting resistance was to *personally offer assistance* (Commonality #1). Each described their behavior in ways that represented the descriptors of champions of inclusion:

FG1

FGP 1 – FG1: I think as teachers we don't like to look like we are incompetent. I don't think force is ever a good word. I would want that the teachers would want to do this because they think hey, this really is the right thing to do. I always do better when I want to do things and when I volunteer. I try to talk to my colleagues, certainly in [my] department [English], "hey, this is working you know [names a student] can do this. He did that for you? Yes, he did. We had to do all these activities first but he ended up doing it and..." I like that and I like hearing other teachers who say, whether it is in math or science, how did you get this student to work for you, or here is a tip where maybe he will work for you. I still think we should be more collaborative and we are not. Teachers still have that mentality, my door is shut – leave me alone.

FGP 3 – FG1: I think just going into maybe a more reluctant general education teacher's classroom and just being in there and modeling how you interact with the ESE students, how you teach them just to show them. I think sometimes the fear is that some of the more reluctant teachers might think that you have to teach totally, completely, different and everything has to be different and they realize the vast majority of it is still just

teaching the kids, of course, there are accommodations and different scaffolding that you have to do, but it is not like it is a complete reinvention of the curriculum to teach the ESE kids. Once they realize that then they are a little bit more open-minded

FG2

Researcher: So in what ways do you positively counteract the resistance? If you hear teachers saying things or...

FGP1 - FG2: Offer assistance. Offer training. You know, come see my classroom. What do you want to know? Try and give guidance, especially you learn so much when you see somebody is trying to do...

Researcher: So you say, "Come see my classroom".

FGP2 - FG2: Oh yes, definitely. Come watch me and observe. I had a teacher who has never had an ESE student and she said she received one of [the] students with autism. She was like, "I don't know what to do." So I sat down with her and I made a schedule of the day so she is higher functioning so she just needed a schedule to be able to say this is what is coming. So we sat down together and we made a little picture chart of her day and how things would progress through the day. That is all it took.

FGP1 - FG2: You have to be willing to do something different but also adapt it through the year because what works in August does not necessarily work for January and then you just try to keep moving and helping teachers based on your experience. We will try this. This worked with this kid. Try this. If that doesn't work try that. Not all teachers will come and ask, you know of course.

Commonality #3: Resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through training opportunities and preparation.

When asked FGQ2 (a), in what ways could the organization counteract resistance, the commonalities among FG1 and FG2 were absolute related to increasing opportunities for training and preparation of both general education and ESE teachers to effective instructional practices for students with disabilities (Commonality #2).

FG1 and FG2 expressed the shared view that general education teachers, primarily, are resistant because they feel unprepared and fearful.

Researcher: What do you think that the organization could do to help with that message to teachers? For those teachers who are not willing.

FGP1 - FG2: I think the imperative is there but it is how you actually work with our inclusion students.

FGP2 - FG2: I think it is a training issue.

Researcher: Do you think they feel unprepared?

FGP1 - FG2: Yes.

FGP2 - FG2: Yes. I think they don't know and [colleague, also in focus group] actually did a training for us, one of our PLCs, since our population is generally autistic, how to deal with these children and how to help them to become better students. I think a lot of it is the teachers are scared. They don't know how to deal.

FGP1 - FG2: How to set up your room. How to work with the other children to set up, you know, be a buddy system and so forth. Once you set it in place it is a lot easier if you don't know how to do it. It is tricky.

Researcher: So you feel like training is an issue for sure.

FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

FG1

FGP 1 - FG1: I think that support...and I really see within my colleagues, exceptional education teachers, need some support and training because for so many of them, most of their work life has been that isolated model, and so they are petrified to walk in [to a general education classroom]. I will walk into a chemistry class and I facilitate it and I don't know all the material. That is extremely frightening for many of my colleagues, so I think they need some support and maybe not just professional development, just coaching and help, a one-on-one to kind of venture in because there are all kinds of skills. I always say it is like going into someone's home, having to be in there every day, and I have to learn that I don't just open your refrigerator, but I eventually gain your trust so that I can, and we can work together. That is a tough thing for someone who has been in a separate class.

FGP 3: Yes, I think that the key is coaching the ESE teachers on how to be effective in an inclusive classroom because I think a lot are afraid that they go in there. Sometimes it happens in reality where they are pretty much just kind of standing there watching the other teacher teach so they prefer to pull kids out and they might even pull strings behind the scenes to try to be even less inclusive so that they can go back to where they feel comfortable in their small groups in their classroom. So finding a way to train them so they feel confident and effective in a full classroom setting, which is probably...

Commonality #4: Resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through the power of peer support.

A commonality that emerged in FG1 and FG2 was the way in which peer support helped to counteract teacher's resistance to inclusion and "changed their mindset" in regard to their view of students with disabilities. The next exchange describes FGP1 – FG1's involvement in the development and continued oversight of the school peer support team.

FGP 1 - FG1

Researcher: In what ways so you personally positively counteract this resistance?

FGP 1 - FG1: I will jump in on that because just today with having the visit of the [district chief administrator to meet the students the peer support team] who helped me to make inroads with the teachers in ways that I could not have, directly with the adults. Having high school students who are open-minded, who get it, who like diversity and who want to be friends with students with disabilities and see how capable they are...they are so successful working with the students that the teachers see it and it is almost like they have thrown down the gauntlet and the teachers are kind of like, well look this is an untrained high school student who has found a way to reach this student. They [teachers] will watch the students and so when the teacher has what they deem a difficult student and with that support that student becomes successful in their class. Now they have a different experience and so they are a little more relaxed when the next one comes in and there is an openness, you know, they might not throw their arms open wide but it is like, I think we can do this and let me see. They needed that successful experience where they did not feel inept, untrained, and incapable and then they begin to see that it could work.

So the students have helped me a lot to get in to the teacher's mindset to change that perception.

Similarly, FG2 described how their own classroom peer support teams helped to counteract teacher's resistance to inclusion and change their mindsets in similar ways:

FGP 1 and FGP2 - FG1

FGP1 - FG2: We have said that one of the successes of an inclusion class is the peer buddy system so even children go with them to their next classes. With our children with autism it really helps to have that peer buddy so the teacher who takes also takes that little group of people and is supposed to fit anywhere.

FGP2 - FG2: I typically pair mine with the closest person that they were with. So last year they went with the person that worked really well with them.

FGP1 - FG2: *It is to help guide the teachers to some extent because those children become experts and if you have questions ask so and so, the peer buddy, because they know if this kid is doing this [emphasis added].* Nothing overbearing but truly in a buddy way.

Commonality #5: Accountability and teacher evaluation prohibit inclusion.

When asked FGQ2 (a), *in what ways could the organization counteract resistance*, the commonalities among FG1 and FG2 were absolute related to the organizations awareness of the unintended consequence of increased payoff for exclusion of students with disabilities due to the pressures associated with increased accountability and the teachers evaluation system (Commonality #3).

As evidenced in the following exchange, participants in FG1 and FG2 went so far as to state that having students with disabilities included in their classrooms could be viewed as “punishment (FGP2 – FG1).” The following italicized sections are the author’s emphasis:

FG1

Researcher: I think you may be right, in that some of it is fear that they [teachers] are not prepared. I do not necessarily think they are negative people or they are just resistant for that sake, but I agree that they may not feel prepared and there is a fear element there.

FGP 1 - FG1: And with a high level of accountability. The tide and the test score is a new...even if you believe that students with a disability are going to learn, maybe their pace is different and will that be reflected on that test and how will that impact me and my scores and if I have too many ESE students then what about the person that is gifted? You know, it is that jockeying now...

FGP 2 - FG1: That performance.

FGP 1 - FG1: It is tied to that kind of testing and it makes it tougher for them and I get that.

Researcher: So in what ways could the organization positively counteract this resistance?

FGP 3 - FG1: Well, I think one way is, I know they are not going to do it, but making sure that teachers do not feel punished or are actually *punished* [emphasis added] in terms of the evaluative system by including everyone in their classroom, because there certainly seems to be...

FGP 1 - FG1: And that there is no opting out. I hate that word. Can I opt out of that? I think sometimes we have to do some tough things and we just need to go forward and just do it, bite the bullet and move forward.

To the concept of punishment, FG1 added that having a classroom of advanced learners was considered a reward, which will be discussed in the next section FGQ2: Divergent and Outlier Views.

In the following two exchanges, FG2 expressed the same concern, using the word “punished” and adding the importance of training administrators to know what to look for and unique considerations in a classroom where a broad range of learners including students with disabilities who may have unique instructional and behavioral accommodations.

FG2

Researcher: So the question is, in what ways can the organization do help positively counteract that resistance? You were saying more training might help with the resistance.

FGP1 - FG2: And you have got to be aware of how it affects your scores.

FGP2 - FG2: That is what I was going to say.

FGP1 - FG2: And to be willing to take that on.

FGP2 - FG2: That is another big resistance.

FGP1 - FG2: As long as you have support in that area it is difficult, and you have a decimal assigned to your name.

FGP2 - FG2: People are very worried about that.

FGP1 - FG2: You will probably make less growth. You can make a lot of growth but then you are going to do a lot more work in order to get the points you want.

Researcher: Right, so you are talking about in terms of the teacher evaluation system, value added model and that kind of thing?

FGP2 - FG2: There is a high priority put on that and a lot of teachers...

Researcher: A lot of priority put on what?

FGP2 - FG2: On being in effective teacher and a lot of teachers don't want to take on the responsibility of the ESE population because you know sometimes it does not work out as well. In my opinion, I love to see growth, whether it be from oh, they weren't reading at all to now they are reading for socialization.

FGP1 - FG2: *As long as you have a principal that can recognize that and not say why aren't all your students on grade level. They can be aware that the child was coming in as a kindergarten reader and into 4th grade classroom now they are 2nd grade, let's celebrate. You have got to be a teacher who can point that out as well. Defend what your students are doing. Don't just put this student here. Look what she did to get there* [emphasis added].

Researcher: So in what ways could the organization positively counteract this resistance?

FGP 2 – FG1: Well, I think one way is, I know they are not going to do it, but making sure that teachers do not feel *punished* [emphasis added] or are actually punished in terms of the evaluative system by including everyone in their classroom, because there certainly seems to be...

When asked focus group question #6 and sub-questions (FGQ6), “to what extent does your organization cultivate an inclusive culture? In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to inclusive culture? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the

importance of inclusive culture?, FG2 expressed concern over the impact of the teacher evaluation system on the progress of inclusion:

FG2

FGP2 - FG2: As far as what can [the school district] do? I mean, it is just the training. I know it is not going away, but the teaching grading. When I speak with people, that is their number one concern is, I am not going to get a raise.

FGP1 - FG2: [Incomprehensible] you make great growth but...

FGP2 - FG2: Nothing is going to happen and then I might be scored negatively and the whole system, I mean, to me it does not matter because I know what I do works and I know that in the end every child has made gains and I just look at that. I focus on that. A lot of other people it is hard for them to focus on that, especially when you get that score at the end of the year.

FGP1 - FG2: *An example for me, and I am not going to criticize anyone and not going to name names, but I was observed in my formal [observation] last year and I have 5 children with autism. Everything was running smoothly. I did this on a desk just to get a kid's attention [taps table]. The person observing me said, "If you had not done that I would have given you an "innovating" on behavior. You don't know where this kid came from. That would have been a massive thing two months ago. So it is that kind of thing that even now we still experience to some extent. You know, we are going to keep teaching. It is always something that is in my head [emphasis added].*

FGP2 - FG2: The whole system is subjective. I know we are not here to talk about...

Research Question #4: Divergent and Outlier Views (DOV)

DOV #1

Divergent perceptions regarding the organization's expectation for inclusion.

When asked focus group question #1 (FGQ1) “To what extent does your organization promote and effectively communicate a compelling organizational imperative for inclusion? (a) How important is it for the organization to communicate an explicit expectation for inclusion? (b) What are your recommendations, if any, for making the expectation for inclusion more explicit?” FG1 and FG2 differed in their responses entirely. While FG1 agreed that inclusion was “happening,” they felt that there was not an explicit expectation or strong message from the district for inclusion. This was in contrast to FG2 who when asked about the organizations’ expectation for inclusion stated that “it is imperative and clear (FGP1 – FG2)” and “built that way at our school (FGP2 – FG2).”

When asked sub-question (a) FG1 and FG2 agreed that it was important for the school district to communicate the explicit imperative for inclusion. FG1’s view was that the district had *not* made the expectation explicit.

Following the guidelines of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, FG2 was not asked sub-question (b) related to their recommendations for making the expectation for inclusion explicit, since both participants indicated that they felt the expectation for inclusion *was explicit* at their school and they felt they were a “separate entity.”

DOV #2:

Perceived “success” of inclusion is a byproduct of basic compliance.

DOV #3:

Inclusion has to be earned.

When asked Focus Group Question #3 (FGQ3) “to what extent does your organization promote inclusive practices? In what ways do you promote inclusive practices?” the idea that inclusion has to be earned surfaced several times in FG2. The following exchanges FG2 added qualifiers in several instances, indicating the possibility of students’ “limitations” being a possible exclusionary factor to the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Researcher: We are getting the [current school] perspective here for sure. So how important do you think it is for the organization to communicate an explicit expectation for inclusion?

FGP1 - FG2: Very important. You know it is not a choice really.

FGP2 - FG2: It is important for the students that they be *included as much as possible as their limitations* [emphasis added].

FG2

Researcher: So you feel it is pretty clear and out there that we are an inclusive district?

FGP1 - FG2: Oh yes.

Researcher: Does that go also for students with significant cognitive disabilities...?

FGP1 - FG2: As far as they can, yes. Some are within Gen. Ed. classrooms for a short time and some it may just be recess and lunch or school events depending on what they can and cannot do.

Researcher: Do you feel like your school in particular is always like looking for opportunity?

FGP2 - FG2: Oh yes. I love [current school] for that reason.

FGP1 - FG2: It is fully inclusive as much as it possibly can.

Interviewee 3

It is worth mentioning that the idea that *inclusion has to be earned* surfaced indirectly in FG1, but for the opposite reason. Interviewee 3 (I3), who was focus group participant 2 (FG2) in focus group 1 (FG1). I3 – FGP2 alluded to the fact that students with more significant cognitive disabilities were not included to a great extent beyond their self-contained settings and spoke of their “growing edge” being their thoughts about the possibility of expanding inclusionary opportunities for that population of students. The following statement was in the context of their school’s peer support team, which had been instrumental in advancing inclusive culture on their high school campus:

I3 – FGP2: There is evidence. It is working, it is working, it is working. This might be the non-example. Where my growing edge is when I look at our small little self-contained unit at [local high school] and I see some students that are medically fragile and not communicative – I am trying to image what it would look like for them to be in a class. What would happen if we had them interacting? I am still searching for what is going to be like. I can feel the limits around that but said, I bet if I saw evidence —I bet

if we gave it a try and just saw what happened and started to cut it—it would not be as awful as I might think it might be. That is what keeps me in that stance. It is because we have tried and 9 times out of 10 some really wonderful positive things have happened and that one time it did not it had more to do with the adults involved than the student.

This is an example of the mindset of a champion of inclusion, in that they demonstrate both a *stance* that questions labeling and leveling of students with disabilities and feels compelled to continually cultivate inclusive culture through the questioning and restructuring of exclusionary structures.

DOV #4:

Inclusion as punishment – exclusion as reward.

Other variations on the theme of accountability and teacher evaluation, came up in one particular exchange of views that were unique to FG1: (1) the implication that teaching advanced classes, that did not include students with disabilities, were viewed as favorable and as a perk or reward:

Researcher: I know when you talk about opting out...looking at some of the classroom ratios of students...you don't want an instructional range that makes it impossible for the teacher to implement IEPs, and you don't want defeat the purpose of inclusion by [having so many students with disabilities that it is impossible] for the teacher to be able to differentiate successfully to meet the needs of the students. I like the no opting out because, without it, teachers will think that inclusion is negotiable.

FGP 2 – FG1: Yes, but is it that culture that you can or because you do this...OK you are teaching AP for me, OK we will not give you ESE or you are coaching basketball and we are winning so I won't give these kind of kids to you in your class.

FGP 2 – FG1: How can I phrase this politely? [Laughter]

DOV #5

Inclusive stance.

When asked focus group question #4 (FGQ4) “to what extent does your organization encourage educators to adopt an inclusive stance? In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive stance? the view of FGP1 - FG2 was an outlier view to other focus group participants with the statement: “They demand it. It is not encouraged. It is something we are expected to do.”

FG1

FGP1 – FG2 presented as the more dominant and senior member of the focus group that was composed of the two teachers from the same school, and FGP2 offered no counterpoint or conformation of FGP1’s stated view.

When expanding on the extent to which the organization encourages educators to reject a deficit perspective of disability and think differently about the success and efficacy of labeling and leveling students, the following exchange occurred. Although it is evident that FG2 believes that ESE labels are “about providing the support that they need to be [successful],” they follow up by referring positively to MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports) as having contributed to student growth “especially for our *yellow population* [emphasis added]”.

FG2

Researcher: OK, so you feel like there is a definite message out there that you know it is not about labeling these kids?

FGP2 - FG2: Yes, it is about providing the support that they need to be...

FGP1 - FG2: The preferred method is you go from tier 2 to tier 1. That is the ideal but obviously it does not always work that way and you may end up with a label so you know how to support them but it is not a label for the sake of a label.

FGP2 - FG2: I don't feel that [the school district] perfectly puts a student in MTSS to label them. No, I definitely think that it is more towards like she said, to move them out and into tier 1 versus to label them. Get them the support to find out.

FGP1 - FG2: It seems to be really beneficial. It is not your cup of tea but it is for the ELL's who seem to make a lot of growth per the MTSS process because they do have the ability to learn. You know, obviously through MTSS. We are finding students who are having difficulties.

FGP1 - FG2: Yes, so that enforced MTSS, we have time where we have 45 minutes to do our interventions and its showing growth, especially for our yellow population.

Counter to this view, FG1 had some strong views on the topic of *inclusive stance* and the efficacy of labeling and leveling students. FGP3 – FG1 expressed the view, as a negative outcome, that the focus on data reinforces the practice of labelling, leveling, and sorting students and is counter to the cultivation of an inclusive stance in that it “hammers home the idea that this child, the child who is ESE, and not just “John Smith.” He is an “ESE John Smith.” FGP3 also stated that in his experience an ESE label served only to perpetuate exclusionary practices and is often erroneous, based only through the automatic grouping of students by ESE label. In addition:

FGP 2: I hate that word disabled.

FGP 2: I hate that because it makes them seem different and they are not. I would like to change that word if I could.

FGP 1 - FG1: I don't even use those labels a lot of times. I will say, let's talk about strategies to work with the student whose pace is different than someone else. Let's talk about the students who need visual cues to help them learn.

FGP1 – FG1 had the following interesting input in regard to labels:

FGP 1 - FG1: One of the things that the [peer support team] students taught me the very first year when I did training with them the first two weeks of school and I spent time talking about the different labels because I thought they were going to need to know. By the second year they all said don't do that. We don't need it. It does not matter to me. We don't need a lot of...so the kids didn't want to know. And today we had visitors come and they were like, well do you get special permission slips for their... and I said no because they are friends. There is a relational thing here. We don't have to treat them like they are going to break. I learned to change my language when I work with the teachers because if I do a professional development and I talk about these are strategies that work with learning disabled students, then I can almost hear those ears close.

FG1 went further in the following exchange in the context of the organization cultivating inclusive practices, which evolved into a discussion of the efficacy of disability labels and the importance of having an inclusive stance, and included an example of how champions of inclusion constructively leverage power to influence transformative change (see italicized text; FGP 1 - FG1):

FGP3: I try to model some strategies that are effective so the other teacher can see that and then integrate that into their teaching. I definitely had some frank conversations with teachers too when they ask, “why are we doing this” and then I would speak my opinion. I try to usually say how it is our job to prepare these kids for the real world and jobs. There is not a separate reality for these students when the graduate. Here is a company that is only hiring ESE kids. [laughter]

Researcher: Or a self-contained grocery store. They are not going to find one.

FGP 3: So I think sometimes when they actually think about that it makes them realize that is the big picture that we are trying to have everybody be successful in the world.

Researcher: So your teachers – do you see any difference between teachers that are more seasoned? I mean, we have two perfect examples here of two that have been teaching 28 and 32 years and have those inclusive values...

FGP 3: Yes, I see some difference and I think sometimes too it can be some that may be reluctant or don't want ESE students and then the flip side of that coin is there are also some teachers who know who the ESE students are and sometimes have the bar set so low that, oh, don't worry about that and here is a sentence stem for you even though the kid doesn't need the sentence stem. So you are also educating them not to over accommodate and automatically make that ESE label mean he doesn't have to do that much – just go on the computer and do this program while we are doing

FGP 2: As if they are inferior.

FGP 3: Right. I mean well-intentioned but not realizing that ...

FGP 2: Yes, [a student] knows that he is not doing the same thing as everybody else. They know.

Researcher: So are you saying that teachers sometimes make assumptions based on that label?

FGP 1 - FG1: *A lot of times too I think about the teachers like I do my ESE students, and so when a teacher is doing something like they decided to make test corrections or do something that is helping that student, I will go to the administration and I will let them know that this person is making gains. Can you please when you get a chance to talk to them, I think that recognition and praise... you know, just like the students, you try something, it is a risk and you get a positive feedback, somebody knows you are trying and then it builds that culture to try a little bit more. I have a lot of eyes and ears. I am in the classrooms and I will just say, "Hey, I just want you to know so and so is now letting the kids do this in class and that was not happening," especially their administrator. If you see [general education teacher] you know give [teacher] pat on the back for that because that is a big deal and it means something to the teachers to hear that [emphasis added].*

DOV # 6

Inclusive values.

Focus group question 5 (FGQ5) was about inclusive values, meaning value systems that regard difference and diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource; a value system within public education that situates inclusive education as an issue of social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Skirtic, 1991), and as a fundamental issue of civil rights (Winzer, 2000).

When asked focus group question #5 (FGQ5), “to what extent does your organization cultivate inclusive values? In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to inclusive values? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of inclusive values?”, FG2 engaged in an exchange that insisted that inclusive values are communicated and cultivated by the organization “because we are inclusive.” Again, FG2 presented a somewhat contradictory view that they were an inclusive school but that “every student is given their least restrictive environment and the minutes that they absolutely need in order to succeed and otherwise they are in the inclusive classroom learning,” implying that if students with disabilities were unable to succeed in the “inclusive classroom” they went somewhere else. When asked about encountering resistance FG2 stated that they encountered no resistance to diversity and that values were communicated by the organization.

When asked focus group question #5 (FGQ5), FG1 engaged in a thoughtful discussion that included questioning about the number of personnel, especially in high level positions, who have disabilities. The discussion included the recommendation that the district adopt Universal Design to ensure that all district facilities are accessible to everyone and the assertion of the importance of exposing students persons with disabilities in professional roles (as opposed to only service roles) and that seeing (or not seeing) persons with disabilities in all strata of school and society was a clue to how they are valued and important in the context of civil rights:

FGP2 – FG1: Because it used to be that we were segregated and you could not drink from the same water fountain as a white person and so how long has that taken to change? The same thing with homosexuality or transgender. Any of these big issues that have to do with treating people as equals. It just seems like it is so hard that we have to work at it to

treat people as equals because we are. I have a hard time wrapping my head around that. You can hear it in our colleagues sometimes too.

FGP 1 - FG1: Oh yes. The students did a commercial around the time, this was last year, that on the announcements about that this is the new civil rights movement. It was black history month and they were talking about exclusion. I will tell you another thing too, that I am not sure all our facilities are built with the best intentions of that. I mean, there is a legal level of what is required but my students we walked our campus one time and we talked about universal design. We have some really heavy doors. We have a student that is blind and the kids will ask me, "why aren't there the little switches on our doors?" We have one elevator in our school that is often breaking down.

FGP 2: And it is at the other end, right? Like ours.

FGP 1 - FG1: Yes, at the end of the school and so I think there are some factors. We have probably the right ramps and the current bathrooms but just looking at that, how can we make sure our school is set up so a parent who has a disability can come in to participate, like at the cafeteria. They set it up and they have all chairs and tables and I am like, OK guys well guess what, if I have this need where are we going to put that person? You are not thinking about that difference when you are PLC. There are no places for wheelchairs in our PLC. It is all chairs and sitting down.

FGP 2: We have a row but really only a row.

FGP 1 - FG1: When our school was first built I was mortified that there were actual signs that were on the rooms that said EH classroom. I said tear those down right now. It is a sense of like I don't know how all the organization works but if the people that are in

construction, are they planning these things? These new schools with this idea of... If a student comes to us and happens to use a wheelchair for transportation, we don't have the right desks. It is an act of congress. Why aren't schools just OK, we are going to have desks and we are going to have so many of this and if you don't....

FGP 2: And tables at the right height for the wheelchair.

FGP 1 - FG1: We don't have all those. We have to go order it. We have to find where they are. Let's build a school with it there at the beginning assuming that someone is going to use it.

Research Question #5: What recommendations do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion have for establishing and advancing an inclusive organizational culture?

There was quite a bit of divergence between the views of FG1 and FG2 in relation to research question #5. FG1 had much to say in regard to their views and recommendations which will be detailed in this section. FG2's views were commensurate with their views related to research question 4, in that despite some evidence of exclusionary constructs in their discussion, they had very few views and opinions in regard to the culture of their organization because the organization had established a culture of inclusion.

When focus group question #10 was posed to FGP2 "anything you see as a barrier [to inclusion]?" (FGQ10), FGP 1 and FGP2 replied in unison "no." The following was the only commonality related to research question #5.

Commonality #6: Resistance to inclusion can be counteracted when teachers see successful models in action.

When asked about focus group question #7 (FGQ7) “to what extent does your organization have the capacity to cultivate an inclusive culture? If not, how might such capacity be built?”, both focus groups were in agreement that the opportunity to see successful models of inclusion in action would help to build capacity for inclusion.

FG1

FGP 3 – FG1: I think one thing people are going to see if just a successful model and action that is relevant to their everyday life so if you are a 5th-grade math and science teacher, you can sit down in preplanning and watch a half an hour lesson of an inclusive classroom in [school district] where it is working and you realize it is not impossible and that they can learn and that everybody could be successful at it. Yes, you want to see it and then maybe that would help the resistance.

FGP 1 – FG1: That is a valid concern and valid point. I think the inclusion coach, here is what happened: we were funded by the district so we had it. Not every high school because some people opted out, right? So they did not have it. Then the money got cut so then the district was going to put one in each community. The principal said that is worthless so then the principal had to decide, am I going to pay for that position or not? The only thing that saved me was that XXX XXXX that was already started but other schools so no, I want to put you here or I am going to put you there. So if some money was available to say look, we are going to give you this but it has to be utilized in this way to support that at your school and we want to observe, I don’t know, I mean I don’t know how the funding came about and why it disappeared. I don’t know the whole story for that.

FG2

Researcher: So what do you think? How can the district build that capacity?

FGP1 - FG2: Build some kind of expert on the district level who can go out and train.

FGP2 - FG2: I definitely think the coaching, the mentoring, and being able to see somebody else at that skill is definitely important. We all go through it interning before we get in the classroom. If you went through the education programs, I spent almost two years interning and watching different teachers.

Research Question #5: Divergent and Outlier Views (DOV)

DOV #1

Communities of Practice

When asked focus group question #8 (FGQ8) “what do you know about communities of practice? How might a community of practice led by champions of inclusion be positioned and utilized by the organization as an agent for culture change?, both focus groups expressed that they were not sure how effective this structure would be in cultivating change. The researcher defined *community of practice - COP* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) for each focus group as a collaborative, informal network that supports professional practitioners in their efforts to develop shared understandings and engage in work-relevant knowledge building (Hara, 2009). COPs develop around a certain activity/profession where a shared professional identity is the bond that brings the members of the COP together (Wenger, 1998). Each group seemed to grapple with conceptualizing such a structure. FG1 indicated that they thought what was needed was more than a virtual meeting or to get together as a group and expressed concern over the amount of time that would be required in addition to current responsibilities:

FGP 1 – FG1: The amount time now that takes with one planning and then trying to get into classrooms and at that end is testing and then we have less time. It is just...I don't know. People are overwhelmed so even though it would be beneficial...I hear people say I can't add another thing to my plate.

FGP 2 – FG2: It was just that saturation of, you know... so I don't know. That is my answers, I don't know.

Researcher: That is a valid answer.

FGP2 – FG2: I know that many of my colleagues are just leaving the profession, getting certified and looking at that and say OK I will grade 100-something papers and math but to write... Some of our consultation people are doing 60, 70 or 80 IEP's and doing IEP progress reports and doing monitor checks and doing... It is hard. So I could see a benefit in it. I think there would be a lot of positives.

FG2 expressed a mix of interest and concern. In this exchange, FGP1 expressed interest, harkening back to their first foray into teaching students on the ASD spectrum in an inclusive setting when they would have welcomed the opportunity to “talk to someone who knew”:

FGP1 - FG2: Because when I took on inclusion, whatever 7 years ago I remember even going, they were from [former school], and we had an ASD coordinator in the school, I said, “can you find out what worked at the last school?” And the response was, “well that is just [refers to specific person].” I was like, “no, I really wanted to talk to someone who knew.” Yes, it would be good, especially for new teachers in inclusion.

FG2 also expressed concern in regard to teachers needing to be open to collaboration, and that you may not reach teachers who are resistant through this method:

FGP2 - FG2: I think the only thing that I see with that would be that you are not going to reach that population that is rejecting inclusion. You are only going to get the people who are into it and the people who are like, “mmm, I want to get my feet wet” type of thing, which would spread a little but I still fear that you are not going to reach the majority of the people that you want to reach.

Researcher: So how could we reach them? Because look at you two. I mean, you two are great at coaching and mentoring other teachers, so do you think having that community of practice might build the capacity of like-minded people to do more coaching and mentoring?

FGP1 - FG2: It has to be somebody who wants to ask though, like someone who is willing to say, “Hey, I am struggling with this; how do I do it?”

Researcher: That is a good point about the community of practice because what we want to do is we want to support the people who do have those values, because they do tend to coach and mentor and network and model.

FGP1 - FG2: I think if you put it out there with a, “hey, are you struggling with ASD or are you struggling with inclusion, try this” kind of thing and it might be that it might trigger someone to lean in and try it. If they are struggling or if you’ve got great ideas.

FGP2 - FG2: I think it be really good for the people who are not sure, like they want to wet their feet, I think it would be good for those people. It is obviously good for the people who are in it because of course if they have something to say they are going to get on, they are going to ask.

FGP1 - FG2: And every year we learn new things because every child is different so we are always looking for ideas even after this many years doing it.

FGP2 - FG2: So I think to the people who are trying to wet their feet and the people who are more headstrong in it, it would be beneficial to them.

DOV #2

Supporting and reinforcing v. constraining and inhibiting inclusive culture.

When asked about focus group question #9 (FGQ9) “To what extent do does your organization: (a) support and reinforce inclusive culture? How? (b) constrain and inhibit inclusive culture? How?, FGP1 took the lead in the discussion, stating in regard to the organization, “I don’t think they are putting constraints on necessarily.” In regard to how the district then supported inclusive culture, FGP1 stated that the organization supported inclusive culture by allowing the school “the freedom to do it the best way they possibly can.”

Subsequently, when asked if they had any other recommendations for removing barriers, FGP1 and FGP2 – FG2 replied in unison “no,” to which FGP1 added, “I don’t think they are putting constraints on, necessarily.” When asked to confirm that they had no additional recommendations for removing barriers, FGP1 - FG1 replied, “That is what we have stated.”

FG1 had several divergent views that were shared in response to research question 4. In regard to practices that constrain or inhibit inclusive culture, FG1 cited unbalanced classroom ratios that cause teachers to want to abandon inclusive teaching altogether due to the pressures of accountability and teacher evaluation, again using the word “punishment” in the exchange:

FG1

Researcher: To what extent does your organization constrain or inhibit inclusive culture?

FGP 2: How are we being held accountable? [FGP1] said it before.

FGP 1: Yes, and the performance and our evaluative piece. I think more people would be more open if they were not so concerned about that.

Researcher: It hasn't helped?

FGP 2: No, it has not and the idea that if you have so many ESEs, it is because well you are being punished or you only get one because you are doing a great job. I don't like that. The same thing with the ELs. It is not just ESE; it is with several of the labels. I just think, you look over, "well, you have got some gifted students." I said yes, it is ESE, it is a big umbrella but I don't like that.

The issue of exclusionary practices in after-school tutoring programs was also offered as an example of a structure that is counter to supporting and reinforcing inclusive culture:

FGP 3: Again, I think one thing I have noticed at least at my school is that we do after-school tutoring and it seems like the students that got invited today to after-school tutoring, it is supposed to be the lowest 25% based on last year's test scores, and most of the ESE students did not get invited even though some of them would score in that. I guess the rationale is that they are already getting a lot of extra support is the thought process so they are not getting invited to the after-school tutoring and then other kids did so that certainly seem to be very inclusive if they are being excluded based on...I never actually went and questioned it like I should have.

FGP 2: We have that and they have tried to place the bottom 25 but I have been there a couple of times in the media center. I don't see a lot of ESE kids in there.

FGP 3: There are definitely groups being made. I know for a fact that some of the students that are selected are selected by targeting students that we think are going to make a big...

FGP 2: Think can pass.

FGP 3: May not even pass but they get are going

FGP 2: They get the learning gain.

FGP 3: Yes.

FGP 2: So they are on the bubble. I hate that word bubble.

FGP 3: It is not going to make a learning game then we are not going to invite them to get the most bang for our buck.

FGP 2: Yes, that is true for our money because I guess someone is paying for the bus transportation.

DOV #3

Additional recommendations: leveraging leadership, policy and grassroots advocacy.

When asked about focus question #10 (FGQ10), “what additional recommendations would you make to the organization for: (a) rooting out structures that perpetuate a culture of exclusion? (b) removing barriers to inclusion? (c) establishing norms, values, practices, and policies that work to support inclusive organizational culture?” the recommendations were quite diverse between FG1 and FG2.

In FG2, FGP1 – FG2 dominated the lengthy exchange almost entirely (with FGP2 concurring), stating the importance of a focus on strategies for managing behavior of students on the ASD spectrum, as “the thing that has had the highest effect on my ability to teach.”

In FG1, the exchange began with FGP1 – FG1 giving a recent example of a high-level member of the district leadership team coming out to observe the peer inclusion team for students with disabilities in action. FGP1 – FG1 emphasized how powerful it was for this high-level district administrator to say “let’s start this conversation” in support of inclusion:

FGP 2: I mean today to have [one of our high level district administrator] come out and see the program and then talk about having that conversation with the API’s [assistant principals of instruction] high school. I mean, looking and saying OK, this was my frustration...when people would come out, say “great program, yeah” and then they would leave.

FGP 1: And not take it back.

FGP 2: So to hear [one of our high level district administrator] even say, “let’s start this conversation.” I was so happy just to say that they are maybe going to start talking about it. Not every school has to have to have a [peer inclusion team] in the next year, but I think from the conversations good things happen.

Researcher: So high level leadership getting involved, walking schools and monitoring...

To this, FGP 3 – FG1 immediately added the positive influence related to the support of [state discretionary project focused on inclusion], to which FGP 2 – FG1 agreed based on similar experience with the discretionary project:

FGP 3: Having [a state discretionary project team] come out to our school was good and that definitely helped.

FGP 1: That is an issue. They worked with us so that...

FGP 3: OK, right, and they kind of changed the way we were scheduling that I believe that they kind of broke apart some of that and made sure that ESE was getting prioritized properly and scheduling and that just kind of fit in at the end so I think that changed some of the mindset there.

Researcher: So what was the genesis of them coming out? Did your principal reach out to them?

FGP 3: I didn't get that sense but I really don't know.

FGP 1: Because when we became inclusion coaches we started working with [state discretionary project] and so I didn't know a lot about the organization so that [state discretionary project] working with the schools that is another area where those conversations are happening.

Researcher: Those conversations are happening more and that is a good suggestion.

FGP 1: And they have an insight. My sense is they [state discretionary project] have one foot in the organization and one foot out so there is a viewing of what can be done that maybe isn't being done because they are not caught up in the structure in the same way.

FGP 3: Yes, they [state discretionary project] have the immunity so they can say what they want and are not going to...

When asked for any final recommendations FGP 3 – FG1 suggested that a “policy that speaks to inclusion” may be necessary “if we really [want] to disseminate that information in a meaningful way.” FGP1 – FG2 added, “This is going to sound so corny, but it is just such a change of heart. It is more that affective kind of sense of openness to say that there is a policy. I see it more at the grass roots.” FGP1 – FG1 added:

FGP 2: It is kind of like the speed limit. Some people follow it, some will go above the speed limit and hope they don't get caught and some will go below the speed limit because they are afraid. So I agree with [FGP2], I think it needs to start with each teacher, starts with the community and the parents. Obviously, if you had a special needs child you would feel differently than someone who did not but may have opened that conversation. Oh, the kids are on the same soccer team. Oh wow, you know this, and make it more accepting. I love this idea about this [peer inclusion team]. I really do. About peers helping other peers that is fantastic. Then that whole generation of them growing up and having their own families and having that trickledown effect. That is a huge ripple. I think we need more ripples.

Summary of Identified Common Themes From the Focus Groups

Five common themes emerged from the focus groups. The common themes were: (1) inclusion is the expectation; however, inclusion is “voluntary” and teachers can “opt out”; (2) resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through collaboration, mentoring, coaching, and support; (3) resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through training opportunities and preparation; (4) resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through the power of peer support; (5) accountability and teacher evaluation prohibit inclusion; and (6) resistance to inclusion can be counteracted when teachers see successful models in action.

Phase 3—Individual Interviews

The individual interview questions, developed to answer research questions 2 and 3, respectively, explored the lived experience of champions of inclusion and the ways in which champions of inclusion act as agents of change.

Three individual interviews were conducted to answer research questions 2 and 3. A semi-structured interview protocol was utilized, containing descriptive questions designed to illuminate the lived experience of teachers who strongly identify as champions of inclusion, and answer research questions 2 and 3:

2. What are the lived experiences of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion?
3. In what ways do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion act as agents of change?

Field Notes

Each interviewee had participated in focus group #1, and had already shared their professional background.

Analysis of Individual Interview Data – Research Question 2 & 3

Analysis of the transcribed interviews revealed several commonalities among the participants related to each research question (2 and 3). Commonalities are presented for each research question, in the sequence of the interview questions accompanied by examples of direct quotations from the transcribed interviews to support the identified commonality. The interviews transcripts in their entirety can be found in Appendix V.

The two research questions addressed in Phase 3 are presented along with the commonalities that were revealed among the interviewees. For each question, following the presentation of commonalities, divergent and outlier units of input will be presented: input that contrasted (divergent) to the views of others or a singular perspective which emerged from only one interviewee (outlier).

Research Question 2: What are the lived experiences of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion?

The guiding questions of the semi-structured interview protocol were designed to explore the lived experience of teachers who identified as champions of inclusion, in terms of what influences shaped their identity as a champion of inclusion, such as personal experience, teaching experience, teacher preparation program, in-service training or professional development, influence of colleagues, leadership, and organizational culture. Using the four identified descriptors of a champion of inclusion, champions were asked:

- Why do they support/enact inclusive practices?
- Why do they maintain an inclusive stance?
- Why do they hold inclusive values?
- Why do they champion inclusion; i.e., what drives them to cultivate inclusive culture?

When asked about the ways in which their views and opinions on inclusion had been influenced by personal experience, several commonalities emerged from the interview data related to research question #2.

Interview Question #1: How have your views, opinions on inclusion been influenced by personal experience? Professional experience? Teacher preparation program? Special education courses completed during your teacher preparation program? Colleagues? Leadership?

For interview question #1 (IQ1), interviewees were asked to share how their views and opinions on inclusion had been influenced by personal experience. Interviewees were asked to share anything they were willing to share about any influences in their life outside of their professional experience, in their professional experience, educational experience, teacher preparation program, colleagues, social experience, or whatever they felt open to sharing.

Lived Experience of Champions of Inclusion

What influences shaped their identity?

Commonality #1: Pervasive concern about inequitable treatment of students with disabilities.

Although each had an individual story to tell, when asked to share how their views and opinions on inclusion had been influenced by personal experience (IQ#1) interviewees expressed that their primary motivation for supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities was an overwhelming concern for the lack of educational equity. Champions' narratives relating to this theme revealed a foremost concern, at the very start of their teaching careers, for the inequitable educational experience of students with disabilities. Each presented this concern, especially I1 and I2 who began their careers in special education, and shared their immediate sense of a disconnect between the way students with disabilities were educated and the infeasibility of a positive future outcome, as the primary motivation for supporting inclusion that shaped their identity as a champion:

When asked how their views and opinions on inclusion had been influenced by their personal and/or professional experience, interviewee #1 (I1 – FGP3) described his first teaching experience in a classroom of students who were emotionally and behaviorally disturbed [state label]. The students had aggressive behaviors such as biting, kicking, spitting, and throwing things, necessitating a class ration of 8:1:1 [ratio of students to adults, 8 students to 1 teacher, to 1 teaching assistant). At this time I1 stated that his natural inclination was to look for opportunities to “get them out”:

Researcher: So, what would you say was the primary influence in terms of your view of inclusion that students needed to have access to the gen. ed. curriculum and not be in a self-contained setting?

I1 - FGP 3: I guess it is just maybe my overarching thought. I keep in the forefront of my mind when working with students is that we are trying to prepare them for after schooling, whether that be college or a job. I look at a setting like that and there is no translation to the real world and any successful outcome for being in a room where there are six kids having war all day long and not learning anything. What are we setting kids up for if this is what they do until they are 18 or 21? Then they leave and there is just not a successful out. So just really trying to focus on that and think of how can we help kids to actually find a way to be successful in the world and it is not being in a separate classroom. There are not jobs that are offered where you are not expected to do anything productive.

I1 - FGP 3: It seems how a lot of these separate class things turn into their own program within a school and they are a separate entity within an entity.

Researcher: Yes, right.

I1 - FGP 3: So without tooting my horn too much, I guess I would say that I was definitely concerned about the academic component of this program because it was a K-5 and when I got there I felt like it was just basically a daycare where as long as the kids weren't doing anything aggressive there were no expectations.

Researcher: You had a multi-grade classroom.

I1 - FGP 3: Right: a multi-grade classroom. And then what if they do get these behaviors under control and then they are ready to go back with their peers. Now they are going to have a 3-4 year in academics and there is no chance for success so we can't have them in a separate class and teach them anything and expect them to ever transition back into the general education setting. So I was concerned about that and looking for opportunities to maybe...

Interviewee #2 (I2 – FGP1) described her first teaching experience where she had students with brain injuries in her classroom. In reference to her educational certificate program she stated,

The classes did not talk about inclusion...they did talk about equality versus equity and that has stuck in my head. I believe it is not equality, it is the equity. Every student has to have equity. When I explained that to my seniors why some of my kids are doing certain things, because I don't ostracize anyone, it is all equitable and then they learn that word.

In the context of interview question #1, I2 – FGP1 also mentioned the influence of her mother, who was a teacher and a very “moral” person who believed in doing what was right.

Interviewee #3 (I3 – FGP2) described her first teaching experience in a self-contained class of students who at the time were labeled language learning disabled (LLD):

I3 – FGP2: ...I knew how badly the kids felt having their special little workbooks. I taught science and we did not have any science equipment when I did the self-contained. We did not have regular books. The kids knew that everything was different...I always say, “You have to keep the kids in the river if they are going to fish.” Take them out of the river and they ain't gettin' no fish. (laughter).

I3 – FGP2 went on to describe the inequitable conditions experienced by the students in the self-contained setting:

I3 – FGP2: We were in portables in the back. They [the students] didn't want to come into my room on time because everybody would know you were going into that class. Here I am teaching science and I have got a resource book that is called "Science on a Shoestring" and I am bringing in activities that are like magic tricks practically trying to show the kids things and I had no microscopes. Are we going to dissect? I was in a portable with no water. I think what intrigued me was that I was feeling the kids' sense of isolation and the sense of not being part of the school from their curriculum, to their books to the location of their classroom. I thought that I don't want my students to feel that way.

Commonality #2: Unprepared by teacher preparation program.

When asked about the influence of their teacher preparation program, each reveal that they felt unprepared by their program.

I2 – FGP1: You know I am an educational major. I have a degree in English Lit. I studied abroad. I took over mid-year and then I had to go back to get my educational certificate for XXX. I will be honest, those classes did absolutely nothing for me. All this stuff about "let me videotape you" and how to make you a good teacher, I didn't think they were preparing me to be a teacher.

I1 – FGP3 echoed a similar response in relation to the extent to which he felt prepared by his teacher preparation program:

I3 - FGP 2: I believe there was only one class that was called Theory in Special Education or something like there so it really wasn't something...I would not say there was an inclusion emphasis of anything that we were doing.

I3 – FGP2 graduated from a local university at a time when the university had not yet gotten accredited for their exceptional education degree:

I3 – FGP2: Well, I graduated from [LOCAL UNIVERSITY] and I was part of the very first class. They had not gotten accredited yet for their exceptional ed. degree. I was the first class. Everything in my experience at [LOCAL UNIVERSITY] made me think that I would be [teaching] in a separate room with these kids giving them skills and then sending them back to the mainstream. So most of my training I had this vision, whether it was resource room or a self-contained room, which is what I thought I would be doing. When I got my first job at [local middle school] it was like that. We did parallel curriculum. I remember my first year I had a math class. I had 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in the same class, and I was supposed to be teaching them the math that they were required for their grade level. As a new teacher within a month I was about ready to quit. I told them, “If you can't at least divide it up by grade – I can't do this.”

Commonality #3: Early, positive, collaborative teaching experience.

When asked about the influence of their professional experience, such as a colleague, (IQ1) each revealed an early positive, collaborative experience that was of significance. I1 – FGP3 revealed the following:

Researcher: Were there any other personal or social influences or influence of colleagues?

I3 - FGP 2: Yes, I worked really closely there with a school social worker that was attached to the 8:1:1 in like an adjoining office. She and I really had some of the same philosophies so I definitely learned a lot from her because she was coming at it from more of the psychological or emotional perspective and then maybe I would be coming at it more from the educational side so I think it was a good combination. I definitely learned a lot from her just in terms of how to interact effectively with students because I was not ready on day one. I had no skills.

I3 - FGP 2: I had no skills and had like four aides that were in there that thought they had skills but most of their skills were inappropriate and then there was just a counselor. So when we got together and realized if she knew what she was doing and could not do it by herself then we were able to change some things.

I2 – FGP1 and I3 – FGP2 had similar positive early collaborative experiences, particularly as part of a co-teaching team:

Researcher: In your professional experience, any motivations or influences in particular, a teacher that had a big influence on you or...?

I2 – FGP1: In [former school] it was guidance. At [another former school] it was when [colleague] left and came back and she was an ESE so I got really close to her. When I came over to [current work location] under [principal] we had one behavioral specialist but then I met [colleague] and got to know her...she was my co-teacher.

Researcher: So your teacher preparation; you said you didn't feel like those courses really prepared you to be a teacher but...

I2 – FGP1: It [alternative certification] is like a minor. It is a minor in education. They give you the terminology but I was already doing it—all the best teaching practices. I really had really great teachers at [former school]. It was different back then. They really took me under their wing. They showed me not only the length of lessons, how to write unit plans...little nitty gritty stuff that some of the teachers now ask me to do, which I think is funny. So that doesn't change but they were very open and they would go, "Here [refers to self], here are lesson plans, take what you need and make it work for you."

Researcher: There was a team there. Was that where you first started?

I2 – FGP1: It was.

Researcher: So that was a great place to start.

I2 – FGP1: It was the best kept little secret in [school district]. I loved [co-teaching partner]. I loved [former school].

Similarly, I3 – FGP2 credited an early, positive collaborative experience stating at the end of the exchange "I was very lucky that I worked with good people that were very open to that idea. That was not always my experience but my first experience was."

Researcher: The first question is, how have your views and opinions on inclusion been influenced by your personal experience? Now this can go back as far as you are willing to go back. This can include your educational experience, your professional experience, your teacher preparation program, colleagues, social experience and influence of leadership...in what ways have your views and opinions on inclusion been influenced by any of these aspects of your personal experience?

I3 – FGP2: ...because I had this experience with LLD [students who were language learning disabled] and it was [local middle school] and then [local high school], when I got my job at [another local middle school] that was about co-teaching and I was very intrigued. It was my first time in a general ed. Classroom...and I thought I had gone to heaven.

Researcher: In co-teaching?

I3 – FGP2: When we co-taught I was in the room I could see master teachers teaching the content and it was wonderful. So starting at [another local middle school] I did do some learning strategies still. I still had some pullout things but a lot of my experience from that point on was co-teaching...

Researcher: OK. So what was it about co-teaching that intrigued you?

I3 – FGP2: When I was in co-taught and my kids [students with disabilities] were struggling and my [other] students that I was working with were having some of the same struggles, I was learning ways to help them, which were helping the other students. I would come up with shortcuts and there would be other kids and I thought now this is the way it should be. Everybody was happier. Well, maybe not the general ed. teachers at first but I was very lucky that I worked with good people that were very open to that idea. That was not always my experience but my first experience was.

Commonality #4: Empowered by leadership that was open to change and created conditions that allowed them to act.

When asked about the influence of a leader in interview question #1 (IQ1), each of the candidates described a leader who was not so much an overt supporter of inclusion, but a leader

who gave them the freedom and empowered them to do what they saw as their job. It was not so much the specific actions on the part of leadership, but the fact that leadership was open to change and created conditions that allowed the champions to *act*.

In the following exchange, I1 – FGP3 describes the supportive leaders who allowed him to champion the inclusion of students who were emotionally and behaviorally disturbed in his first teaching assignment:

Researcher: So any influence as far as your professional experience, meaning an influence of a leader or any other teachers along the way.

I1 - FGP 3: I would say both of the principals that I had up there [teaching assignment in northeastern state], they actually ended up getting married, but I had one at the one school.

Researcher: They obviously must have been supportive of you doing this.

I1 - FGP 3: Yes, [former administrator] and [former administrator], now they are married and we actually became friends even though they are still in [northern-eastern state].

Yes, so if I went to them with an idea they very much gave me the freedom and empowered me to make whatever changes as long as I ran it by them and I had a rationale that was reasonable. They were not trying to keep the status quo. I don't think, quite honestly again from an administrators perspective, you got a whole school to run and that classroom that is down at the end of the hall with four kids in it does not always get a lot of time from the administrator's perspective. They were very open though to allowing me to change it.

I2 - FGP1 described, and subsequently mentioned several times in her interview, a former administrator who “made me the teacher I am today.” I2 - FGP1 repeatedly and positively referred to the many administrators she had over time, by name, referring to their general leadership quality of being supportive of and not being a barrier to her efforts, rather than a leader who was necessarily leading the charge for inclusion.

Researcher: What was it about him that...?

I2 – FGP1: He barked at a lot of people but at the end of the day he cared about the students and he wanted everybody to do their job. If you could just do your job everybody could get along. I have no issues doing my job.

I3 – FGP2 talked about imagining the potential of co-teaching as an inclusionary model for the students who were stigmatized by the isolation of a self-contained class. When talking about the principals who were open to and supportive of the implementation of a co-teaching model she stated that she felt “very lucky that I worked with good people that were very open to that idea”.

Interview Question # 2: Why do they support inclusive practices?

Commonality #5: Pervasive concern about the likelihood of positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

When asked interview question #2 (IQ2), “why do you support inclusive practices?”, meaning restructuring the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students, each expressed concern for the student, in terms of their concern for student’s future outcomes:

I1 – FGP3: I think, again classrooms are a microcosm of any post school environment that you will be in, whether it is a business or anything. You are going to be working with people who are different than you, with different abilities and of course it is important to be able to get along and interact effectively with all different sorts of people, whatever the difference may be. If we only expose children to peers who are exactly like them, they are going to have a tough time when they get to environments where people are not exactly like them.

I2 also expressed concerns for the impact of low expectations and inequitable opportunities on students' future outcomes:

I2 – FGP1: It is for the student. It is not watering down your curriculum. You hear that from a lot of people that don't understand that inclusion actually is...

I2 – FGP1: It does start with the children. I liked what [focus group participant 2] said: the little ripple effect. What will these kids be like as adults and then their children and so forth?

I2 stated that inclusive practices were necessary to ensure students with disabilities received a "good education" and were able to "learn what they needed to learn".

I2 - FGP1: I just think every person has the right to a good education and those practices are good. Period. They are good for students who have a particular need but they are good for all students. I spoke to our beginning teachers today after school and they ask a lot of questions about what do I do about my ESE students not paying attention and I just said, "what do you do about any student who is having a hard time paying attention?" You know, they are not lepers. There is nothing that makes them so different. They are

not that different. I just feel the more I have done it the more I see that those practices that help students and maybe they were originated to help students with disabilities, they really help all students. It is just good teaching and it allows all the students to learn what they need to learn.

Research Question 2: Divergent and Outlier Views

While interview questions 1 (influences of experience) and 2 (inclusive practices) revealed commonalities among the champions, the questions that targeted stance, values and culture revealed differences.

Interview Question #3: Why do they maintain an inclusive stance?

When asked interview question #3 (IQ3), “why do you maintain an inclusive stance?”, meaning the rejection of a deficit perspective of students with disabilities based on disability label and assumed level of academic functioning, I1 – FGP3 stated:

I1 - FGP 3: I guess it may go back to something that we touched upon when you were speaking before, maybe it has been my experience sometimes to oftentimes when we give an IEP to a student and then we start putting services in place, sometimes or oftentimes those services will actually increase the gap rather than decrease the gap. That is just something that really has always irked me. It is well intentioned and people think, OK so now so and so is going to get what they need but oftentimes it is not true. What they are going to get what they need is an over-remediation in a separate room by somebody that maybe does not know what is expected for the grade-level expectation while they are being pulled away from their peers that are doing stuff. They are still expected to come back into that room and do all the stuff they missed while they are leaving to do

something that is two grade levels behind what they are then coming back and expected to do. I guess it never really made sense to me how we think that is supposed to help the student close a gap and not just make the gap bigger.

I1 - FGP 3: I really got that message more so once I flipped to the gen. ed. side even down here in [current state]. The other school I went to the first year, I had a few ESE students in my class and they were performing reasonably well in the class and with accommodations they were able to do what we were doing. Then when they would leave for their time with the ESE teacher I would find out, ask or learn that they are shuffling around like letter tiles making one syllable words but yet in my class they are doing 4th-grade level content so then why are they spending half an hour a day lining up THE and then taking away the E and adding IS to make THIS. Of course, I am thinking now from my perspective now they are missing a half of hour and we just did this, to go play with letter tiles, something that they don't need just because it is the assumption that I must do something below grade level with them because they are ESE I guess.

When asked about their inclusive stance that tends to question labeling and leveling of students, I2 – FGP1 stated:

I2 – FGP1: I just don't like labels. I don't like saying "you are gifted." I don't like saying that "you are learning disabled." How are you learning disabled? You may have some challenges on how you process things but I don't think it is a disability. Now I understand you have the disabilities act. I think when we slap a label on someone we have already pigeonholed them and we have moved on. OK, he is ESE and that is a 504 and that is a gifted student. They are not looking at the whole student. What is your family like? What have you done in school? What do you like to do for fun? Everything

that makes up that whole person. Maybe they have had a horrible childhood and then here is another person who is going to add to the horribleness of that experience. I don't want to be that teacher. I want to be the teacher that makes a difference—a positive impact—because teachers have a lot of power and we can do both good and harm. I don't like the harmful part.

When asked why they maintain an inclusive stance, I3 – FGP2 stated:

I3 - FGP2: I saw evidence of success. The more I worked with students and the more that I saw they could do it given the right environment, given the right instruction and given the right support. I was blown away. With the training that all that 'they can't, they can't and they can't' and students would be placed in a class and sometimes they would come and they would have the top grade on the test. I would be, "Wow, I didn't expect that – now why didn't I expect that?"

Researcher: So those labels I guess in your experience weren't always accurate in terms of the traditional assumptions...

I3 - FGP2: No. When I was working there was a young lady I worked with who had a learning disability. That is her label. She came to me and she had a difficult time with processing speed in all AP classes. She would come to me to take a test. She didn't receive assistance and didn't spend a lot of time with me. I didn't do anything but she just needed more time. She passed all of her AP classes. I saw her mother in the grocery store. [Now] she is a biomedical engineer and is supervising people now. There are people that didn't think she should have been in AP classes. There is evidence. It is working, it is working, it is working. This might be the non-example. Where my growling edge is when I look at our small little self-contained unit at [local high school]

and I see some students that are medically fragile and not communicative – I am trying to image what it would look like for them to be in a class. What would happen if we had them interacting? I am still searching for what is going to be like. I can feel the limits around that but said, I bet if I saw evidence - I bet if we gave it a try and just saw what happened and started to cut it – it would not be as awful as I might think it might be. That is what keeps me in that stance. It is because we have tried and 9 times out of 10 some really wonderful positive things have happened and that one time it did not it had more to do with the adults involved than the student.

Interview Question #4: Why do they hold inclusive values?

When asked interview question #4 (IQ4), regarding the value of difference and diversity and the view of inclusion as an issue of civil rights and social justice one of the interviewees differed from the other two; however, each revealed personal value systems that situated inclusion as issues of moral imperative and social justice. Coming out the business world and into teaching as a career change, I1 – FGP 3 expressed his shock at the practices he encountered in his first teaching position. When asked why he held inclusive values:

I1 - FGP 3: I guess that would come back to some of the push back that I got from my first job up in [northern-eastern state] at 8:1:1 [student/teacher/assistant ratio] just maybe surprising when I would go to a teacher and run by and say here is the student I have and here is my idea, I am thinking that he can come in for half an hour during this time and he will come with an adult. Then to have some teachers that would say no to that and give me their reasoning why. That really made me say wow, I didn't realize that there are actually people out there that aren't...If you are teacher I guess I came in with a naïve assumption that you liked kids and that you wanted to help all kids. When I found out

that there are some teachers that definitely don't like kids and certainly are not interested in helping all kids...that was a shock to my system. I didn't realize that. So I guess that then put me on the warpath a little bit. If you are going to shut me down when I went to you in a nice way, then I am going to try to find a way to come back and make it happen anyways. So I guess that got me on the crusader mode

Researcher: So you did feel like it was a social justice issue?

I1 - FGP 3: Right.

Researcher: Or an equity issue?

I1 - FGP 3: Right. I thought that it was an equity non-issue because I couldn't imagine that anybody wouldn't be open to giving somebody a chance, so I was not even prepared to think it was going to be an issue because I had this naïve assumption that everybody would be open to having a kid or at least giving a kid a chance. I mean, if a kid goes in there and it goes terribly and they are throwing pencils at you in whole group instruction, sure I can understand why you don't want that to continue. But to not be willing to give kids a chance, that really struck me and then I guess that is what motivated me to try to make changes and see if we can.

I2 – FGP1 and I3 – FGP2 each referenced their spiritual upbringing and a view of inclusion as a moral imperative. I2 – FGP1 also added the fact that she was a “migrant” who came from Cuba in 1967 at the age of 3. I2 – FGP1 went on to add:

I2 – FGP1: I am a Christian but I have been taught tolerance. There are many ways to look at things but at the end of the day we are human beings and we were all told to love one another and treat everybody the same with equity, kindness, and compassion.

Researcher: It is a good philosophy.

I2 – FGP1: That is all my mom's influence, truly, that is how she was. I can't say that about every single member of my family. Some of her siblings were a little more what I would call racist, I mean they are, but not my mom. One of her first jobs was at [local high school]. Her first job was at [local high school] when she came here to this country and then she worked on her Master's, even though she had two other doctorates, and then she went to [local middle school] for many, many years. My mom was colorblind, truly. She practiced what she preached.

I3 – FGP2 had a similar response, citing her "church upbringing," "spiritual values," and the way she was influenced by the civil rights movement, when asked about what has influenced her inclusive values:

I3 – FGP2: That is my spiritual values and my church upbringing. I know that does not necessarily foster that in every religion, but it did in mine. For whatever reason, diversity difference was supported and valued and it was important. It was important to meet people where they were. When I think of my Christianity, God was never this big judge and you had to be perfect, it was that idea of, "OK, here is where you are at and let me come alongside you." That is what I knew. The only way I know to say this is just how much I loved my students and I didn't want anybody to think less of them. I saw gifted, beautiful, wonderful, and multi-talented. I just thought just because this kid is not reading at grade level but do you know that he can put together a motor in two seconds and he can walk into a classroom and tell you how to set up your room so you have a natural flow to the day. I would just say, "Why aren't we celebrating the 10 things this kid is extremely wonderful at and we are focusing on this one?", because I just love my kids. I

hated to see someone not see their gifts. I think another small piece, and this probably I never thought of it before, but I was born in 1960. I was a product of [local school district]. I remember when I was at [local elementary school] and they were going to integrate the schools and the neighborhood was like, “Oh, we are going to send them to private school – you have got to get them here.” I remember my parents just looking at us and saying no, we have taught our children that everybody is the same. This will be a great experience. Of course, [local school district] then got all nervous so the first thing they did was integrate the teachers. For the first time I had African American teachers and I had a great experience.

I3 – FGP2: I think I grew up at a time and certainly had parents that weren’t teaching me that different was bad.

I3 – FGP2: I remember even in 1978 when I graduated from [local high school] in the classes I was in, it wasn’t called AP then but it was advanced classes, and one of the young men I was good friends with, [classmate], was African-American. I was going to have a birthday party. I asked that [classmate] come because we were in the literary magazine together and the girl’s parents had a fit because they didn’t want to invite him. I said then don’t have the party. When he got a scholarship to Harvard I remember all my friends saying he got that because he was black and I was so angry. I think even then I was like this oddball.

I3 – FGP2: [I’m not sure] where all that came from...but I do credit a lot of my church teaching I was brought up and my parents who stood firm with that and lived out the values that they talked about.

In the domain of *values*, I3 – FGP2 again attributed her inclusive values to two things: her “Catholic” upbringing which served as her “moral compass” and the impact of exclusion on families:

I3 – FGP2: There are two things. I was raised Catholic but then when I got married we started going to a protestant church but always part of my moral compass is that all people should be treated equally and that they should be respected, honored, and given what they need and not what seems fair but what is needed. So I think that was an underlying idea that was part of who I was as a person and definitely spilled into my teaching but also through my church experience. In the different congregations I was a part of...we had people who had disabilities and I got to see their parents. I got to see how much it meant to their families to see them included. I never really thought about what it was like for the parents of these kids, let alone the kids. In talking and having those relationships with some of the parents in our church shed another perspective like, wow, they want their kids to have a high school experience or middle school experience like to run track, to be in pictures with their friends, and to get invited to sleepovers. That is an important piece of their family life. At one of the churches I attended there was a young man that had autism and I just remember because I was an ESE teacher that the parent would often come talk to me about the frustration with what was in place and that is when it was very much a self-contained...“We can't manage you out in the general curriculum.”

Interview Question #5: Why do they champion inclusion, i.e. what drives them to actively cultivate/promote an inclusive culture?

When asked interview question #5, why do you champion inclusion; i.e., what drives you to actively cultivate/promote an inclusive culture?" each of the interviewees had slightly different motivations. In their responses to this question, each of the interviewees makes statements that are *telling* in regard to the descriptors of a champion of inclusion, meaning statements that indicate evidence of their commitment and competency in regard to inclusive practice, stance, values, and culture. Where noted, it will be indicated by the author, e.g. [stance].

I1 – FGP3’s reasons for promoting inclusive culture connected back to his inclusive stance and his dissatisfaction with the focus on disability labels and his skepticism about the true efficacy of labeling:

I1 - FGP 3: Again, I really just...I don't want to be like the Stephen Colbert where I pretend I don't see differences. Of course, we all see them, but obviously we are all humans and they are all students and I don't quite get why we would ever get so focused or make our primary determination or judgment about a student based on a disability or based on a label [stance]. It should just be looking at it as, this is just another student who has this challenge, this challenge and this challenge compared to another student who is not ESE but has this this challenge, this challenge, and this challenge. I guess I don't quite see why we need to worry about labeling the challenges and not just looking at each student as a student [stance]. Every student has needs, strengths, and weaknesses. I understand the system is the way it is but from a human perspective I don't think it is really helpful to think of a student as an IEP or think of a student as an ESE student. It is just Joey, Tammy, or whatever.

During this exchange, I1 also stated that something “triggered” his thinking, and he added a personal anecdote that suggested personal issues of class and socio-economic inequality that may have influenced his identity as a champion:

I grew up very middle to lower middle class in terms of income and I went to a [private school], which is a very upper crust school and even though I am a white male as you can see, the doors socially were not very open to me at that school because I didn't have the money. So I guess that maybe something it got me realizing how if you just had people that are all alike in one place it is usually not the best thing.

Here I1 - FGP 3 went beyond skepticism about the advantages of labeling, alluding to the possible harm of a disability label:

I1 - FGP 3: ...I sometimes feel like that is then where the label or the placement is driving the way that they are being treated rather than the actual reality of what their abilities are. Also, again there are some parents that I think that want of course what is best for their kids but then I think maybe they think that the more labels and the more services you put on something is going to automatically mean a better outcome, but I don't think that is always the case, and when they say they want more... There are only so many hours in a school day so if your kid is being pulled an hour for this and an hour for that and half an hour for this, they are missing something [practice]...they are leaving a class that they are not going to get whatever the content is while they are getting their other service.

When asked about their reasons for promoting inclusive culture, I2 stated:

I2 - FGP1: When I started at [former high school] I was included in many things even though I was a new kid on the block. I didn't have special needs except I needed everybody's help to get me through the day until I got some experience. They all had kids in their classes—that was before ESOL's [English for speakers of other languages] were pulled out—and they could share those experiences with me. I don't think I have ever had a colleague that I have respected, that is the key that I have respected that has ever been non-inclusive. They have all shown me how you can include everyone regardless of gender, abilities and whether those abilities be physical or mental. I have not experienced that but then I tend to surround myself with good people.

I2 – FGP1 goes on to add that her desire to be positive and solution-oriented also drives her to actively promote inclusive culture [culture: acts an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking and mentoring other educators]:

I2 - FGP1: I want to be a positive change. Bitching about something is not going to fix it. I want – give me some solutions: What can I do? I help teachers.

When asked about their reasons for promoting inclusive culture, I3 – FGP2 attributed her active promotion of inclusive culture to multiple origins. First she talked about what it means to the students, harkening back to her first teaching experience and the sense of isolation and stigma the students felt, second, she talked about what it means to the teachers whose belief systems are transformed and third, to what it means to the parents of children with disabilities. When asked what drives her to champion inclusion:

I3 – FGP2: [Because of] How much more it means to the students. To not be isolated and to not be separate. How much more it means to the students when they are working in any class like anyone else and then making gains. As one student said to me, he said

“Miss, I would rather have a C in a ‘regular class’ than an A in a special ed. class. I want to know that I am being challenged. I want to know that my work matters.” So watching the kids—that is always my first thing.

Another motivator for I3 – FGP2 was seeing a change in the teachers’ attitude:

I3 – FGP2: The second the thing is that I am loving to watch these teachers who by fear or stereotypes don’t think our students can succeed. The depth of what they are learning, the teacher is seeing and what the kids bring to the classroom and what other kids learn from them and that the giftedness they have, I just think, “Wow, isn’t it sad that class would have missed out on that if we were back 20 years ago and he was in a class by himself.” I think about [current student] who is our young man who is blind and his spirit and how he is with people is so wonderful and at the end of the year the physics teacher was a nervous wreck and now he just can’t sing [current student] praises loud enough or long enough.

In addition, I3 – FGP2 spoke about the positive impact of inclusion on students with disabilities, as well as the positive impact on their peers without disabilities:

I3 – FGP2: I think about what the other students are learning from [current student] as well as what [current student] is learning from them, it does not happen when we are all in the back portable.

Research Question 3: In what ways do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion act as agents of change?

Interview questions 6–8 asked the champions how they respond when they encounter resistance and how they actively influence inclusive practices (IQ6), inclusive stance (IQ7), and inclusive values (IQ8).

Interview Questions 6 and 7 revealed similar tactics among the champions when it came to responding to resistance to inclusive practices and sustaining and promoting inclusive practices (IQ6), and responding to resistance to their inclusive stance and influencing others to adopt an inclusive stance (IQ7). The similarities in response to both questions are presented as commonality #6.

Interview Question #6: How do you respond when you encounter resistance to inclusive practices? How do you actively sustain and promote inclusive practices?

Interview Question #7: How do you respond when you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance? In what ways do you actively influence others to adopt an inclusive stance?

Commonality #6: Counteracting resistance to inclusive practices and influencing inclusive stance through persuasion, active listening, and side-by-side coaching.

When the champions were asked how they respond when they encounter resistance to inclusive practices, each of the champions' responses indicated a combination of persuasion or "sales tactics" (I1 – FGP3), active listening, and a genuine offer of side-by-side help:

I1 - FGP3: I definitely use some sales tactics I guess. It never hurts to start with a compliment or a statement of understanding, "I know that you have a lot on your plate and I know you have a challenging group of students already" so let me start with some of those and offer some solutions too or some ideas of how to make it work. "So there is a student I am thinking of that I think would work well in this class because of the way you create an atmosphere of..." and then really just being able to listen to what their concerns might be. Usually once you listen to the concern then you can come back with some thoughts as to why it is at least worth a shot. I think usually people are willing to give it a shot. There is just the fear of not knowing or even the fear that they would have

to drastically change what they have to do. I guess that is probably the biggest one, is that people that don't know would think, "Oh, if I have this student coming in that has this IEP, now I have to do this, this, this, and this" and telling them no, you really don't have to change that much of what you are doing. You keep teaching and just treat this as another student. Of course, you give [them] accommodations and check in, you know, in this manner but it is not like you need to reinvent your entire classroom design. I think sometimes that can help to allay some of the fears and hesitation.

When asked about strategies they have used to work around resistance to inclusion, I3 – FGP 2 emphasized a collegial and helpful approach:

I3 - FGP2: One of the things that has helped me a lot is that I have been there since it opened and I have built a reputation where people know that I am approachable and that I am helpful. I always assume, right or wrong and probably sometimes wrong, that people are resistant because they are afraid. So when I think when I am afraid to do something, what helps me, it is not force. If I am afraid of heights, someone pulling me out does not make me... So I think about what I need. I need companionship. I need encouragement. I need someone to point out the evidence of success. So I am OK with someone saying no, that won't work. Like I said, I believe that too and then I say let's try it and then we will look at the evidence and if you still feel that way we will have another conversation. I never say then we won't do it because... (laughter).

Researcher: Right, we will have another conversation.

I3 - FGP2: Yes, we will revisit it. So 9 times out of 10 something amazing happens because that is the way it is supposed to be and the less fearful people get the more open they are. I am gentle at the beginning. I am true leader. I tell them I am going to be right

there with you. I never ever say any more, “You know, the IEP is a legal document and if you don’t do this...”. I don’t get good results with that.

Researcher: Right, that is only one tactic and not always successful.

I3 - FGP2: No. I think that might need to be said after 20 other things have been tried but really, I think that is the biggest thing. I think people are afraid. People do not want to look incompetent and they don’t know what to do so they are afraid to do anything. If I can show them and if I can come alongside them and said this is doable, let’s do this together, most of the time people will do it.

When I2 – FGP1 was asked how she responds to resistance to inclusive practices she replied:

I2 - FGP1: I try not to be combative and more like Mahatma Gandhi.

I2 - FGP1: Not Malcolm X. Trying to take that approach and try to talk about the benefits and not only am I talking about it, I am usually bringing up some stories that I have. Sometimes we have similar students, you know those types of experiences, and see if that is not better. I do know that when people preach at teachers that nobody likes it so it is like, “Here let me show you what I am doing and look how easy this is. Maybe I can help you model a lesson. This is what so and so does in my class and how I get him to work.”

Researcher: Model help.

I2 - FGP1: Yes, what can I do to make this easier for you?

How do you actively sustain and promote inclusive practices?

When the champions were asked specifically how they actively sustain and promote inclusive practices, I1 – FGP3 emphasized the importance of promoting and sustaining inclusive practices by being successful in his role, so that teachers experience a “net [result] of having these students in their class in a positive.” In the next exchange, the champion reveals his sense of responsibility for bringing credibility to the ESE resource teacher’s role in supporting inclusion, in order to show teachers the power of meaningful inclusion:

I1 - FGP3: There was a certain level of, I guess I don’t have any research so you won’t care, but there was a person in this position last year who left and there was a certain level of disgust as to how this position was being utilized and I was like, I want to go there and show people how that it can actually be a worthwhile position. Like this person would have a reading group of three every day at 10:30 and then if two of the students were absent but then one of the students was still here, she could come to my room and say, “OK while the other two are absent today so I am not taking Jason because it would just be a waste of time – it would just be him.” So one-on-one help with a kid is a waste of time where of course you can make a huge impact if you have half an hour to read with a kid, you would just cancel the group and not pick up... which of course I shouldn’t let happen but that is a so I guess that also does motivate me to show people that this isn’t just like this break job that you hope you get because you can do nothing and cancel all your groups all the time and it can actually be something where you can impact...right, I mean a lot of kids and not just three or two, you can actually help out a class or *change the perspective of people* [emphasis added].

Researcher: So you had a feeling that you wanted to show people that it could work?

I1 - FGP3: Yes. Show people that it could work and show people that it could be a different way the job is done too I guess. I don't know how to better phrase it. Not a glorified para and that you could actually be a real teacher, even though the kids don't think I am a teacher. They love telling me, "are you going to be a teacher again next year?" I don't know, I hope so. Showing the teachers that it is actually a real teaching job too and it is not just a ...

Researcher: So when you encounter that resistance how do you generally respond? I know you mentioned certainly listening and you mentioned getting the foot in the door in terms of coming up with solutions and using sales tactics.

I1 - FGP3: Certainly making sure that teachers know that I am obviously there to teach as well and to help as well and I am not just putting a student who is on my case load or whatever we call it, not just...

Researcher: Letting teachers know you are in it with them?

I1 - FGP3: Right, that I am in it with them and I am not just expecting you to deliver all of the reading instruction and math instruction and that I am there to help too and not just with that student. I am there to help the classroom. I like to think that some teachers view me as an asset to their entire class so now they are more accepting to including students and they want to have the ESE students next year because they want me to be attached to their classroom so I come in for an hour during math and can help all the students to some degree. I think the competency of the teacher that is going to be providing support facilitation services certainly could be a factor and the willingness of the gen. ed. teacher to enjoy the inclusion model.

Researcher: Right. What I noted was your focus is on being viewed as an asset...

I1 - FGP3: Yes.

Researcher: In order to combat any resistance that you might feel.

I1 - FGP3: Right because certainly if they feel like yes, they are getting help and *if the net results of having these students in their class in a positive, then they are more apt to be for round two the next year* [emphasis added].

I2 – FGP1 talked of sustaining and promoting inclusive culture through sharing and modeling:

Researcher: So showing people what is possible and then how it is possible.

I2 - FGP1: And how it is done because I like the modeling. When I do a good lesson I want to share that with someone. With my new teachers when I was department chair I had different binders to show them how it was done when we did B's and you had to keep all those binders and portfolios. They would take mine and "Can we copy yours?" "Sure, why not." I had little tabs so when an administrator would ask me something, let me flip, and they were all colored and coordinated but that is just me.

Researcher: But you are willing to share.

I2 - FGP1: I am willing to share and I have taught it and the thing is, once you teach it you can tweak it and make it your own. Then you will use it and then you can share it with someone else. You can pass that forward.

In regard to actively sustaining and promoting inclusive practices, I3 – FGP2:

I3 - FGP2: ...the [peer inclusion team] students teach me because of their belief that the students can learn and will learn and they just have to find the right way. Like I said, when I started that program I never thought about them as adults. I think maybe the adults grew up in a system where just by the way it was constructed didn't have exposure and did not know what was possible. Now with these young people when I think about a kindergarten class who might have someone in it who is using a wheelchair or is needing sign, we are going to have grownup adults that are just going to think, "Well that is the way it is supposed to be" and not "What a concept."

Interview Question #7: How do you respond when you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance? In what ways do you actively influence others to adopt an inclusive stance?

When asked how they respond when they encounter resistance to their inclusive stance, and the ways in which they actively influence others to adopt an inclusive stance (IQ6), the champions offered that at first it took time to convince teachers that inclusion was possible, and then once they had an opportunity to show teachers how it could work they started to see teachers begin to assume an inclusive stance.

Here, I1 – FGP3 describes such a transformation citing the benefit and power of actually having teachers exposed to a broad range of learners coupled with support that follows students with disabilities into the general education classroom, in influencing an inclusive stance:

I1 - FGP3: I guess it just has to mostly come as the byproduct of a successful outcome of actually having them experience students in their class who they may have thought weren't the right fit or an appropriate fit and then realizing that it does work out. I guess that has probably been the trial and succeed method of changing some minds.

I1 - FGP3: So a kid that they would have never thought they would want in their class or include, once they are in their class for a week, two weeks, or three weeks, then they think of it as their kid and then they become a champion for a kid that they otherwise the previous years would have excluded. I certainly see that. If you are 5th-grade teacher and there are these 4th graders and you know, “oh man, I don’t want that kid, no please.” Then that kid gets in your class and a month later you are the one defending him to everybody else, “Oh no, he is actually a great kid.” *It is actually people experiencing all different sorts of students who will tend to get them on board* [emphasis added].

I2 – FGP1 described the strategy of first convincing teachers that labels and assumptions about students with disabilities maybe not beneficial and then how to focus on students strengths rather than focusing on the disability:

I2 – FGP1: I have always said [to other teachers], you guys if you have never had an ESE student in your class then you don’t know what you are missing. It makes you a better teacher. It really does. It also helps your students be better students because they get to see you working with everyone. It is real easy to say something or say that you do something but unless you are actually doing it... do you know what I mean? People who just have a lot of lip service for whatever cause they have but they don’t actually do it. I believe in doing it, whether you are little or you are older. It can work for anyone. I know some of my colleagues don’t agree with me and they just go, “Oh, [refers to self] is on her soap box – go the other way.” I know that.

Researcher: How do you actively influence others? It sounds like you do a lot of testimonials.

I2 – FGP1: I do and [current colleague] is always throwing me under the bus. Go to [refers to self]’s class. Go do this. Go do that. [refers to self by name] go help so and so.

I2 – FGP1: I am one of those people when you see a person who is struggling, whether it is old, young, or in a wheelchair, “Can I help you with this?” or “You dropped your bag” – I was taught you help them.

I3 – FGP2 gave a specific example of how she responds when she encounters resistance to her inclusive stance and how she works to influence others to adopt an inclusive stance:

I3 - FGP2: I would say the facilitation classes I am in right now. I think I was chosen or volunteered for a reason but one of the people have just been really resistant and it shows. So the person that I am working with, one of the people I am working with now, I think she is in a different stance than she was at the beginning of the year. Is she as far along as I would have hoped? No, but we are doing some things now in the classroom that we didn’t do at the beginning. If I get to work with her next year, which I am going to say I will, I bet we do a lot more different than we did even at this point.

Interview Question #8: How do you respond you encounter resistance to inclusive values? In what ways do you actively influence others to embrace inclusive values?

Commonality #7: Each compelled to be relentlessly helpful in pursuit of inclusion as an issue of social justice.

When the champions were asked how they respond when they encounter resistance to inclusive values, and the ways in which they influence others to embrace inclusive values, I1 – FGP3 describes his commitment to promoting inclusion as issue of equality and justice:

Researcher: Do you think it is just that sense of equality and justice that made you not become more conforming to what you found as the status quo?

I1 - FGP 3: I guess you could say that, yes. I am a little bit of a slave to logic, too, so when I think something is logical and reasonable, unless I am presented with something that I think was more logical or reasonable, I am not going to change my mind. So I guess, yes I would be a little stubborn if I know what is going to help this student to be included. I am not going to let somebody say no because they have always said no. Let's see if we can find a way to convince them or I guess force them even to at least give it a chance.

I2 - FGP1 also characterized inclusion as a social justice issue and suggested:

I2 – FCP1: It is called peer pressure. It works for students and it also works for adults. It works for ideas. That is how movements get started but it has to have a larger voice. I don't think that it has a strong enough voice.

I2 – FCP1: The revolution. I think that if we continue to make it so it is like a social injustice that we might get more traction because apparently it is not working about saying that it is equitable education. I don't think that is enough. It is like you are treading on these people's rights. They have the right to an equitable education.

In regard to combating resistance to and promoting inclusive values, I3 – FGP2 continued with the aforementioned example of the teacher from another country who was raised with a completely different value system in regard to people with disabilities. In this exchange, the champion emphasizes how she took a tactical approach, by first building a personal relationship, building trust, in this case by proving she “has their back” and standing together, and how this began to transform behavior of the teacher towards students with disabilities:

I3 - FGP2: In this particular teacher there is a cultural difference. She didn't come to the United States until she was 22. I have asked her some questions about how they dealt with people with disabilities where you grew up? It is vastly different. Now she is here. OK, well come on people I hope you don't expect big changes in a year because we are talking about a fundamental shift in her perspective.

Researcher: The issue is with the belief system that she was raised with?

I3 - FGP2: Right and so any progress I make I feel happy about. The kids now can take a test and if they don't do well she won't let them test with me because she thinks I am going to cheat. If they take the test and they don't do well then they can make corrections and they can get at least a C. We weren't doing that at the beginning of the year.

Researcher: Right. So for you, in terms of how you have actively influenced someone who has been that tough to penetrate, has it just been a gentle relentless effort? Do the [peer inclusion team] students go in the class? Have there been like different fronts?

I3 - FGP2: Yes. There have been all kinds of assaults [hyperbole]. Mostly I have to establish a personal relationship with that person when they place me in the class with the hopes of interchanging some of the dynamics. The first year to me it is like being invited into someone's home. The very first time I come into another teacher's classroom I can't just open the refrigerator and serve myself. We have to have a mutual trust. They have to know that I have their back. They have to know that we are presenting a united front. It is a lot of personal stuff of asking about their family and learning about what is important to them. There is a situation we are dealing with right now. There is the group of kids that has turned us into good cop/bad cop. The kids like me or they like my

approach. They don't like her. They have been really disrespectful to her. We stood together today and said that is not allowed and we are a team. To one you do to both. The kids saw that and I think that helped her realize that I am here for you as much as I have here for the kids.

Researcher: That was an opportunity to establish a camaraderie.

I3 - FGP2: Yes.

Researcher: You are like a Trojan horse.

I3 - FGP2: (laughter). That is it. That has what I have always aspired to be. It is crazy. In a way it is just like working with a student who says I can't do this, I can't do this, and then the minute they do it you make such as, "Oh, look at that – you thought you couldn't do it." So it is giving in to that.

Researcher: A Reinforcer.

I3 - FGP2: [At one point I was saying to myself] This is not going to work. It is not going to happen. So I am at a point now so now, "[refers to self] you remember this was our percentage of failure at the beginning and now look at what we have got." Now, when this student was about to drop out and we are hanging on to him and that is a good thing. We are doing that together. So I think if we were to work together next year I think we could move even further but it is just really being kind and being patient and believing just like the kids, that she can do it.

Research Question 3: Divergent and Outlier Views

Interview questions 9 and 10 asked the champions for their views and opinions on the success of inclusion in their public school system, and what their organization could do, or do

better, to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide inclusive culture. There were some commonalities, although no commonalities that were shared among all three interviewees.

Interview question #9: What are your views, opinions on the success of inclusion in your public school system? To what do you attribute success or lack thereof?

I1 – FGP3 attributed any perceived “success” of inclusion to basic compliance, in that it was happening “as a byproduct of the legal ramifications.” I1 – FGP3 stated that the true measure of the “success” of inclusion would be “by the actual outcome and their [students with disabilities] level of success and the way they are treated and thought of in the general education setting”:

I1 - FGP3: I think success is measured by the fact, you know, is inclusion happening? Is it coming down? Is it mandated or pushed or a reality that is happening? Yes, I would say it is successful that for the most part, at least here and the other school in [school district], most students are included to a pretty significant extent. Now from measuring the success of inclusion by the actual outcome and their level of success and the way they are treated and thought of in the general education setting, then I would say that we definitely still have some work to do. It is one thing to tell somebody yes, this child is going to be in your class at this time but it is another thing to actually make it a successful experience for the student and the teacher. I think that as an organization we are good at mandating or proclaiming that we are inclusive and getting those minutes right on the IEP so that so and so is with his peers 93% of the day, but I am not sure we are always good at actually making sure that 93% of the day is as effective as it could be, both academically and socioemotionally.

When asked, “to what do you attribute whatever success you see, or lack of success?”,

I1 – FGP3 stated:

I1 - FGP3: Well, so success on the first part I guess about the inclusive model being used more is I think coming as a byproduct of the legal ramifications. I guess I am sure there have been legal challenges made to get students that have equal treatment and equal rights and equal services in the schools and also is a byproduct of administrators going to trainings or getting advanced degrees where they actually learn that in fact it is the best system so that trickles down. I think in the same sense then that is also where it gets lost is that the people with the real knowledge that it has to happen can make the decision it has to happen but then that knowledge is not present in the people who are left to actually deliver the inclusive model to the students. So if they don't really believe or know it is the best system, then they can be forced to do it but they can't be forced to make it successful or encouraged to do it, not that anybody is really forced I guess.

Researcher: So really, in terms of what is trickling down to the teachers, in terms of outcomes and attitudes towards students, you feel teachers are not really getting a message beyond inclusion as a legality? The current status of inclusion is “successful” due to basic compliance, given that it is “happening,” but then on the second hand you attribute a lack of success to the fact that the philosophy and attitude part of it [inclusion] is not something that is nurtured or cultivated beyond compliance.

I1 - FGP3: Yes, I would say that is very true and then it is very easy to get into the group think of woe is me because I have six ESE kids and the next person, “Oh, I have got nine; Oh how do you do it?”, so just the whole paradigm of having an ESE kid is more work

and a bad thing is pretty standard. Not too many people that are gen. ed. teachers would say that they are happy to be the one to have...

Researcher: So although it is widely accepted that the expectation is for inclusion, the view as far as teachers embracing inclusion, their attitudes are definitely not favorable?

I1 - FGP3: Sure, I would say that they agree with the concept of it absolutely but their attitudes are not favorable because they feel as if it is either an impossible task or a task that will require a lot more work versus the alternative, without any extra compensation.

I2 - FGP1 suggested the school district might “gain more traction” by (1) sending clear message (here suggesting that they had not) about inclusion a social justice issue, (2) having school administrators “opt in” and disseminate the message, and then (3) starting a “revolution” spearheaded by the efforts of champions of inclusion. In the beginning of this exchange we also see the champion credits the “opt out” culture for the lack of success, where support for inclusion is voluntary even among school leaders:

I2 – FCP1: I think that if the district sent this message out, some of the principals opted in and some opted out and along with that culture that is what happened at the school. I think if you can get admin to opt in, they can then talk to department chairs, they can opt in and then they can disseminate it even further. It is really hard for you to be the only teacher that does not want to do something when almost the entire school has bought in to the idea.

I2 – FCP1: The revolution. I think that if we continue to make it so it is like a social injustice that we might get more traction because apparently it is not working about

saying that it is equitable education. I don't think that is enough. It is like you are treading on these people's rights. They have the right to an equitable education.

When asked, "to what do you attribute whatever success you see, or lack of success?", I3 – FGP2 led with the successes, crediting the peer inclusion team as a being responsible for the success of inclusion success on several levels:

I3 - FGP2: Well certainly a success has been the support we have received from the [peer support team] and whether that came from the support to allow me out of the classroom as an inclusion coach to get that built up and a principal who is supporting that now and being able to work with those kids and teachers seeing the results. That evidence—that is certainly a success.

I3 – FGP2 went on to share the opinion that the state of inclusion is in "limbo" and that there is a changing model. She cited the new intervention specialist certificate that is coming out of the local university as evidence of a changing model where the focus is not on the disability but the intensity of support a student needs to be successful:

I3 - FGP2: I think we are in a limbo time, let's describe it that way, where I believe the role of the special ed. teacher is changing. We have a lot of folks who are used to the very traditional working from the label and working from the IEP and not so much the needs and then from what I am hearing there is a new group coming to the colleges where it is a different perspective, intervention specialist versus what I got was we are now teaching and help students who have learning disabilities.

As to what she attributed any lack of success, I3 – FGP2 cited the demands required for special education compliance, meaning the amount of time teachers are required to manage the

documentation due to the size of their caseloads. According to I3 – FGP2, these demands limit the ability of champions to be “out in the trenches” supporting inclusive education through networking, coaching and building relationships that are critical to promoting inclusive culture:

I3 - FGP2: ...there is just a lot of demands for the exceptional ed. teacher's job that rightfully so, have to do with documentation and the legal things with the IEP that take way or [make it] difficult to form a bond in relationships with other teachers and be that encourager when... You know, I am lucky right now in that I have 11 IEP's – I don't have 80. I think the dynamic changes when we don't have enough people spreading out that paperwork so that there is somebody that is doing 80 or 100 and the time factors to do that well. You can do it but to do it well, it limits your ability to be out in the trenches and having those conversations.

Interview question #10: What could your organization do, or do better, to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide inclusive culture?

Each champion had a specific viewpoints when asked about what their organization do, or do better, to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide inclusive culture. In this section, the recommendations of each champion will be presented in succession: interviewee #1, interviewee #2, and interviewee #3.

Interviewee #1 (I1)

Training, education and successful models.

I1 – FGP3 stated the importance of training and most importantly allowing teachers to see successful models of inclusion:

I1 - FGP3: I definitely think more training and education and I think we mentioned before allowing people to see a successful model of conclusion, whether it be videos or

whether it be trips, just that it doesn't have to be something so drastically different to include kids in your class and that it can still be an effective academically rigorous class. I think something there are some teachers that will have students in and they don't do anything different. They refuse to do anything different. It is every kid is exactly the same. They are getting that and then there are the other kinds that have the ESE students come in and they think that they helping but they won't even include them in some of the whole group task. They will just put them on, you know, go to the computer and do [a proprietary reading software program]. Go to the computer and do this. They won't even give them a chance to actually... and again, they are doing it with the thought that they are helping but not even... So I guess there are just people that don't have the knowledge to know how to do it. They know they have to do inclusion but they don't have the knowledge of how to make it effective.

Invest in a quality teaching force.

I1 – FGP3 also stated the need for a quality teaching force, speculating about the ability of teachers to accommodate diversity and make decisions at higher levels when they had not yet mastered teaching:

I1 - FGP 3: ...I definitely think too that economics are at play in terms of who gets drawn into the profession when you need an advanced degree. I don't know if too many other jobs like this, that we don't require an advanced degree in [state], but I mean the pay versus the educational level attained does not always yield a work force that one would hope I guess. Not to sound too judgmental but I guess I did.

Researcher: Are you saying the concern is about the quality of instruction and the quality of the teachers based on their preparedness?

I1 - FGP 3: Yes, based on their preparedness and based on their...yes, their level of academic achievement in their own careers and they ability to actually teach 4th and 5th grade material. I don't know if you would be surprised but I have been surprised how many teachers in elementary schools that teach 4th and 5th grade actually can't do 4th and 5th grade work so I think the teacher preparedness there, the tests that we give to make sure people are ready to teach... I didn't take them in [current state] but sometimes it is shocking. So I guess from an inclusion perspective, it is difficult to think that somebody is going to be able effectively include somebody and accommodate that level of diversity in their class and then make decisions at a higher level of thinking about how best to help this kid. If they can't even do the lesson they are trying to teach, then how are they going to effectively...

Researcher: Sure, I am following you 100%.

I1 - FGP 3: I think that again just comes down to the economics of who becomes a teacher sometimes and if you are going to go to school for four years and make this amount or this amount, a lot of people or the higher achievers or the higher SAT scores, however you want to slice it, don't choose teaching.

Share longitudinal outcomes of students with disabilities who have been successfully included.

In response to I1 – FGP3's assertion that teachers may be resistant because they don't feel prepared to teach students with disabilities, he was asked:

Researcher: How do we help teachers when they are willing but maybe fearful because they don't feel prepared?

I1 - FGP3: Right and I guess again it is difficult for teachers. We tend to look at our class and our year. So a first period teacher you are looking at your group of 1st graders this year and the next year I mean you see the kids you had last year, “hey, how are you doing,” but then your mind is all on this so you don’t really have that longitudinal look whatever you would say, of a student as they go through their journey through school. We are always focused on the one year that we are involved in so maybe if there was a way to have some more...I don’t know if there are case studies on students who some more of a longitudinal look at this student that was in a successful inclusion model with the same challenges as this student who wasn’t, and then showing how the outcome at the end can be so drastically different.

Researcher: So showing that trajectory.

I1 - FGP3: Yes, and getting the big picture of not just the one year but of their 12 or 13 years—this can be the outcome of this student in 2nd grade that had the same challenges as this one that wasn’t given.

Researcher: Right, so maybe looking at some case studies and building those experiences in. I think many teachers are legitimately concerned that a student who has any special need is going to be placed in their class and they [the teacher] are not going to know what to do and they [the students] are not going to get enough support.

I1 - FGP3: Yes, fear of the unknown. I think if they can see some successful outcomes and they can realize that they can be a part of that maybe that would open some minds a little bit.

Interviewee #2 (I2)

Communicate an explicit imperative for inclusion.

When asked what her organization could do, or do better, to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide inclusive culture, I2 – FGP1 stated unequivocally:

I2 – FGP1: I think they need to do a better job of their directive. I want to call it that, about inclusion and about what it is and what it isn't. What would they like to see in the schools? What their expectations are. Then to see our principals, whether it is at the elementary, middle, or high, take that and bring it to the faculty. Not all principals react the same way when you talk about inclusion. I imagine they think that they [students with disabilities] are a drain on society.

I2 – FGP1: So I think it is a mindset that we have to change. Once we change the mindset I think we can change the culture. I think they are going to be separate. I don't think until you change minds and really along with the minds but the hearts of people, that it is not going to gain traction.

Work on changing mindsets and hearts.

I2 – FCP1: So I think it is a mindset that we have to change. Once we change the mindset I think we can change the culture. I think they are going to be separate. I don't think until you change minds and really along with the minds but the hearts of people, that it is not going to gain traction.

Interviewee #3 (I3)

Make the organizations belief system visible

When asked what their organization do or do better to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide culture of inclusion, I3 – FGP2 suggested making the belief system visible:

I3 – FGP2: In the course of our focus group meeting, when it was the three of us, and I can't remember who brought up the question or who mentioned this, but I am wondering is [our school district] making a point to hire people with disabilities? Are we looking at ourselves as a transition site? Are we looking within the organization to be actively pursuing what we believe about inclusion? What are our percentages? That part of the conversation, I left our meeting and I thought, wow I have never thought about that.

Researcher: That is a great point.

I3 - FGP2: What would you say when occupational specialist comes out or a speech therapist who happens to also be using assistive technology or using a wheelchair, whatever...I just think we have got all these sites that kids could do. Is there anything within the organization that need help in the offices that students...so that is a visible belief system or living that out. Differences are good.

Ensure champions of inclusion are in key roles to support inclusive practices, model inclusive stance, encourage inclusive values, and cultivate inclusive culture, and ensuring they have the freedom to coach, network, and mentor.

I3 – FGP2 became an inclusion coach as a result of a district initiative to fund high school inclusion coaches. I3 – FGP2 credits that opportunity that exposed her to opportunities that allowed her to build what is definitely a standout in the school district for its culture of inclusion. I3 – FGP2 credits that the district supported the inclusion coach position, for providing her with knowledge of inclusive educational practices, helping her cultivate her inclusive mindset, and empowering her as a champion who was able to actively cultivate inclusive culture

on her school campus, with the right people in the right places to support it and make it what it is. I3 – FGP2 expressed the hope that that the inclusion coach position would be refunded and supported by the district once again, attributing the success of inclusion at her school (which is considered a model in the district) to the district’s support of the inclusion coach initiative. I3 – FGP2 expressed optimism that the district might re-invest in furthering inclusive models by allocating the inclusion coach position once again:

I3 - FGP2: I think just going back to look at that inclusion coach position, I think that what [Chief of High Schools] is doing by bring API’s in to look at a program that is working [peer inclusion team]....

I3 - FGP2: I would never, ever have thought about doing [peer support team] if it had not been for that [inclusion coach opportunity]. I could not have done it in a classroom where I have to grade papers and meet with kids and give feedback. They were IEP’s and... that program came about because I got to be able to be out and about, talk to the teachers and see kids. I consider it my best thing but it wouldn’t have happened had I been in the classroom.

I3 - FGP2: I think you have alluded in our talk about your research [and] that from experience and from whatever, there is someone that has got [to have] that bug, so instead of just appointing someone, [it has to be the person that says] “Ya, I will go have that conversation for the 10th time.”

All organizational investments in professional development should contain application to students with disabilities.

I3 – FGP2 also asserted that all district professional development in the content areas should contain application to students with disabilities, and by the same token, all district

instructional coaches and instructional support staff should be prepared to support all teachers in teaching a broad range of learners:

I3 – FGP2: I have been fighting for years about why doesn't someone have to do 20 hours or 60 hours of ESE [similar to the state mandated 60 hours of PD for English Language Learners]? You know, have the ELL and I am like, what about ESE? So that change is important to move forward. I thought that was huge. I love that. The teachers that are going to AP training that go to the AP Institutes I want to say, "What has helped you there about the students with disabilities you will have in your class?" I have talked with a few AP teachers and they are like, "What are you talking about?" I am like, "That is not an integral part and have it?" They have got their own message but are they addressing avid trainings and avid schools, is there is a piece? Again, I don't want to say students with disabilities but the kids that are not going to fit the mold. It doesn't even have to be a student to fit a label. How are you going to address that when your 8th grade AP student can't sit still for that hour lecture?

I3 - FGP2: They [need to] make the assumption that student is going to be everywhere. The upper ends, the lower ends, the middle, the art classes, the drama, everything....so whatever the training is, that is the standard OPs. What are some strategies? How do you do this? Where are your resources? Here is this news feed.

Special education teachers need the time and freedom to fulfill the teaching and learning aspects of their role.

I3 – FGP2 stated her concern about the amount of time that special education teachers who are in support roles have to truly fulfill their role and responsibilities:

I3 - FGP2: Something, as you're talking, and I don't know how this would be done in an organization but because the roles are shifting, I don't want to say a new job description, it is not that simple but analysis of what is the time investment to write a good IEP?

What is the time investment to monitor, to document, and to get data? How many people does it take? So it is not even that magic formula but realistically what can one person do, even a little above and beyond? Are we just way off the mark now? So maybe looking at if we are in a change, what is it we are expecting those exceptional ed. teachers to be really doing effectively and what is the time investment? Is one planning enough? Does there need to be more flexibility in a schedule to do that? I know I am very lucky in that the reason I am able to do that is because there is so much flexibility in my day.

I3 - FGP2: So allocating [my] position and giving someone [the inclusion coach] role was really key, and then some of the other constraints that are placed on people who might feel that their time can be well spent actively promoting are taken up with the compliance piece. That does take a lot of wind out of your sails so to speak. Not that it is not important because there are the legalities and that compliance piece has to be there. We have a whole other set of problems without it.

Summary of Identified Common Themes from the Individual Interviews

Seven common themes emerged from the individual interviews. The common themes among the lived experience of the three champions were: (1) each experienced pervasive concern about inequitable treatment of students with disabilities; (2) each felt unprepared by teacher preparation program; (3) each was strongly influenced by early, positive, collaborative teaching experience; (4) each was empowered by leadership that was open to change and created conditions that allowed them to act; (5) each experienced pervasive concern for positive

outcomes; (6) each champion counteracts resistance to inclusion through a combination of persuasion, active listening, and side-by-side coaching; and (7) each was compelled to be relentlessly helpful in pursuit of inclusion as an issue of social justice.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Van der Klift & Kunc (1994) stated that:

The move toward cooperative and inclusive education is part of a larger move out of social oppression for individuals with disabilities. It is part of a groundswell movement of social reform that holds as a central tenet the belief that all children, including those with disabilities, are capable of learning and contributing to their classrooms and communities. (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994, p. 391)

The purpose of this study was to seek out teachers on the front lines of this groundswell movement of social reform called inclusion, to explore the lived experience of classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who identify as champions of inclusion; including their appraisal of the status of inclusion in a large urban school system, through their views, opinions, and insight pertaining to the current phenomenon of inclusion within their organization. This chapter provides a synopsis of the research and a summary and interpretation of findings for each of the research questions, and it discusses implications for educational policy and recommendations for future research.

Synopsis of Research

A mixed methods phenomenological research design (MMPR) was used to obtain data related to the lived experience of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion. The study was

conducted in three phases—survey (Phase 1), focus group (Phase 2), and individual interview (Phase 3)—to triangulate findings and increase the rigor, reliability, and validity of the results.

Five research questions (RQ1-RQ5) were developed for this exploration into the phenomenon of inclusion in a large urban school district. The researcher drafted survey items for Phase 1 (RQ1), developed guiding questions for Phase 2 (RQ4 and RQ5) and Phase 3 (RQ2 and RQ3), and assembled an expert panel to conduct a Delphi technique (Hsu & Sanford, 2007) to help develop and validate the survey items, focus group questionnaire, and the individual interview questionnaire.

Principals were asked to nominate classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who readily accept, embrace, and/or promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. In Phase 1, participants who were nominated by their school principals were invited to participate in a survey designed to yield a sample of individuals with a positive ideological orientation toward the phenomenon of inclusion. The survey ultimately yielded six individuals who self-identified as champions of inclusion based on their responses to the survey items. The six individuals who scored within a desired range based on the number of desired values (DV) in their survey responses were invited to participate in a focus group. Three of the focus group participants who emerged with (1) a strong, positive ideological orientation relevant to the phenomenon of inclusion, (2) a view of inclusive education in the context of civil rights, democracy, and social justice, and (3) a strong and positive vision of how the organization could position itself as an agent of culture change, were invited to participate in individual interviews to explore their lived experience as champions of inclusion.

Through the analysis of the focus group and interview data the researcher identified commonalities and themes. The intention was to integrate quantitative and qualitative phases in

this study and sequential explanatory design to produce insights that might have been missed with one single method and to generate a more complete understanding of the lived experiences of teachers who identified as champions of inclusion. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences, views and perceptions of teachers who identified as champions of inclusion, to seek insight, and inform organizational practices that might mitigate teacher resistance to inclusion; and position the organization (school district) itself as a facilitator of implementation and agent of change, in order to cultivate positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusion as a social justice imperative in the public schools.

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

Research Question #1

To what extent do classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches, who are recognized by their school principal as understanding, embracing and/or promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, identify as champions of inclusion (i.e., enact inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, and actively cultivate an inclusive culture)?

The survey (Phase 1) was developed to answer research question #1 and yielded seven teachers whose survey responses indicated a positive ideological orientation toward inclusion. Six agreed to continue participation in the study. A positive ideological orientation toward inclusion was determined by assigning a point value to the survey completers' responses to pro-inclusion statements (strongly agree - 3, somewhat agree - 2, agree - 1) and pro-exclusion statements (strongly disagree - 3, somewhat disagree - 2, disagree - 1). Survey items were in the form of statements, some of which were pro-inclusion and some of which were pro-exclusion.

The items were designed to elicit teachers' views and opinions on inclusion by their level of agreement with pro-inclusion statements and level of disagreement with pro-exclusion statements related to inclusive practice, inclusive stance, inclusive values, and inclusive culture:

Inclusive Practice

Students formerly educated in separate schools or segregated classrooms are appearing in increasing numbers in neighbourhood [sic] schools and regular classrooms. Across North America, we are coming to recognize that full participation in communities and schools should be the right of all individuals and that segregation on the basis of physical, mental, or cultural differences is fundamentally wrong. (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994, p. 391)

The first descriptor of champions of inclusion is that they support *inclusive practices*, meaning that champions of inclusion demonstrate attitudes and implement accommodations, adaptations, and instructional practices in the interest of restructuring the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students (Lalvani, 2012). Each of the six teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the majority of pro-inclusion statements relating to *inclusive practice*, such as “Many of the instructional practices that general education teachers implement for students without disabilities are appropriate for students with disabilities,” and “With few exceptions, the general education classroom can be restructured to effectively meet the needs of all its students, including students with disabilities.” Congruently, each of the six teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the majority of pro-exclusion statements related to *inclusive practice*, such as “With few exceptions, most students with disabilities require methods of instruction that are beyond the scope of what is possible in a general education setting,” and all strongly disagreed or disagreed with “The extra attention students with disabilities require in general education classrooms may be to the detriment of the other students,” with the exclusion of one who

somewhat agreed (but scored highly in other domains). The overall responses of the six teachers in the domain of *inclusive practice* suggested a belief that the general education classroom could be and should be reengineered to meet the educational needs of all children, including those with disabilities.

Inclusive Stance

Isolation in the name of safety is a double-lock on the door of community. It effectively prevents those relegated to the outer circle from entering and belonging, while still allowing those within to feel that lofty moral imperatives have been well served. We know that good intentions based on unacknowledged fears can result in oppression. Some of the cruelest actions committed by humanity upon its members have been the result of so-called “good intentions.” (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994, p. 395)

The second descriptor of champions of inclusion is that they maintain an *inclusive stance*, meaning a held belief in equity in education for all children, combined with a personal stance that assumes and anticipates human difference and values those differences and what they can teach us. A *champion of inclusion* tends to question the purpose and efficacy of labeling and leveling students and rejects a deficit perspective of students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2003). Each of the six teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the majority of pro-inclusion statements relating to *inclusive stance*, such as “a student with a disability should be given every opportunity to be educated in the classroom they would otherwise attend (i.e. a general education classroom) if they did not have a disability”, and “with very few exceptions, students with disabilities can benefit from inclusion in general education classrooms.”

Congruently, each of the six teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the majority of pro-exclusion statements related to *inclusive stance*, such as “Students with disabilities are more

likely to develop academic skills more rapidly in a special education classroom than in a general education classroom,” and all strongly disagreed or disagreed with “A low IQ score is a valid criterion for denial of access to general education classrooms for a student with a disability.” The overall responses of the six teachers in the domain of *inclusive stance* suggested a belief that differences do not imply deficiency, and that students with disabilities are capable of learning and making significant contributions.

Inclusive Values

Those who work on social justice issues are stripping the mask of good intention from the faces of both marginalization and reform. The hurtful results are made more public; their legitimacy and continued existence now in question. Simply being tolerated is not necessarily to be valued. Being present does not automatically mean being included. Tolerance has seemed, for many, a worthy goal. However, if it is the ultimate and only goal, true social justice will never be realized. In sum, to move beyond mere tolerance, another response to diversity—that of valuing—must prevail. In a valuing paradigm, diversity is viewed as normal, people are considered of equal worth, relationships are of mutual benefit, and belonging is a central societal theme. (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994, p. 396)

The third key descriptor of champions of inclusion is that they hold *inclusive values*. A champion of inclusion values difference and diversity as a natural condition and views inclusion as an issue of civil rights and social justice. For the purposes of this study, *inclusive values* refer to a value system that regards difference and diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource, a value system within public education that situates inclusive education as an issue of

social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Skirtic, 1991), and as a fundamental issue of civil rights (Winzer, 2000).

Each of the six teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the majority of pro-inclusion statements relating to *inclusive values*, such as “Learning differences are a natural part of the human condition,” and “The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms represents the fundamental guarantee of their civil rights.” Congruently, each of the six teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the majority of pro-exclusion statements related to *inclusive values*, such as “A student with a disability is likely to exhibit behavior problems that will require their removal from the general education classroom setting,” and all strongly disagreed or disagreed with “Advancing and improving inclusionary opportunities for students with disabilities puts too much responsibility and pressure on general education teachers,” with the exclusion of one who somewhat disagreed (but scored highly in other domains). The overall responses of the six teachers in the domain of *inclusive values* suggested a belief that students with disabilities are of equal worth, that diversity is the norm, and that students with disabilities have a rightful place in the human community.

Inclusive Culture

Schools will be transformed only as we move away from a blindered [sic] "that's the way we've always done it" mind set, and begin to focus on creating a classroom community that promotes belonging and acceptance for all, and does not rely on competition and stratification to provide its [members] with a sense of worth. (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994, p. 397)

The fourth key descriptor of champions of inclusion is that they feel compelled to actively cultivate *inclusive culture*. A champion of inclusion acts an agent of change through

educating, coaching, networking, and mentoring other educators (Henderson, 2007) and demonstrates both the commitment and the competency for supporting inclusive culture, by consistently connecting, communicating, challenging, and collaborating appropriately to advance and improve educational services for students with disabilities. Each of the six teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the majority of pro-inclusion statements relating to *inclusive culture*, such as “I connect with students who have disabilities and view them as integral, contributing members of the classroom community,” and “I actively collaborate with other educators and service providers to maximize the learning and development of students with disabilities,” with the exclusion of one who somewhat agreed.

Congruently, all but one of the six teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the majority of pro-exclusion statements related to *inclusive culture*. Five of the six teachers strongly disagreed with statements “Promoting inclusive culture within our schools and enacting this kind of change is highly unlikely due to other priorities”, and “I am overwhelmed by the current challenges in the field of education.

The exclusions were one teacher who somewhat agreed and one teacher who somewhat disagreed with “Promoting inclusive culture within our schools and enacting this kind of change is highly unlikely due to other priorities”, and one teacher who somewhat agreed and one teacher who somewhat disagreed with “I am overwhelmed by the current challenges in the field of education. Each of these teachers scored highly in other domains, qualifying them for Phase 2 of the study. The overall responses of the six teachers in the domain of *inclusive culture* suggested a propensity for supporting and prioritizing cooperative relationships that inclusive culture.

Research Question #2: Champions of Inclusion: What are the lived experiences of champions of inclusion?

Research questions 2 and 3, respectively, were addressed through the individual interviews, using a semi-structured questionnaire designed to explore the lived experience of champions of inclusion (RQ2) and identify the ways in which champions of inclusion act as agents of change (RQ3).

First, champions were asked how their views and opinions on inclusion have been influenced by personal experience, teaching experience, teacher preparation program, in-service training or professional development, influence of colleagues, and leadership.

Using the four identified descriptors of a champion of inclusion, champions were then asked: why they support/enact inclusive practices? why they maintain an inclusive stance? why they hold inclusive values? and why they champion inclusion, i.e.. what drives them to cultivate inclusive culture?

Five common themes emerged within the lived experience of the three champions of inclusion: (1) pervasive concern about inequitable treatment of students with disabilities; (2) feeling of being insufficiently prepared by teacher preparation program; (3) influence of early, positive, collaborative teaching experience; (4) influence of leadership that was open to change and created conditions that allowed them to act; and (5) pervasive concern about the likelihood of positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

RQ2: Identified Common Theme #1: Pervasive concern about inequitable treatment of students with disabilities.

Thurlow (2000) cautioned against alternatives to full inclusion (and accountability) such as those described here by the champions, that are often veiled in the false kindness of low

expectations, and concealed in the belief that students with disabilities should be protected from the harm of rigorous learning environments. Although each champion had an individual story to tell, when asked what influence(s) shaped their identity as a champion and to share the primary influence on their views and opinions on inclusion (IQ#1), each champion expressed that their primary motivation for supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities was an overwhelming concern for the lack of educational equity. Each champion's narrative revealed a pervasive concern about marginalization and inequitable treatment of students with disabilities at the start of their teaching careers. These narratives are evidence of the status quo in far too many schools, where special education is still viewed as a necessarily separate system; a view which continues to serve as a mechanism for the marginalization of certain populations of students (Osgood, 2006) and the perpetuation of a culture of exclusion.

I2's response was simply stated and direct, declaring that she doesn't believe in ostracizing anyone, adding "I believe it is not equality, it is the equity. Every student has to have equity." I1 and I2 began their careers in special education and were especially critical of the disparity between the educational experiences of the students with disabilities. I1 and I2 presented this concern immediately, and descriptively. Disparities included low overall expectations, lack of opportunity, lack of exposure to rigorous grade-level curriculum in a multi-grade classroom, lack of instructional materials and resources, isolation from the school community, and embarrassment and stigma of being treated differently. Coming out of the business world and into teaching as a career change, I1 described his first teaching assignment and his disbelief at the ineffectual practice of segregating students with emotional behavioral disorders, stating that his overarching thought was that if we are trying to prepare students for post-school success, whether that be college or a job, "how can being in a room where there are

six kids having war all day long and not learning anything” translate to the real world and any successful outcome?

RQ2: Identified Common Theme #2: Unprepared by teacher preparation program.

Two of the champions interviewed in Phase 3 were prepared as general educators and one of the champions was prepared as a special educator. When asked if their views and opinions on inclusion had been influenced by their teacher preparation program, none of the champions expressed a great deal of satisfaction with their educational experience, and two expressed that they did not feel prepared at all.

Despite their lack of preparedness, each champion demonstrated an internal motivation to enact change on behalf of students with disabilities and the confidence that they could improve the educational experience of students with disabilities. This is exemplary of the characteristics of a champion of inclusion, in that they are energized by challenging situations and demonstrate resiliency in acting as agents of change. The champion’s recommendations for shared responsibility between general education and special education for the successful outcomes of students with disabilities are aligned with the findings of Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum (2005), who revealed the critical influence of teacher knowledge and skill related to providing instruction that is engaging and explicit and found that these were skills that generalists often did not possess, but were typically part of the specialized knowledge and skills that are included in special education teacher preparation programs. Similarly, the conclusion reached by McLesky & Waldron (2011), was that meeting the needs of students with disabilities through effective inclusion will require improving core general education instruction to accommodate broad range of learning needs through Universal Supports and differentiated instruction and the development of service delivery options that support general education teachers and special education teachers

in delivering high quality, intensive instruction to students with disabilities through a continuum of increasingly specialized and intensive supports.

RQ2: Identified Common Theme #3: Influence of early, positive, collaborative teaching experience

When asked about the influence of their professional experience, such as a colleague, (IQ1) each of the champions revealed an early positive, collaborative experience that was of significance. The champions described collaborative relationships with colleagues who were influential in shaping their practice and setting a precedent for their approach to teaching.

At the start of his career I1 had an early collaborative professional relationship with a social worker who was a like-minded partner in advocating for inclusive opportunities for students in a segregated intensive (low student to adult ratio) setting. He stated that he learned a great deal from the school social worker and that their shared philosophy in regard to the importance of inclusion, the combination of her knowledge-base from the psychological or emotional perspective, and his knowledge base from the teaching and learning side, was a good combination. I1 - FGP 3 stated that through their collaboration, they formed a team that was “able to change some things”.

I2 and I3 each espoused the influence of their successful early experiences as part of co-teaching teams (one certified in academic content only and one certified in content and special education) that were successful in providing some of the first inclusive experiences for students with disabilities in the district. The champions described the advantages of their early involvement in a service delivery option that supported general education teachers and special education teachers in providing support and specially designed instruction to students with disabilities in general education settings (McLesky & Waldron, 2011). The champions credited

this early experience in setting the tone for their view of teaching as a collaborative endeavor that was more than just placing students with disabilities in general education and providing access.

Both indicated that while this was not always their experience, their first experience continued to influence and sustain their belief in the efficacy of inclusive service delivery,

RQ2: Identified Common Theme #4: Leadership that was open to change and created conditions that allowed champions to act.

When asked if their views and opinions on inclusion had been influenced by leadership, each of the champions described a leader who was not so much an overt supporter of inclusion, but a leader who gave them the freedom and empowered them to do what they (the champions) saw as their job. It was not so much the specific actions on the part of leadership but the fact that leadership was open to change and created conditions that allowed the champions to *act*. Such conditions were presented by Fuchs and Fuchs (2001) who identified key elements for sustaining research-based practices such as inclusion, which include (1) a leader who recognizes and takes responsibility for the (2) allocation of resources (e.g., funding for programmatic changes; allocation of time and funding for professional learning), (3) who assumes accountability for student outcomes, (4) who demonstrates tolerance for initial implementation difficulties, and (5) understand the importance of recognizing accomplishments.

RQ2: Identified Common Theme #5: Pervasive concern about the likelihood of positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

When asked why they support inclusive practices, all three champions shared their immediate and overwhelming sense of the disconnect between the way students with disabilities were educated and the likelihood of a positive educational outcome. Each expressed such doubt, and the two of the champions who began their careers teaching students with mild disabilities

and emotional/behavioral disabilities, respectively, highlighted the disparity in overall expectations, opportunities, exposure to rigorous grade level curriculum in a multi-grade classroom, quality and availability of instructional materials and resources.

I1 expressed concern about the level of rigor and the quality of collaborative relationships students are able to develop in segregated settings, stating that “classrooms are a microcosm of any post-school environment” and expressing concern for the impact of low expectations and inequitable opportunities on students’ future outcomes, stating: “What will these kids be like as adults and then their children and so forth?” The research is consistent with I1’s views and indicates that students with disabilities benefit from socialization opportunities and exposure to the higher expectations of general education curriculum (Telzrow & Tankersley, 2000). Moreover, students with disabilities who are placed in separate programs are less likely to have non-disabled friends, less likely to have goals tied to the general education curriculum, more likely to drop out of school and have lower rates of successful adult outcomes (Telzrow & Tankersley, 2000; Kortering & Christenson, 2009).

RQ2: Divergent and Outlier Views - Stance

Each of the champions expressed skepticism at the advantages of a disability label, with I1 and I3 going so far as to suggest a label could possibly do harm. In support of this assertion, I3 stated: “It has been my experience sometimes to oftentimes when we give an IEP to a student and then we start putting services in place...sometimes those services will actually increase the gap rather than decrease the gap.”

The champion’s views are consistent with the emerging understanding that the practice of educating students with disabilities in segregated settings, with slower paced and lower levels of instruction, is not supported by research (Reschly, Tilly & Grimes, 1999; Telzrow & Tankersley,

2000; NASP, 2012). Furthermore, categorical labeling and segregated settings are not required by federal law (IDEA) and actually contribute to achievement gaps (DeRuvo, 2010). Problem solving (PS) models, response to intervention (RtI), and approaches that combine inclusion and a multi-tiered system of supports (DeRuvo, 2010; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Sugai & Horner, 2009) are viable alternatives to traditional exclusionary special education program models, and hold great promise for providing effective instruction to students with disabilities, and other students experiencing gaps in achievement, in general education settings.

When asked about the accuracy of disability labels in terms of the traditional assumptions, I3 recounted the story of a former student who had a learning disability. The student has a label of SLD, needed additional time to process information and, however, was in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. I2 stated that the students would come to her for her accommodation of extra time on tests, but that she did not provide any other assistance to the student. The student passed all of her AP classes and went on to graduate. A few years later I2 saw the student's mother in the grocery store and her mother reported that she is a biomedical engineer, I2 reflected on the fact that at the time the student came to her to receive her accommodation, there were people that didn't think she should have been in AP classes. In the words of I2 "there is evidence. It [inclusion] is working, it is working, it is working".

During this same exchange, I3 exhibited the characteristics of a champion of inclusion in regard to stance and in regard to culture, demonstrating what it means to have an inclusive culture in the context of her schools' peer inclusion team which was instrumental in advancing inclusive culture on their high school campus. She exemplified her inclusive stance when she spoke of her "growing edge" being her thoughts about the self-contained unit at her school, with students who have significant cognitive disabilities, many of whom have no formal means of

communication. I2 further demonstrated the stance of a champion of inclusion as she imagined “what it would look like for them to be in a class. What would happen if we had them interacting? I am still searching for what is going to be like.” This proclivity is exemplary of a champion of inclusion and is representative of the progressive movement to define “access to the curriculum” for students with significant cognitive disabilities and redefine the roles and responsibilities of teachers who provide access to academic instruction and actively engage in intentional planning to meet the needs of this population of students (Lee, Wehmeyer, Soukup, and Palmer, 2010; Timberlake, 2014). I3 demonstrated her competency in the domains of stance and culture, acknowledging the potential limits, but adding the position exemplary of a true champion of inclusion:

I bet if I saw evidence—I bet if we gave it a try and just saw what happened and started to cut it—it would not be as awful as I might think it might be. That is what keeps me in that stance. It is because we have tried and 9 times out of 10 some really wonderful positive things have happened and that one time it did not it had more to do with the adults involved than the student.

RQ2: Divergent and Outlier Views - Values

According to Sapon-Shevin (2003) “inclusive classrooms teach us important lessons that go far beyond individual students and specific settings and help us create the inclusive, democratic society that we envision for our students and society (p. 26). When asked why they value difference and diversity and view inclusion as an issue of civil rights and social justice, each champion revealed different aspects of a personal value systems that situated inclusion as an issue of moral imperative and social justice.

I1 described his first teaching assignment and his astonishment at educators who were unwilling to help kids. When asked if he thought inclusion was a social justice issue, I1 demonstrated his inclusive value system stating his assumption that inclusion would be an equity non-issue, because he couldn't imagine that teachers *wouldn't* be open to giving somebody a chance. I1 stated that he was not prepared to think it was going to be an issue because of his "naïve assumption that everybody would be open to having a kid or at least giving a kid a chance". His inclusive value system was evident in his shock at many educator's unwillingness to give students with disabilities a chance, and was a motivating factor in his proactive efforts to enact change. During this exchange, I1 also stated that something "triggered" his thinking, and he added a personal anecdote that suggested personal issues of class and socio-economic inequality that may have influenced his identity as a champion. I1 stated that he grew up very middle to lower middle class in terms of income and attended "a very upper crust" private school. I1 stated that even though he was a white male the doors, socially, were not very open because of the economic disparity between him and the majority of students who attended the school. I1 shared that he was influenced and motivated to act in his teaching role based on his finding that "people that are all alike in one place it is usually not the best thing".

I2 attributed her view of inclusion as an issue of civil rights and social justice inclusive values to her status as a "migrant" who came from Cuba in 1967 at the age of 3. She went on to add that her inclusive values were shaped as she was taught tolerance through her Christian upbringing and taught to love others and treat everybody the same with equity, kindness, and compassion. I2 also attributed her view of inclusion as a matter of civil rights and social justice to the impact of the continuing unrest surrounding the integration of the public schools in the 1960s and early 1970s.

In the domain of values, I3 ultimately attributed her inclusive values to her Catholic upbringing, which served as her “moral compass”. She also stated that her inclusive values were shaped by her relationship with families of children with disabilities who attended her church, and her understanding of the impact of exclusion on those families.

In each of these scenarios, one of Sapon-Shevin’s suggestions (2003) for realizing the vision of inclusive schools were manifested in the champion’s natural inclination to “challenge exclusion” (p. 26). It is significant that each of the champions were compelled to act as an ally to those whom they perceived were experiencing oppression (exclusion), and in turn, had experienced or viewed exclusion at some point in different ways, through the lens of race, class, and religion. According to Sapon-Shevin “the culture of exclusion posits that marginalizing the stranger, the outlier, is appropriate, acceptable, and sometimes even laudatory” (p. 26). Each of the champions exemplified Sapon-Shevin’s assertion that “exclusion is not about difference; it is about our responses to difference” (p. 26).

RQ2: Divergent and Outlier Views—Culture

When asked why they champion inclusion and what drives them to actively cultivate/promote an inclusive culture (IQ5), each of the interviewees shared slightly different motivations, yet all their responses were *descriptive* of champions of inclusion, including statements that indicate evidence of their commitment and competency in regard to inclusive practice, stance, values, and culture. The champions’ responses in regard to culture were indicative of a pervasive concern for students’ future outcomes and the unfeasibility of a positive future outcome with the current climate of resistance to inclusion and relentless push for segregated models. According to the champions, this reality was and remains their primary

motivation for working to advance inclusive culture and what initially shaped their identity as champions of inclusion.

II's reasons for promoting inclusive culture connected back to his inclusive stance and his dissatisfaction with the focus on disability labels "from a human perspective" and his skepticism about the true efficacy and purpose of labeling. II's view is consistent with the literature supporting the movement from a segregated system of educating students with disabilities, to one that educates students with disabilities alongside their peers without disabilities. II's skepticism and questioning of the practice of making primary determinations or judgments about a student based on a disability or based on a label are consistent with advances in research, instructional technology, and the use of problem-solving models, which are demonstrating the power to override and repudiate the value of categorical service models and even labeling of students in the 21st Century (NASP, 2012).

II's assessment of the possible harm that can result from a hyper-focus on the disability label, such as "the label or the placement...driving the way that they are being treated rather than the actual reality of what their abilities are," and the limited number of hours in a school day and the amount of instruction they miss when they are pulled from core instruction for special education services are now recognized as practices that are inherently inequitable. Categorical labeling and segregated settings are not required by federal law (IDEA) and have contributed to the achievement gaps we have today (DeRuvo, 2010). Furthermore, what is now known is that the practice of educating students with disabilities in segregated settings, with slower paced and lower levels of instruction is not supported by research (Reschly, Tilly & Grimes, 1999; Telzrow & Tankersly, 2000; NASP, 2012).

When asked about her reasons for promoting inclusive culture, I2 stated that her first teaching experience as the “new kid on the block” showed that you can “include everyone regardless of gender, abilities, and whether those abilities be physical or mental,” crediting the influence of the culture and the “great teachers at [their former school]. They really took me under their wing.” The propensity for being positive and solution-oriented and active in promoting inclusive culture as an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking, and mentoring other educators is exemplary of a champion of inclusion (Henderson, 2007). I3 attributed her active promotion of inclusive culture to what it means to the students, harkening back to her first teaching experience and the sense of isolation and stigma the students felt. I3 spoke about the positive impact of inclusion on students with disabilities, as well as the positive impact on their peers without disabilities and about what it means to the teachers whose belief systems are transformed.

In the realm of culture the champions shared evidence of their commitment, persistence, and competency in regard to enacting and advancing inclusive practice, stance, values, and culture. A study by Hamner, Cohen Hall, Timmons, Boeltzig and Fesko (2008) focused on the ways in which informal leaders, similar to the champions, developed relationships as well as the organizational context that promoted change (p. 166). Hamner et al (2008) characterize such leaders as “bridge-builders...who work within and around the system to mobilize others” (p. 165), and cultivate strategic partnerships that have the potential to result in long-term change.

Research Question #3: In what ways do champions of inclusion act as agents of change?

For the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs (Eliot, 1874).

Interview questions 6, 7, and 8 asked the champions how they respond when they encounter resistance and how they actively influence inclusive practices (IQ6), inclusive stance (IQ7), and inclusive values (IQ8). Research Question #3 revealed two common themes related to the ways in which champions of inclusion act as agents of change: (1) champions counteract resistance to inclusion through a combination of persuasion, active listening, and side-by-side coaching; and (2) champions are compelled to counteract resistance to inclusion by being relentlessly helpful in pursuit of inclusion as an issue of social justice.

RQ3: Identified Common Theme #1: Champions of inclusion counteract resistance to inclusion through a combination of persuasion, active listening, and side-by-side coaching.

Lipsky (2010) proposed that professionals on the front lines of any social service delivery create policy through actions and decisions that occur on a daily basis. The actions and self-described “tactics” of the champions of inclusion are consistent with Lipsky’s street-level bureaucracy theory, in that within a context of policy ambiguity those on the front lines of social or human service delivery shape policy outcomes as they execute their work (Lipsky, 2010).

Interview Questions 6 and 7 revealed the champions’ tactics in regard to how they respond to resistance to inclusive practices and how they sustain and promote inclusive practices (IQ6), and how they respond to resistance to their inclusive stance and influence others to adopt an inclusive stance (IQ7).

When the champions were asked how they respond when they encounter resistance to inclusive practices, each of the champions' responses revealed a pattern of persuasion, active listening, and a genuine offer of side-by-side help. Evidence of these three tactics was woven throughout their dialog as they responded to *all* of the interview questions, and were similar to tactics used by agents of change, described by Hamner et al (2008) as "bridge-builders" (p. 161). According to Hamner et al, bridge-builders are collaborative team players who go "above and beyond their job descriptions to enable change" (p. 170). Throughout their dialog, I1 and I3 attributed teachers' "fear" as a primary reason for resistance, and according to the champions a critical success factor in countering teachers' resistance to inclusion was doing their utmost to give teachers the sense that they were *in it with them*. I1 added that in his experience, fear partly stemmed from teachers' perception that they would have to do something completely different for a student with an IEP. I1 stated that listening to teachers' concerns was paramount and that when "you can come back with some thoughts as to why it is at least worth a shot...usually people are willing to give it a shot." These findings are directly aligned with Hamner et al's (2008) finding that "bridge-builders" such as the champions of inclusion in this study, are a critical asset for empowering resistant and fearful teachers through their collaborative efforts and the influence of the champion's belief in their ability to be successful (p. 170).

I1 and I3 are in coaching roles and provided evidence consistent with Lipsky's (2010) street level bureaucracy theory and its influence on ground-level policy. Characterized by I1 as "sales tactics", both I1 and I3 described strategies they have used to work around resistance to inclusion. I3 emphasized a collegial and helpful approach, adding that having a reputation for being "approachable and helpful" has helped tremendously. I3 took the position "right or wrong" that "people are resistant because they are afraid" and approaches teachers as she would want to

be approached, reflecting that companionship, encouragement, and evidence of success a far more powerful levers for change than force. I3 went on to emphasize the importance of being gentle and reiterated the importance of letting people know you are right there in it with them. Similarly, I2 emphasized the importance of showing people what is possible and then how it is possible through modeling, and in turn, sustaining and promoting inclusive culture based on the idea that when people learn something they in turn could pass forward. I2 added that her approach was “more like Mahatma Ghandi...not Malcolm X,” adding the importance of stories (without being preachy), modeling, and providing evidence of how she has been successful in similar situations.

When asked specifically how he actively sustains and promotes inclusive practices, I1 emphasized the importance of promoting and sustaining inclusive practices by being successful in his role, so that teachers experience a “net [result] of having these students in their class in a positive” so that they are “more apt to be for round two the next year.” I1 showed the characteristics of a champion of inclusion in his sense of responsibility for promoting and sustaining inclusive practices by bringing credibility to the ESE resource teacher’s role in supporting inclusion, in order to show teachers the power of meaningful inclusion and counteract the negative perception of the role based on the performance of the person who previously held the position. I1 stated that he was motivated to show people that “it can actually be something where you can impact...right, I mean a lot of kids and not just three or two, you can actually help out a class or *change the perspective of people* [emphasis added].” It was clear that I1 felt that his competency in the role was a factor in the “willingness of the gen. ed. teacher to enjoy the inclusion model”. This disposition represented yet another characteristic of a “bridge-builder” who works to “establish relationships and credibility” (Hamner et al, 2008, p. 167) with their

collaborative partners by accomplishing tasks in order to initiate change (Zacharakis and Flora, 2005).

I3 credited the role that the peer inclusion team plays—which I3 supervises and coaches in the implementation of inclusive instructional practices—in helping to sustain and promote inclusive practices more effectively than adult-to-adult coaching. I3 stated that the benefits of peer-inclusion have the potential to extend beyond the school campus and into the future as inclusion becomes the norm for generations of students who will grow into adults for whom inclusion is the norm. This effort is supported by Sapon-Shevin’s (2003) social justice model of cultivating inclusion by influencing students to become “active allies of social justice” (p. 28), thereby creating a powerful medium for transforming our schools and our society.

When asked how they respond when they encounter resistance to their inclusive stance, and the ways in which they actively influence others to adopt an inclusive stance (IQ6), the champions reiterated that at first it takes time to convince teachers that inclusion is possible, and then once they have an opportunity to show teachers how it could work they start to see teachers begin to assume an inclusive stance. I1 offered an example of such a transformation, citing the benefit and power of actually having teachers exposed to a broad range of learners coupled with support that follows students with disabilities into the general education classroom. I3 stated that the phenomenon of turning a resistant teacher into a champion and influencing their inclusive stance is the byproduct of a successful outcome of actually having them experience success in teaching students who they may have thought weren’t the right fit or an appropriate fit. I1 described their first-hand experience seeing the transformation of a resistant teacher into a champion for a student that they otherwise would have excluded. According to I1, “*It is actually*

people experiencing all different sorts of students who will tend to get them on board” [emphasis added].

RQ3: Identified Common Theme #2: Champions are compelled to counteract resistance to inclusion by being relentlessly helpful in pursuit of inclusion as an issue of social justice.

Interview question #8 also revealed commonalities among the champions. When the champions were asked how they respond when they encounter resistance to inclusive values, and the ways in which they influence others to embrace inclusive values, each shared that they were compelled to be relentlessly helpful in pursuit of inclusion as an issue of social justice. To enact this effort, the champions again offered that significant effort was required to first convince teachers that inclusion was possible. Each shared the characteristic of being *relentlessly* helpful, in pursuit of inclusion as a social justice issue.

In line with Hamner et al’s (2008) characterization of bridge-builders such as champions of inclusion as “action-oriented” (p. 166) and unrelenting in their commitment to promoting inclusion as issue of equality and justice. I1 attributed his drive to being “a slave to logic” in regard to his belief that inclusion was beneficial, stating, “when I think something is logical and reasonable, unless I am presented with something that I think was more logical or reasonable, I am not going to change my mind.” I1 went on to add that he can be “stubborn” when he knows that it is going to help a student to be included, adding, “I am not going to let somebody say no because they have always said no. Let’s see if we can find a way to convince them or I guess force them even to at least give it a chance.”

I2 - FGP1 characterized inclusion as a social justice issue and suggested the school district might “gain more traction” by sending a clear message about inclusion as a social justice issue and capitalizing on the efforts of champions of inclusion through peer pressure, asserting

that the influence of peers works on adults, but that inclusion has to have a larger voice. I2 went on to suggest a revolution, stating the seriousness of the current state of inclusion and social injustice in the public schools that is perpetuated by inequitable education, and utterly in need of reform in the context of democracy and social justice (Skirtic, 1995; Slee, 2001; Ware, 2003; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006; Lalvani, 2012).

In regard to combating resistance to and promoting inclusive values, I3's example of the teacher from another country who was raised with a completely different value system in regard to people with disabilities provides a look at her tactical approach, in which she first built a personal relationship, built trust, in this case by proving she "has their back" and standing together, and how this began to transform the behavior of the teacher towards students with disabilities. I3 shared the ways in which she actively influenced this teacher who was tough to penetrate, through gentle relentless effort and good-natured "assaults" such as efforts to establish a personal relationship with the teacher. I3 likened her approach to collaboration with a general education teacher to being invited into someone's home, stating, for example, that the "very first time I come into another teacher's classroom I can't just open the refrigerator and serve myself. We have to have a mutual trust. They have to know that I have their back. They have to know that we are presenting a united front". I3 likened her approach to that of a Trojan horse, stating that is always what she has aspired to be stating "in a way it is just like working with a student who says I can't do this, I can't do this, and then the minute they do it you are able to say, "Oh, look at that—you thought you couldn't do it." This approach is suggestive of Hamner et al's (2008) finding that agents of change form collaborations that "avert turf issues skillfully and build ties based on mutual interest" (p. 170).

Research Question #4: What are the views and opinions of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion in regard to the culture of their organization?

At first glance, this change might seem to be taking place. Individuals with disabilities are more visible and increasingly involved in community life. If we believed that greater proximity led to greater acceptance, it could be argued that we are successfully participating in the creation of a new social order.

Unfortunately, this is only partly true. Instead, we are finding that increased visibility and “presence” alone do not necessarily ensure that those with disabilities are fully included (Van der Klift & Kunc, N. in Thousand & Nevin, 1994, 391).

Research question #4 revealed five common themes related to the views and opinions of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion in regard to the culture of their organization: (1) inclusion is the expectation; however, inclusion is “voluntary” and teachers can “opt out”; (2) resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through collaboration, mentoring, coaching, and support; (3) resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through training opportunities and preparation; (4) resistance to inclusion can be counteracted through the power of peer support; (5) accountability and teacher evaluation prohibit inclusion.

RQ4: Identified Common Theme #1: Inclusion is the expectation; however, inclusion is “voluntary” and teachers can “opt out”

When asked whether their organization promoted and effectively communicated a compelling and explicit organizational imperative for inclusion (FGQ1), the focus groups differed in their collective responses. Focus group #1 (FG1) concurred that while inclusion was “happening” it was a result of basic compliance and that they did not have a sense of an explicit

expectation or strong message from the district for inclusion. Conversely, focus group #2 (FG2), comprising two teachers from the same school—a third participant dropped out prior to the session—issued a strong assertion that the organization’s expectation for inclusion was “imperative and clear.”

The collective view of FG1 inclusion was that inclusion was not widely understood to be a non-negotiable, and teachers could “opt out.” FGP3 – FG1 compared inclusion to a double-edged sword, describing a scenario in which a teacher makes it known that they do not want students with disabilities in their class, leaving their administrator to grapple with the decision as to whether to schedule students with a teacher “who they know is going to end up doing a bad job,” adding, “You can almost get an easier route by not being open-minded and inclusive.” An important connection to make is the relationship between this reality shared by FGP3 – FG1, and the assertion he made in his interview, that the phenomenon of turning a resistant teacher into a champion and influencing their inclusive stance is the byproduct of a successful outcome of actually having them experience success in teaching students who they may have thought weren’t the right fit or an appropriate fit. This presents a compelling argument for a no opt-out policy, coupled with the strategic utilization of champions of inclusion in the public schools.

The teachers in focus group 2 were not as explicit in their message; however, as the session progressed the participants’ responses began to reveal evidence that there have been instances in which inclusion may be “optional,” despite their insistence that they were an “inclusive school.” Comments such as “Some teachers...take it on more than others,” in addition to the teachers’ referring to their classrooms as the “inclusion class”, and calling themselves “the inclusion teachers,” were illuminating in regard to the progress still to be made in counteracting the “special education status quo” (Brantlinger, 2004, p. 11). The perspectives

of the teachers in FG2 echoed Van der Klift & Kunc's (1994) assertion that "any good social reformer with a modicum of honesty will admit [that] attitudinal barriers don't exist only among those 'retrogressive oppressors out there', but are just as often within ourselves" (p. 397) adding the "immortal words of Pogo, 'We have met the enemy and he is us'." Educational organizations who address these attitudinal barriers can optimize and sustain the efforts of agents of change such as champions of inclusion in challenging and breaking through the special education status quo.

RQ4: Identified Common Theme #2: Resistance to inclusion could be counteracted through collaboration, mentoring, coaching and support

Several commonalities emerged among FG1 and FG2 in regard to counteracting resistance to inclusion. Participants in both focus groups indicated that their primary strategy for counteracting resistance was to *personally offer assistance*. Participants in both focus groups described their behavior in ways that represented the descriptors of champions of inclusion, in that they that described their efforts to connect, communicate, challenge, and collaborate appropriately to advance and improve education services for students who have a disability by educating, coaching, networking, and mentoring other educators (Henderson, 2007). Hamner et al (2008) describe networks as one of the most important tools that agents of change such as champions of inclusion create to achieve their goals, and are a critical success factor in optimizing efforts to enact change, while maintaining endurance and sustaining their efforts over the long-haul (p. 170). Educational organizations can optimize and sustain the work of agents of change such as champions of inclusion, by being aware of and supporting the informal and flexible nature of their efforts and removing constraints and barriers that can be present in heavily bureaucratized systems (Hamner et al, 2008, p. 171)

RQ4: Identified Common Theme #3: Resistance to inclusion could be counteracted through training opportunities and preparation

There was a consensus among the focus groups that many teachers are resistant to inclusion out of fear, and to a great extent teachers' fears are based on feeling unprepared to teach students with disabilities. The focus group discussion ranged from both general education teachers' and special education teachers' comfort level with an isolated teaching model, and the need to move beyond that model, to one that emphasizes collaborative, job-embedded "coaching and help" vs. formal professional development.

Researchers Villa and Thousand (1994) aver the advantages of cooperative, informal models of coaching and support in creating opportunities for creative problem-solving and persevering through complex problems of practice. Villa and Thousand provide a compelling argument for the process of cooperative learning described by the champions throughout Phases 2 and 3, which were similar to the researcher's synergistic processes of collective induction, whereby two educators induce general principles together that could not necessarily be produced individually, and process gain, whereby two educators generate new ideas through their collective interaction that would not necessarily be generated if they worked alone (p. 81). Educational organizations can optimize and sustain the work of agents of change such as champions of inclusion by supporting the cooperative professional learning structures described by the champions.

RQ4: Identified Common Theme #4: Resistance to inclusion could be counteracted through the power of peer support

Another commonality among the focus groups was the power of peer support. Both focus groups credited peer support in changing the mindset of adults who had been resistant to inclusion. Throughout the focus groups and interviews, the most significant barriers to inclusion,

whether from fear or lack of preparation, was attitudinal on the part of general education teachers. In several instances the champions provided scenarios in which they worked to overcome teacher's attitudes through coaching and collaboration rather than remediating a teacher's actual pedagogical deficit.

FGP 1 – FG1 described the peer in inclusion team as having “thrown down the gauntlet” as a result of the peer inclusion team's success in supporting a student with a disability that a teacher may have deemed “difficult”. FGP 1 – FG1 shared that teachers' attitudes begin to transform when they are faced with “an untrained high school student” who found a way to reach a student that the teacher was unable or unwilling to reach. Similarly, the participants in FG2 shared similar experiences with their “peer buddy system,” where students in their “inclusion class” go with children with disabilities to their other classes “to help guide the teachers to some extent because those children become experts and if you have questions ask so and so, the peer buddy, because they know if this kid is doing this.”

The exponential power of peer support is evident in these stories; clearly advantaging students with disabilities, building the capacity of teachers to serve students with disabilities, and building the capacity for inclusive practice, stance, values, and inclusive culture well into the future. According to Sapon-Shevin (2003), when students learn active ways to including students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (p. 26), when they are afforded opportunities to become both comfortable and sophisticated in understanding difference and becoming active allies for students with disabilities (p. 28), they are then able to address issues of inclusion and exclusion and take powerful stances against oppression of any kind, resulting in their agency and power to change the world (p. 28). When educational organizations recognize and support structures such as peer support, this becomes a powerful theory of action (Owens and Valesky, 2011) in

countering resistance to social justice initiatives of any kind by teaching students to evaluate their own actions, the actions of others, the actions of groups, organizations and even society.

RQ4: Identified Common Theme #5: Accountability and teacher evaluation prohibit inclusion

Although the focus groups were not asked directly about accountability measures and the impact of teacher evaluation systems, this was a recurring topic that surfaced throughout the focus groups and interviews. This commonality revealed a significant threat to inclusive education and exposed the synergy of common themes 1, 2, 3, 4 and revealed what the champions viewed as a substantial barrier to inclusion. The trend of opting out could be viewed as a by-product of common themes 2–5, i.e. lack of opportunity for collaboration, mentoring, coaching, and support for inclusion, lack of training opportunities and preparation, lack of structures that support inclusion such as systems of peer support, in that they are all reasons why teachers may want to “opt out” of inclusion and critical success factors in ensuring that inclusion is successful. Another aspect of “opting out” of inclusion, is the concept of inclusion as “punishment”. The concept of punishment, exemplified in the following quote from I1 – FGP3, recurred throughout focus group 1 and the individual interviews and will be addressed in Divergent and Outlier Views: “You can almost get an easier route by not being open-minded and inclusive.”

It could be considered a natural inclination to resist doing something that one does not feel prepared to do, especially when being formally evaluated and held accountable without feeling as if one has had adequate preparation. To wit, if teachers are resistant to inclusion out of fear because they feel they are not prepared to teach students with disabilities, why would they want to risk their professional reputations and potential for performance pay with unfavorable

evaluations by teaching students who they fear (rightly or wrongly) may not make adequate gains each year?

A reality of inclusive education is that the growth of students with disabilities, as well as other students, may be asynchronous; students with disabilities may differ in the rate at which they learn, the depth to which they learn, and differ in their rate of skill acquisition. Systems of accountability should not appear to or actually penalize general education teachers for including students with disabilities whose performance, growth and attainment of grade-level achievement standards may differ in rate and complexity from that of students without disabilities. When educational organizations advocate for and implement systems of accountability that are a function of teaching and learning processes and accountability processes in relation to learning outcomes; those accountability systems will discourage inclusion or appear to penalize teachers for embracing inclusion, and will be competently designed, carefully calibrated, validated and accurately representative of the growth and achievement of our students, and the dedication and talent of teachers.

RQ4: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #1: Divergent perceptions regarding the organization's expectation for inclusion.

When asked whether it was important for the school district to communicate an explicit imperative for inclusion (FGQ1), FG1 and FG2 were in firm agreement that it was important; however, they differed in their perspective as to whether their district had effectively communicated that message.

FG1's view was that the district had *not* made the expectation explicit, in contrast to FGP1 - FG2's view that "It is imperative and clear and 'built that way at our school.'" When FG2 was asked whether they felt it was that way at every school, each stated "I don't know," one

stating “I haven’t been to another school.” This view was in stark contrast to the perception of FGP1 – FG1, that “too many people, too many faculty members and some administrators, they do not think that some of the students with disabilities are capable. They see them as deficits” (FGP1 – FG1).

Difference must be both anticipated and valued in order for inclusive practices to become pervasive in schools and classrooms (Udvari-Solner, 1995), and educational organizations can optimize and sustain the work of agents of change such as champions of inclusion when they communicate a strong and explicit organizational imperative for inclusion. This idea is supported by Villa and Thousand (2003) who state that for inclusion to succeed, action must be taken to articulate the vision, build consensus for the vision and lead all stakeholders to active involvement (p. 22). Villa and Thousand go on to state that “systems-level and classroom level variables...facilitate the creation and maintenance of inclusive education” (p. 23). This could account for such differing perspectives between FG1 and FG2. Whereas FG2 portrayed their school as an inclusive school and themselves as inclusive teachers as a result of the expectation of the school district, FG1’s portrayal of their schools as resistant to inclusion, despite their individual successes, suggesting inconsistency in the expectation for inclusion at the system-level and classroom level.

RQ4: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #2 Perceived “success” of inclusion is a byproduct of basic compliance.

When asked to what extent their organization promotes and effectively communicates explicit expectation for inclusion (FGQ1), FG1 and FG2 differed in their responses. There were hints of commonality, but none shared among the two focus groups. There was a feeling among the FG participants that inclusion was “happening,” given that the majority of students with

disabilities were in general education settings; however, the “success” of inclusion was to be measured by the actual outcome, and the way students with disabilities are treated in the general education setting, then there was tremendous work still to be done. This following statement from II – FGP3, is telling, and evident of disability rights advocate Kathie Snow’s (2007) concern that that public education continues to operate from a legal perspective “going no further than following the ‘guidelines’ of special ed [sic] laws...and even with legal imperatives, segregation and isolation continue (p. 2):

I think that as an organization we are good at mandating or proclaiming that we are inclusive and getting those minutes right on the IEP so that so and so is with his peers 93% of the day, but I am not sure we are always good at actually making sure that 93% of the day is as effective as it could be, both academically and socioemotionally.

According to Barney (2014) organizational culture is defined as “a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that defines the ways in which a firm conducts its business” (p. 657). Barney (2014) examined culture as a source of competitive advantage related to financial performance, and determined that “firms that do not have the required cultures cannot engage in activities that will modify their cultures and generate sustained superior financial performance” (p. 656). Applied to educational organizations who are held accountable for the educational outcomes of students with disabilities (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004) the relationship between culture and superior organizational performance is one that must not be ignored. In order for inclusion to be successful, inclusion has to be more than simply a legal preference. Educational organizations can optimize and sustain the work of agents of change such as champions of inclusion by assessing and addressing exclusionary values and structures, and espousing and embedding inclusionary values and structures throughout the system

RQ4: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #3: Inclusion has to be earned.

When asked to what extent their organization promotes inclusive practices, and to what extent they promote inclusive practices, the responses of FG2, comprising the self-identified “inclusion teachers” from the same school, are an example of how inclusion is prone to divergent interpretations of the construct and means “different things to people who wish different things from it” (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994, p. 299). While their school was described as an inclusive school where inclusion was “not a choice”, several times a qualifier was added indicating the possibility of “limitations” being a possible exclusionary factor to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. This qualifier reinforces the concern that even among those who consider themselves to be advocates of inclusion, in this case teachers who self-identified with a an ideological orientation that was pro-inclusion, access to the general education curriculum for all students is not a widely enacted stance (Connor, 2008). It is of concern that the participants in FG2 claimed to have an inclusive stance, but in actuality demonstrated their deficit perspective of disability by suggesting that students with disabilities needed to meet certain criteria to be included in general education settings, including their “inclusion classrooms.” This view of “inclusion” appears to be used inaccurately by FG2, whose view is more consistent with the term “mainstreaming”. According to Lalvani:

mainstreaming refers to providing students with disabilities varying levels of opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers during the school day; inclusion involves placement in classrooms that have been restructured to meet the educational needs of all its students.

The distinction here is important to this study, philosophically, and represents the stark difference between visiting a classroom versus having full membership in it. As Giangreco and Doyle stated, “We will know that inclusive education has fully arrived

when designations such as ‘inclusion school,’ ‘inclusion classroom,’ or ‘inclusion student’ are no longer needed as part of our educational vocabulary because everyone is included” (2000, p. 52).

RQ4: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #4: Inclusion as punishment—exclusion as reward.

Inclusion as punishment and exclusion as reward was an outlier view of FG1 that was mentioned in the discussion of *RQ4: Identified Common Theme #5*. This view surfaced directly in FG1 during the discussion about teachers opting out of inclusion. When talking about the “opt-out” culture and inclusion being “negotiable” FGP2 – FG1 stated “

Is it that culture that you can or because you do this...OK you are teaching AP for me, OK we will not give you ESE or you are coaching basketball and we are winning so I won't give these kind of kids to you in your class. How can I phrase this politely?
(Laughter)

This view appeared to be affirmed by the other members of the focus group by their body language and expressions. This view was also reinforced by a statement quoted earlier, which was made by FGP3 – FG1 in support of *RQ4: Identified Common Theme #5*: “You can almost get an easier route by not being open-minded and inclusive.”

Why do some educators feel they have the right to refuse to teach certain students? Lalvani (2013) explored teacher’s beliefs about the education of students with disabilities in the context of dominant educational discourses that center on “otherness” of some students and assumptions about special education (p. 14). Lalvani’s study revealed that teachers held multiple interpretations of inclusive education, and that those who demonstrated superficial support for inclusive education had an overall deficit perspective of students with disabilities based on

medical model and entrenched beliefs and assumptions about students with disabilities related to IQ, and ability (p. 14). Conversely, teachers who strongly supported inclusion and expressed a strong willingness to enact inclusive practices viewed inclusive education through the lens of equitable education, democracy and social justice.

Could there be anything more dangerous and threatening to the advancement of inclusive education as a civil right than the perception of inclusion as punishment? This revelation is a bellwether to educational organization and highlights the importance of attending to teacher dispositions and unexamined beliefs, lest they remain latent and insidiously create barriers to inclusive classrooms (Vellegas, 2007). It is imperative that educational organization themselves become champions of inclusion, to examine and address teacher's conceptualization of inclusive education and as Lalvani stated "explore the ways in which they position themselves as teachers (17). RQ4: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #5: Inclusive Organizational Stance.

An inclusive stance requires teachers to reject the medical model of disability and its focus on impairments and limitations in favor of a social model that views the education of students with disabilities as an issue of civil rights and social justice (Lalvani, 2012, p. 16). FG1 and FG2 differed in their view of the organizations' efforts to encourage educators to have an *inclusive stance*. FG2 was of the opinion that the organization demands it as opposed to it being "encouraged," while FG1 was also of the opinion that ESE labels were about providing the support students need to be successful as opposed to labeling based on perceived deficit. This was in contrast to FG1's strong opinions on district support of *inclusive stance*, expressing the view that ESE labels seem to perpetuate exclusionary practices through the often erroneous and automatic grouping of students by ESE label.

It is imperative that educational organizations adopt and communicate their inclusive stance to validate the presence of human variation and ensure that teachers understand, in no uncertain terms, that a student's real or perceived disability is not an adequate or allowable justification for denial of access to general education classrooms (Lalvani, 2012, p. 24). By working systemically to shape and eradicate the view of students with disability labels as "second-class members" (Theoharris, 2007, p. 29) of the general education classroom and the school at large, educational organizations can optimize and sustain the efforts of agents of change such as champions of inclusion.

RQ4: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #6: Inclusive Organizational Values

FG1 and FG2 differed in their views about the extent of inclusive values within the organization. Although FG2 proclaimed that their school was inclusive, their dialog revealed an implication that student with disabilities may need to go somewhere else, i.e., a more restrictive placement, even though they were supposedly in an "inclusion classroom." FG2 had nothing to add when asked how the organization could promote diversity and inclusive values, because they felt that the importance of diversity and inclusive values were already communicated by the organization and because they "celebrate all the different history months and we have our autism awareness month. We have it all going on." FG2 again affirmed that students with disabilities were enmeshed in the school community and were not in a separate wing, although stating previously that they were in a separate wing, albeit in a central location.

When asked about the extent of inclusive values within the organization, FG1's discussion centered on civil rights and social justice, first touching on segregation and then on the equal treatment of individuals who are homosexual or transgender. FG1 suggested that the school district's adoption of Universal Design to ensure that all district facilities are accessible to

individuals with disabilities would send a powerful message about the district's inclusive values by building a school with accessibility features "assuming that someone is going to use it." FG1 also added that the school district could send a powerful message about the district's inclusive values by hiring persons with disabilities in professional roles (as opposed to only service roles) and ensuring that persons with disabilities are visible in the school district.

It is imperative that educational organizations express inclusive values of democracy, and social justice as a calling in order to establish an inclusive culture. Theoharris (2007) made the critical connection between social justice and the inclusion of students with disabilities, stating unequivocally that "social justice cannot be a reality in schools where students with disabilities are segregated, pulled out from the regular classroom, or receive separate curriculum and instruction" (p. 2). Theoharris (2007) defined social justice leadership in the context of school principals, however application to educational organizations is easily made in terms of addressing and eliminating marginalization through inclusive education, by keeping "vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States' at the center of practice (p. 3).

Educational organizations can optimize and sustain the efforts of agents of change such as champions of inclusion by espousing and reinforcing values of democracy, and social justice throughout the system, cultivate and establish an inclusive culture. Research Question #5: What recommendations do teachers who identify as champions of inclusion have for establishing and advancing an inclusive organizational culture?

Research question #5 targeted teachers' views and opinions on the *organizations* capacity for *cultivating an inclusive culture (FGQ7)*, how *champions of inclusion* might be positioned and utilized by the organization as an agent for culture change (FGQ8), how the organization

supports and/or inhibits inclusive culture, and their recommendations for rooting out exclusionary structures (FGQ9), removing barriers to inclusion and establishing norms, values, practices, and policies that work to support inclusive organizational culture (FGQ10).

Research Question #5 revealed three divergent and outlier views and one common theme in regard to the recommendations teachers who identify as champions of inclusion have for establishing and advancing an inclusive organizational culture.

The common theme among the focus groups was that resistance to inclusion can be counteracted when teachers see successful models in action.

RQ5: Identified Common Theme #1

When asked for recommendations for establishing and/or advancing an inclusive organizational culture (FGQ7), the importance of having *successful models in action* was the common theme in FG1 and FG2. FG1 stated that is important for teachers to see models that are “relevant to their everyday life” as opposed to participating in professional development and training that is conceptual at best or in a simulated or theoretical environment. In the words of FGP3 – FG1, when you see “where it is working...you realize it is not impossible.” Each asserted that coaching, mentoring, and being able to see somebody else at that skill were of critical importance in advancing inclusive culture and closing the implementation gap for inclusion by providing a context for learning and an appropriate learning process for teachers or to change their practice and begin to transform stance, values, and culture.

Theoharris and Scanlon (2014) asked the question, “how do innovative and entrepreneurial efforts that improve educational equity move beyond isolated pockets (i.e., in one classroom, department, or school)?” (p. 80). Fullan (2000) described professional learning that resembled the self-described methods of the champions; as a continuous process, supported

through mentoring, coaching and feedback to address the perceived needs of teachers and students within individual classrooms and schools. An investigation by Klingner, Vaughn, Hughes, and Arguelles (2001) indicated that for programs designed to meet the needs of a range of learners, teachers were more likely to maintain a practice if colleagues perceived the practice as valuable and a support network was in place to allow for discussion and problem-solving around implementation issues. The champions described similar efforts to support teachers in taking risks when it came to educating students with disabilities. Inclusive schools are still the exception rather than the rule, however, their coaching, mentoring, and networking efforts are creating successful models in action that can be replicated. When educational organizations seek to establish an identity as a learning organization, support open classrooms, and create conditions that free teachers from the fear of taking risks, they “make the scene ripe for the influence of the change agent” (Hamner et al, 2008, p. 170) such as champions of inclusion, but create the capacity for educational innovation and transformation.

RQ5: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #1: Communities of Practice

When asked about the possibility of forming a community of practice of champions of inclusion (FGQ8), both focus groups expressed that they were not sure how effective this structure would be in cultivating change. Each group seemed to grapple with conceptualizing such a structure, expressing a concern over the amount of time that would be required (FG1) in addition to current responsibilities, as well as the concern that teachers who were resistant and who “reject inclusion” would not be reached (FG2). FGP1 – FG1 and FGP2 – FG1 felt a community of practice of champions of inclusion could be of benefit but were not sure of the efficacy given that “people are overwhelmed so even though it would be beneficial...I hear people say I can’t add another thing to my plate” (FGP1 – FG1). FGP1 – FG1 added that she

could see some positives and benefit, but stated that many of her colleagues were leaving the profession, due to the excessive work-load and pressure.

The participants in FG2 had a difficult time conceptualizing the concept and usefulness of a community of practice, however, their views on inclusive education reveal the importance of forming an intellectual community such as a community of practice, that teachers belong to as a sort of check-and-balance. Despite evidence to the contrary, teachers have a tremendous amount of power and it is important that practice, stance, value and culture are influenced in the right ways through thoughtful and informed understanding. Considering the insistence of the teachers in FG2 that they were an “inclusive school”, that their classrooms were the “inclusion class[rooms]”, that they were “the inclusion teachers”, a community of practice is an important structure through which districts can routinely take the temperature of their organization by monitoring important aspects of culture such as values, beliefs, and assumptions.

RQ5: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #2: Supporting and reinforcing v. constraining and inhibiting inclusive culture

When asked about the extent to which their organization supports and reinforces inclusive culture and/or constrains and inhibits inclusive culture, the consensus of FG2 as put forth by FGP1 – FG1 was “I don’t think they [the school district] are putting constraints on, necessarily” and that the organization supported inclusive culture by allowing the school “the freedom to do it the best way they possibly can.” FG2 seemed to have the perception that that they were inclusive, indicating an attitudinal barrier that may be preventing them from recognizing exclusionary structures.

In regard to practices that constrain or inhibit inclusive culture, FG1 referenced unbalanced classroom ratios and the pressures of accountability (again using the word

“punishment”) in causing teachers to want to abandon inclusive teaching altogether. In addition, FG1 discussed exclusionary practices such as excluding students with disabilities from tutoring programs and targeting only students who have the statistical potential to make a learning gain on the state assessment to ensure that the school gets “the most bang for our buck.”

RQ5: Focus Groups: Divergent and Outlier View #3: Additional recommendations: leveraging leadership, policy and grassroots advocacy

When asked to offer any additional recommendations rooting out structures that perpetuate a culture of exclusion, removing barriers to inclusion, and establishing norms, values, practices, and policies that work to support inclusive organizational culture, FG1 and FG2 differed in their responses. FG2’s exchange was dominated by FGP1 – FG2, whose only recommendation was an increased focus on strategies for managing behavior of students on the ASD spectrum. In FG1, FGP2 – FG1 emphasized the power of high level leadership setting an expectation for inclusion and adding momentum to the efforts of champions. FGP2 – FG1 gave a specific example of a recent visit from a high-level district administrator in creating a sense of urgency among all high schools for replicating her schools’ peer inclusion team. FGP3 – FG1 added the positive influence of the state discretionary project focused on inclusion, which had partnered with his school to advance and improve inclusive practices. Each participant emphasized the importance of these partnerships in particular, stating that both district leadership and the state organization were instrumental in initiating and perpetuating “conversations” that were leading to transformative change.

FG1’s responses were aligned with Theoharris’s (2014) characteristics of leadership for social justice. According to Theoharris, school leaders enact social justice through improved learning outcomes influenced through structural reform, building the capacity of human

resources within their schools, strengthening their school culture by cultivating habits that support all students, in particular those that have been traditionally marginalized. In addition, leaders who champion social justice look across institutions for support and understand the root causes of injustice within the public schools and their broader social context (Berliner, 2006).

When educational organizations expect and empower leaders to enact social justice in the public schools, they create conditions that optimize and support the efforts of agents of change such as champions of inclusion in strengthening inclusive school culture and improving educational outcomes for student with disabilities and other marginalized groups of students.

Implications for Educational Policy and Practice

Social justice is an important aspect of education. The development of empathy and shared understanding between individuals of diverse background and ability is critical if our world is to survive the next century. We need young women and men who will work together to address the issues of inequity and injustice that still face us (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994, p. 401).

Overview

This is study centered on the position that inclusion is more than the placement and provision of supports and services to students with disabilities in general education classes and more than a set of instructional strategies. The positionality of this research endeavor is that inclusion, meaning the practice of educating students with disabilities as *“supported members of chronologically age-appropriate general education classes in their home schools, receiving the specialized instruction delineated by their IEPs, within the context of the core curriculum and*

general class activities” (Halvorsen & Neary, 2009, p. 1), has to do with belonging and membership.

Measures of accountability require that students with disabilities have access to and make progress in rigorous standards-based curriculum (Connor & Ferri, 2007; Skirtic, 1991). Sixteen years into the 21st century, students with disabilities are increasingly included in general education classrooms, yet in an overwhelming number of those classrooms, they are still as unwelcome as they were during the initial mandate for compulsory school attendance in the early 1900s. The burning question that drove this study was, how do we do more than simply admire this problem?

Surveys throughout the literature show that general education teachers experience a range of apprehension about the inclusion of students with disabilities, from feeling unprepared, unwilling, lacking the time to plan for students with special needs, and/or having the belief that inclusion is simply not appropriate for all students with disabilities. Throughout the focus groups and interviews those apprehensions were evident, along with recommendations for adequate training, preparation and support to mitigate teacher resistance. However, the reality is that without the positioning of inclusive education as belonging and membership in the classroom a student would otherwise attend if they were not a student with a disability—in other words, positioning inclusive education as a right and not a privilege of students who are “able,”—all the preparation, training and support in the world will still fail to make teachers less resistant, when they believe that special education is a place where students with disabilities are simply better off.

Arguments to the contrary notwithstanding, it is important to note that the concern and apprehension many general education teachers have in regard to the inclusion of students with

disabilities in their classrooms is valid and should be taken seriously. Although this study takes the position that inclusion is about belonging and membership, this study is in no way meant to diminish the importance of teacher preparation, the development of instructional skills and strategies, nor the importance of time for intentional planning and preparation to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Neither was this study meant to overlook students' need for appropriate supports and services. In fact, the intention is quite the opposite.

The purpose of this study was to seek out teachers who enact practices of inclusivity despite the challenges; teachers who view inclusive education as an issue of social justice and as a fundamental issue of civil rights, and work to transform the status quo of resistance to inclusion—to gain insight and understanding in regard to minimizing and removing existing exclusionary organizational structures and barriers to inclusion, and seek recommendations for establishing norms, values, practices, and policies that work to support inclusive organizational culture.

Henderson (2007) referred to teachers with the aforementioned characteristics as champions of inclusion and asserted the importance of seeking out and supporting teachers who, despite the recognized challenges, make inclusion “happen.” Given the ongoing resistance to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education, the overarching purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of teachers who strongly self-identified as champions of inclusion, in order to find out what goes into the making of inclusion.

Four ideas drove this study. The first idea was that insight into what motivates change agents who demonstrate a commitment and a sense of urgency toward socially conscious change should be of paramount interest to organizations who need human talent and energy to successfully achieve their objectives. The second was the idea that organizations could mitigate

resistance to inclusion and build and strengthen a culture of inclusion systemically by identifying teachers who demonstrate commitment and competency for including students with disabilities, and capitalizing on their natural proclivity for coaching, educating, networking, and mentoring other educators. The third idea was that an educational organization could *itself* become a champion of transformative change by seeking out and removing barriers to inclusion and supporting champions of inclusion as they embed and reinforce an inclusive culture throughout the system.

The Organization as Champion of Inclusion

To investigate these ideas, the research on organizational change in general was explored, and in particular, the findings of an empirical study conducted by Ortlieb and Sieben (2014) were an inspiration for this study. The findings suggested that organizational actors, such as the champions of inclusion posited in this study, help shape the structural dimensions that underpin and form inclusive organizations by themselves acting accordingly and inciting others to do the same. As referenced in the Review of Literature (Chapter 2), Ortlieb and Sieben (2014) explored the relationship between the practices of an organization and the actions of individual and collective agents relative to shaping and making an organization more inclusive. The author's findings suggest that Giddens's (1984) theoretical framework (Figure 3) held promise for future study of how organizational practices, and the mobilization of agents who reinforce or "shape" (p. 236) inclusive organizational practices by cultivating and continually reinforcing a culture of inclusion (p. 237) and contributing to the making of an inclusive organization.

The Organization as Champion

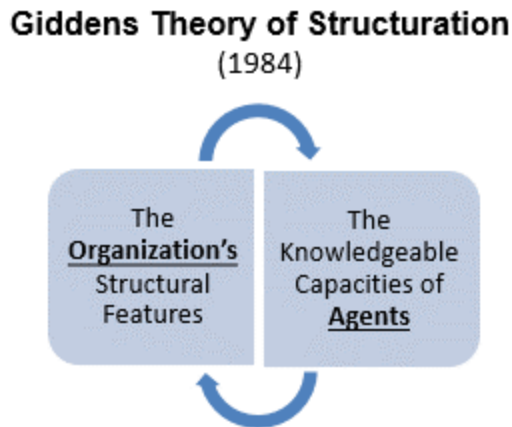


Figure 3: Giddens Theory of Structuration

A similar study by Barratt-Pugh, Bahn, and Gakere (2011) explored the ways in which organizations might strategically approach change management and culture change, and sought to identify the components of such an approach from a strategic organizational perspective. Barratt-Pugh et al. (2013) based their definition of culture on the work of Schein (1991, 1995) and Sanchez (1996), defining culture as the “patterns of shared assumptions and enacted values, developed through and embedded within social interaction, which guide evolving social practice” (p. 750). As revealed in the *Summary and Interpretation of Findings* earlier in this chapter, these components and patterns were evident throughout the focus groups and interviews.

Recent research by Buono and Subbiah (2014) encouraged organizations to seek out and utilize built-in capacity for change. Figure 1 in Chapter 2 illustrates Buono and Subbiah’s concept of change capacity and its constituent factors: (1) the people who are willing and able to embrace change; (2) the structure, framework, and resources for pursuing change efforts; and (3) the elements of organizational culture. Buono and Subbiah (2014) asserted that an organization’s

culture must provide the foundation and supports for change efforts and, accordingly, must provide the foundation and support for change through “(1) open-mindedness, (2) a pluralistic viewpoint on issues and matters of concern, (3) a commitment to experimentation and learning, and (4) the creation of a shared purpose among all stakeholders” (p. 39). As explicated throughout the *Summary and Interpretation of Findings* earlier in this chapter, agents of change such as the Champions of Inclusion identified in this study are an available and effective route to success.

Implications

So who are these change agents and what goes into the making of inclusion? The research on inclusive education was explored in order to deconstruct the constituent elements of inclusion (Figure 4). Seminal to this process was Henderson’s construct of the champion of inclusion (Henderson, 2007). With permission, Henderson endorsed the use of the term champion of inclusion for this study and supported the expansion of his definition with the incorporation of ideology from the educational researchers cited herein. Champions of Inclusion are educators for whom the inclusion of students with disabilities in “chronologically age-appropriate general education classes” in their home schools is part of their belief system and practice; who enact *inclusive practice*; i.e. attitudes, accommodations, adaptations, and instructional practices occur in the interest of restructuring the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students (Lalvani, 2012). Champions of Inclusion are educators who maintain an *inclusive stance*; who tend to question the labeling and leveling of students with special needs and reject a deficit perspective of students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2003). Champions of Inclusion are educators who hold *inclusive values*; value

difference and diversity as a natural condition; and view the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms as a fundamental matter of civil rights and social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Skirtic, 1991; Winzer, 2000). Champions of Inclusion are educators who, on a regular basis, demonstrate the commitment and competency for cultivating *inclusive culture* and who believe they can act an agent for change to cultivate inclusive values through educating, coaching, networking, mentoring, and collaborating with other educators (Henderson, 2007).

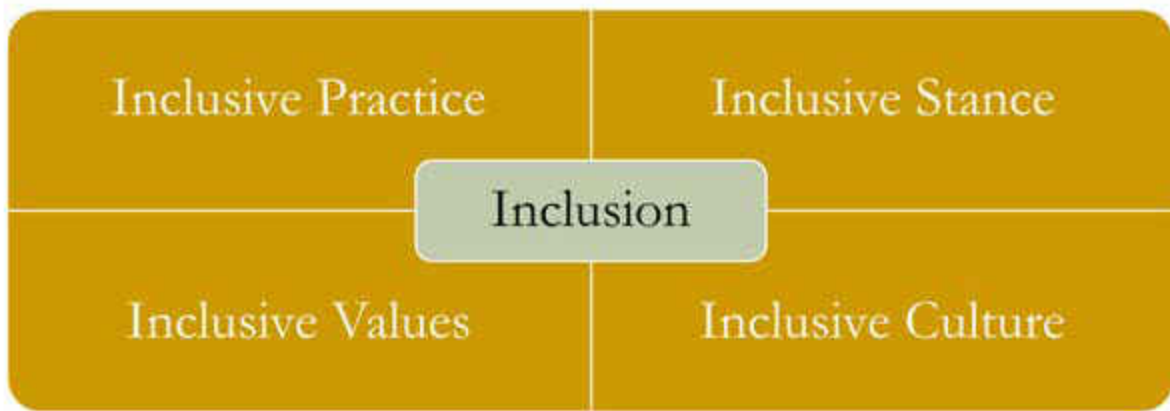


Figure 4: Constituent Elements of Inclusion

So what do the Champions of Inclusion have to say about the phenomenon and status of inclusion in their organization?

Contradictions in the System Constrain and Inhibit Inclusion

Implications for Accountability and Assessment

Educational organizations must be aware of the unintended consequence of increased payoff for the exclusion of students with disabilities due to the pressures associated with increased accountability and teacher evaluation systems. While this study assumes a belief in the

instructional benefits of accountability, the evidence presented here clearly suggests that the structure of current systems of accountability and teacher evaluation significantly prohibits inclusion and may actually incentivize the *exclusion* of students with disabilities from general education classrooms. Fear could have been an identified common theme for the focus groups and interviews, as the champions expressed that teachers are afraid that the inclusion of students with disabilities who may not make adequate gains will result in unfavorable teacher evaluations and jeopardize their professional reputations and careers, not to mention pay.

The message was clear that not only are teachers resistant to taking on students with disabilities, but that in many cases, teachers view the placement of students with disabilities in their classrooms as “punishment.” This is a significant implication for educational organizations that are faced with the paradox of increased accountability for the educational progress of students with disabilities and ever-increasing resistance to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general curriculum, despite the equitable education promised by federal law.

What is needed is a radical restructuring of our accountability system. Accountability systems need to do more than assign students, teachers, schools and districts with differing levels *credit* (and consequences) for academic achievement. According to Thurlow, Quenemoen & Albus (2013) “accurate data, from the appropriate assessment, is critical to knowing how well students are doing in relation to the knowledge and skills they are to demonstrate” (p. 10). Thurlow (2013) cautioned:

If students who participate in assessment have different characteristics and develop competence in the assessed content differently from those who are the intended participants in the assessment, then the validity argument on which the assessment was developed is no longer appropriate (p. 10).

Moreover, Thurlow et al (2013) goes on to voice the more critical concern that when a student is inappropriately assigned to an assessment, the result may be a decreased opportunity to learn, as “educators, parents and the students themselves may believe that the student can do less than he or she can do (p. 10). *All* students deserve the instructional benefits of accountability *and* deserve to be evaluated by accountability measures that are appropriate, unambiguous, valid and reliable.

In regard to the appropriate assessment and accurate reporting of data for students with disabilities, the fear that teachers experience as the person most responsible for student’s educational outcomes is real. It is essential for educational organizations to demand systems of assessment and accountability measures that include safeguards to ensure that results that impact teacher evaluation have true and accurate meaning, do not penalize teachers for embracing the inclusion of students with disabilities and therefore do not threaten inclusive schooling and social justice.

Implications for Countering the Special Education Status Quo

The problems inherent in the creation of attitudinal change continue to be difficult for the agents of any social movement. Attitudinal barriers stubbornly defy legislation, do not respond to architectural adaptations, and do not necessarily improve with the application of more money or better programming. They are notoriously slippery; the insidious products of unconscious socialization. (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994, p. 392)

According to Lalvani (2012), “teachers need to learn to identify their own roles in perpetuating the status quo”. This need was exemplified in the responses of focus group 2, the “inclusion teachers”, and in the survey data of teachers who were identified by their principals as individuals who embraced and promoted inclusion, yet whose responses did not qualify them for

Phase 2 of the study. To what extent do these teachers, unwittingly or otherwise, perpetuate ableism? Similar to Lalvani, Slee (2001) suggested that “if we are to create truly inclusive classrooms, it is essential to confront our own complicity in systematic exclusion”, yet in a study conducted by Lalvani (2012), few teachers examined their own roles in perpetuating the segregation.

The institution that is the *Special Education Status Quo* has significant implications for both pre-service and in-service teacher education. Osgood (2006) implored us to examine and reconsider the special education terminology that includes language that depicts categories of disability and suggests characteristics of children with disabilities, conditions, practices and especially attitudes that are responsible for defining its form (p. 135). Osgood recognized that “issues of social justice are inextricably embedded in the professional and cultural language used in special education discourse” (p. 142), and Lalvani’s study indicated that teacher education should include coursework grounded in a sociocultural approach to learning and development, in addition to an examination of both historical and current attitudes towards individuals with disabilities (2013, p. 26).

Lalvani asserts that it is imperative that educators learn to recognize the language and labels that perpetuate segregation, and be routinely challenged to examine and discuss their own complicity in the continued marginalization of certain groups of students. Teaching is a profession that requires thoughtful consideration in order to make informed decisions about complex problems of practice (Oyler, 2011). Educators need the space to do this. Teacher preparation programs, programs through which educational organizations onboard and mentor new teachers, and in-service professional development programs must provide teachers with a community of practice that provides teachers with an intellectual community of support and

validation that cultivates inclusive practice, stance, values, and culture and allow educational organization to influence patterns of practice and culture in order to measure and shape organizational climate and culture.

Inclusion in Name Only

I want to explain this to you. My argument will be that in spite of all of this measurable activity, financial expenditure and optimistic talk exclusion remains a real and present danger. In fact, not only is the phenomenon of exclusion growing, some of the mechanisms for inclusive schooling are contributing directly to exclusion (Slee, 2012, p. 896).

As stated in the *Summary and Interpretation of Findings* earlier in this chapter, there has to be more than legal preference for inclusion. If we listen to the champions, their overarching message echoed the findings from the literature: inclusion requires careful thought, preparation, and a focus not just on access to general education, but rather the assurance that when inclusion is deemed appropriate, it is implemented with proper attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations in place (Deno, 1994; King-Sears, 1997; Scott et al., 1998). According to the champions, if we listen to teachers and administrators as they discuss inclusive education and the range of students with disabilities who are present in our schools and classrooms, we soon hear that we are a long way from where we should be.

Unless we move beyond the superficial implementation of inclusion, and embrace inclusion at a deeper level, the implementation of inclusion at the instructional level will remain a grandly abstract and elusive concept for those who are held most accountable for indicators of students' educational progress: classroom teachers (Winter & O'Raw, 2010). This is a significant implication for educational organizations and communities for whom the consequences of such

superficial change—when billions of dollars are spent annually on special education—are students with disabilities who have not been adequately supported in gaining access to and making progress in the general curriculum, and who leave school but stay in their communities, at high economic and social costs. In fact, as far back as 1993, the *Final Report of the Inclusive Education Committee: Findings and Recommendations* (Michigan State Department of Education, 1993) included the following,

When one contrasts such [positive] indicators [regarding inclusion] with the fact that there appears to be little, if any evidence in research to support superior student outcomes as a result of placement in segregated settings, one must seriously question the efficacy of spending ever-increasing sums of money to maintain dual systems.

Slee (2012) stated that “defining inclusion might be a distraction and that the real challenge for us was to learn how to detect, understand and dismantle exclusion... as it presents itself in education” (p. 905). Slee goes on to discuss the reality of activity, similar to that described by the “inclusion teaches” in focus group 2, that is couched as inclusion yet has an exclusionary effect such as students with disabilities being limited to one classroom (the inclusion classroom) or being taught in the back of a classroom with “conditional and tenuous engagement” (p. 905), under the protection of a special education teacher or assistant. Slee cautions that a focus on inclusion may be counterproductive and may be causing the “escalation of mechanisms to farther divide the student population” (905) several of which were identified by the champions on this study. This researcher shares Slee’s *stance* and concern that the “cumulative impact” of a focus on inclusion as a “thing” is that more children will be caught in the diagnostic net” necessitating the call for more resources to apply to individualized and separate educational practices and programs (p. 905).

Supporting Champions of Inclusion as Strategic Assets.

We can tread the traditional special educational path and call it inclusion, but we will create more strangers, more surplus children and more exclusion. This means that we need to carefully examine proclamations of inclusive education. Many of those who describe themselves as inclusive educators are not looking for education or social reform to build engaging communities; they seek clients to practice on (Slee, 2013, p. 906).

Slee identified one of the root causes of the aforementioned trend in the following: “we need a new way of identifying resources for inclusion” (p. 906). Slee then went on to ask a more essential question: “how do we build the capacity of schools to grow with and to work with a difference” (p. 905)? The efforts of champions of inclusion to promote change through coaching, educating, networking, and mentoring efforts that embed and reinforce inclusive practice, stance, values, and culture throughout the system represent a sustainable course of improvement for developing the expertise of teachers to engage a broad range of diverse learners in quality learning.

Implications for Aspiring and Current Educational Leaders

The themes revealed in this study have implications for educational organizations and leadership programs. Owens and Valesky (2011) compare the cost of the anxiety, resentment, frustration and dissatisfaction that teachers are experiencing due to the tense climate of increased accountability teacher evaluation and scarce resources to concept of deferred maintenance on tangible property or assets, in terms of their effect on the organization’s human resources. Owens and Valesky assert that these costs have the capacity to undermine district initiatives and undermine the motivation of staff and teamwork between administration and teachers. Yet, as

evidenced in this study, there are teachers who demonstrate a commitment and a sense of urgency toward socially conscious change and despite the challenges, make inclusion “happen.”

An awareness of the domains and descriptor of a champion of inclusion is important for aspiring and current educational leaders. Owens and Valesky (2011) cite the importance of treating human resources as assets (as opposed to pawns) who are expected to have value extending into the future nurtured by training, support and encouragement in their growth and development. It is critical for aspiring and current educational leaders to understand that it is only through these methods that an educational organization can expect to create and maintain a high performing team made up of committed and talented employees.

According to Owens and Valesky (2011), assuring that administrators are aware of the relationship and reciprocity between the behaviors, policies and practices of the organization and the impact, for good or ill, on its human side is a critical success factor. It is important for aspiring and current educational leaders to understand the value of agents of change such as champions of inclusion, who act as influencers who communicate, transmit, and reinforce values, through both word and action (Bennis, 1993). It is essential that aspiring and current educational leaders recognize and support individuals who stand apart in grasping and leveraging sources of power and authority to increase the capacity for generating meaningful outcomes (Rylatt, 2013, p. 74); who have the resilience and consistent ability to articulate compelling reasons for change (p. 74); who are energized by (as opposed to being daunted by) and demonstrate personal responsibility for resolving difficult challenges; who hold themselves and others accountable.

Leadership is essential in creating inclusive schools (Theoharris & Causton-Theoharris, 2008). The domains and descriptors of a champion of inclusion may be useful to current and aspiring school leaders who are charged with hiring talented instructional staff who have both the

capacity and sense of responsibility for advancing inclusive schooling and social justice. Using the domains and descriptors of a champion of inclusion to screening potential teacher candidates based on the extent to which they support inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values, actively cultivate inclusive culture and respond to challenge holds promise for leaders and organizations who are hiring both new and experienced teachers. As evidence in the lived experience of the champions of inclusion, what was most important to their success was not experience and expertise, but the personal stance, values and resilience that led to the development of their professional practice and their success as a champion of inclusion.

Implications for Professional Development

As evidenced in the *Summary and Interpretation of Findings*, cultivating inclusive culture is a recursive, interconnected process. Champions of inclusion enact and model inclusive practices, enact and model their inclusive stance, enact and model their inclusive values, and enact and cultivate inclusive culture. Moreover, the self-described efforts of the champions of inclusion are aligned to the key elements of professional learning that change professional practice and that can result in increased student learning; content, context, and process (National Staff Development Council, 2009).

In most opportunities for professional development, professional development content, typically delivered in isolation, is the star. But without a context that supports professional learning and an appropriate research-based learning process, there is typically little change in educator practice. The self-described efforts of the champions of inclusion represent a professional learning process that is purposeful, focused, ongoing, sustained, collaborative, and most importantly based on the job, embedded.

Kalb Knoll (1987) pointed to the inherent problem of typical professional development opportunities and one of the most common and serious mistakes made in any change process, which is the presumption that once an improvement, method, or strategy is introduced and initial training has been completed, the intended users will put the innovation into practice. The second mistake is to assume that all users will react in similar ways. Professional learning through coaching and mentorship, from individuals who are “in it with them,” i.e., champions of inclusion, represents systemic professional development that not only leads to individual improvement but represents improvements in the capacity of the organization to solve problems and renew itself (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

More importantly, the messages from the system transmitted by champions of inclusion are essential to the organization, providing an ear to the ground that will enable organizations to be responsive and make strategic adjustments. This is a significant implication for educational organizations, which need to address learning and organizational changes simultaneously in ways that are reciprocal and support one another, lest the gains made in one area be canceled by continuing problems in others (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997)

The findings that emerged in this study support the assertion of Kauffman, Bantz, and McCullough, that “special education is deeply flawed and needs radical restructuring” (2002, p. 149). The findings suggest that champions of inclusion may be central to such restructuring, serving as a strategic asset in “reconceptualizing special education as a service, not a place, and as an integral part of a flexible, supple, responsive part of general education that does not require singling children out for special services” (2002, p. 150).

Champions support the restructuring called for by Kauffman and colleagues (2002) by reinforcing the truth that children are more alike than different and that they are entitled to the

same high-quality education (p. 150). Moreover, the efforts of champions normalize inclusion so that the stigmatization and separation of children are avoided and the needs of all are met collaboratively through shared responsibility of general and special education teachers, eliminating the need for a separate program for “exceptional” children (p. 150).

The findings are evidence that champions of inclusion are a strategic asset and necessary resource for countering “champions of the special education status quo” (Ware, 2004, p. 11), i.e., general education teachers and special education teachers who are resistant to inclusive education and seek to protect segregated placements and learning environments regardless of the positive evidence for inclusive settings.

Recommendations for Future Research

How then, do we move beyond mere tolerance to true valuing of diversity? For many of us, the struggle is often not in understanding why we should do something, but in knowing what we should do next. Rather than seek answers, perhaps it might be more helpful to begin by developing a new set of questions. We need questions that are broad in scope, and will challenge the paradigms both inside and outside the context of inclusive education. What kind of educational system do we want? What can schools become? What kind of society do we want to live in? (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994, p. 397)

In this phenomenological research study, the researcher represents the most unique and evolving instrument. To add to their validity as an instrument, the researcher chose a research focus related to their experience, became well-read and knowledgeable in the subject, analytical reflective and introspective (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach & Richardson, 2005, p. 197).

Having said that, the positionality of the researcher is an important variable in this study; to wit, the phenomenon of inclusion was *examined* by a researcher, who happens to be an individual for whom inclusive education, inclusive practice, inclusive values, and inclusive stance are fundamental to their lived experience. In turn *that* researcher sought to view the phenomenon of inclusion in a public school system from the perspective of individuals for whom inclusive education, inclusive practice, inclusive values, and inclusive stance are fundamental to their lived experience.

The intention was to add value to the body of knowledge on inclusive education, in that both lived experience and shared experience of champions of inclusion will help to better understand what goes into the making of inclusion and the norms, values, practices, and policies that reinforce and sustain a culture of inclusion. Van Manen (1990) described such anecdotal narratives as “experiential case studies” (p. 120) that teach us through the power of systematic discourse, more commonly referred to as stories.

As one champion asked, “are [there] case studies on students [that show] more of a longitudinal look at [a] student that was in a successful inclusion model with the same sort of challenges as this student who wasn’t, and then showing how the outcome at the end can be so drastically different?” There is room in the literature and demand for such stories. It has been said that stories are data with a soul, and Van Manen asserted the significance of these types of anecdotal narratives in phenomenological research due to its power “to compel, to lead us to reflect, to involve us personally, to transform and to measure one’s interpretive sense” (p. 121).

The current study based its conclusions on a sample size of seven surveys, two focus groups of five (total) participants, and three interviews. Future studies could enlarge the sample size to obtain a larger experience base and a broader cross-section of respondents. Participants’

could be drawn from more geographically disparate school settings, rather than all from one school district.

In addition, the rich data from the survey could be further explicated to examine the responses and dispositions of the survey completers who did not self-identify as a champion of inclusion based on the criterion. Such an exploration may provide further insight into the current status of inclusion in this school district and may yield evidence of the extent to which the special education status quo may be obstructing or advancing inclusion.

Although the method of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2007) employed in this study does not claim to be able to say something about the lived experience of all teachers who identify as champions of inclusion, it is possible for subsequent studies to be conducted with other groups, allowing more general claims to be made. Smith and Osborn recommended that IPA be thought of in terms of theoretical rather than empirical generalizability. IPA allows the reader to make “links between the findings of an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience, and the claims in the extant literature” (p.56). Smith and Osborn went on to add that “the power of the IPA study is judged by the light it sheds within this broader context.”

Recent research suggests that this type of research within educational organizations is essential for clearly identifying contextual factors that either facilitate or inhibit the capacity for strategic culture change and therefore either advance or diminish educational outcomes for students with disabilities. The literature on organizational change reveals the importance of agents of change, referred to as “bridge-builders” (Hamner et al., 2008), in creating and sustaining transformative change. Applied to a strategic culture change such as inclusion, this study explored the lives of individuals within organizations who emerged as agents who were

empowered to act as champions of change, to assess the potential power of harnessing the synergy between the individual and organization as cultivators of change.

Although there is a significant body of literature that offers evidence that organizational culture is a strategic resource and can be leveraged as a strategic asset, there is little research on how educational organizations work to shape and change teachers' conceptualization of inclusion; how educational organizations reinforce existing resources for change to mitigate entrenchment (Hulgin & Drake, 2009); and how educational organizations enact strategic culture change in the context of civil rights, democracy, and social justice.

Further study based on Giddens' Theory of Structuration that directly explores the opportunities for reciprocity between organizational structures and conditions, and agents of change at the school and district level who reinforce and advance organizational practices may provide further insight into the current status of mechanism of inclusion and exclusion and yield findings that suggest how to optimize the efforts of agents of change such as champions of inclusion. Further study could focus exclusively on individuals in positions of leadership such as school principals, assistant principals and district level administrators. Further study could focus on executive leadership such as school Superintendent's and state chiefs of educational organizations including those in general education and special education.

It was anticipated that this study might produce findings that would provide insight and understanding as to the ways in which educational organizations can mitigate resistance to inclusion and cultivate positive attitudes toward inclusion as a social justice imperative in pre-service and in-service general education teachers. The intent of the researcher was for this study to join the discourse related to the full inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, and the discourse related to the evolving form and function of a progressive special

education model that focuses less on student deficits and the ensuing educational placement that their disability label warrants, to one of inclusion as (1) a practice that assumes and prepares for learner variability, (2) as a stance that questions exclusionary practices and rejects a deficit perspective of disability, (3) as a value that holds inclusion as a matter of civil rights and social justice, and (4) as a culture of belongingness, sensitivity, and fairness (Sosu, Mtika, & Colucci-Gray, 2010). The ultimate intention: “[that] it will be said we taught them to stand tall & proud, even in the face of history & the future was made new & whole for us all, one child at a time.”

**APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL
FLORIDA**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

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

To: **June M. Sellers**

Date: **May 18, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 05/18/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Inclusion: A Question of Practice, Stance, Values and Culture
Investigator:	June M. Sellers
IRB Number:	SBE-15-11207
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

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

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

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

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 05/18/2015 09:32:59 AM EDT

IRB manager

**APPENDIX B: RESEARCH APPROVAL FROM XXXXXX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



Orange County Public Schools

445 West Amelia Street • Orlando, FL 32801-1129 • Phone 407.317.3300 • www.ocps.net

Notice of Approval

Approval Date: 11/24/15 Approval Number: **0023**
Project Title: Inclusion: A Question of Practice, Stance, Values and Culture
Requester: June Sellers
Project Director/Advisor: Suzanne Martin
Sponsor Agency/Institutional Affiliation: University of Central Florida

Thank you for your request to conduct research in Orange County Public Schools. We have reviewed and approved your application. This Notice of Approval expires one year after issue, 11/23/16.

If you are interacting with OCPS staff or students, you should have submitted a Principal Notification Form with your application. You may now email the principals who have indicated interest in participating, including this Notice as an attachment. After initial contact with principals, you may then email any necessary staff. This notice does not obligate administrators, teachers, students, or families of students to participate in your study; participation is entirely voluntary.

OCPS badges are required to enter any OCPS campus or building (see the [Security Clearance Flow Chart](#)).

You are responsible for submitting a [Change Request Form](#) to this office prior to implementing any changes to the currently approved protocol. If any problems or unexpected adverse reactions occur as a result of this study, you must notify this office immediately by emailing a completed [Adverse Event Report Form](#). On or before 10/23/16, you must complete a [Request for Renewal or Executive Summary Submission](#). Email all forms to researchv@ocps.net. All forms may be found at www.ocps.net/cs/services/accountability/Pages/Research.aspx.

Should you have questions or need assistance, please contact Mary Ann White at (407) 317-3201 or marv.white@ocps.net.

Best wishes for continued success,

Tavy Chen, Ed.D.
tavy.chen@ocps.net
Director of Accountability, Research and Evaluation
Orange County Public Schools

Cc: Brandon McKelvey, Senior Director, brandon.mckelvey@ocps.net

"The Orange County School Board is an equal opportunity agency."

**APPENDIX C: EMAIL INVITATION FOR EXPERT PROTOCOL
REVIEW PANEL**

Greetings,

I am respectfully soliciting the benefit of your informed judgment as I enter the dissertation phase of my doctoral program. I hope you will kindly consent to provide your expertise and assistance.

My study will focus on inclusion, meaning the practice of educating students with disabilities in general education classes with the provision of supports, and the performance of educational organizations.

You are recognized as someone who is familiar with the phenomenon of inclusion, and have been nominated based on one or more of the following characteristics:

- professional educator (classroom teacher or support staff)
- knowledgeable and practiced in the phenomenon of inclusion
- vested interest in the topic of inclusion in education
- highly credentialed expert in the field of education (M.Ed., Ed.S. Ed.D. or Ph.D.)
- principal, administrator/executive administrator, who may be interested in the findings of this study

Your participation will involve vetting three, short sets of questions that will be used in the study:

- survey questions
- focus group questions
- individual interview questions

The process we will utilize for vetting the questions in the protocols is an iterative process known as a Delphi Technique.

In the first round, or iteration, you will be sent sample questions electronically, and will be asked to review questions for errors in syntax, bias, ambiguity, vagueness, etc. You will be able to rate each question on a Likert-type scale (highly relevant, relevant, relevant with revisions, not relevant, neutral/no opinion). Responses will be collected via electronic submission. First-round responses will be coded and analyzed, and ALL individual responses will remain confidential.

In the second round, the process will be repeated. Depending on the level of consensus, the number of rounds may range from two to four. It is estimated that your investment of time in this entire process, from start to finish, should be little to no more than one hour.

It is expected that the entire process will take approximately 2-3 weeks, and when complete, you will receive a report of the results.

Please let me know if you will be willing to participate. You may simply hit reply and type YES or NO.

Once I receive your affirmative reply, I will send a letter with further explanation of the study, the instruments, and instructions.

Please email or call me if you have any questions: [321-946-5241](tel:321-946-5241)

Thank you in advance for your willingness to advance and improve the educational experience of students with disabilities.

Sincerely,

June M. Sellers, Doctoral Candidate

College of Education and Human Performance, University of Central Florida

**APPENDIX D: EMAIL INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXPERT PROTOCOL
REVIEW PANEL**

Hello _____,

Thank you for consenting to serve on my Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP). You have been chosen to serve on this panel based on your commitment to inclusion, and to promoting inclusive values in the public school system. Thank you in advance for your participation!

As the culminating task of my doctoral degree, I will be conducting a study, as described in the following abstract:

ABSTRACT

INCLUSION: A QUESTION OF PRACTICE, STANCE, VALUES AND CULTURE

Today, inclusion in general education is the expectation when it comes to meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities (Office of Special Education Programs, 2012). Yet, despite the equitable education promised by federal law, teachers have been resistant to the inclusion of children with disabilities in public school classrooms since the initial mandate for compulsory school attendance in the early 1900's (Connor & Ferri, 2007; Ferguson, 2014). This study proposes to examine the reasons why some teachers readily accept and embrace and the idea of inclusion. The primary focus of the inquiry will be to examine the lived experiences of teachers who self-identify as a *champion of inclusion*, to identify key traits and influences to determine how organizations can enact and influence transformative change. This study proposes a mixed-methods phenomenological research (MMPR) design to examine the phenomenon of inclusion in a large, urban public school system. Potential participants for the study will be nominated by school principals. The survey will screen nominees, based on key descriptors, based on the extent to which they enact *inclusive practices*, maintain an *inclusive stance*, hold *inclusive values* and actively promote *inclusive culture*. Teachers who self-identify as a champion of inclusion will be selected through random purposive sampling. The lived experiences of teachers who have this distinct perspective and insight into the phenomenon of inclusion will be explored through focus group session and individual interview.

As stated in your invitation, you will be vetting the sample questions for the survey, focus group and individual interviews to be conducted during the study, through an iterative process known as a Delphi Technique. The Delphi Technique will be used to gain a consensus of opinion from the EPRP, in terms of the suitability and alignment of the survey questions, interview questions, and focus group questions, to the objectives of the study. For a question to be included in the study, a majority of focus group members must rate the question as Acceptable.

an online survey relating to teaching experience, knowledge, basic perceptions of co-teaching methods in general, and of the co-teaching service delivery model at Devon Aire K-8 Center. You are under no obligation to do so, but I hope that you will take a few minutes to complete *Round 1* of the survey and provide your valuable insight in the interest of educational research.

The link to the survey is: _____

Sincerely,

June M. Sellers

APPENDIX E: DELPHI EXPERT PANEL ITEM REVIEW ROUND 1

Delphi EPRP Survey/Focus Group/Interview Protocol - Round 1

Thank you for consenting to serve on my Expert Protocol Review Panel (EPRP). You have been chosen to serve on this panel based on your recognized commitment to inclusion, and to promoting inclusive values in the public school system. Thank you for your time and participation!

You are being asked to evaluate statements and questions for the following protocols: Survey (50), Focus Group (10) and Individual Interview (10).

You are not being asked to respond to the statements or answer the questions. You are not necessarily being asked if you agree or disagree with the statements or questions, however, you could disagree with the way a statement or question is written based on its misalignment with the objectives of the study. You are being asked to review questions for errors in syntax, bias, ambiguity, vagueness, and vet them based on their suitability and alignment to the research questions and objectives of the study.

INSTRUCTIONS:

For each question you will first be able to select 1 of 2 options: "Acceptable" or "Revision/Rewording Suggested".

For example, question #1 is:

"Many of the things general education teachers do in their classrooms for students without disabilities are appropriate for students with disabilities."

The choices are as follows:

- "Acceptable"
- "Revision or rewording Suggested (see q. 1a)"

Each question in this survey is followed by a repeat of the same question with an open text field and the instructions:

"If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to the next question."

If you chose "Acceptable" you will simply skip question 1a., leaving the text field blank, and advance to the next question, in this example, question #2.

If you choose "Revision/Rewording Suggested", simply advance to question 1a. and type your suggested revision or rewording of the question before advancing to the next question.

If you have any difficulties with the survey, please do not hesitate to call June Sellers, the Principal Investigator of the study at 321-946-5241.

* Required

STUDY ABSTRACT

INCLUSION: A QUESTION OF PRACTICE, STANCE, VALUES AND CULTURE

Continuing exclusionary practices relating to the education of students with disabilities in the public schools call for fundamental change (Sarason 1991; Skirtic 1991; Slee 1993; Gordon, 2010). Exclusionary practices based on a deficit perspective of disability are not supported by law and are inconsistent with the rigorous standards for teaching, learning and accountability in our public schools. Moreover, consequences of failed change will continue to have significant negative effects on the performance of educational organizations (Chawla and Kelloway, 2004). Studies suggest that organizations can become agents of change by capitalizing on the commitment and competency of individuals who already champion inclusive values (Miller, 1998). By supporting them as they promote change through coaching, networking and mentoring efforts, organizations can propagate a culture of inclusion as they embed and reinforce inclusive values throughout the system. This study proposes a mixed-methods phenomenological research (MMPR) design (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014) to examine the phenomenon of inclusion in a large, urban public school system. Potential participants for the study will be nominated by school principals and invited to participate in a survey. The survey will screen for teachers who support inclusive practices, maintain an inclusive stance, hold inclusive values and identify as a champion of inclusion. Teachers who self-identify as a champion of inclusion will be selected through random purposive sampling (Patton, 1990). The lived experiences of teachers who have this distinct perspective and insight into the phenomenon of inclusion will be explored through focus group sessions and individual interviews.

SURVEY PROTOCOL

The Survey represents Phase 1 of the study, and has been developed to capture participant's views regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in general education settings.

The statements have been categorized into four Domains: (1) Inclusionary Practices/Inclusive Practices; (2) Inclusive Stance; (3) Inclusive Values; (4) Inclusive Culture. Each Domain includes key descriptors gleaned from the literature which are aligned to the themes of the research questions.

A Likert-type scale will be employed to identify a target sample of participants with specific dispositions and ideological orientations relative to the phenomenon being studied.

Remember:

You are not being asked to respond to the statements.

You are not necessarily being asked if you agree or disagree with the statements, however, you

could disagree with the way a statement or question is written based on its misalignment with the objectives of the study.

You will note that some of the survey statements are "pro-inclusion" and some are "anti-inclusion". This is purposeful, in order to yield a sample of participants who meet criterion for the study based on the extent to which they "strongly agree" with "pro-inclusion" statements and "strongly disagree" with statements that are "anti-inclusion".

The Survey will also serve as Stage 1 of a multistage sampling scheme, that will yield a sample of participants who self-identify as a "Champion of Inclusion" and thereby self-select for participation in the subsequent phases of the study based on the extent to which they affirmatively identify with the statements in the Survey Protocol.

Instrument 1 - Survey Protocol

THE STATEMENTS IN THIS SECTION ARE DESIGNED TO SCREEN FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT INCLUSIONARY/INCLUSIVE PRACTICES.

Supports Inclusionary Practices/Inclusive Practices - Attitudes, accommodations, adaptations and instructional practices that occur in the interest of restructuring the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students (Lalvani, 2012).

Key descriptor(s): Restructuring the classroom environment to meet the needs of all students.

1. Many of the things general education teachers do in their classrooms for students without disabilities are appropriate for students with disabilities. *

Acceptable

Revision or Rewording Suggested (see q. 1a.)

1a. Many of the things general education teachers do in their classrooms for students without disabilities are appropriate for students with disabilities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



2. Students with disabilities risk being socially isolated by students without disabilities in general education classrooms. *

Acceptable

Rewording or Revision Suggested (see q. 2a.)

2a. Students with disabilities risks being socially isolated by students without disabilities in general education classrooms.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



3. The extra attention students with disabilities require will be to the detriment of the other students. *

Acceptable

Revision or Rewording Suggested

3a. The extra attention students with disabilities require will be to the detriment of the other students.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



4. Teachers can creatively adapt and utilize strategies and materials to help students with disabilities learn and succeed in general education classrooms.

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 4a.)

4a. Teachers can creatively adapt and utilize strategies and materials to help students with disabilities learn and succeed in general education classrooms.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



5. Diagnostic-prescriptive teaching is best done in a resource-room or special education classrooms, vs. a general education classroom. *


Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 5a.)

5a. Diagnostic-prescriptive teaching is best done in a resource-room or special education classrooms, vs. a general education classroom.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



6. General education teachers possess a great deal of the expertise necessary to work with students with disabilities. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording(see q. 6a.)

6a. General education teachers possess a great deal of the expertise necessary to work with students with disabilities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



7. The integration of students with disabilities will require significant changes in general education procedures. *


Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 7a.)

7a. The integration of students with disabilities will require significant changes in general education procedures.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



8. Students with disabilities require significantly different methods of education than their peers without disabilities. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 8a.)

8a. Students with disabilities require significantly different methods of education than their peers without disabilities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



9. Only self-contained classroom settings offer truly individualized education, differentiated instruction, and access to specialized services for students with disabilities. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 9a.)

9a. Only self-contained classroom settings offer truly individualized education, differentiated instruction, and access to specialized services for students with disabilities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



10. With few exceptions, the general education classroom can be restructured to effectively meet the needs of all its students, including students with disabilities. *

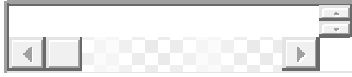
Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 10a.)

10a. With few exceptions, the general education classroom can be restructured to effectively meet the needs of all its students, including students with disabilities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



THE STATEMENTS IN THIS SECTION ARE DESIGNED TO SCREEN FOR TEACHERS WHO MAINTAIN AN INCLUSIVE STANCE.

Inclusive Stance - A held belief in equity in education for all children, combined with a personal stance that assumes and anticipates human difference; values those differences and what they can teach us; a proclivity for questioning the labeling and leveling of students, and rejecting a deficit perspective of students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow, Howes, Farrell, & Frankham, 2003).

Key descriptor(s): A belief in equity for all children; anticipates and values human difference; questions labeling and leveling of students with disabilities; rejects a deficit perspective of disability

11. Students with disabilities will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a special education classroom than in a general education classroom. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 11a.)

11a. Students with disabilities will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a special education classroom than in a general education classroom.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



12. It is difficult to maintain order in a general education classroom that contains students with disabilities. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see. q. 12a.)

12a. It is difficult to maintain order in a general education classroom that contains students with disabilities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



13. Low IQ scores are a valid criterion for denial of access to general education classrooms for a student with a disability. *

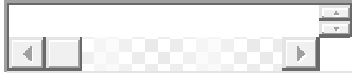
Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 13a.)

13a. Low IQ scores are a valid criterion for denial of access to general education classrooms for a student with a disability.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



14. The challenge of being in a general education classroom will promote the academic growth of students with disabilities. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 14a.)

14a. The challenge of being in a general education classroom will promote the academic growth of students with disabilities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



15. Increased freedom in the general education classroom will create too much confusion for a student with a disability. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 15a.)

15a. Increased freedom in the general education classroom will create too much confusion for a student with a disability.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



16. Isolation in a separate, special class can have a negative effect on the social and emotional development of a student with a disability. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 16a.)

16a. Isolation in a separate, special class can have a negative effect on the social and emotional development of a student with a disability.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



17. A student with a disability should be given every opportunity to be educated in the classroom they would otherwise attend if they did not have a disability (i.e. a general education classroom). *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 17a.)

17a. A student with a disability should be given every opportunity to be educated in the classroom they would otherwise attend if they did not have a disability, i.e. in the general education classroom setting.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



18. Students with disabilities, with very few exceptions, can benefit from inclusion in general education classrooms. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 18a.)

18a. Students with disabilities, with very few exceptions, can benefit from inclusion in general education classrooms.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



19. The needs of students with disabilities can best be served through special, separate classes. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 19a.)

19a. The needs of students with disabilities can best be served through special, separate classes.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



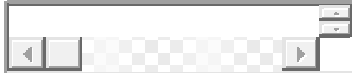
20. Placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms should be based on factors such as: type of disability, level of functioning, cognitive ability, IQ score, and behavior. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 20a.)

20a. Placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms should be based on factors such as: type of disability, level of functioning, cognitive ability, IQ score, and behavior. If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



21. Students with disabilities must be able to ‘keep up’ with their peers without disabilities in order to have access to general education classrooms. *

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 21a)

21a. Students with disabilities must be able to ‘keep up’ with their peers without disabilities in order to have access to general education classrooms.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



THE STATEMENTS IN THIS SECTION ARE DESIGNED TO SCREEN FOR TEACHERS

WHO HOLD INCLUSIVE VALUES.

Inclusive Values - A value system that regards difference and diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource; a value system within public education that situates inclusive education as an issue of social justice (Skirtic, 1991; Gerrard, 1994), and as a fundamental issue of civil rights (Winzer, 2000).

Key descriptor(s): Values difference and diversity as a natural condition; views inclusion as an issue of civil rights and social justice:

22. Learning differences are a natural part of the human condition. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.22a.)

22a. Learning differences are a natural part of the human condition.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



23. Segregation and stigma can negatively impact students with disabilities and their learning outcomes. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 23a)

23a. Segregation and stigma can negatively impact students with disabilities and their learning outcomes.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



24. It is likely that a student with a disability will exhibit behavior problems that will require their removal from the general education classroom setting. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.24a.)

24a. It is likely that a student with a disability will exhibit behavior problems that will require their removal from the general education classroom setting.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



25. Advancing and improving inclusion opportunities for students with disabilities is too much for me right now; I have to work on my teaching. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.25a.)

25a. Advancing and improving inclusion opportunities for students with disabilities is too much for me right now; I have to work on my teaching.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



26. The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms represents the fundamental guarantee of their civil rights. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.26a.)

26a. The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms represents the fundamental guarantee of their civil rights.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



27. The contact between students without disabilities and students with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms may be harmful and may negatively impact learning.*

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.27a.)

27a. The contact between students without disabilities and students with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms may be harmful and may negatively impact learning. If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



28. The presence of students with disabilities in general education classrooms will enable beneficial interactions which will foster students' understanding and acceptance of differences. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.28a)

28a. The presence of students with disabilities in general education classrooms will enable beneficial interactions which will foster students' understanding and acceptance of differences. If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



29. The integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms should be the norm, and is beneficial for all students. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.29a)

29a. The integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms should be the norm, and is will be beneficial for all students. If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



30. Inclusion is more than just implementing instructional strategies, it is about belonging and membership. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.30a)

30a. Inclusion is more than just implementing instructional strategies, it is about belonging and membership. If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



THE STATEMENTS IN THIS SECTION ARE DESIGNED TO SCREEN FOR TEACHERS WHO ACTIVELY CULTIVATE AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE.

Inclusive Culture - An educator who consistently demonstrates both commitment and competency for supporting inclusive culture; who exemplifies on a regular basis that they can connect, communicate, challenge, and collaborate appropriately to advance and improve education services for students who have a disability; and acts an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking and mentoring other educators (Henderson, 2007).

Key descriptor(s): Actively demonstrates a commitment and competency for supporting inclusive culture; change agent

31. I connect with students who have disabilities and view them as integral, contributing members of the classroom community.*

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.31a.)

31a. I connect with students who have disabilities and view them as integral, contributing members of the classroom community.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



32. I feel comfortable around students with disabilities and have no problem communicating my enthusiasm for inclusion to other educators.*

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 32a.)

32a. I feel comfortable around students with disabilities and have no problem communicating my enthusiasm for inclusion to other educators.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



33. I always expect and challenge students with disabilities to do their best work toward high standards.*

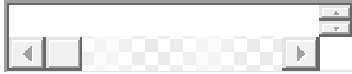
Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.33a.)

33a. I always expect and challenge student with disabilities to do their best work toward high standards.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



34. I actively collaborate with other educators to maximize the learning and development of students with disabilities. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.34a.)

34a. I actively collaborate with other educators to maximize the learning and development of students with disabilities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



35. As a person and as an educator, I am philosophically committed to celebrating diversity. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.35a.)

35a. As a person and as an educator, I am philosophically committed to celebrating diversity.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



36. I embrace and promote diversity as a valued resource. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.36a.)

36a. I embrace and promote diversity as a valued resource.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



37. I welcome and enable contributions from people with a broad range of styles, perspectives and skills, and believe that they are of extraordinary value.

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.37a)

37a. I welcome and enable contributions from people with a broad range of styles, perspectives and skills, and believe that they are of extraordinary value.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



38. Increasing diversity and inclusion within our organization will increase the talent and energy available to the organization. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.38a.)

38a. Increasing diversity and inclusion within our organization will increase the talent and energy available to the organization.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



39. Increasing diversity and inclusion within our organization will increase available routes to success in teaching and learning. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.39a)

39a. Increasing diversity and inclusion within our organization will increase available routes to success in teaching and learning.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



40. Promoting inclusive culture within our organization, or even thinking about the possibility of helping enact such change, is something that is difficult right now due to other priorities. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.40a.)

40a. Promoting inclusive culture within our organization, or even thinking about the possibility of helping enact such change, is something that is difficult right now due to other priorities.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



41. I tend to be energized by difficult challenges and actively seek to collaborate with peers and leaders to resolve problems of practice. *

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.41a.)

41a. I tend to be energized by difficult challenges and actively seek to collaborate with peers and leaders to resolve problems of practice.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



42. The challenges we are facing in education are overwhelming to me at this point. *


Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.42a.)

42a. The challenges we are facing in education are overwhelming to me at this point.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



43. I am skilled at identifying and utilizing resources and relationships to generate meaningful

outcomes, and am motivated to help others do so. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.43a)

43a. I am skilled at identifying and utilizing resources and relationships to generate meaningful

outcomes, and am motivated to help others do so.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



44. I am skilled at constructively leveraging sources of power and authority to solve problems

and positively generate meaningful outcomes, and am motivated to help others do so. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.44a.)

44a. I am skilled at constructively leveraging sources of power and authority to positively

generate meaningful outcomes, and frequently influence my peers to do so.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



45. I am skilled at articulating compelling reasons for change within our organization, and feel

motivated to share with my peers and leaders. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.45a.)

45a. I am skilled at articulating compelling reasons for change within our organization, and feel

motivated to share with my peers and leaders.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



46. Enacting transformative change within an organization depends on continuously cultivating relationships, and taking care to always preserving existing relationships. *

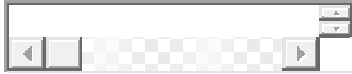
Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.46a.)

46a. Enacting transformative change within an organization depends on continuously cultivating relationships, and taking care to always preserving existing relationships.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



47. The organization I work for would benefit from establishing structures that support and reinforce inclusive values. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.47a.)

47a. The organization I work for would benefit from establishing structures that support and reinforce inclusive values.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



48. The organization I work for would benefit from efforts to remove barriers that constrain and inhibit inclusive values. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.48a.)

48a. The organization I work for would benefit from efforts to remove barriers that constrain and inhibit inclusive values.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



49. It is essential for any organization to The organization I work for articulate a vision that actively supports a culture of inclusion. *

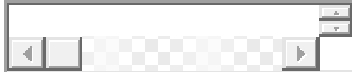
Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see 49a.)

49a. It is essential for any organization to The organization I work for articulate a vision that actively supports a culture of inclusion.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



50. Reinforcing and promoting an inclusive culture through coaching, networking, mentoring and other collaborative efforts is an important responsibility that I take very seriously. *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.50a.)

50a. Reinforcing and promoting an inclusive culture through coaching, networking, mentoring and other collaborative efforts is an important responsibility that I take very seriously.

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

The Focus Group represents Phase 2 of the study. The sample of teachers who identify as a Champion of Inclusion will be invited to participate in a Focus Group session, to share their experiences in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion in their organization, and share their insight into: (1) how the organization supports and/or constrains them as Champions of Inclusion; (2) how the organization might position and utilize them as agents for culture change; (3) how the organization can become an agent for change to positively counteract resistance to inclusion and cultivate and strengthen inclusive values and culture.

The Focus Group Protocol is semi-structured and will employ the following open-ended questions to gather deeper understanding into the participant's lived experience. To the extent possible, the Focus Group will exploit the dynamic of collective engagement in answering the research questions.

The Focus Group will also serve as Stage 2 of the multistage sampling scheme. This scheme is designed to yield an information-rich sample of participants who identify as Champions of Inclusion, with strong ideological orientations relevant to the phenomenon being studied, for the individual interview sessions.

INSTRUMENT 2 – FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

This semi-structured focus group protocol contains descriptive questions designed to expand on the quantitative data elicited from the survey questions.

Focus groups are often employed to explain results found through other data collection methods (Harrell & Bradley, 2009), therefore it should be expected that additional questions generated by the survey responses may be added.

1. To what extent does your organization promote inclusive practices? Do you encounter resistance to inclusive practices? *

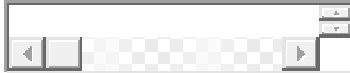
Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 1a)

1a. To what extent does your organization promote inclusive practices? Do you encounter resistance to inclusive practices?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



2. To what extent does your organization encourage educators to adopt an inclusive stance? Do you encounter resistance to an inclusive stance? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive stance? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 2a)

2a. To what extent does your organization encourage educators to adopt an inclusive stance? Do you encounter resistance to an inclusive stance? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive stance?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



3. To what extent does your organization cultivate inclusive values? Do you encounter resistance to inclusive values? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive values? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 3a.)

3a. To what extent does your organization cultivate inclusive values? Do you encounter resistance to inclusive values? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive values?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



4. To what extent does your organization cultivate an inclusive culture? Do you encounter resistance to inclusive culture? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive culture? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 4a.)

4a. To what extent does your organization cultivate an inclusive culture? Do you encounter resistance to inclusive culture? In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive culture?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



5. Do you feel the organization effectively communicates a compelling organizational imperative for inclusion? If not, what are your recommendations for remedying this? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 5a.)

5a. Do you feel the organization effectively communicates a compelling organizational imperative for inclusion? If not, what are your recommendations for remedying this?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



6. What do you know about communities of practice? [Definition will be provided] How might a community of practice of champions of inclusion be positioned and utilized by the organization as an agent for culture change? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 6a.)

6a. What do you know about communities of practice? [Definition will be provided] How might a community of practice of champions of inclusion be positioned and utilized by the organization as an agent for culture change?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



7. To what extent does your organization: (a.) support and reinforce inclusive values? How? (b.) constrain and inhibit inclusive values? How? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 7a.)

7a. To what extent does your organization: (a.) support and reinforce inclusive values? How? (b.) constrain and inhibits inclusive values? How?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



8. Based on your experience, does your organization currently have the capacity to cultivate an inclusive culture? How might such capacity be built? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 8a.)

8a. Based on your experience, does your organization currently have the capacity to cultivate an inclusive culture? How might such capacity be built?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



9. What recommendations can you make to the organization for: (a.) rooting out structures that perpetuate a culture of exclusion? (b.) removing barriers to inclusion? (c.) establishing norms, values, practices and policies that work to support inclusive organizational culture? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 9a.)

9a. What recommendations can you make to the organization for: (a.) rooting out structures that perpetuate a culture of exclusion? (b.) removing barriers to inclusion? (c.) establishing norms, values, practices and policies that work to support inclusive organizational culture?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



10. Teachers have been resistant to the inclusion of children with disabilities in public school classrooms since the initial mandate for compulsory school attendance in the early 1900's. In what ways do you positively counteract this resistance? In what ways could your organization positively counteract this resistance? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q.10a)

10a. Teachers have been resistant to the inclusion of children with disabilities in public school classrooms since the initial mandate for compulsory school attendance in the early 1900's. In what ways do you positively counteract this resistance? In what ways could your organization positively counteract this resistance?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



If you choose, you may use this space to suggest additional questions for consideration.

Your answer

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

In Phase 3 of the study, a sample of participants who emerge from the Focus Group as Champions of Inclusion, with a strong ideological orientation relevant to the phenomenon being studied, will be invited to participate in an Individual Interview.

The Individual Interview Protocol is semi-structured and will employ the following open-ended questions to explore: (1) the experiences and moments that influenced participants views and opinions about inclusion, led them to support inclusive practices, adopt an inclusive stance, embrace inclusive values, and made them a Champion of Inclusion; (2) their views in regard to the success of inclusion in their organization; (3) their views on their role as an agent of culture change; and (4) their views on their organizations' role establishing and/or advancing an inclusive organizational culture.

INSTRUMENT 3 - INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How have your views and opinions on inclusion been influenced by personal experience?

Professional experience? Teacher preparation program? Special education courses completed during your teacher preparation program? Colleagues? Leadership? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 1a.)

1a. How have your views and opinions on inclusion been influenced by personal experience?

Professional experience? Teacher preparation program? Special education courses completed during your teacher preparation program? Colleagues? Leadership?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer

2. Why do you support inclusionary/inclusive practices? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 2a.)

2a. Why do you support inclusionary/inclusive practices?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer

3. Why do you maintain an inclusive stance? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 3a.)

3a. Why do you maintain an inclusive stance?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer

4. Why do you hold inclusive values? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 4a.)

4a. Why do you hold inclusive values?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer

5. Why do you champion inclusion, i.e. what drives you to actively cultivate/promote inclusive culture? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 5a.)

5a. Why do you champion inclusion, i.e. what drives you to actively cultivate/promote inclusive culture?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer

6. How do you respond when you encounter resistance to inclusive practices? How do you actively sustain and promote inclusive practices? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 6a.)

6a. How do you respond when you encounter resistance to inclusive practices? How do you actively sustain and promote inclusive practices?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer

7. How do you respond when you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance? In what ways do you actively influence others to adopt an inclusive stance? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 7a.)

7a. How do you respond when you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance? In what ways do you actively influence others to adopt an inclusive stance?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



8. How do you respond you encounter resistance to inclusive values? In what ways do you actively influence others to embrace inclusive values? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 8a.)

8a. How do you respond you encounter resistance to inclusive values? In what ways do you actively influence others to embrace inclusive values?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



9. What are your views and opinions on the success of inclusion in your public school system?

To what do you attribute success or lack thereof? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 9a.)

9a. What are your views and opinions on the success of inclusion in your public school system?

To what do you attribute success or lack thereof?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



10. What could your organization do, or do better, to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide inclusive culture? *

Acceptable

Suggest Revision or Rewording (see q. 10a.)

10a. What could your organization do, or do better, to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide inclusive culture?

If applicable, please suggest revision or rewording; otherwise go to next question.

Your answer



If you choose, you may use this space to suggest additional questions for consideration.

Your answer

A horizontal scroll bar with a checkered pattern and navigation arrows. It consists of a main track with a checkered background, a scroll knob, and arrows at both ends for navigation.

ROUND 1 IS NOW COMPLETE!

Thank you so much for agreeing to serve on this panel.

Your expert opinion is extremely valuable to the success of this study!

The Round 1 responses will be compared and in Round 2 the process will be repeated with the collective responses and revisions (if applicable) from the panel.

Remember all individual responses will remain confidential.

Thank you sincerely,
June Sellers

SUBMIT

APPENDIX F: EMAIL INVITATION TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Dear Principal,

My name is June Sellers, and I am conducting a research study in your school district in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education and Human Performance at the University of Central Florida. The primary purpose of the study is to explore the reasons why some teachers readily embrace and promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings.

You have been chosen because your school includes a significant number of students with disabilities in general education classrooms, which is considered to be an inclusive model of ESE service delivery, representing the least restrictive environment. For the purposes of this study, I have an interest in identifying individuals with a distinct perspective and insight into the phenomenon of inclusion. I am specifically writing to you to request nominations of classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches, whom in your view have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Supports *inclusionary practices/inclusive practices*: promotes attitudes, accommodations, adaptations and instructional practices that support the restructuring of the classroom environment to meet the educational needs of all its students.
- Maintains an *inclusive stance*: a belief in equity in education for all children, combined with a personal stance that assumes and anticipates human difference and values those differences and what they can teach us; a proclivity for questioning the labeling and leveling of students, and rejecting a deficit perspective of students with disabilities.
- Holds *inclusive values*: a value system that regards difference and diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource; a value system within public education that situates inclusive education as an issue of social justice and as a fundamental issue of civil rights.
- Actively cultivates an *inclusive organizational culture*: consistently demonstrates both commitment and competency for supporting inclusive culture; exemplifies on a regular basis that they can connect, communicate, challenge, and collaborate appropriately to advance and improve education services for students who have a disability; acts an agent of change through educating, coaching, networking and mentoring other educators.

For your convenience, you may submit your recommendations via this secure link; please go to

Your support will help provide valuable information that will contribute to the body of knowledge on inclusive education, and lead to deeper understanding of what goes into the making of inclusion, and the norms, values, and practices that reinforce and sustain a culture of inclusion in the public schools.

Thank you in advance for your support in furthering this important research. If you have any questions regarding the survey or the study in general, please contact June Sellers at (321) 946-5241.

Sincerely,

June M. Sellers, Doctoral Candidate

College of Education and Human Performance, University of Central Florida

APPENDIX G: EMAIL INVITATION TO PRINCIPAL’S NOMINEES

Greetings,

My name is June Sellers, and I am conducting a research study in your school district in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education and Human Performance at the University of Central Florida. The primary purpose of the study is to explore the reasons why some teachers readily accept and embrace the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a classroom teacher, instructional support teacher, or instructional coach, who has been recognized by your school principal as someone who understands, embraces and/or promotes the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. Whether you take part in this research is up to you.

I have obtained permission from your principal and the school district, to invite you to participate in *Phase 1* of a research study. *Phase 1* of the study is a short online survey designed to capture your views and opinions related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, and the phenomenon of inclusion in your organization. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes.

The study will be conducted in three phases: (1) survey; (2) focus group; (3) individual interview. As a result of your participation in the survey (Phase 1), it is possible that you may be chosen via purposive criterion sampling, and invited with your consent to participate in a focus group (Phase 2) facilitated by the principal investigator. The purpose of the focus group is to solicit teachers' shared experience in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion and the current state of inclusion in their organization. Since only a purposive sample of those who participate in the survey will be chosen to participate in a focus group (Phase 2), it is possible that you will have no further obligation beyond the survey.

If you are chosen, and give consent to participate in a focus group (Phase 2) you may be subsequently be chosen to participate, with your consent, in an individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interview (Phase 3). Since only a purposive sample of those who participate in the focus group will be chosen to participate in a face-to-face interview, it is possible that you will have no further obligation beyond the focus group. If you are chosen and give consent, the principal investigator will conduct the interview using open-ended, guiding questions designed to gather deeper understanding into the lived experiences and moments that influenced your attitudes and beliefs about inclusion.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and the information you provide will be kept confidential. Your participation will provide valuable information which will contribute to the body of knowledge on inclusive education, and lead to deeper understanding of what goes into

the making of inclusion, and the norms, values, and practices that reinforce and sustain a culture of inclusion in the public schools.

To access and complete the secure online survey, please go to _____. Once you access the survey, and provide consent, further instructions will be provided.

Thank you in advance for participating in this important research. If you have any questions regarding the survey or the study in general, please contact June Sellers at (321) 946-5241.

Sincerely,

June M. Sellers, Doctoral Candidate

College of Education and Human Performance, University of Central Florida

APPENDIX H: EMAIL INVITATION FOR FOCUS GROUP

Hello _____,

First of all, thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this study!

Based on your responses to the survey (PHASE 1) you have been selected to participate the PHASE 2 focus group.

The next step is to find a time and a central location that works for everyone.

Please click the following link to fill out a brief, 3 item survey indicating your preference of day(s), time(s) and area(s) of town that would be most convenient:

http://ucf.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_2lRszMq9QyJ87Pv

If you have any questions please contact me at 321-946-5241.

Please see below for an overview of PHASE 2 of the study.

Thank you for participating in this important research!

Sincerely,

June M. Sellers, Doctoral Candidate

College of Education and Human Performance, University of Central Florida

PHASE 2 OVERVIEW

- Based on your completion of the survey in Phase 1 of the study, you have been chosen via purposeful criterion sampling to participate in a focus group session (Phase 2). With your consent, you will be invited to participate in a face-to-face, semi-structured focus group. The principal investigator, June M. Sellers, will facilitate the focus group session using open-ended guiding questions. The purpose of the focus group session is to solicit further insight into the phenomenon of inclusion and the current state of inclusion in your organization through the shared experience of fellow educators with similar responses to the survey items. The focus group will provide a forum for to explore shared views and opinions in regard to (1) how the organization supports and/or constrains inclusion and their efforts to champion inclusion; (2) how the organization might position and utilize them as champions for change; and (3) how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture. Participation and individual responses are completely

voluntary. You do not have to respond to every question or topic during the focus group session, nor must you elaborate on a response that is volunteered by you or another participant, even if asked to do so.

- The focus group session will be convened at a central location that is as convenient as possible for all participants. Every attempt will be made to secure a location that gives participants a sense of privacy and confidentiality, including, but not limited to their school site, a district work location, an agreed upon public place, or other appropriate and safe place for group discussion. It is expected that the focus group session (Phase 2) will last no more than 1-2 hours.

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP CONSENT EMBEDDED IN SURVEY

Thank you for accessing this survey and for participating in this important research!

Based on your completion of the survey in Phase 1 of the study, you have been selected to participate in a focus group session (Phase 2). With your consent, you will be invited to participate in a face-to-face, semi-structured focus group. The principal investigator, June M. Sellers, will facilitate the focus group session using open-ended guiding questions. The purpose of the focus group session is to solicit further insight into the phenomenon of inclusion and the current state of inclusion in your organization through the shared experience of educators with similar responses to the survey items. The focus group will provide a forum for you and 5 other educators to share views and opinions in regard to (1) how the organization supports and/or constrains inclusion and their efforts to champion inclusion; (2) how the organization might position and utilize them as champions for change; and (3) how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture. Participation and individual responses are completely voluntary. You do not have to respond to every question or topic during the focus group session, nor must you elaborate on a response that is volunteered by you or another participant, even if asked to do so. If you wish, you may decline to give your consent for participation in the focus group. If you do not wish to continue participating in the study, your contact information will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur. The initial invitation you received described the 3 Phases of the study. You should be aware that by participating in this focus group you could be selected to participate in individual interview.

Participation is voluntary and you will be asked for your consent before participating in any phase of this study. You may withdraw from participation during any phase of the research study, without penalty. If you choose to withdraw your e-mail address will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur.

You will give your consent for participation in the FOCUS GROUP by selecting AGREE and then answering the brief, 3 question survey

If you wish, you may decline to give your consent for participation in the survey by clicking “DISAGREE”, thereby ending the survey. If you choose this option, your e-mail address will be removed from the list of possible participants without penalty, and no further contact will occur.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints: June M. Sellers, Graduate Student, College of Education and Human Performance, (321) 946-5241, or Dr. Suzanne Martin, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences, by email at suzanne.martin@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

APPENDIX J: EMAIL INVITATION FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Hello _____,

Thank you so much for your continued participation in this study and for your input at the focus group session!

Based on your contribution to the focus group dialog, you have been selected to participate in the final phase of the study, an individual interview.

With your permission, I will be contacting you at the phone number you provided to find a time and location that works for you, with minimal disruption to your schedule.

The interview will take place at your convenience, at an agreed upon time and location of your choice. You may choose any place that gives you a sense of privacy and confidentiality, including, but not limited to your school site, a district work location, an agreed upon public place, or other appropriate and safe place of your choosing. It is expected that the individual interview (Phase 3) will last no more than 1-1½ hours.

If you have any questions please contact me at 321-946-5241.
Please see below for an overview of PHASE 3 of the study.

Thank you for participating in this important research!

June Sellers
Doctoral Candidate, University of Central Florida

SUMMARY EXPLANATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH - INTERVIEW

Title of Project: Inclusion: A Question of Practice, Stance, Values and Culture

Principal Investigator: June M. Sellers

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The person doing this research, June Sellers, is a graduate student in the UCF – College of Education and Human Performance at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by Dr. Suzanne Martin, PhD, a UCF faculty advisor in The Department of Child, Family and Community Sciences.
- The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who readily accept, embrace and/or promote the *inclusion* of students with disabilities in general education settings, including their view of the current phenomenon of *inclusion* within their organization.

- Of interest to this study, and represented in the research questions, are teachers' (1) experiences, views, beliefs and opinions related to the concept of inclusion; (2) insights into the current phenomenon of inclusion in a large urban public school system; (3) perspectives on how the organization supports and/or constrains inclusion and their efforts to champion inclusion; (4) recommendations for how the organization might position and utilize them as champions for change; (5) recommendations for how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture.
- Based on your participation in the focus group phase (Phase 2) of this study, you have been chosen to participate in the final phase of the research study, an individual interview (Phase 3). With your consent, you will be invited to participate in a face-to-face, semi-structured, individual interview conducted by the principal investigator, June M. Sellers. The purpose of the interview is to gather deeper understanding into the lived experiences and moments that influenced your attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. The interview will be conducted using open-ended, guiding questions, and individual responses are completely voluntary. You do not have to answer every question that is asked of you, nor must you elaborate on a response even if asked to do so. The interview (Phase 3) is the final phase of the study, and you will have no further obligation. If you wish, you may decline to give your consent for participation in the interview. If you do not wish to continue participating in the study, your contact information will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur.
- The interview will take place at your convenience, at an agreed upon time and location of your choice. You may choose any place that gives you a sense of privacy and confidentiality, including, but not limited to your school site, a district work location, an agreed upon public place, or other appropriate and safe place of your choosing. It is expected that the individual interview (Phase 3) will last no more than 1-1½ hours.
- There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in the individual interview phase of the study. To capture responses and dialog as accurately as possible in the study, the individual interview session will be audio-recorded. All interview data collected will be kept confidential. A summary of the individual interview session will be shared with you at a later date to check for agreement and allow you to contribute additional information if needed. If you consent to be audio-recorded, the recording will be kept in a locked, safe place. Organizations that may inspect and copy information from the study include Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and other representatives of UCF. Personal data collected in this study will be limited only to people who have a need to review this information. All information and data collected in the study will kept in a secure location, accessible only to the researcher. If kept digitally, all data and information will be encrypted and password protected to ensure it can only be accessed by the researcher.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints: June M. Sellers, Graduate Student, College of Education and Human Performance, (321) 946-5241, or Dr. Suzanne Martin, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences, by email at suzanne.martin@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

**APPENDIX K: SUMMARY EXPLANATION FOR EXEMPT
RESEARCH—SURVEY**



SUMMARY EXPLANATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH - SURVEY

Title of Project: Inclusion: A Question of Practice, Stance, Values and Culture

Principal Investigator: June M. Sellers

Faculty Supervisor: Suzanne M. Martin, PhD

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The person doing this research, June Sellers, is a graduate student in the UCF – College of Education and Human Performance at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by Dr. Suzanne Martin, PhD, a UCF faculty advisor in The Department of Child, Family and Community Sciences.
- The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who readily accept, embrace and/or promote the *inclusion* of students with disabilities in general education settings, including their view of the current phenomenon of *inclusion* within their organization.
- Of interest to this study, and represented in the research questions, are teachers' (1) experiences, views, beliefs and opinions related to the concept of inclusion; (2) insights into the current phenomenon of inclusion in a large urban public school system; (3) perspectives on how the organization supports and/or constrains inclusion and their efforts to champion inclusion; (4) recommendations for how the organization might position and utilize them as champions for change; (5) recommendations for how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture.
- You are being invited to participate in Phase 1 of this study, which is a survey. You have been chosen because you are a classroom teacher, instructional support teacher, or instructional coach, who has been recognized by your school principal as someone who understands, embraces and/or promotes the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. With your consent, you will be sent a link to a brief, online,

Likert-type survey designed to capture your views on the concept of inclusion and the phenomenon of inclusion within your organization. The online survey should take no more than 30 minutes of your time. A consent process is built into the survey and the results of the survey are confidential. You do not have to answer every question. You will not lose any benefits if you skip questions. Participation is voluntary and you will be prompted before the start of the survey for your consent. You will give your consent for participation in the survey by clicking “agree,” which will take you to the survey. If you wish, you may decline to give your consent for participation in the survey by clicking “disagree”, thereby ending the survey. If you choose the “disagree” option or respond via e-mail stating that you do not wish to take part in the study, your e-mail address will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur.

- The study will be conducted in three phases: (1) survey; (2) focus group; (3) individual interview. As a result of your participation in the survey (Phase 1), it is possible that you may be chosen via purposive criterion sampling to participate, with your consent, in a focus group (Phase 2) facilitated by the principal investigator. Since only a random sample of those who participate in the survey will be chosen to participate in a focus group (Phase 2), it is possible that you will have no further obligation beyond the survey. The purpose of the focus group session is to solicit teachers’ shared experience in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion and the current state of inclusion in their organization. Subsequently, as a result of your participation in a focus group (Phase 2) you may be chosen to participate, with your consent, in an individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interview (Phase 3). Since only a purposive sample of those who participate in the focus group will be chosen to participate in a face-to-face interview, it is possible that you will have no further obligation beyond the focus group. If you are chosen and give consent, the principal investigator will conduct the interview using open-ended, guiding questions designed to gather deeper understanding into the lived experiences and moments that influenced your attitudes and beliefs about inclusion.
- You will be asked for your consent before participating in any phase of this study. You may withdraw from participation at any time, during any phase of the research study you are involved in. If you do not wish to take part in the study, your e-mail address will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur.
- The survey (Phase 1) will be accessed on-line, anywhere that you have access to your school district email address. If you are chosen via random sampling to participate in a focus group session (Phase 2), the focus group will be convened at a central location that is as convenient as possible for all participants. If you are chosen via random sampling to participate in an individual interview (Phase 3) session, the interview will take place at your convenience, at an agreed upon time and location.
- The entire study (Phases 1, 2, and 3) will take place over the span of approximately two months. It is expected that the time needed to complete survey (Phase 1) will not exceed

30 minutes and may take considerably less time. The focus group session (Phase 2) is expected to last approximately 1-2 hours and the individual interview (Phase 3) session should last no more than 1-1½ hours.

- There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in the survey phase of the study. Survey responses will be captured in a password protected, encrypted database. The information collected in the survey is confidential and will be known only to the researcher. Organizations that may inspect and copy information from the study include Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and other representatives of UCF. Personal data collected in this study will be limited only to people who have a need to review this information. All information and data collected in the study will be kept in a secure location, accessible only to the researcher. If kept digitally, all data and information will be encrypted and password protected to ensure it can only be accessed by the researcher.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints: June M. Sellers, Graduate Student, College of Education and Human Performance, (321) 946-5241, or Dr. Suzanne Martin, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences, by email at suzanne.martin@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

**APPENDIX L: SUMMARY EXPLANATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH—
FOCUS GROUP**



SUMMARY EXPLANATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH – FOCUS GROUP

Title of Project: Inclusion: A Question of Practice, Stance, Values and Culture

Principal Investigator: June M. Sellers

Faculty Supervisor: Suzanne M. Martin, PhD

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The person doing this research, June Sellers, is a graduate student in the UCF – College of Education and Human Performance at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by Dr. Suzanne Martin, PhD, a UCF faculty advisor in The Department of Child, Family and Community Sciences.
- The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who readily accept, embrace and/or promote the *inclusion* of students with disabilities in general education settings, including their view of the current phenomenon of *inclusion* within their organization.
- Of interest to this study, and represented in the research questions, are teachers' (1) experiences, views, beliefs and opinions related to the concept of inclusion; (2) insights into the current phenomenon of inclusion in a large urban public school system; (3) perspectives on how the organization supports and/or constrains inclusion and their efforts to champion inclusion; (4) recommendations for how the organization might position and utilize them as champions for change; (5) recommendations for how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture.
- Based on your completion of the survey in Phase 1 of the study, you have been chosen via purposive criterion sampling to participate in a focus group session (Phase 2). With your consent, you will be invited to participate in a face-to-face, semi-structured focus group. The principal investigator, June M. Sellers, will facilitate the focus group session using open-ended guiding questions. The purpose of the focus group session is to solicit

further insight into the phenomenon of inclusion and the current state of inclusion in their organization through teachers' shared experience. The focus group will provide a forum for participants to explore shared views and opinions in regard to (1) how the organization supports and/or constrains inclusion and their efforts to champion inclusion; (2) how the organization might position and utilize them as champions for change; and (3) how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture. Participation and individual responses are completely voluntary. You do not have to respond to every question or topic during the focus group session, nor must you elaborate on a response that is volunteered by you or another participant, even if asked to do so. If you wish, you may decline to give your consent for participation in the focus group. If you do not wish to continue participating in the study, your contact information will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur.

- The focus group represents Phase 2 of a three phase research study. The purpose of the focus group session is to solicit teachers' shared experience in regard to the phenomenon of inclusion and the current state of inclusion in their organization. Subsequently, as a result of your participation in a focus group (Phase 2) you may be chosen to participate, with your consent, in an individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interview (Phase 3) conducted by the principal investigator. Since only a purposive sample of those who participate in the focus group will be chosen to participate in a face-to-face interview, it is possible that you will have no further obligation beyond the focus group. If you are chosen and give consent, the principal investigator will conduct the interview using open-ended, guiding questions designed to gather deeper understanding into the lived experiences and moments that influenced your attitudes and beliefs about inclusion.
- You will be asked for your consent before participating in each phase of this study. You may withdraw from participation at any time, during any phase of the research study. If you do not wish to take part in the study, your e-mail address will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur.
- The focus group session will be convened at a central location that is as convenient as possible for all participants. Every attempt will be made to secure a location that gives participants a sense of privacy and confidentiality, including, but not limited to their school site, a district work location, an agreed upon public place, or other appropriate and safe place for group discussion. It is expected that the focus group session (Phase 2) will last no more than 1-2 hours.
- There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in the focus group phase of the study. To capture the responses and dialog of the focus group as accurately as possible in the study, the focus group session will be audio-recorded. All focus group and data collected will be kept confidential. A summary of the focus group session will

be shared with you at a later date to check for agreement and allow you to contribute additional information if needed. If you consent to be audio-recorded, the recording will be kept in a locked, safe place. Organizations that may inspect and copy information from the study include Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and other representatives of UCF. Personal data collected in this study will be limited only to people who have a need to review this information. All information and data collected in the study will kept in a secure location, accessible only to the researcher. If kept digitally, all data and information will be encrypted and password protected to ensure it can only be accessed by the researcher.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints: June M. Sellers, Graduate Student, College of Education and Human Performance, (321) 946-5241, or Dr. Suzanne Martin, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences, by email at suzanne.martin@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

**APPENDIX M: SUMMARY EXPLANATION FOR EXEMPT
RESEARCH—INTERVIEW**



SUMMARY EXPLANATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH - INTERVIEW

Title of Project: Inclusion: A Question of Practice, Stance, Values and Culture

Principal Investigator: June M. Sellers

Faculty Supervisor: Suzanne M. Martin, PhD

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The person doing this research, June Sellers, is a graduate student in the UCF – College of Education and Human Performance at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by Dr. Suzanne Martin, PhD, a UCF faculty advisor in The Department of Child, Family and Community Sciences.
- The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of classroom teachers, instructional support teachers, or instructional coaches who readily accept, embrace and/or promote the *inclusion* of students with disabilities in general education settings, including their view of the current phenomenon of *inclusion* within their organization.
- Of interest to this study, and represented in the research questions, are teachers' (1) experiences, views, beliefs and opinions related to the concept of inclusion; (2) insights into the current phenomenon of inclusion in a large urban public school system; (3) perspectives on how the organization supports and/or constrains inclusion and their efforts to champion inclusion; (4) recommendations for how the organization might position and utilize them as champions for change; (5) recommendations for how the organization might build and strengthen an inclusive organizational culture.
- Based on your participation in the focus group phase (Phase 2) of this study, you have been chosen via random sampling to participate in the final phase of the research study (Phase 3), an individual interview session (Phase 3). With your consent, you will be invited to participate in a face-to-face, semi-structured, individual interview conducted by the principal investigator, June M. Sellers. The purpose of the interview is to gather

deeper understanding into the lived experiences and moments that influenced your attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. The interview will be conducted using open-ended, guiding questions, and individual responses are completely voluntary. You do not have to answer every question that is asked of you, nor must you elaborate on a response even if asked to do so. The interview (Phase 3) is the final phase of the study, and you will have no further obligation. If you wish, you may decline to give your consent for participation in the interview. If you do not wish to continue participating in the study, your contact information will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur.

- The interview will take place at your convenience, at an agreed upon time and location of your choice. You may choose any place that gives you a sense of privacy and confidentiality, including, but not limited to your school site, a district work location, an agreed upon public place, or other appropriate and safe place of your choosing. It is expected that the individual interview (Phase 3) will last no more than 1-1½ hours.
- There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in the individual interview phase of the study. To capture responses and dialog as accurately as possible in the study, the individual interview session will be audio-recorded. All interview data collected will be kept confidential. A summary of the individual interview session will be shared with you at a later date to check for agreement and allow you to contribute additional information if needed. If you consent to be audio-recorded, the recording will be kept in a locked, safe place. Organizations that may inspect and copy information from the study include Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and other representatives of UCF. Personal data collected in this study will be limited only to people who have a need to review this information. All information and data collected in the study will kept in a secure location, accessible only to the researcher. If kept digitally, all data and information will be encrypted and password protected to ensure it can only be accessed by the researcher.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints: June M. Sellers, Graduate Student, College of Education and Human Performance, (321) 946-5241, or Dr. Suzanne Martin, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences, by email at suzanne.martin@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

APPENDIX N: SURVEY FOR PRINCIPAL NOMINATIONS

Principal Nominations

Request for Nominations to Participate in Research

1. Please nominate up to 2 classroom teachers, instructional support/resource teachers, and/or instructional coaches who readily accept, embrace and/or promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings:

Nominee #1 _____

Nominee #2 _____

APPENDIX O: SURVEY PROTOCOL

Q56 Thank you for accessing this survey and for participating in this important research!

The survey is designed to capture your views and opinions related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, and the phenomenon of inclusion in your organization. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes. The invitation letter you received described the 3 Phases of the study. You should be aware that by participating in this survey you could be chosen to participate in a focus group and subsequently, an individual interview.

Participation is voluntary and you will be asked for your consent before participating in any phase of this study. You may withdraw from participation during any phase of the research study, without penalty. If you choose to withdraw your e-mail address will be removed from the list of possible participants and no further contact will occur. You will give your consent for participation in the survey below, by selecting AGREE. You will then be directed to enter your [school district] email address, which will allow the researcher to contact you if you are chosen for the subsequent phases of the study. If you wish, you may decline to give your consent for participation in the survey by clicking “DECLINE”, thereby ending the survey. If you choose this option, your e-mail address will be removed from the list of possible participants without penalty, and no further contact will occur. Survey responses will be captured in a password protected, encrypted database. The information collected in the survey is confidential and will be known only to the researcher. Organizations that may inspect and copy information from the study include Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and other representatives of UCF. Personal data collected in this study will be limited only to people who have a need to review this information. The information obtained in this study will be included in a dissertation, and may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences, however, no identifying information linking participants to the study will be included. Any information obtained about

participants in this dissertation research study will be coded for anonymity and kept strictly confidential in a secure and locked database. The school district name will be replaced with a pseudonym. All audio recordings, transcriptions, and printed survey reports will be saved in a locked cabinet, kept at the principal investigator's home, for three years. Only the principal investigator will have access to the data. All information and data collected in the study will be kept in a secure location, accessible only to the researcher. If kept digitally, all data and information will be encrypted and password protected to ensure it can only be accessed by the researcher.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints: June M. Sellers, Graduate Student, College of Education and Human Performance, (321) 946-5241, or Dr. Suzanne Martin, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences, by email at suzanne.martin@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

Please indicate whether you AGREE to or DECLINE to participate in this study:

- AGREE (1)
- DECLINE (2)

If DECLINE Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q59 Please enter your [school district] email address in numerical form (ex: 12345@XXXX.net)

Q53 What is your current position at your school?

Q52 Please enter your years of teaching experience:

- I am a first year teacher (1)
- 1-2 (2)
- 3-5 (3)
- 6-10 (4)
- 11-20 (5)
- 21-30 (6)
- 30+ (7)

Q57 Which of the following best describes the settings you have taught in? (Click all that apply)

- General Education Classroom (1)
- Self-Contained ESE Classroom (2)
- ESE Resource Classroom (3)
- Other (4)

Q58 Which of the following best describes your path to teaching?

- Traditional teacher preparation program (1)
- Alternative Certification program (2)

Q54 Which of the following best describes your teaching credentials? (Click all that apply)

- Elementary Education (1)
- Dually Certified in Elementary Education and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) (2)
- Certified only in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) (3)
- Certified in one or more secondary content areas (4)
- Certified in one or more secondary content areas and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) (5)
- Certified in Educational Leadership (6)
- Reading Endorsement (7)
- Gifted Endorsement (8)
- Autism Endorsement (9)
- Other certification or endorsement (10)

Q55 What is the highest degree you have earned?

- Bachelor's Degree (1)
- Master's Degree (2)
- Specialist's Degree (3)
- Doctoral Degree (4)

Q1 Many of the instructional practices and strategies that general education teachers implement for students without disabilities are appropriate for students with disabilities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q2 Inclusion in general education settings places students with disabilities at greater risk for social isolation than in separate class settings.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q3 The extra attention students with disabilities require in general education classrooms may be to the detriment of the other students.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q4 Teachers are capable of creatively adapting and utilizing instructional strategies and materials to help students with disabilities learn and succeed in general education classrooms.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q5 Specially designed instruction is more effective and generalizable for students with disabilities when taught in a resource-room or self-contained special education classroom vs. a general education classroom.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q6 General education teachers are capable of developing the expertise necessary to teach students with disabilities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q7 The integration of students with disabilities in general education settings requires significant changes to a school's general education program.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q8 With few exceptions, most students with disabilities require methods of instruction that are beyond the scope of what is possible in a general education setting.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q9 With few exceptions, the general education classroom can be restructured to effectively meet the needs of all its students, including students with disabilities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q10 Students with disabilities are more likely to develop academic skills more proficiently in a special education classroom than in a general education classroom.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q11 It is difficult to maintain order in a general education classroom that contains students with disabilities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q12 A low IQ score is a valid criterion for denial of access to general education classrooms for a student with a disability.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q13 The general education classroom provides a rigorous environment that promotes the academic growth of students with disabilities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q14 With few exceptions, it is likely that the less restrictive environment of the general education classroom will create too much confusion for a student with a disability.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q15 Isolation in a separate, special class can have a negative effect on the social and emotional development of a student with a disability.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q16 A student with a disability should be given every opportunity to be educated in the classroom they would otherwise attend (i.e. a general education classroom) if they did not have a disability.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q17 With very few exceptions, students with disabilities can benefit from inclusion in general education classrooms.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q18 The needs of students with disabilities can best be served through special, separate classes.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q19 Placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms should be based on factors such as: type of disability, IQ score and cognitive ability, level of independent functioning, and behavior.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q20 Students with disabilities must be able to 'keep up' with their peers without disabilities in order to have access to general education classrooms.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q21 Learning differences are a natural part of the human condition.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q22 Removal from general education settings and segregation of students with disabilities for all or part of the day may negatively impact students with disabilities and their learning outcomes.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q23 A student with a disability is likely to exhibit behavior problems that will require their removal from the general education classroom setting.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q24 Advancing and improving inclusionary opportunities for students with disabilities puts too much responsibility and pressure on general education teachers.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q25 The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms represents a fundamental guarantee of their civil rights.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q26 The interaction between students without disabilities and students with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms may negatively impact the learning outcomes of both populations.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q27 The presence of students with disabilities in general education classrooms enables social interactions that benefit all students.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q28 The integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms is beneficial for all students and should be the norm.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q29 Inclusion is more than just implementing instructional strategies; it is about belonging and membership.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q30 I connect with students who have disabilities and view them as integral, contributing members of the classroom community.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q31 I feel comfortable around students with disabilities and easily connect and communicate with them.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q32 I have no problem communicating my enthusiasm for inclusion to other educators.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q33 I expect and challenge students with disabilities to do their best work toward high standards.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q34 I actively collaborate with other educators and service providers to maximize the learning and development of students with disabilities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q35 I am personally and professionally committed to welcoming and celebrating diversity.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q36 I view and promote diversity as a valued resource both personally and professionally.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q37 Any undertaking is strengthened by contributions from people with a broad range of styles, perspectives and skills.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q38 Promoting diversity and inclusion within our schools increases the amount of talent and energy available for innovation in teaching and learning.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q39 Promoting inclusive culture within our schools and enacting this kind of change is highly unlikely due to other priorities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q40 I am energized by challenges and challenging situations.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q41 I actively seek collaboration with peers and leaders to resolve problems of practice.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q42 I am overwhelmed by the current challenges in the field of education.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q43 I am skilled at identifying and utilizing resources and relationships to generate meaningful outcomes, and I feel motivated to help others do so.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q44 I am skilled at constructively leveraging sources of power and authority to solve problems and positively generate meaningful outcomes, and I feel motivated to help others do so.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q45 I am skilled at articulating compelling reasons for change within our organization, and I feel motivated to share with my peers and leaders.

- Q Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

46 Enacting transformative change within any organization depends on continuously cultivating collaborative partnerships and preserving existing relationships.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q47 The organization I work for would benefit from establishing structures that support and reinforce inclusive values.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q48 The organization I work for would benefit from efforts to remove barriers that constrain and inhibit inclusive values.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q49 It is essential for any organization to explicitly articulate a vision that supports a culture of inclusion.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

Q61 I feel responsible for actively promoting and strengthening inclusive culture through coaching, networking, mentoring and collaborating with other educators.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat Agree (3)
- Somewhat Disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

APPENDIX P: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. To what extent does your organization promote and effectively communicate a compelling organizational imperative for inclusion?
 - 1.1 How important is it for the organization to communicate an explicit expectation for inclusion?
 - 1.2 What are your recommendations, if any, for making the expectation for inclusion more explicit?

2. Teachers have been resistant to the inclusion of children with disabilities in public school classrooms since the initial mandate for compulsory school attendance in the early 1900's. In what ways do you positively counteract this resistance?
 - 2.1 In what ways could your organization positively counteract this resistance?

3. To what extent does your organization promote inclusive practices?
 - 3.1 In what ways do you promote inclusive practices?

4. To what extent does your organization encourage educators to adopt an inclusive stance?
 - 4.1 In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance?
 - 4.2 In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive stance?

5. To what extent does your organization cultivate inclusive values?
 - 5.1 In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to inclusive values?
 - 5.2 In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of inclusive values?

6. To what extent does your organization cultivate an inclusive culture?
 - 6.1 In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to inclusive culture?
 - 6.2 In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of inclusive culture?

7. To what extent does your organization have the capacity to cultivate an inclusive culture?
 - 7.1 If not, how might such capacity be built?

8. What do you know about *communities of practice*?
 - 8.1 How might a *community of practice* led by *champions of inclusion* be positioned and utilized by the organization as an agent for culture change?

9. To what extent do does your organization:
 - a. support and reinforce inclusive culture? How?
 - b. constrain and inhibit inclusive culture? How?

10. What additional recommendations would you make to the organization for:
 - rooting out structures that perpetuate a culture of exclusion?

- removing barriers to inclusion?
- establishing norms, values, practices and policies that work to support inclusive organizational culture?

APPENDIX Q: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How have your views, opinions on inclusion been influenced by personal experience?
 - 1.1 Professional experience?
 - 1.2 Teacher preparation program?
 - 1.3 Special education courses completed during your teacher preparation program?
 - 1.4 Colleagues?
 - 1.5 Leadership?
2. Why do you support inclusionary/inclusive practices?
3. Why do you maintain an inclusive stance?
4. Why do you hold inclusive values?
5. Why do you champion inclusion, i.e. what drives you to actively cultivate/promote an inclusive culture?
6. How do you respond when you encounter resistance to inclusive practices?
 - 6.1 How do you actively sustain and promote inclusive practices?
7. How do you respond when you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance?
 - 7.1 In what ways do you actively influence others to adopt an inclusive stance?
8. How do you respond you encounter resistance to inclusive values?
 - 8.1 In what ways do you actively influence others to embrace inclusive values?




9. What are your views, opinions on the success of inclusion in your public school system?

9.1 To what do you attribute success or lack thereof?

10. What could your organization do, or do better, to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide inclusive culture?





APPENDIX R: SURVEY DATA

Many of the instructional practices and strategies that general education teachers implement for students without disabilities are appropriate for students with disabilities.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		4	16.00%
2	Agree		10	40.00%
3	Somewhat Agree		7	28.00%
4	Somewhat Disagree		3	12.00%
5	Disagree		1	4.00%
6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	2.48	1.09	1.05	25	25

Inclusion in general education settings places students with disabilities at greater risk for social isolation than in separate class settings.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
x1	Strongly Agree		1	4.00%
x2	Agree		0	0.00%
x3	Somewhat Agree		2	8.00%
x4	Somewhat Disagree		5	20.00%
x5	Disagree		11	44.00%
x6	Strongly Disagree		6	24.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

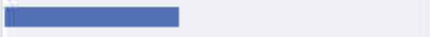
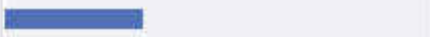
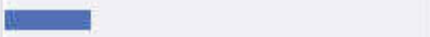
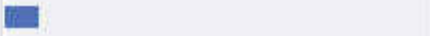
Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	4.72	1.38	1.17	25	25

The extra attention students with disabilities require in general education classrooms may be to the detriment of the other students.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		2	8.00%
xx2	Agree		3	12.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		6	24.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		3	12.00%
xx5	Disagree		8	32.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		3	12.00%
	Total		25	100.00%




Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	3.84	2.31	1.52	25	25

Teachers are capable of creatively adapting and utilizing instructional strategies and materials to help students with disabilities learn and succeed in general education classrooms.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxx1	Strongly Agree		10	40.00%
xxx2	Agree		8	32.00%
xxx3	Somewhat Agree		5	20.00%
xxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxx5	Disagree		2	8.00%
xxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	2.04	1.37	1.17	25	25

Specially designed instruction is more effective and generalizable for students with disabilities when taught in a resource-room or self-contained special education classroom vs. a general education classroom.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxx1	Strongly Agree		1	4.00%
xxxx2	Agree		4	16.00%
xxxx3	Somewhat Agree		7	28.00%
xxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		4	16.00%
xxxx5	Disagree		6	24.00%
xxxx6	Strongly Disagree		3	12.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	3.76	2.02	1.42	25	25

General education teachers are capable of developing the expertise necessary to teach students with disabilities.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxx1	Strongly Agree		5	20.00%
xxxx2	Agree		12	48.00%
xxxx3	Somewhat Agree		5	20.00%
xxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxx5	Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxx6	Strongly Disagree		1	4.00%
	Total		25	100.00%







Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	2.36	1.49	1.22	25	25

The integration of students with disabilities in general education settings requires significant changes to a school's general education program.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxx1	Strongly Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxx2	Agree		5	20.00%
xxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		10	40.00%
xxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxx5	Disagree		8	32.00%
xxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	3.40	1.58	1.26	25	25

With few exceptions, most students with disabilities require methods of instruction that are beyond the scope of what is possible in a general education setting.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxx2	Agree		3	12.00%
xxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		7	28.00%
xxxxxx5	Disagree		8	32.00%
xxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		4	16.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	4.12	2.28	1.51	25	25

With few exceptions, the general education classroom can be restructured to effectively meet the needs of all its students, including students with disabilities.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		13	52.00%
xxxxxxxx2	Agree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		4	16.00%
xxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxx5	Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	1.84	1.22	1.11	25	25

Students with disabilities are more likely to develop academic skills more proficiently in a special education classroom than in a general education classroom.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxx2	Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		3	12.00%
xxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		8	32.00%
xxxxxxxx5	Disagree		7	28.00%
xxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		5	20.00%
	Total		25	100.00%





Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
2	6	4.40	1.42	1.19	25	25

It is difficult to maintain order in a general education classroom that contains students with disabilities.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxx2	Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		4	16.00%
xxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		11	44.00%
xxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		7	28.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
2	6	4.84	1.14	1.07	25	25

A low IQ score is a valid criterion for denial of access to general education classrooms for a student with a disability.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxx2	Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		3	12.00%
xxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		9	36.00%
xxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		11	44.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
3	6	5.16	0.89	0.94	25	25

The general education classroom provides a rigorous environment that promotes the academic growth of students with disabilities.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		10	40.00%
xxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		7	28.00%
xxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	2.04	1.21	1.10	25	25

With few exceptions, it is likely that the less restrictive environment of the general education classroom will create too much confusion for a student with a disability.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		3	12.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		5	20.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		11	44.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		5	20.00%
	Total		25	100.00%




Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
2	6	4.64	1.16	1.08	25	25

isolation in a separate, special class can have a negative effect on the social and emotional development of a student with a disability.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		7	28.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		9	36.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		5	20.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		3	12.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	2.28	1.29	1.14	25	25

A student with a disability should be given every opportunity to be educated in the classroom they would otherwise attend (i.e. a general education classroom) if they did not have a disability.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		14	56.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		9	36.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%



Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	3	1.52	0.43	0.65	25	25

With very few exceptions, students with disabilities can benefit from inclusion in general education classrooms.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		15	60.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		7	28.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	4	1.56	0.67	0.82	25	25

The needs of students with disabilities can best be served through special, separate classes.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		7	28.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		4	16.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		6	24.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
2	6	4.28	1.79	1.34	25	25

Placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms should be based on factors such as: type of disability, IQ score and cognitive ability, level of independent functioning, and behavior.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		5	20.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		12	48.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		1	4.00%
	Total		25	100.00%



Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	2.28	1.21	1.10	25	25

Students with disabilities must be able to 'keep up' with their peers without disabilities in order to have access to general education classrooms.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		3	12.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		5	20.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		11	44.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		5	20.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	4.60	1.42	1.19	25	25

Learning differences are a natural part of the human condition.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		17	68.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		8	32.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%







Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	2	1.32	0.23	0.48	25	25

Removal from general education settings and segregation of students with disabilities for all or part of the day may negatively impact students with disabilities and their learning outcomes.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		11	44.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		4	16.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%


Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	2.32	1.39	1.18	25	25

A student with a disability is likely to exhibit behavior problems that will require their removal from the general education classroom setting.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		7	28.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		9	36.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		5	20.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	4.48	1.59	1.26	25	25

Advancing and improving inclusionary opportunities for students with disabilities puts too much responsibility and pressure on general education teachers.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		8	32.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		5	20.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		3	12.00%
	Total		25	100.00%




Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	3.84	1.97	1.40	25	25

The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms represents a fundamental guarantee of their civil rights.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		9	36.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		9	36.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		5	20.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%





Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	2.04	1.12	1.06	25	25

The interaction between students without disabilities and students with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms may negatively impact the learning outcomes of both populations.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		3	12.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		9	36.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		11	44.00%
	Total		25	100.00%






Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	5.04	1.62	1.27	25	25

The presence of students with disabilities in general education classrooms enables social interactions that benefit all students.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		15	60.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		8	32.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	1.56	0.84	0.92	25	25

The integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms is beneficial for all students and should be the norm.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		11	44.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		1	4.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%



Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	2.20	1.00	1.00	25	25

Inclusion is more than just implementing instructional strategies; it is about belonging and membership.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		15	60.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		8	32.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%



Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	3	1.48	0.43	0.65	25	25

I connect with students who have disabilities and view them as integral, contributing members of the classroom community.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		16	64.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		9	36.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	2	1.36	0.24	0.49	25	25

I feel comfortable around students with disabilities and easily connect and communicate with them.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		19	76.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		6	24.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%



Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	2	1.24	0.19	0.44	25	25

I have no problem communicating my enthusiasm for inclusion to other educators.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		13	52.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		5	20.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		5	20.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	5	1.92	1.49	1.22	25	25

I expect and challenge students with disabilities to do their best work toward high standards.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		19	76.00%
xx2	Agree		6	24.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		0	0.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%



Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	2	1.24	0.19	0.44	25	25

I actively collaborate with other educators and service providers to maximize the learning and development of students with disabilities.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx1	Strongly Agree		13	52.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx2	Agree		10	40.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx3	Somewhat Agree		2	8.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%




Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	3	1.56	0.42	0.65	25	25

I am personally and professionally committed to welcoming and celebrating diversity.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		19	76.00%
xx2	Agree		6	24.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		0	0.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%



Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	2	1.24	0.19	0.44	25	25

I view and promote diversity as a valued resource both personally and professionally.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		18	72.00%
xx2	Agree		6	24.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		1	4.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	3	1.32	0.31	0.56	25	25

Any undertaking is strengthened by contributions from people with a broad range of styles, perspectives and skills.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		10	40.00%
xx2	Agree		15	60.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		0	0.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%


Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	2	1.60	0.25	0.50	25	25

Promoting diversity and inclusion within our schools increases the amount of talent and energy available for innovation in teaching and learning.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		11	44.00%
xx2	Agree		11	44.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		3	12.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

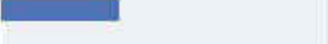

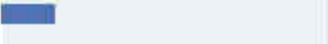
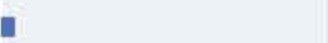
Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	3	1.68	0.48	0.69	25	25

Promoting inclusive culture within our schools and enacting this kind of change is highly unlikely due to other priorities.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		0	0.00%
xx2	Agree		2	8.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		5	20.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		5	20.00%
xx5	Disagree		12	48.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		1	4.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
2	6	4.20	1.17	1.08	25	25

I am energized by challenges and challenging situations.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		9	36.00%
xx2	Agree		11	44.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		4	16.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%





Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	4	1.88	0.69	0.83	25	25

I am overwhelmed by the current challenges in the field of education.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		3	12.00%
xx2	Agree		6	24.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		6	24.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xx5	Disagree		8	32.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		1	4.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	6	3.32	2.39	1.55	25	25

I am skilled at constructively leveraging sources of power and authority to solve problems and positively generate meaningful outcomes, and I feel motivated to help others do so.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		8	32.00%
xx2	Agree		7	28.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		9	36.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	4	2.12	0.86	0.93	25	25

The organization I work for would benefit from establishing structures that support and reinforce inclusive values.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		8	32.00%
xx2	Agree		15	60.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		1	4.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%





Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	4	1.80	0.50	0.71	25	25

It is essential for any organization to explicitly articulate a vision that supports a culture of inclusion.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
xx1	Strongly Agree		12	48.00%
xx2	Agree		12	48.00%
xx3	Somewhat Agree		1	4.00%
xx4	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.00%
xx5	Disagree		0	0.00%
xx6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		25	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	3	1.56	0.34	0.58	25	25

I feel responsible for actively promoting and strengthening inclusive culture through coaching, networking, mentoring and collaborating with other educators.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly Agree		7	29.17%
2	Agree		11	45.83%
3	Somewhat Agree		5	20.83%
4	Somewhat Disagree		1	4.17%
5	Disagree		0	0.00%
6	Strongly Disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		24	100.00%

Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses	Total Respondents
1	4	2.00	0.70	0.83	24	24

APPENDIX S: PERMISSION TO ADAPT SURVEY ITEMS

From: Roben Taylor <rtaylor6@daltonstate.edu>
To: June Sellers <junemsellers@gmail.com>
cc: "Sharon L. Hixon" <shixon@daltonstate.edu>
Date: Sun, Jan 3, 2016 at 6:12 PM
Subject: Re: Your research: Impacting Pre-Service teachers Attitudes...
Mailed-by: daltonstate.edu
Signed-by: daltonstatecollege.onmicrosoft.com
Encryption: Standard (TLS) [Learn more](#)

June,

Yes, I'd be happy for you to use my survey to conduct your own research and hope that when you have completed your dissertation that you'll share it with me! Best of luck!

Dr. Roben Taylor
School of Education
Dalton State College
650 College Drive
Dalton, GA 30720
706-272-2591

APPENDIX T: PERMISSION TO USE CONSTRUCT “CHAMPION OF INCLUSION”

From: Bill H <whenderson50@comcast.net>
To: June Sellers <junemellers@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Feb 14, 2016 at 5:03 PM
Subject: RE: REQUEST: Inclusion study - Champions of Inclusion
Mailed-by: comcast.net
Signed-by: comcast.net
Encryption: Standard (TLS) [Learn more](#)

Dear June Sellers,

I give permission for you to use my term “champions of inclusion” as well as to quote from that article or from my book in any way that will support your research.

Best wishes.

William Henderson

1086 Adams St.

Boston MA 02124

APPENDIX U: TRANSCRIPTIONS OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Focus Group 1

FGP1: SC6_P5 (Survey Completer 6_Principal 5)

FGP2: SC21_P15 (Survey Completer 21_Principal 15)

FGP3: SC5_P3 (Survey Completer 5_Principal 3)

Researcher: To what extent does your organization promote and effectively communicate a compelling organizational imperative for inclusion?

- Probe: To what extent does your organization put forth that message?
- Probe: Are you aware that the school district issued a proclamation that says we are an inclusive district?

FGP 1: I will be quite honest, XXXX. I do not know about the proclamation. I do not because I am a gen ed. teacher, however, I was brought up very well at XXXXXXXXX High School. We included everyone again and really at XXXX XXXXX, XXXXX XXXXX, God bless XXX, XXX is fantastic. XXX is a XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX. XXX is on everything. What I like about XXX is XXX is kind but XXX is advocate for those students. I want to be like XXX when I grow up. Too many people, too many faculty members and some administrators, they do not think that some of the students with disabilities are capable. They see them as deficits. I can see that and in my classroom it is like, while there are accommodations, yes these are their accommodations but they still have to do this, this and this. Now, if in his accommodation he can only do A, B and C, I am not going to give him D, E and F...I will give him to try. I always want my students to strive for more, whether it is someone with a disability, whether it is my honors, my AP or my regulars. I do not care, but a lot of teachers don't. They just do the bare

minimum and some of these kids need more. It is kind of like autism. It is a spectrum of students, so is ESE and what works for one kid in that one class...they have given me...my 7th period class is loaded with ESE because they know I can handle it. It is a wide variety of exceptionalities. The one child that had Asperger's, we took XXX out because XXX was not thriving in that environment. XXX is my honors class now. It is a large class, the kids, we all work with XXX and XXX certain issues but XXX was not working with all the other students with disabilities in that other class, which I thought was interesting. That was a learning experience for me. It is a wide variety and what works...again, they are so different. I have students with 504's in there too. It is a lot and if you don't as a teacher want to do better and do the best you can for your students you are going to wallow and you are not going to do anything. I see a lot of our colleagues struggling. It is not just the new teachers. They are happy. They are fresh. They are coming off "let's be great". These are some of the more experienced teacher [who are struggling]. So, I know, we all get a little tired but this is why we are in this profession to do great things with our students so they can do great things.

Researcher: Let me ask you, you have a number of students with disabilities in one particular class?

FGP 1: Yes, it is not labelled as such. There are three non-disabled students and everybody else is ESE. I have them in pods because that is how they want it at our school. They want you in the group collaboration. I have them grouped so I have three of the kids spread out. It is a small enough class that I can do that with but if one of those kids is out then I sit at the pod and I try to help and facilitate the discussion or lead it to where I want it to go so the students remain focused.

Researcher: So you feel like those students are scheduled in your class because they know that you have the capacity?

FGP 1: I know they are. I have already been told. Someone said I won't take so and so, OK I will take XXX.

Researcher: Alright, so that is where that organizational message is not coming through?

FGP1: Yes, and sometimes it is not just the students with disabilities who are difficult. I have ELL [English Language Learners] kids in that class because I am certified. No problem, but it is a lot to balance. I don't think it is right for me or anybody like me to do that, and others get the right to say no.

Researcher: It [Inclusion] is voluntary?

FGP 1: Right but at the end of the day I would rather take them than for them to get their little hearts broken and not have their needs met somewhere else. We have had that too. I am a little squeaky wheel. XXXXXX knows.

Researcher: That is great. You all are a great team. How about at XXXXXX XXXXX? You have the XXX XXXX.

FGP 2: Well I think foundationally when the school opened XX XXXXXX, I remember when XX interviewed me and when XXX interviewed the general education teachers...from the get go XX said this is going to be an inclusive school and if you are not on board with that then don't come here. So XXX message, I have not experienced that any place else. I have had principals that were supportive but XXX kind of set that boundary early on and that is what the school was built on. Then the second time where I really felt that compelling directive, is when I became an inclusion coach when the county funded and supported and trained several of us to go. I think it was kind of a new thing and it was sometimes, I want to say misguided but some of the things that we did were very effective and others were just what we do for this next meeting. It was my perfect job. It was all my experience in exceptional education and I dreamed of that kind of job. I always wanted to support the general education teachers but I was never free to do that when I was contained in a classroom full time. So those are the two times where I personally really felt like the organization was supporting me to do what I always wanted to do.

Researcher: In your case, you had that leader that really put out that strong message about inclusion...

FGP 2: Yes...when he left and XX XXXXXX stepped in, XXX doctorate is in exceptional education so XXX has supported that ongoing and that is communicated to the teachers.

Researcher: Did you feel that message is just as strong?

FGP 2: Yes and there is resistance. There are still people...we have a lot of teachers through their own experience and through their own education there was not inclusion and they are at the end of their time and it is a difficult thing for them to wrap their minds around. We have a lot of the newer teachers that I am finding are more and more open to it, so the shift that might be coming based on what they are learning in college now, which is even different than what I learned. My learning when it came to teaching was exclusion. There was a separate class and a separate...

Researcher: Maybe they [the new teachers] are being raised on it.

FGP 2: Yes, so I can see the shift in the new teachers coming and want to know they are open and they want that information whereas some of the more experienced teachers they are fearful. They are scared. It is just a matter of supporting and educating.

Researcher: Yes, they never had an experience making connections with students. That was the model. You know it is not the people, well-meaning, that was the model of the way...

FGP 2: I graduated from [school district].

Researcher: Me too.

FGP 2: I went to XXXXXXXXX High School and I don't ever remember seeing students with disabilities until I went back to teach there.

Researcher: I graduated from [local school] and you know where they went? They went to [special separate day school for SWD]. [special separate day school for SWD] was not just for behavioral [like it is now], it was for any student with a disability, physical, who was in a wheelchair, a student who...

FGP 2: Or they were often a separate section of the school and very isolated.

FGP 1: We didn't have them either. Of course, we didn't have pregnant girls either so you know, it was (laughter)...

Researcher: The times they have changed. XXXXXXXX, how about you?

FGP 3: OK, so at XXXXXXXXXXXX we worked with the [state discretionary project focused on Inclusion], right, so I have really seen a change since the couple three years ago...since then so it has shifted to much, it's more of an inclusive friendly school. I can say at least from an administrative level they have made it clear that it is going to be a fully inclusive school. It is an autism cluster school so of course there is not quite a full inclusion there, but I think that's sometimes where the message does not get mixed but then in the reality...so you tell the teachers it is going to be inclusive and everybody kind of smiles and says, "ya, sure", but then the reality on a day to day basis is there are certainly some teachers who definitely are not quite as pleased

about it happening. They definitely look at those students as “my” students and almost reluctantly teach them during the times that I am not there because they are really...do my job for me type of deal...is the sense that I get if I am not there the whole time. Sometimes it is, unfortunately, but it seems like the scheduling is such that they will all be clustered into one class and there might be 8 or 9 VE student just because my schedule kind of drives their placement, when really in reality it would be better for them if they were mixed amongst all of the class and less of a ratio. So that is unfortunate. I understand why it is the way it is.

Researcher: So still does it seem kind of optional for some teachers also?

FGP 3: Yes, I think it is kind of a double-edged sword. If you kind of make it known that you are not going to be happy about it, then the administrator is kind of left with, “do I force this on a teacher who I know is going to end up doing a bad job or do I go to a teacher that I know will be accepting and not do a bad job?” So you can almost get an easier route by not being open-minded and inclusive.

Researcher: That’s the issue that this question is targeting...what can the organization do to help?

1.1 How important is it for the organization to communicate an explicit expectation for inclusion?

Researcher: So how important do you think it is for the organization to communicate that explicit expectation for inclusion?

FGP 1: I think if it is not coming from the top down then you might have pockets at a school or you might have a group of really strong teachers but then when the administration changes or there is some new program that comes in, then everything falls apart. I have been at schools where we have brought in, you know we are doing co-teaching or we are going into the classes, and then someone new comes and they don't want to reach out. They go back to what they are familiar with. If it is explicit that this [inclusion] is the plan for the county or the area or that is what we are going to do...the school has a lot more stability if it is across the board.

Researcher: You're saying a clear consistent message would be beneficial because when someone leaves or regime change happens, things end up very differently?

FGP 2: The district – it used to come from them but our administration and maybe we need a [peer support team]...I like this idea of the [peer support team] team. This sounds great. I am going to bring that back to my school.

Researcher: It may be is coming (laughter).

FGP 2: There has to be some core of teachers that can start a movement. You always need key personnel in starting a revolution so I think that is what we need to do because it is high time that those kids get just what they deserve, what all children deserve.

FGP 1: An equal education.

Researcher: People to start a revolution (laughter).

FGP 3: There you go, that is right.

Researcher: I have another question that is going to address that issue as we move forward, so I'm glad you brought that up. XXXXXXXX, is there anything you wanted to add to that?

FGP 3: Yes, it does seem like there are pockets in the school so like in the 1st grade all the ESE kids will go to this teacher and then in 2nd grade all the ESE kids will go to this teacher and it is kind of a known thing who the one teacher per grade level is, who is always going to get the ESE kids because that is just the way it is...how do we find a way to educate the other teachers so it is not just a known thing that they are always going to get this one teacher, but to have all the teachers on the grade level of course be willing and open. So there has to be a way to show teachers that the model can work whether it is videos or training and that it does not necessarily mean it is an extra burden that is going to make you unhappy...you may even find that you like it more once you experience it, maybe not all the time but certainly some of the time.

FGP 2: We don't like it all the time (laughter).

FGP 3: There are definitely some teachers that would say, yes they would not want to go back but they like having that diversity in their classroom and they actually prefer it.

FGP 2: I do like the diversity, I do because you have all these varying intelligences and it actually makes me a better teacher because I have to hit everything or at least try to hit everything. It keeps things fresh so I like that.

FGP 1: And it changes the perspective of the students. I have now started to think about future inclusion so students that are involved in the XXX crew are going to grow up to be adults who are going to have birthday parties with their children whose kids are going to have sleepovers and who are going to own businesses and that thinking is changed because they have been exposed – I can't even imagine what that is going to look like in their own personal lives 10-20 years from now.

Researcher: Major.

FGP 1: But the support to allow them to have that experience of someone different, which in the student's mind are not that different...from a student perspective they do not feel the difference between themselves and other kids as much as the adults do.

Researcher: That is definitely a major thing.

1.2 What are your recommendations, if any, for making the expectation for inclusion more explicit?

Researcher: So, what are your recommendations for the organization in terms of how they can make that expectation more explicit? How do you think the organization could make that happen?

FGP 2: Well, we don't have inclusion coaches now...why can't we go back to having an inclusion coach?

Researcher: We could.

FGP 2: You know, we have behavioral specialists...

Researcher: An inclusion coach who tries to work themselves out of a job...

FGP 1: Or just maintain the work that is happening.

FGP 2: Some people, sad to say, they want to get out of the classroom because they want to get out of the classroom. I just refuse to get out of the classroom. I like the classroom. I like being with the kids. [It needs to be] someone who really can work with kids and can work with adults, it does take a special person who really wants to get that message across and not, oh I get to be part of admin, I get a walkie-talkie and no lesson plans.

FGP 1: I think that support...and I really see within my colleagues, exceptional education teachers, need some support and training because for so many of them, most of their work life has been that isolated model, and so they are petrified to walk in [to a general education classroom]. I will walk into a chemistry class and I facilitate it and I don't know all the material. That is extremely frightening for many of my colleagues, so I think they need some support and maybe not just professional development, just coaching and help, a one-on-one to kind of venture in because there are all kinds of skills. I always say it is like going into someone's home, having to be in there every day, and I have to learn that I don't just open your refrigerator, but I eventually gain your trust so that I can, and we can work together. That is a tough thing for someone who has been in a separate class.

FGP 3: Yes, I think that the key is coaching the ESE teachers on how to be effective in an inclusive classroom because I think a lot are afraid that they go in there. Sometimes it happens in reality where they are pretty much just kind of standing there watching the other teacher teach so they prefer to pull kids out and they might even pull strings behind the scenes to try to be even less inclusive so that they can go back to where they feel comfortable in their small groups in their classroom. So finding a way to train them so they feel confident and effective in a full classroom setting, which is probably...

FGP 2: When I opened up XXXXXXXX I had a co-taught class of 40 students and 25 were ESE. That was a rude awakening but I loved my co-teacher...we bonded and XXX was my best friend and we did so well. XXX would help the regular kids. I watched XXX with the ESE kids and I

followed her lead. There were some rough kids. XX XXXXXX, XX goes, “you have 40 kids, I can’t walk in here”. I said I keep telling you I need another teacher but hey, OK whatever, but it was fantastic. XXX went to ESE because that is XXX background but XXX also has a Master’s in literature and they XXX can back to my department this year so we were working together until XXX had a baby. Everything that I learned from her, XXX is a great teacher, I could pass it forward. I try when new teachers come I am no longer department chair but I used to show the teachers this is what we do, come into my classroom, especially the [one with a lot of students with disabilities] because I get one every year and it is OK. I have no issues with that. I welcome other teachers to come to this period and you will see how I do things and see if maybe you can take something back, some of the modeling and maybe you can give me some pointers. Maybe I did not help XXXXXX today and maybe you have some insight to that as well. I do like that. I like seeing other teachers how they work, seeing ESE teachers, have them come into my classroom, [tell me] what am I doing well and what could I tweak.

FGP 2: I don’t know what the connection is to the colleges too. I know there has been a shift. I know XXX program is changed. I don’t know if the district is actively looking for ESE teachers that have that inclusive attitude or the new group coming in, if they are working with the colleges because I know I had a big disconnect. What I was being trained to do in college, and then when I got into the school system it was vastly different. So I don’t even know, it has been so long, how that link or that communication is happening for the future teachers and how is it going to mesh with what is in existence right now.

FGP 3: I think the students now that graduate from UCF currently automatically have the ESE. I think it is like a requirement.

FGP 2: They do because my daughter got it. XXX has the ESOL Endorsement, the Reading Endorsement and the ESE Endorsement.

FGP 3: Some course work obviously goes along with that so I don't even think it is a choice to decide to go

FGP 2: No, XXX has no choice.

FGP 2: There is a difference. When the requirements came down for the 20 hours [of professional development in] ESE, people would just...I said the only people that should be complaining are the people that are already certified. I can see you need updates but we always used to argue that 20 points is not really that much and I think that exposure is essential so that they are at least...implementing all the things...were they exposed, yes, and that is a beginning. That is a foot in the door.

FGP 3: I enjoyed [the district's Universal Design for Learning] course very much.

Researcher: This is a great discussion, thank you all.

- Teachers have been resistant to the inclusion of children with disabilities in public school classrooms since the initial mandate for compulsory school attendance in the early 1900's. In what ways do you positively counteract this resistance?

2.2 In what ways could your organization positively counteract this resistance?

Researcher: Teachers have been resistant to the inclusion of students with disabilities since the initial mandate for compulsory school in the early 1900's. In what ways so you personally positively counteract this resistance?

FGP 1: I will jump in on that because just today with having the visit of the XXX XXXX...the XXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX team helped me to make inroads with the teachers in ways that I could not have, directly with the adults. Having high school students who are open-minded, who get it, who like diversity and who want to be friends with students with disabilities and see how capable they are...they are so successful working with the students that the teachers see it and it is almost like they have thrown down the gauntlet and the teachers are kind of like, well look this is an untrained high school student who has found a way to reach this student. They [teachers] will watch the students and so when the teacher has what they deem a difficult student and with that support that student becomes successful in their class. Now they have a different experience and so they are a little more relaxed when the next one comes in and there is an openness, you know, they might not throw their arms open wide but it is like, I think we can do this and let me see. They needed that successful experience where they did not feel inept, untrained and incapable and then they begin to see that it could work. So the students have helped me a lot to get in to the teacher's mindset to change that perception.

FGP 2: I think as teachers we don't like to look like we are incompetent. We have digital devices at our school. They just pretty much threw them out as sink or swim. Sometimes, oh it is not working, OK well let's do paper and pencil. OK, oh it is working and sometimes I will be thinking they will go, miss are you buffering...no. So that is our running joke. We do the best that we can but that I think has to do with the teacher's personality and how much experience you have had. I understand if you don't have the same life experiences as me you may not do quite as well or you have been shunned, you have been excluded and so now you are being forced. I don't think force is ever a good word. I would want that the teachers would want to do this because they think hey, this really is the right thing to do. I always do better when I want to do things and when I volunteer. I try to talk to my colleagues, certainly in the XXXXXX department, hey, this is working you know XXXXXX can do this. He did that for you? Yes, he did. We had to do all these activities first but he ended up doing it and I like that and I like hearing other teachers who say, whether it is in math or science, how did you get this student to work for you or here is a tip where maybe he will work for you. I still think we should be more collaborative and we are not. Teachers still have that mentality, my door is shut – leave me alone.

FGP 3: I think just going into maybe a more reluctant general education teacher's classroom and just being in there and modeling how you interact with the ESE students, how you teach them just to show them. I think sometimes the fear is that some of the more reluctant teachers might think that you have to teach totally, completely, different and everything has to be different and they realize the vast majority of it is still just teaching the kids, of course, there are

accommodations and different scaffolding that you have to do, but it is not like it is a complete reinvention of the curriculum to teach the ESE kids. Once they realize that then they are a little bit more open-minded.

Researcher: So you think that they [teachers] think it is going to be a reinvention of the curriculum?

FGP 1: I do.

Researcher: I think you may be right, in that some of it is fear that they [teachers] are not prepared. I do not necessarily think they are negative people or they are just resistant for that sake, but I agree that they may not feel prepared and there is a fear element there.

FGP 1: And with a high level of accountability. The tide and the test score is a new...even if you believe that students with a disability are going to learn, maybe their pace is different and will that be reflected on that test and how will that impact me and my scores and if I have too many ESE students then what about the person that is gifted? You know, it is that jockeying now...

FGP 2: That performance.

FGP 1: It is tied to that kind of testing and it makes it tougher for them and I get that.

2.1 In what ways could your organization positively counteract this resistance?

Researcher: Excellent feedback. So in what ways could the organization positively counteract this resistance?

FGP 2: Well, I think one way is, I know they are not going to do it, but making sure that teachers do not feel punished or are actually punished in terms of the evaluative system by including everyone in their classroom, because there certainly seems to be...

FGP 2: And that there is no opting out. I hate that word. Can I opt out of that? No, you are taking the test like everyone else. Can I opt out of not taking my senior cap and gown? Certainly, just go tell XX XXXXX. XX XXXXX he doesn't take guff. I think sometimes we have to do some tough things and we just need to go forward and just do it, bite the bullet and move forward.

Researcher: I know when you talk about opting out, I mean looking some of the classroom ratios of students, the XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX recommendation is no more than a third students with special needs in any classroom, and that includes English language learners, students who are gifted and includes students with disabilities. You don't want an instructional range that makes it impossible for the teacher to implement IEPs, and you don't want defeat the purpose of inclusion by making it impossible for the teacher to be able to differentiate successfully to meet the needs of the students. I like the no opting out because, without it, teachers will think that inclusion is negotiable.

FGP 2: Yes, but it is that culture that you can or because you do this...OK you are teaching AP for me, OK we will not give you ESE or you are coaching basketball and we are winning so I won't give these kind of kids to you in your class.

FGP 2: How can I phrase this politely? (Laughter).

FGP 1: Long ago in a land far away, when we used to have to do a formula when the kids generated money and we knew based on what we had at our school exactly how many ESE supports we could have. I think when the principals got to decide on their pot of money, and it is not an obligation, or it is not a demand, or it is not... because these really clever things happened. For example, we have teachers that are certified ESE and it is on their certification and they may be doing a bunch of other things but they are counting that as one of their allocations. For example, this person who happens to be certified ESE, well how convenient that is a good thing because XXX is in there with the students and can give support. XXX is not directly teaching ESE as the population is very small. So if the district said this is what you should have and we want to see that implemented and you have to have that support regardless because for us I feel like, why do I have to go every year and beg for another facilitator? We could be doing things for our seniors in economics and there are not enough people. That is an important place right now until the teachers feel comfortable and supported to have those people stepping in and giving that information and strategies and I would like to see them say...

FGP 2: It is those creative financial things that they are doing, like being a department chair, our old principal was very, well this is it, oh yeah you know I lost so and so now we are missing \$300,000 from the budget so we are cutting this, this and that. A lot of time to make up that money, they would cut something from ESE. I know because I would hear about it. That stinks, you know, whether it was manipulatives or all some of their special stuff things would go missing, their cameras that they had for them. They had a lot of nice things, ipads, OK so if it is for them it should be for them. It was bought with their money. So I don't like the creative financial thing.

Researcher: So your saying having more oversight and certainly monitoring ESE allocations would be very beneficial. Alright, XXXXXXXX is there anything you want to add to that?

FGP 2: Yes, I mean just that it is difficult on a ratio and from an elementary perspective so there are two of us that are the VE teachers who I work with 1st, 4th and 5th grade so in order to have me be in classrooms for a meaningful chunk of time, well then they kind of have to put all of the ESE students in one class so then the ratios are way out of whack because there are ELL students and gifted students in that class, but then all the gifted students are in the other class so that ratios are so out of whack. It is driven by my schedule because otherwise if I am in a room for 20 minutes and then next room for 20 minutes, then it is just kind of, how are you doing, and then I'm off to my next one so make it an hour then you know....that tends to happen and then where it is really bad is when you know students get staffed during the year and then they are changing their classes just to put them in the class that I go into.

FGP 2: And they don't like that.

FGP 3: Of course they don't like that.

FGP 2: No one likes that, ESE or not.

FGP 3: Yes, but then if they don't then I have to cut the time in half with the one class to spend half an hour with the other, you know one student, so how can we do that? Obviously, hire more teachers. That is really not an option.

FGP 2: You know it could be.

- To what extent does your organization promote inclusive practices?

Researcher: Good feedback. So now we are going to talk about inclusive practices...those are instructional practices that are implemented in the classroom to meet the needs of all students. To what extent does your organization promote inclusive practices?

- Probe: We talked about teachers feeling unprepared.

FGP 1: Besides the recertification thing [state required professional development in ESE], I don't think they do much of anything. [The Universal Design for Learning] course and that is it.

There was another one. There was a 6-point one too that I took before I took [the Universal Design for Learning] course.

Researcher: An ESE overview?

FGP 2: Yes, that was it. That is it. No, and just because I had to recertify I have it but there are people who don't have to recertify for another four years. They are "we are not taking that" but you know it is really good. Yes, you will have the points and yes, "I will worry about that later". They are hoping that they can opt out and not have to do that. That is the talk. They think it is going to go away and it is like, OK, and I feel sorry for XXXXXX. XXXXXX and I we have done several workshops at our school because we are usually partners in crime. How to get something as simple as your IEP's, the peer input form done, your 504's, how to document it and your lesson plans – little things. XXX came up with like a chart. It is really simple. It is just a matter of writing things down and having it so you could answer a question if an auditor or someone from XXX or someone from the district came you would be covered. They could not even be bothered to go. It is not that we are not well liked, we are well liked, it is just they hear the word ESE and "yeah, that is not for me – I am not an ESE teacher". Well, neither am I but someone has to be an advocate. Just when I was doing ESOL at XXXXXXXXX High School, "those aren't my kids". OK but they are still part of our community. It is like they are not.

Researcher: So are you saying that they are thinking someone else is going to come in, sort of the second shift, will come in and take care of this?

FGP 2: Yes. Because I am not full time in the classroom I am able to do some professional development with our instructional coach and because I open the school I have a long established relationship with a lot of teachers, so even though there are a lot of new teachers, they know my work ethic and they know what I do, so they are open. Where it falls apart is that they will come to the workshop and maybe the administration will say your administrator is going to be at each session and they know someone is watching. It is the implementation in the classroom. They will come for the meeting. They will get the information. I think some of them pull a lot of it, but I think if we were collaborating and working together and we were in the rooms with them and like you say, could actually show them that it is really not that intimidating and there are ways to do it. I am happy to have the opportunity to even talk to them but that generalization to the day-to-day is where it kind of falls apart.

Researcher: So are you saying it would be beneficial if district support was more out there?

FGP 2: I think so and I think there needs to be actually more accountability because everybody is looking at me and seeing what I am doing in that class and making sure that you know my T's are crossed and my I's are dotted, but what about the teachers that got to opt out?

FGP 1: That is the math training. It used to be there was a lot of training for the district and directly. We used to actually go into auditoriums and there was you know... but when these math teachers...in the summer they need, whoever is in charge of math, what are they saying to

them about the ESE students? The English teachers, what are they being told about working and why does it have to come from the ESE teacher?

FGP 2: From other sources [other than ESE].

Researcher: That is great feedback. Those investments in professional learning that are targeting the content areas, they really could build in application to students with disabilities.

3.2 In what ways do you promote inclusive practices?

Researcher: The next question is, in what ways do you promote inclusive practices?

- **Probe:** You kind of answered that in the way that you said you combat resistance. Is there anything you want to add in terms of ways that you promote inclusive practices, meaning those classroom strategies?

FGP 3: I try to model some strategies that are effective so the other teacher can see that and then integrate that into their teaching. I definitely had some frank conversations with teachers too when they ask, “why are we doing this” and then I would speak my opinion. I try to usually say how it is our job to prepare these kids for the real world and jobs. There is not a separate reality for these students when the graduate. Here is a company that is only hiring ESE kids (laughter).

Researcher: Or a self-contained grocery store. They are not going to find one.

FGP 3: So I think sometimes when they actually think about that it makes them realize that is the big picture that we are trying to have everybody be successful in the world.

Researcher: So your teachers – do you see any difference between teachers that are more seasoned? I mean, we have two perfect examples here of two that have been teaching 28 and 32 years and have those inclusive values...

FGP 3: Yes, I see some difference and I think sometimes too it can be some that may be reluctant or don't want ESE students and then the flip side of that coin is there are also some teachers who know who the ESE students are and sometimes have the bar set so low that, oh, don't worry about that and here is a sentence stem for you even though the kid doesn't need the sentence stem. So you are also educating them not to over accommodate and automatically make that ESE label mean he doesn't have to do that much – just go on the computer and do this program while we are doing

FGP 2: As if they are inferior.

FGP 3: Right. I mean well-intentioned but not realizing that ...

FGP 2: Yes, [a student] knows that he is not doing the same thing as everybody else. They know.

Researcher: So are you saying that teachers sometimes make assumptions based on that label?

FGP 1: A lot of times too I think about the teachers like I do my ESE students, and so when a teacher is doing something like they decided to make test corrections or do something that is helping that student, I will go to the administration and I will let them know that this person is making gains. Can you please when you get a chance to talk to them, I think that recognition and praise... you know, just like the students, you try something, it is a risk and you get a positive feedback, somebody knows you are trying and then it builds that culture to try a little bit more. I have a lot of eyes and ears. I am in the classrooms and I will just say, "hey, I just want you to know so and so is now letting the kids do this in class and that was not happening", especially their administrator. If you see XXX, you know give XXX a pat on the back for that because that is a big deal and it means something to the teachers to hear that.

Researcher: Yes, you got that right for sure.

1. To what extent does your organization encourage educators to adopt an inclusive stance?
- 2.

Researcher: So the next set of questions are about stance. Stance refers to a belief in equity and a quality education for all children, where they don't necessarily have to earn their way into a general education setting. Stance refers to a personal stance that questions

the labelling and leveling and sorting of human children. To what extent does your organization encourage educators to adopt an inclusive stance?

- Probe: A counter question would be, to what extent we perpetuate that idea that the ESE label is what the student needs to get the help they need... just to couch that question.

FGP 3: I think from a data perspective it is very clear out of all the data, we have of a student, it says ESE next to his name and like the whole focus of the conversation on each specific kid is, oh he is ESE or she is ESE, but if so and so makes gains, you know XXX is ESE so that really just hammers home the idea that this child, the child who is ESE, and not just “John Smith”. He is an “ESE John Smith”.

FGP 2: Look at their learning goals, what have they accomplished this semester. I was taught to do that. I did not start out that way, you know, learning goals and what can XXXXXX now do in your class and what have you done to help XXXXXX meet that goal and then move forward and can you help XXXXXX write another goal for the next IEP for the annual reviews. That I have gotten from XXXXXX. XXXXXX has gotten very technical with me and that has been interesting. It is eye-opening but not everybody wants to know that. When I pipe up well, “no, I don’t need to do that”, and they just like want the minimum. I think we need to do more than the minimum.

FGP 1: I think part of the stance too has been that the way, a while back, they got people to do it was the legal part of it, the fear that if they don’t follow the IEP and if they don’t do it, it is a

legal document and there is due process and you are going to get your hand slapped. That Is not a good way that I think.

Researcher: [Complying] out of fear?

FGP 1: Yes, so often when I meet with the new teachers, it is “what if I don’t follow the IEP?” Well, there is a deeper question there and it is not just about the IEP. It is about that attitude of inclusion, you know, how do I help this student? Well, how do you help any student? How do you do this? How do you do that? I think there has been for the few teachers that have had to show documentation or go to a due process meeting or had a lawyer come in or an advocate, there is a fear associated with it and that has been the way to get people to do it. Fill this out because you have to. I think the organization is just beginning to get an idea of what that means for the stance.

Researcher: It is difficult because like you say, it is all based on the fact that they got staffed in the first place so that is kind of separating them by actually staffing them. How do you then change the mentality for them to be looked at just as another student who of course...

FGP 1: [Is the Exceptional Student Education department] still on a different floor [than the Curriculum & Instruction department]?

FGP 1: When people go to the [district office] and you know that all of the ESE Instructional staff are on [a different floor than the Curriculum & Instruction department], there is that. I don't know if this fits in but there is also the attitude of the parents. There is a lot of parent fear around inclusion and what that means so that piece of it too, you know bullying or whatever that means, and how that is communicated to district and administration is tough.

FGP 3: They gave me a stamp this year that says "I completed with help" and that they want me to stamp if I worked with them. I don't use it but just the fact like that....

FGP 1: That somebody made that.

FGP 3: Somebody made it. I got it on my desk. It is a red stamp that I am supposed to if I actually....

FGP 1: And it is red. I hate red. I don't even grade in red.

FGP 3: It is to show "you are an ESE kid and I helped you". Obviously, I help lots of kids.

FGP 1: So when you sit down with the teachers and their lesson plan and I helped you with this, there is your stamp (laughter).

FGP 3: Again, this shows maybe there is some room for ...

FGP 2: I put gold stars and smiley faces on all the papers. You have to get 100 in order to get it. My ESE kids have gotten 100 on something and they are so excited, “look what I got” and they put them all over their notebooks. That is great.

Researcher: Even in high school every student still loves getting a star.

FGP 3: Like on an elementary level, how do you balance the report cards versus the data, so I have really seen a shift now where I mean we are hammering these kids in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade with F’s just because they are not at grade level. There is still a way to indicate like, I don’t know, it just really bothers me that....

FGP 2: So tests. All these extra tests. I like how he said we are hammering. You know, it used to be I got the kids from elementary school and I got them in high school. I still had kids who loved to read but not on the first day of school when you can’t even read for fun any more. No, we are going to read this text, which is information, and no more literature. No more fun stories. No more let’s find all the adjectives. Let’s do this. You know, that really sucks for an English teacher. It probably sucks for everybody. We need to have lifelong learners, regardless of your IQ, your exceptionalities and any accommodation because if you don’t like to learn you are not going to have a very good life. You are not going to be a very good productive citizen. That is part of my job too is to create productive citizens. We might want to rethink all these testing because last year my seniors they “miss we can’t do this for you – we are so sorry”. They were tired of being tested. All the benchmarks that we all had to take. We can’t do this for you. Even with the cookies that I promised. I said, “yeah, but did you see that they took all their AP tests

on the day before and you want them to come and test, an EOC from my class the next day – are you insane?”.

FGP 3: They give up and they disengage.

FGP 2: And they say, “miss we just can’t do it”.

FGP 3: They don’t know so they want to be successful. They don’t completely understand that maybe they are like two years behind in like a reading level. They get the F on their report card and they are crushed and that is that. That is not something that is driven by the general education teachers and there is really not much you can do other than try to say...

FGP 2: And there has to be some, when it comes to grades, I have always felt that it is not just about tests because you can be a great student and not test well. The ACT and the SAT prove that. You can be brilliant and not do well on those. What about you participating? What about you discussing things in class? What about you collaborating with your peers? What about completing a magnificent project that has nothing to do with any of those standardized tests? I am still teaching them the skill; it just means that it didn’t translate over well to the test. I don’t know.

Researcher: Yes, I know, educational testing and measurement is a whole another arena.

That is for sure. I liked what you said especially about the subgroups. There is such a focus on those subgroups but what is really the purpose of that focus on the subgroup? Is it just

to move those numbers? Because you are right, it is totally perpetuating the focus on the label. The purpose of these questions is to explore what we can do to root out the structures that are already in the organization, and that are kind of perpetuating an exclusionary culture...so that is great feedback.

FGP 2: I think it is interesting that the district gave the schools the ability to opt out of the benchmark testing but now we have replaced it with formative assessments so now we are deconstructing the standards. We are still testing – it is just in a different format.

Researcher: They are calling them common final exams now.

FGP 2: Well, there is that but I mean every 2-3 weeks we as our PLC we have to come up with an assessment. We give it and it has to be cold and it has to be unbiased. That takes a lot of work. It is like my kids go, “miss, why are we doing this – we don’t need to do this”. Yes, we have to so we are making them short and sometimes we will do a nice essay but they are not just doing it in our class, they are doing it in their other six classes including PE. PE is supposed to do it. I am not sure if PE is doing it but they are supposed to do it as well. ROTC, your art class, everything – that is a lot of testing.

Researcher: Yes, it is a lot of testing.

FGP 2: In addition, to your unit test or whatever other assessments you have going, projects, you know in economics and American government. I am really good friends with them. They

have lots of big ongoing projects but then they have these little 'piddely' things they have to do as well. It does not flow. You can say it flows but it doesn't flow. We have to take time in order to do that.

4.1 In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance?

Researcher: In what ways do you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance?

- Probe: XXXXXXXX, you mentioned saying to people, “they are going to be citizens and these kids are going to be out in the world and there is not going to be a separate whatever...”. In what ways have any of you encountered resistance to that stance; that the label or not really important, and we look at the student's strengths? Anything you want to share in regard to that particular...?

FGP 3: That they don't buy into it? Yes, so there is one teacher I worked with this year who has 7 or maybe 8 ESE students in that class and XXX is the reading teacher. There are centers typically so they go around in like 4 or 5 groups so XXX automatically made one group all 7 of the ESE kids.

FGP 1: And we are not supposed to do that.

FGP 3: So I had to explain to XXX to let's base this on their reading level. They are not all the lowest readers in the class actually so that is what we should be doing improvements on is that and not just putting all 7 students that are mine in one group so you know trying those types of

things to say that we shouldn't just look again at the label and we should look what is the basis of all the other groups.

Researcher: Did XXX go for that?

FGP 3: Kind of but it is still morphs back to that they are my students basically and XXX does not pull them for teacher groups. I am the teacher so XXX would not pull them for XXX teacher group ever. XXX asked me to take....I will say this, I know it is not about stories but...

Researcher: It is about stories.

FGP 3: Yesterday XXX asked me to take two of the students I work with just down to my room to an AR quiz because they are taking an AR quiz. Yes, great so we went and did it and then 5 minutes another one but not to take an AR quiz, it is just kind of like just go see Mr. XXXXXXXXXXXX kind of and I am, "what are you doing here". If I left the room then my kid should probably be following me too so finding an excuse to have them walk into my room and I didn't know why they were there.

Researcher: So you are providing support facilitation services then, right?

FGP 3: Yes.

Researcher: You are kind of that support facilitator. Does AR make you think XXX views those as your kids?

FGP 3: Yes, certainly.

Researcher: How about at XXXX XXXXX? Do you have support facilitation there?

FGP 2: We do but the way it works out unfortunately...

Researcher: They probably don't come in your class.

FGP 2: No, but they are using our support facilitators to do paperwork. You didn't hear that from me.

FGP 2: So they don't come into the classes. I have never had anybody in my classroom. One coach he goes, "hey, if you ever need me, and XXX goes oh I know you, you don't need me at all". XXX walked right back out. So OK, fine, you are right I don't, moving on but that is not right for teachers that do need that just like our ESOL para's. I feel sorry for some of the teachers that they have the endorsement but they still need the support and they have 25 kids in there. So again, that goes with money and how the principal sets up the school. If you have funds that are allocated for that, then they actually should be in the classroom. To me when I hear support facilitator I don't think of someone pushing paper, I think of someone actually being in the classroom, maybe not a co-teacher but trying to help me out. While I am working

with these, can you work with XXX. Hey, if I am working with XXX would you mind working with somebody else? Can you only work with ESE? If I am working with the ESE student one-on-one.

Researcher: Her magic doesn't work with them?

FGP 2: Apparently not.

Researcher: And they can. They can provide incidental support to other students.

FGP 2: To say hey, what are you doing?

FGP 1: One of the things that the XXX XXXX students taught me the very first year when I did training with them the first two weeks of school and I spent time talking about the different labels because I thought they were going to need to know. By the second year they all said don't do that. We don't need it. It does not matter to me. We don't need a lot of....so the kids didn't want to know. And today we had visitors come and they were like, well do you get special permission slips for their... and I said no because they are friends. There is a relational thing here. We don't have to treat them like they are going to break. I learned to change my language when I work with the teachers because if I do a professional development and I talk about these are strategies that work with learning disabled students, then I can almost hear those ears close.

FGP 2: I hate that word disabled.

FGP 2: I hate that because it makes them seem different and they are not. I would like to change that word if I could.

FGP 1: I don't even use those labels a lot of times. I will say, let's talk about strategies to work with the student whose pace is different than someone else. Let's talk about the students who need visual cues to help them learn.

Researcher: The language of the support they need and not the....

FGP 1: And the teachers will ask me and I kind of flip it about and say, can you show me who is ESE in my class. I say, let's play a little guessing game. I just say I am not going to show you. I want to see if you know and just see what you think your little radar.... I am telling you, 9 times out of 10 they are totally off because it is a behavioral thing or they have some logical thing. Even then I don't want to share the label so tell me what this kid is doing and tell me what this kid is needing help with. So that language, not let's identify your ESE, let's highlight them in yellow on your roll...uughh.

FGP 2: Which we used to do.

FGP 2: I highlight my gifted in yellow in my seating chart and the kids go, what does this mean? I have my own agenda. My legend and for me "G" equals gifted. Well, that is not what "G" means in the ESE codes. It just is. HI obviously is hearing impaired but that is for me. I

have had someone who was visually impaired and legally blind who got a 5 on the FCAT. XXX did not do work anywhere else but did it for me because we shared a love of reading, but would blow another teacher off. XXXXXX XXXXXXXX, looked so different from everybody else. Well, he had these huge glasses and really could not see but he refused to learn braille. XXX goes, “miss, I am just going to read”. It is like, OK honey. I would blow things up for XXX. He did not know faces. He knew you by how you walked. He made hundreds on his vocab test and his classmates go, “we want to be like XXXXXX”. I said, well XXX studies just like you do, maybe in a different fashion but he still does the work. Great handwriting. It was just amazing what that XXX could do sitting in the front of the room and still I had to blow things up. If you didn’t know, except for the glasses, you would never know that he had that or that he had such a rotten home life because his parents gave XXX no support – nothing. We were always buying XXX clothes because XXX pants, I don’t mean just a little bit, I mean like this [gestures]. All the things that people at XXXX XXXXX did for XXX...and his classmates were trained, hey XXXXXXX is a wonderful addition to our class. Not all teachers do that and it is like, oh yeah, they sit XXX in the back or they sit XXX in the front or as you said, altogether. You would never know in my classroom where all my ESE kids are. Only my one Asperger’s because XXX has to be next to me so XXX is in the front. Everybody else, no, you don’t know who they are and how they work in their groups you can’t tell either.

FGP 1: I always love when someone says, well they don’t look like ESE. (Laughter).

FGP 2: And you can’t tell by their writing or anything else. What do you think they are going to be doing? Duh, duh, duh...

4.2 In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive stance?

Researcher: So we have kind of answered the next question, which was, how can your organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive stance?

- Probe: There have kind of been some answers to that question embedded in some of your feedback thus far, such as focusing on the language of support. It is not about how the student struggles, but what support they need to be successful. Any other suggestions?

FGP 1: I like the positive. What we said that is positive.

Researcher: Those subgroup labels they don't help?

FGP 2: No they don't.

Researcher: Like you said, they highlight them in yellow and they put "ESE" next to their name.

FGP 1: Do they figure in different in the formula? I mean, is there something that is going to make it to their advantage for an A or something that they...I don't know, at high school level you know they begin to talk about if someone is not about to graduate, they are talking about can

we have XXX tested. That is about waivers. It is just not looking at the whole student. I think that one of the things that has thrown teachers is MTSS and the idea that we just don't automatically test and label and that we look at interventions. That mindset is taking a while to really come into play. I think people are used to, OK XXX seems to have a problem so let's test XXX. It has got to be something. That idea of then asking them, what have you tried? What is working? Let's talk about this. It is very different. I think it will be different in 10 years from now. At the high school level. It is happening more and more in elementary schools but we have got kids, they got tested, they got labelled and that is what they are but when those labels start to kind of fade away and we are looking at what supports, I think in a few years that will change the culture too.

Researcher: I am glad you mentioned MTSS. When RTI and MTSS kind of came into inception, there was position statement released by the National Association of School Psychologists. They issued a statement, it was about rights without labels, and advocated for a multi-tiered system of supports, tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3, to really look at providing supports to students without the need for a label. What did that really get them?

Sometimes they ended up learning separately, lower, slower and less. MTSS asks, first of all, is the student getting good first instruction in tier 1. Is the teacher prepared? Are they using the right strategies? Are they using the right scaffolding? Are there supports in place in tier 1? And then tier 2 and tier 3. Then if they need sustained intensity and duration in order to maintain success, and you have the data to support it, there might be a referral for special education services, and then all that would do is guarantee those tiers of support all the time. The students are not going anywhere, to some other place. They have

a rights-based space document [IEP] that protects them and guarantees that intense level of support all the time. I think it takes time for these things to take hold. I think MTSS, over time, will help with stance.

FGP 1: I think so too.

- To what extent does your organization cultivate inclusive values?

5.3 In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to inclusive values?

5.4 In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of inclusive values?

Researcher: The next question is about inclusive values. Values have to do with regarding difference in diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource; this refers to a personal value system, within public education, that regards inclusion as a social justice and civil rights issue, in terms of the students being included and not having to earn their way into a quality education that is not separate and segregated. So to what extent does your organization cultivate inclusive values in terms of that civil rights democracy and social justice?

FGP 2: I do think we are a diverse county. I will say this. I don't know about in our district in our ELC office how many of our personnel, especially higher-ups, have disabilities or do we have any. We don't just need to talk the talk, we need to walk the talk as well. So if it starts there and what about in our schools, people who have, how shall I put this nicely, a higher level

of a job with disabilities. I mean, how far can we include them? Because our students see that. Is it always going to be the janitor or the lady in the cafeteria or can we have a clerk and can we be patient with that clerk, whether XXX is working or he is working, maybe not in the discipline office but maybe in the library or as a teacher's aide, something where other kids can see that person and say, wow, that is great. You know, I see a lot of people with special needs at Goodwill. I see them hired at Publix. I see quite a few at Target. I don't see them hired at Macy's. You know what I am trying to say? That is not just our district; that is society as a whole. How do we value them? Because it used to be that we were segregated and you could not drink from the same water fountain as a white person and so how long has that taken to change? The same thing with homosexuality or transgender. Any of these big issues that have to do with treating people as equals. It just seems like it is so hard that we have to work at it to treat people as equals because we are. I have a hard time wrapping my head around that. You can hear it in our colleagues sometimes too.

Researcher: I think so. How about the XXX XXXX? I know you do an extensive amount of instruction on disability etiquette and rights. Do you talk to students about civil rights and social justice?

FGP 1: Oh yes. The students did a commercial around the time, this was last year, that on the announcements about that this is the new civil rights movement. It was black history month and they were talking about exclusion. I will tell you another thing too, that I am not sure all our facilities are built with the best intentions of that. I mean, there is a legal level of what is required but my students we walked our campus one time and we talked about universal design.

We have some really heavy doors. We have a student that is blind and the kids will ask me, “why aren’t there the little switches on our doors?” We have one elevator in our school that is often breaking down.

FGP 2: And it is at the other end, right? Like ours.

FGP 1: Yes, at the end of the school and so I think there are some factors. We have probably the right ramps and the current bathrooms but just looking at that, how can we make sure our school is set up so a parent who has a disability can come in to participate, like at the cafeteria. They set it up and they have all chairs and tables and I am like, OK guys well guess what, if I have this need where are we going to put that person? You are not thinking about that difference when you are PLC. There are no places for wheelchairs in our PLC. It is all chairs and sitting down.

FGP 2: We have a row but really only a row.

FGP 1: When our school was first built I was mortified that there were actual signs that were on the rooms that said EH classroom. I said tear those down right now. It is a sense of like I don’t know how all the organization works but if the people that are in construction, are they planning these things? These new schools with this idea of... If a student comes to us and happens to use a wheelchair for transportation, we don’t have the right desks. It is an act of congress. Why aren’t schools just OK, we are going to have desks and we are going to have so many of this and if you don’t....

FGP 2: And tables at the right height for the wheelchair.

FGP 1: We don't have all those. We have to go order it. We have to find where they are. Let's build a school with it there at the beginning assuming that someone is going to use it.

FGP 2: Two years ago one of my students, a brilliant little girl, XXX is at UCF, we had a fire drill and the elevator was broken and XXX is in a wheelchair. I could not carry XXX so I am sitting there. I send my class out and I am waiting. The administrator got angry with me. Why did you stay with the student. Where would you like me to go? If that had been a real fire? XXX parents called the school because XXX was appalled that I got yelled at in front of her and that I got chastised for staying with XXX. I am never going to leave a student behind. We got to the end of the corridor. That is far as I can go. Why was it such a big deal XXX XXXXX to have.... Well, because if there was a real fire, how could that kid go down? XXX would have to go all the way to the end of the building to use an elevator. Why can't you have an elevator in multiple places? XXXXXX XXXXX is like XXXXXXXX. You are like this. At XXXX XXXXX we are like this. We have a bigger courtyard. We have an extra building in the middle. It is a long walk from the 400 to the 600 where the elevator is. If you needed, well maybe 2 wheelchairs can fit but that is it. So what if you had 3? OK, well...

FGP 1: We are going digital next year. I am already asking so what kinds of things are going to be part of the school that they find sitting lower than everybody else? Can I go to the smart board? Can I do everything else that everybody else is doing? How are you thinking about

iPads or whatever that are going to be different for the kids? That just should be part of our thinking.

FGP 3: From the organizational perspective, it is really easy to make a mission statement about civil rights and everybody deserves this, but it is a far cry from just saying a placard and making it a reality.

Researcher: Right and those suggestions are important ways that the organization can communicate that we have inclusive values...for instance, by embracing universal design throughout the district and, for one thing, not having it be an act of congress to get assistive technology or equipment for a student.

1. To what extent does your organization cultivate an inclusive culture?

Researcher: So let's talk about inclusive culture. To what extent do you feel the organization cultivates an inclusive culture...a collaborative structure where people are coaching and networking?

- **Probe:** This is about climate. XXXXXX, you were saying that teachers are not collaborators. This is all about that collaborative culture. This is about individuals who demonstrate commitment and competency, the ability to network and coach...things that you all have all explained throughout this session. What can the organization do?

FCP 2: At my school this year we are doing PLC's and it is different. It is different than it has been in years past where it was just kind of a label, oh yeah, on the email you and let me go home early on Wednesdays. Now we are really doing...

Researcher: The message is coming from leadership?

FCP 2: I think that [the Superintendent] got with the principals and then the principals got with their AP's and then have gotten with us. I think that because it came from the top people are taking it seriously, or at least in my school are taking it seriously. We are using that time. It is not just about writing lesson plans, it is about talking about what is really going on in your classroom and what happened with XXXXXX. Sometimes we can meet cross curricularly so if we have a student that has, not special needs per se, but is having difficulty. Maybe XXX has had a difficulty in math but XXX is doing well in English and in history. Well, science is flagging too. Maybe that is a point of discussion. I think that because we have the culture of the PLC's, we are not afraid to go and talk to people now. I get e-mails all the time. Someone will call me. Can you talk a little bit about so and so? Absolutely. This is going on. Did you know that his grandmother died? You know, things like that. I think that as teachers we are stepping out of our classrooms and we are learning about the whole student. Maybe they had a really bad game or they got cut from the team. Those things impact our students. Maybe they lost their home or their dad lost his job. Before, we didn't want to get too personal with our students. That is what we have always been told. Don't touch them and don't talk about your personal life. My students like to know what is going on, how many kids I have and how is Ian doing in school and that type of thing. Do I like soccer? Do I like football? Little things like that. They

know if they need to talk about something serious, because I started with the rapport, that they can. We have caught some serious things. I take credit for doing that. Some teachers don't want to do that. They don't want to get so personal with their students.

Researcher: How strongly does your leadership push that? I know you said there was resistance and things seem like they are optional.

FCP 2: Yes, I still think they have not got a complete grasp of what is going on at our school. I think that in some departments, depending on who those teachers are, if you got veteran teachers who are invested and who want to do a good job because it is the right thing to do, then it is working. Some others not so much. It is like my kids, we had to do an infrastructure test, and you had to do preparation. While the PE department did not do it. Well, what PE? It doesn't matter, you are still part of the school and you still have to do this. Or they miss announcements. OK, I show the announcements every day. It is important. We are supposed to show the announcements. I am in PE, miss. It does not matter. You come in early and you watch the announcements because the kids do a really good job on our show and then they give valuable information. So it is always about those people who want to opt out. I don't know where that culture comes from. If I am told to do something I do it.

Researcher: I didn't think there was an "opt out" either.

FCP 2: I am sorry, I am a professional and if you tell me to dress professionally you know I have to tell you that, I am going to do it. Sometimes it is silly but do your job and if you go above that is even better but at least do your job and teaching every student is doing your job.

Researcher: How about XXXXXX XXXXX and XXXXXXXXXXXX?

- **Probe:** Are you working in PLCs? That is certainly one way to kind of start to build that structure of collaboration, but do you feel it is your principal, or is this a message and expectation that is coming from the district?

FCP 3: I think it is better at least at my school that the push has been more to sometimes a grade level would prefer during a special area at times. In the last couple of years there was more of a shift, well if you work a lot with a VE teacher, can we meet before school or after school so that all members of the team can be present and not just... so I think that has definitely been a positive.

- **Probe:** So not just PLC's in name, but gaining a little bit of traction?

FCP 3: Right, if I am actually there then I could be more part of the team but if it is just during their special area times when I am in another classroom, which does not work as well.

- **Probe:** Do you get a chance to participate?

FCP 3: Yes, with some of the teams but I would say the one team that I work more closely with is definitely the one where I feel most effective.

FCP 2: Are you the only VE teacher?

FCP 3: No, there are two of us. I do 1st, 4th and 5th and XXX does K2 to 3.

Researcher: How about at XXXXXX XXXXX? Are PLCs catching on there?

FCP 1: I was just thinking that we do PLC's and I think it is done well but my PLC is the ESE and so what I said to someone, talking to my AP, and I am facilitating the math for college readiness. I feel like I should be in the math PLC. When I was co-teaching algebra I would show up at the meetings and they would be like, oh are you here to see what we are doing? And I said no, I am instructing and I want to hear what the county is telling you and what you are hearing about your testing. It is important for me to know or I don't know what in the world it is that I want my kids to be successful in. So even then, we are still kind of the facilitators to the ESE PLC and the learning strategies high school high tech PLC. Well, I am tired of talking just to ESE teachers all day. That is where I have learned the most is when I get to go in there and hear what the demands are because it helps me know how do I prepare my kids and what can I do to support you. I had no idea that you had that requirement. Looking at pacing guides and I am thinking, yes the ESE some of these students in these classes might be slowing you up and how can I support you when you can't hit your pacing guide because this student is requiring a repetition in that material. I think the exceptional education teacher facilitator should be at those

PLC's and not on their own some place, separated. I think it is sad when so many of our ESE teachers don't even know the names of all of our faculty.

FCP 2: Of the faculty does not know the names of the ESE teachers either. Oh, they are ESE.

FCP 1: Who is that one? Oh, they teach in the ESE classroom.

- **Probe: XXXXXXXX do you experience that at the elementary level? I know you are much smaller than our high schools. Do you still have people that kind of don't know what other people do?**

FCP 3: Yes, certainly and specifically because we are an autism cluster school and those classrooms are like invisible and the people don't know the teacher's names. It was actually one of our coaches was doing the yearbook and sent out an e-mail with different folders that you can put pictures in if you have it, so like a 3rd grade folder, whatever, it is a folder labeled autistic that you can put any of your, I guess, autistic pictures go in that folder. Anyhow, I got a kick out of that.

FCP 2: Not in a positive manner. We understand. (laughter).

FCP 3: It was the autistic folder.

FCP 2: Wow.

FCP 3: So they are definitely viewed as separate there.

FCP 1: I think if the district would focus on...I am just am amazed that changing student perspective, teaching the lessons that are happening to students about diversity and the lessons are taking place about working with differences for the students. Whether it is like, I am thinking back to the days when we used to do the [sic], kind of the impact kind of stuff where the effective education, but there is actual time spent in teaching kids about accepting someone that is not doing this the same way you are. It is not that old idea that everybody gets what they need. Not everybody gets the same. How do we embed that? You know, you get extra time on the test, you need it and that does not mean you have an advantage. So I don't know. The kids get that. That is what I am so surprised at.

FCP 2: But the adults don't.

FCP 1: The adult's mind is more formed and like I believe you could teach elementary students, young ones would get that quicker and then grow up with that attitude versus taking an adult who is three years away from retirement and trying to...

FCP 3: They are growing up with that attitude, right. In 23 years they will be....

- **Probe:** That has been powerful at XXXXXX XXXXX. As you said, part of what has helped to move the teachers are just the attitudes of the students being shocked at any kind of exclusionary viewpoint.

FCP 1: I know we had a really strong parent group that worked with the district but I just think parents have such a voice about what they hope for their students and what they would like their schools to look like and if there are pictures. When they do something that there are pictures of those students. You know, I hated it when you know IND [intellectual disabilities] page or whatever. I want those pictures all throughout the book. So what are parents wanting for their kids?

FCP 3: Educate the parents too because their fear of course is if their child in a classroom with students with disabilities, their child is going to learn less, is going to be taught at a slower pace and they are not going to be challenged.

FCP 2: They think there is no rigor in that classroom.

FCP 3: I talked to a parent today that is getting his kid out of the class because that is exactly what he told me on the phone. I went to the principal and he said yes, they are moving. That is a common belief and sometimes it is a reality. If you have a teacher who feels because XXX has so many ESE students that then they kind of accommodate their tier 1 instructions to the point where it really is not tier 1 instruction for all students. It is remediated instruction for the 40% of your class that you feel needs it.

Researcher: So are you saying that there are parents who request to have their student removed from an inclusive class? Is that basically what I heard?

FCP 3: Yes.

Researcher: That is definitely an example of resistance to an inclusive culture.

6.1 In what ways, if any, do you encounter resistance to inclusive culture?

Researcher: The next question is, what do you do when you encounter resistance to inclusive culture?

FCP 2: I just listen. I spend time and that is why I am so appreciative to be out of the classroom time. To be able to go in and say, what is it that is hard about this? What would you need to make this easier? What is the first step? Let's not go to the end. Let's not imagine what it is going to look like but what do we need to have those, we call them courageous conversations, or supportive conversations? I quit looking at the resistance as that is the door that is shut. There is something behind that and it just takes time to find out what that thing is and address it. It is hard if you are stuck in a classroom. I had learned strategies six periods a day that required planning. I had IEP's to do and that was it. It leads to that kind of isolated... but when I am out and I can go in, oh, you have planning first, I will make an appointment on my calendar and I will be there and will see you and listen and offer the support.

FCP 3: If that resistance is based on like a valid reality where sometimes there is lesser instruction in some of the inclusive rooms, it is difficult and you can't really argue with somebody when you know they are actually right that your child does get moved to the class that has 7 gifted kids in it instead of the class that has 7 ESE kids. Unfortunately, it is being taught in a way that wouldn't benefit your child greater in the other class.

Researcher: That is all the more reason to move away from the no "opt out" model because ...

FCP 2: I am not the only senior XXXXXXXX teacher, trust me, I know that. Or this idea if you are a really good teacher then you are going to have the AP so what I keep saying, keep letting them have AP. Given XXX one regular class. If these are your best teachers and they are the best trained, we know they are going to have an impact on these students and so can we mix that up so, "I only do honors now". OK, do honors for five periods of day.

FCP 1: And have one regular to keep it real.

FCP 2: I just think we need our best teachers with the students that have those... It is not just our ESE. There are some teachers at our school that have never had an ESE student and have never had an ESOL student and have never ever taught a regular class since they have been at our school. At XXXXXXXX it was a little bit more mixed but it is like OK.

FCP 3: And principals can play a role too. Like XXX was saying, with the gifted I feel like at our school the most confident teachers kind of get targeted and sought out by the administrators who say, hey go get your gifted endorsement so you can be 2nd grade gifted. Go get your gifted endorsement so you can be 3rd grade gifted. So we are taking our best teachers and we are steering them into the AP or the gifted ones and then they are kind of giving some of our weaker teachers who should not be a gifted teacher, therefore so you are going have the ESE kids.

FCP 1: The worst thing and it was not only at XXXXX XXXXX but trying to get rid of a teacher and load up a class with....

FCP 2: Who suffers, not the teacher but the students.

Researcher: That is definitely a structure that helps perpetuate that for sure.

FCP 1: I just want to throw this in too. The union is now getting into this, the Teacher's Union, because teachers think there should be a number. There is a law of how many you can have at one time. We have a very active union representative at our school and there has been a lot of talk about how many I should have and how that is going to impact my scores. They are going to union people and then the union is thinking and I am thinking well, that is just horrible. There is no law. I always say [students with disabilities] are not lepers.

FCP 2: I had no idea about what you just said.

FCP 3: If you speak Spanish you get a disproportionate amount ESL kids.

FCP 2: Been there done that.

6.2 In what ways can your organization effectively communicate the importance of inclusive culture?

Researcher: So the next two questions are, does the organization effectively communicate the importance of an inclusive culture and does the organization have the capacity to cultivate inclusive culture?

- **Probe:** Is this the role of the organization?
- **Probe:** Is it something that has to kind of come from the bottom up? Is this a grass roots thing?
- **Probe:** What do you think the organization could do in terms of building the capacity for inclusive culture?

FCP 3: I think one thing people are going to see if just a successful model and action that is relevant to their everyday life so if you are a 5th grade math and science teacher, you can sit down in preplanning and watch a half an hour lesson of an inclusive classroom in [school district] where it is working and you realize it is not impossible and that they can learn and that

everybody could be successful at it. Yes, you want to see it and then maybe that would help the resistance.

FCP 1: I think just what we were saying, the organization, there is not a 6th floor, it is only the ESE, the curriculum, education instruction, everybody is at the table for that. Again, I don't know the structure but those little cubbies, you know everything is so isolated up there. I don't know. Did people here talk to the people down there? And how will that translate to us in the classwork at our school? If the district does give a mandate, if the principal ignores it or waters it down, then how does that look? Maybe they are doing these wonderful things at XXXXXX XXXXX and maybe we will do part of it at XXXX XXXXX and nothing at XXXXXXXXXXXX. I think just because we are all kind of the same.

FCP 2: I think it is interesting to me that the XXX XXXX has been in place. This our 5th year and just now, because we have a course code there people are paying attention, but if you see something good, there is also going to be some supports. I know there are some principals that have it even though they have come and see it, they don't have the funding or what is going on at their school is they are trying to serve a population that is very different than XXXXXX XXXXX. The socioeconomic group out there is very different than another school so if there was some financial support from the district that said, OK, if you are going to implement this and you can show us you are going to do it and we can see that you are doing it, we can fund part of that. We can share some of that money to support that. I think more principals would do that.

FCP 1: That is a valid concern and valid point. I think the inclusion coach, here is what happened: we were funded by the district so we had it. Not every high school because some people opted out, right? So they did not have it. Then the money got cut so then the district was going to put one in each community. The principal said that is worthless so then the principal had to decide, am I going to pay for that position or not? The only thing that saved me was that XXX XXXX that was already started but other schools so no, I want to put you here or I am going to put you there. So if some money was available to say look, we are going to give you this but it has to be utilized in this way to support that at your school and we want to observe, I don't know, I mean I don't know how the funding came about and why it disappeared. I don't know the whole story for that.

FCP 2: I think it was a grant. Wasn't it a grant?

FCP 3: Maybe it goes along with the principals watering down the message but also how do we incentivize principals to be honest and open about the reality of inclusion in their school because that is like the whole structure currently, is of course, the principal wants to make their school seen to any outsider that it is awesome and everybody is inclusive and we are great because if they admit to their boss, oh it is actually not going well here, then they might not be the principal at that school the next year. So I mean, how we even get an honest and open dialogue about it when a lot of principals...

FCP 2: They are afraid for their jobs too.

FCP 3: Of course. Once they begin the grade year.

Researcher: That speaks to the culture. Creating a culture where they can kind of put their cards on the table and get support and not feel they will be run out because they can't handle it.

FCP 2: A witness protection program for that.

Researcher: So you are saying we should incentivize and support principals.

1. What do you know about communities of practice?

How might a community of practice led by champions of inclusion be positioned and utilized by the organization as an agent for culture change?

Researcher: Have any of you heard of communities or practice? Is that a term that you have heard before? XXXXXXXX you started to get at this; a community of practice is a group of people, not as formal as a PLC, who come together to solve problems of practice. How might a community of practice led by teachers who promote inclusion, deposition be utilized by the organization as agents for this kind of culture change?

FCP 2: You talking about one central community of practice or like one....

Researcher: It could be learning community.

FCP 2: Learning or....

Researcher: Yes, what do you think? Do you think it would be helpful?

FCP 2: Because we don't even have the same students but we are on the same side of town it would be easy, hey not just you know a virtual meeting, maybe we want to meet for coffee somewhere in the middle. Teachers like food, we found that out, in a more relaxed atmosphere or the principal might give us the TDY or we get time for a professional day. We might choose to do this for half a day. I think that would be great. Certainly I would do it.

FCP 1: I would be interested in it but I will tell you that what I hear ESE teachers, the IEP has gotten more cumbersome and the amount of time...it is not a matter. We went from the days of checking a box to now writing statements, many of them that are legal. I am sure when I go to train someone, well like that came from some due process or something. The amount time now that takes with one planning and then trying to get into classrooms and at that end is testing and then we have less time. It is just...I don't know. People are overwhelmed so even though it would be beneficial...I hear people say I can't add another thing to my plate.

FCP 1: It was just that saturation of, you know... so I don't know. That is my answers, I don't know.

Researcher: That is a valid answer.

FCP 1: I know that many of my colleagues are just leaving the profession, getting certified and looking at that and say OK I will grade 100-something papers and math but to write... Some of our consultation people are doing 60, 70 or 80 IEP's and doing IEP progress reports and doing monitor checks and doing... It is hard. So I could see a benefit in it. I think there would be a lot of positives.

- **Probe: The overarching question is, what can the organization do to help people like you? What can we do to maybe make your efforts more exponential? Is there anything that you feel that the organization can do, whether it is a community practice or something else that would support your efforts?**

FCP 1: I think to continue that it is offered, maybe even some support for subs for teachers to go observe if you know a school is doing something good that someone gets to go and spend half a day or go look and see and be in that culture so what does that look and feel like versus my school. Maybe that would be a good thing and then you could get away from your kids for a day. Sometimes it is just a mental health breathing room day to kind of look at something new.

FCP 3: It seems like it is usually coaches and administrators that go to different schools and watch classrooms and observe but not the teachers. This year being my first year as VE and now I am five different classes and I am just like, oh I like what this teacher does and I like what this

teacher does. I know what this teacher does. I have learned so much more and changed my whole viewpoint about teaching by seeing different teachers all day and most teachers have never seen another teacher actually teach.

FCP 1: Yes, they get nervous don't they?

- *To what extent do does your organization:*
 - c. support and reinforce inclusive culture? How?*
 - d. constrain and inhibit inclusive culture? How?*

Researcher: To what extent does your organization constrain or inhibit inclusive culture?

- **Probe:** You have mentioned some things. I thought it was powerful what you mentioned, XXXXXXXX, about the subgroups. We think we are focusing on the subgroups for the right reason, but maybe it is just highlighting and kind of perpetuating a deficit, perspective by looking at students in that way.
- **Probe:** To what extent is your organization constrained or inhibit inclusive culture? Is there anything currently that is in place or some structure that is just really...

FCP 1: How are we being held accountable? XXX said it before.

FCP 1: Yes, and the performance and our evaluative piece. I think more people would be more open if they were not so concerned about that.

Researcher: It hasn't helped?

FCP 2: No, it has not and the idea that if you have so many ESE's, it is because well you are being punished or you only get one because you are doing a great job. I don't like that. The same thing with the EL's. It is not just ESE, it is with several of the labels. I just think, you look over, "well, you have got some gifted students". I said yes, it is ESE, it is a big umbrella but I don't like that.

FCP 3: Again, I think one thing I have noticed at least at my school is that we do after school tutoring and it seems like the students that got invited today to after school tutoring, it is supposed to be the lowest 25% based on last year's test scores, and most of the ESE students did not get invited even though some of them would score in that. I guess the rationale is that they are already getting a lot of extra support is the thought process so they are not getting invited to the after school tutoring and then other kids did so that certainly seem to be very inclusive if they are being excluded based on...I never actually went and questioned it like I should have.

Researcher: Is that district wide tutoring or is it just at XXXXXXXXXXXX? I know a lot of schools offer tutoring, but I did not know there was a...

FCP 2: We have that and they have tried to place the bottom 25 but I have been there a couple of times in the media center. I don't see a lot of ESE kids in there.

FCP 3: There are definitely groups being made. I know for a fact that some of the students that are selected are selected by targeting students that we think are going to make a big...

FCP 2: Think can pass.

FCP 3: May not even pass but they get are going

FCP 2: They get the learning gain.

FCP 3: Yes.

FCP 2: So they are on the bubble. I hate that word bubble.

FCP 3: It is not going to make a learning game then we are not going to invite them to get the most bang for our buck.

FCP 2: Yes, that is true for our money because I guess someone is paying for the bus transportation.

FCP 1: I love it when people are thinking outside the box or like our AVID teachers. They are looking for kids and a lot of times they are not looking at our students with disabilities as part of that group because they feel they have that support, same thing, and learning strategies are somewhere else and I am like, but there is a whole culture and avid that the kids want to be part of or AP. We have students with disabilities that may score low here or there but could probably in certain classes. I have a young man with autism that knows everything about history. Why he is not being challenged in the AP history class. I think they just don't even look and like if the AP teacher said, let's look at our data for our ESE students and see, is there someone we are missing out on? But it is kind of like, you know, we are just going to stop looking. I feel like in those specialized programs they are not always thinking about that group and reaching out.

FCP 2: Do they know the data of the number of students they have that might be dealing with disabilities and are they trying to include more and have more diversity. I know that there are certainly we are looking to how many men, African-American, this and that, are we tracking some other things too? Are we looking at that to be more inclusive?

- What additional recommendations would you make to the organization?

Researcher: So what additional recommendations would you make? We talked about a lot of recommendations but what additional recommendations would you make to the organization for removing barriers to inclusion or structures that perpetuate inclusion?

- **Probe:** What existing structures perpetuate a culture of exclusion?
- **Probe:** What are some of the barriers to inclusion?

- **Probe: What norms, values, practices and policies might be established to support inclusive organizational culture?**

FCP 1: I mean today to have [one of our high level district administrator] come out and see the program and then talk about having that conversation with the API's. I mean, looking and saying OK, this was my frustration...when people would come out, say "great program, yeah" and then they would leave.

FCP 2: And not take it back.

FCP 1: And then just what can you do to begin to talk about, even just go back to your district or whatever because [another district] came and then [another district] came and [another district] came. But nobody is doing the program. So to hear [one of our high level district administrator] even say, "let's start this conversation". I was so happy just to say that they are maybe going to start talking about it. Not every school has to have to have a XXX XXXX in the next year, but I think from the conversations good things happen.

Researcher: So high level leadership getting involved, walking schools and monitoring...

FCP 3: Having [a state discretionary project team] come out to our school was good and that definitely helped.

FCP 1: That is an issue. They worked with us so that...

FCP 3: OK, right, and they kind of changed the way we were scheduling that I believe that they kind of broke apart some of that and made sure that ESE was getting prioritized properly and scheduling and that just kind of fit in at the end so I think that changed some of the mindset there.

Researcher: So what was the genesis of them coming out? Did your principal reach out to them?

FCP 3: I didn't get that sense but I really don't know.

FCP 1: Because when we became inclusion coaches we started working with [state discretionary project] and so I didn't know a lot about the organization so that [state discretionary project] working with the schools that is another area where those conversations are happening.

Researcher: Those conversations are happening more and that is a good suggestion.

FCP 1: And they have an insight. My sense is they [state discretionary project] have one foot in the organization and one foot out so there is a viewing of what can be done that maybe isn't being done because they are not caught up in the structure in the same way.

FCP 3: Yes, they [state discretionary project] have the immunity so they can say what they want and are not going to...

FCP 1: In this incidence they really do.

Researcher: Any other recommendations? You all made a lot of great suggestions. Any other recommendations in terms of establishing norms, values, practices or even policies? Are there any kind of policies out there that you know of that could better support an inclusive culture? You all have given an excellent list of examples.

FCP 3: I think at least for me I am sure there are a lot of policies that are in these management directives that most people click through 80 pages and sign so I have no idea. To be honest, there may be a policy that speaks to inclusion, one of those things, but if we really wanted to disseminate that information in a meaningful way, it can't be through one of those click and sign routines.

FCP 1: I think it is what I talked about, to use the legality of the IEP or you could get in trouble, a policy, rule or regulation and this is going to sound so corny, but it is just such a change of heart. It is more that affective kind of sense of openness to say that there is a policy. I see it more at the grass roots. I don't know that a policy would change it.

FCP 2: It is kind of like the speed limit. Some people follow it, some will go above the speed limit and hope they don't get caught and some will go below the speed limit because they are afraid. So I agree with her, I think it needs to start with each teacher, starts with the community and the parents. Obviously, if you had a special needs child you would feel differently than

someone who did not but may have opened that conversation. Oh, the kids are on the same soccer team. Oh wow, you know this, and make it more accepting. I love this idea about this XXX XXXX. I really do. About peers helping other peers that is fantastic. Then that whole generation of them growing up and having their own families and having that trickledown effect. That is a huge ripple. I think we need more ripples.

Researcher: You mentioned that we need a group of people who can create this revolution...so regarding a community of practice. Is that a structure that the district could support? That it should support? I think you brought up some important considerations about how that might not be the most advantageous way to support the efforts of teachers who really are promoting and supporting inclusion in the schools. What can we do to enhance your efforts? Is the organization doing enough to help? I feel like you have to tweak the levers everywhere, the levers in the organization. There are levers in leadership. There is levers in the classroom and levers with parents. Everybody has to do their part to make inclusion happen, and that is really what this study is about. It does start with the teacher, so that is really kind of the overarching question of the study, is what can we do to influence teachers who are resistant, but let's look at it through the viewpoint of people who are not resistant to see what we can learn. You can't change another person's belief system, as you said, whether it is through laws or policies or whatever, but you can invite them to change their belief system through experience. That is why having people who can coach and network and mentor...that is why those structures are so powerful. So anything else you want to add in terms of that? How can the organization enhance the efforts of people who are organizing a revolution?

FCP 1: I don't know how it happened exactly but my life experiences led me to believe in certain things. I can be that cheerleader and I think, like you said, there is going to be people that are going to begin to change with that but finding those people. I am so afraid that if we do XXX XXXX at every high school that it will be like, oh well let's give that to the coach. I want it to be with someone that has that drive, that fire and that belief and how do you cultivate that within the leaders even?

Researcher: How can the organization be a cheerleader too?

FCP 1: Yes, so it is not just now we have created this network, you know, we are going to have this in the schools but how do we feed that? How do we get somebody to...

FCP 2: Keep its integrity.

FCP 1: Yes, and I like the fact that the other three high schools that are doing it [peer support] we meet once a month and sometimes it is just supporting each other in that conversation but you have to have someone that has that is not studied but you know, fire.

FCP 1: And to have some personal experience. Sometimes I will say to parents or teachers when they are doing something else, I will say if this was your child in this classroom would you want them sitting at that table over by the side? That is a way sometimes that it ties in. I am excited and terrified all at the same time.

FCP 2: And that is a good thing.

FCP 1: I think it can happen in an elementary. My friend's daughter has a brother who has a disability and her teaching and helping her friends and her peers. I mean, it is a powerful thing.

Focus Group 2

FGP1: SC15_P12 (Survey Completer 15_Principal 12)

FGP2: SC17_P12 (Survey Completer 17_Principal 12)

RESEARCHER: To what extent does your organization promote and effectively communicate a compelling organizational imperative for inclusion?

FGP1 - FG2: It is imperative and clear.

RESEARCHER: Who makes that clear?

FGP1 - FG2: [The school district]. The policy itself. The [school district] policies. The school itself.

FGP2 - FG2: And they feel that even at [XXXX XXXXXXXX] we have the self-contained units but even our self-contained units even still interact.

FGP1 - FG2: And the majority of the time they can have contact with Gen. Ed [students] because they get it.

FGP2 - FG2: It is built that way at our school, which is really nice for all of our students.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel it is built that way at every school?

FGP1 - FG2: I don't know.

FGP2 - FG2: I don't know. I haven't been to another school.

RESEARCHER: Because you were at [former school].

FGP1 - FG2: At [former school] it was very separate then but that was 8 years ago so I don't know how much it has changed but at [former school] we had our inclusion students and SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] and so forth but there was still a separate unit. Your friend [former colleague].

RESEARCHER: Yes, that is right. So you feel it is pretty clear and out there that we are an inclusive district?

FGP1 - FG2: Oh yes.

RESEARCHER: Does that go also for students with significant cognitive disabilities to the extent that they are able to?

FGP1 - FG2: As far as they can, yes. Some are within Gen. Ed. classrooms for a short time and some it may just be recess and lunch or school events depending on what they can and cannot do.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel like your school in particular is always like looking for opportunity?

FGP2 - FG2: Oh yes. I love [current school] for that reason.

FGP1 - FG2: It is fully inclusive as much as it possibly can.

FGP2 - FG2: The school is the reason why I picked up the [grant funded endorsement program] at [local university]...

FGP1 - FG2: Me too.

FGP2 - FG2: Because they were so heavy on including everyone together as much as possible, even in the hallways that we travel our school is enclosed. We all travel the same hallways. They are not kept separate in a separate wing. In fact, our wing is actually on a wing everybody has to go by.

FGP1 - FG2: A central place.

RESEARCHER: All right. We are getting the [current school] perspective here for sure. So how important do you think it is for the organization to communicate an explicit expectation for inclusion?

FGP1 - FG2: Very important. You know it is not a choice really.

FGP2 - FG2: It is important for the students that they be included as much as possible as their limitations...

RESEARCHER: I don't know how often you interact with people at other schools. Do you feel like it is that way at every school or do you feel like...

FGP1 - FG2: We are such a separate entity. I don't know. I don't know what it is like.

FGP2 - FG2: The only other interaction that I receive is through the program [university program] but most of the feedback I get from them are some schools are not that way.

FGP1 - FG2: I don't know if your experience is like that but when I did [grant funded endorsement program at local university] I graduated two years ago, most of the teachers doing it are ESE teachers. They are not gen. ed. inclusion teachers. I was the only inclusion teacher and I have to fight to be inclusion, you know for the paycheck. My number is high so I am very inclusive.

FGP2 - FG2: But I feel like that program is reaching out to more [school district] gen. ed. teachers because this time around there is just three from our school alone that are gen. ed. inclusion.

RESEARCHER: Well, you know the majority of students with disabilities are working on gen. ed. standards...

FGP1 - FG2: Yes, an inclusive....

RESEARCHER: They are on Florida standards, but we do have some schools that have separate classrooms, mostly elementary...teaching gen. ed. Standards but in a self-contained setting. The concern is, are they building independence for those students, vs. having them rely on that sheltered environment where they may not necessarily build frustration tolerance, resilience, and the learning behaviors and stamina to be successful in a gen. ed. setting. When they get to middle school and high school and of course, begin their young adult lives, it can be problematic when they have been so isolated. So feedback from other schools is that maybe it is sometimes no so inclusive.

FGP2 - FG2: I see a lot more positivity because we are so inclusive here.

FGP1 - FG2: I think it is in our [grant funded endorsement program at local university] and I know there is inclusion when you have a language impaired student. It is a very different relationship than a child with autism. So I think we are kind of a separate little entity as well.

Even within the north we are a Center School for Autism so we have a different process for our population.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel like it is your leadership that has set that imperative for inclusion?

FGP1 - FG2: Our leadership changed and we had that from the beginning when the SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] unit came, you know, Dr. XXXXX was our principal and you weren't there then but she invited teachers to volunteer and I was one of them. I didn't know anything about children with autism then. We already had SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] but our numbers seem to be growing in that area but right from the beginning it was these children are our children.

RESEARCHER: OK, so you feel like it has been a part of the culture.

FGP1 - FG2: Yes, [current principal] has picked it up as well.

RESEARCHER: When another administrator came in it just caught on?

FGP1 - FG2: Yes, but what he has done is asked for more units. We have grown in our autism population with [current principal].

RESEARCHER: So within those units, you still look for opportunities for inclusion because they are self-contained.

FGP1 - FG2: They are self-contained and yes that is exactly...

FGP2 - FG2: I think there are 11 self-contained units right now but they are always trying to bring those children and what happens... I was in kindergarten last year. They would ask some of the teachers, can they come and sit in during your reading block and get them familiar with the processes.

FGP1 - FG2: I think that was the idea. When you were bringing in the new units, because they were the younger children, to see if we could bring them into inclusion earlier because at one point [a neighboring school] had them until kindergarten, then we would take them 1st grade through 5th and then it was very hard to truly include them because they had been separate so long. The idea with having the pre-K unit is to try and increase the inclusion minutes.

RESEARCHER: Right, got it. That is good.

FGP1 - FG2: So they are already part of the process. Why make a child with autism change school more times than any other child.

FGP2 - FG2: It doesn't make sense.

RESEARCHER: Right.

FGP1 - FG2: Already they go to a different middle school and high school. Why make them go to two or three elementary schools. So that was [current principal] pushing that.

RESEARCHER: OK, so your leadership did push that?

FGP1 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Because it does sound like you really have an inclusive culture in place but we know it is not that strong at a lot of schools. There is still a lot of resistance and a lot of separating students out and labeling and leveling.

FGP1 - FG2: And it is not perfect. There are some teachers, those who take it on more than others.

RESEARCHER: Right.

FGP1 - FG2: You know, [current principal] has to be aware of that as well.

RESEARCHER: What do you think that the organization could do to help with that message to teachers? For those teachers who are not willing.

FGP1 - FG2: I think the imperative is there but it is how you actually work with our inclusion students.

FGP2 - FG2: I think it is a training issue.

RESEARCHER: Do you think they feel unprepared?

FGP1 - FG2: Yes.

FGP2 - FG2: Yes. I think they don't know and [colleague, also in focus group] actually did a training for us, one of our PLC's, since our population is generally autistic, how to deal with these children and how to help them to become better students. I think a lot of it is the teachers are scared. They don't know how to deal.

FGP1 - FG2: How to set up your room. How to work with the other children to set up, you know, be a buddy system and so forth. Once you set it in place it is a lot easier if you don't know how to do it. It is tricky.

RESEARCHER: So you feel like training is an issue for sure.

W & FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: You know part of the rationale for the study is that there are still teachers that have been resistant to inclusion of students with disabilities since the first days of school, in the early 1900's when students were able to attend school, so the question is in what ways can the organization do help positively counteract that resistance? So that would be definitely more training.

FGP1 - FG2: And you have got to be aware of how it affects your scores.

FGP2 - FG2: That is what I was going to say.

FGP1 - FG2: And to be willing to take that on.

FGP2 - FG2: That is another big resistance.

FGP1 - FG2: As long as you have support in that area it is difficult, and you have a decimal assigned to your name.

FGP2 - FG2: People are very worried about that.

FGP1 - FG2: You will probably make less growth. You can make a lot of growth but then you are going to do a lot more work in order to get the points you want.

RESEARCHER: Right, so you are talking about in terms of the teacher evaluation system, value added model and that kind of thing?

FGP2 - FG2: There is a high priority put on that and a lot of teachers...

RESEARCHER: A lot of priority put on what?

FGP2 - FG2: On being in effective teacher and a lot of teachers don't want to take on the responsibility of the ESE population because you know sometimes it does not work out as well. In my opinion, I love to see growth, whether it be from oh, they weren't reading at all to now they are reading for socialization.

FGP1 - FG2: As long as you have a principal that can recognize that and not say why aren't all your students on grade level. They can be aware that the child was coming in as a kindergarten reader and into 4th grade classroom now they are 2nd grade, let's celebrate. You have got to be a teacher who can point that out as well. Defend what your students are doing. Don't just put this student here. Look what she did to get there.

RESEARCHER: Exactly.

FGP2 - FG2: You can't be afraid of what the children can learn being with you. It is really important to have a teacher who wants...

FGP1 - FG2: Celebrates every step.

RESEARCHER: I think that is a really key aspect of the resistance, especially given the teacher evaluation system, because you are right, if there is so much importance placed on being effective or highly effective, why would you want to risk to having to provide instruction to a student that you don't feel prepared to teach. So that's an important connection.

FGP1 - FG2: If they have been through MTSS you know they don't necessarily respond to intervention so you are taking on a student who has grown to take a massive amount of work who sadly there is not as much pushing as I would want. There is still pull out for a lot of our student resource. Because of the numbers of resource teachers it can't be done and so you also lose somebody full time with that student.

RESEARCHER: Yes, that is very true.

FGP2 - FG2: But then you just have to go, "I don't care what you see when you come in". That is how I feel. A lot of people get nervous about it but I just teach and what you see happens and it is the daily life. We write down what went wrong and we fix it the next day. You can't focus on that. You have to focus on every child's gain.

RESEARCHER: Right, that is true. So in what ways do you positively counteract the resistance. If you hear teachers saying things or...

FGP1 - FG2: Offer assistance. Offer training. You know, come see my classroom. What do you want to know? Try and give guidance, especially you learn so much when you see somebody is trying to do...

RESEARCHER: That is powerful. So you say, “come see my classroom”.

FGP2 - FG2: Oh yes, definitely. Come watch me and observe. I had a teacher who has never had an ESE student and she said she received one of little students with autism. She was like, “I don’t know what to do”. So I sat down with her and I made a schedule of the day so she is higher functioning so she just needed a schedule to be able to say this is what is coming. So we sat down together and we made a little picture chart of her day and how things would progress through the day. That is all it took.

FGP1 - FG2: You have to be willing to do something different but also adapt it through the year because what works in August does not necessarily work for January and then you just try to keep moving and helping teachers based on your experience. We will try this. This worked with this kid. Try this. If that doesn’t work try that. Not all teachers will come and ask, you know of course.

RESEARCHER: Right, I know everybody has their own style when it comes to that.

FGP2 - FG2: Oh yes, it broke that teacher. I know it broke her to come and ask. I could see.

RESEARCHER: People are very proud. These teachers are high performers and they are very proud of the work they do.

FGP2 - FG2: Teaching for a long time, and so to come ask a new teacher, she was like, “ahhh, OK”.

RESEARCHER: So you reach out to people. You talked about the importance of training...in what other ways could your organization positively counteract that resistance? I know you mentioned training. Is there anything else?

FGP1 - FG2: I think to some extent we have, I don't know if Amy agrees, but we have a behavior support staff but really they are more involved with self-contained students because of their behaviors and they give less support to gen. ed. and I think some of their behavior training would be helpful. I think they are reaching out. [District Behavior support] just sent an e-mail today about some training that is be offered out to gen. ed. but I think that would help if they knew that the behavior support team was not there just to pull kids out when they are acting up but to give strategies on how to prevent the acting up in the first place.

RESEARCHER: That is good.

FGP2 - FG2: I think of in years previous to this when we just grew so large this year they did more for the gen. ed. students.

FGP1 - FG2: This ran pretty thin and I think if they could get more support, just in the training as I say, because a lot of the time if a kid is acting up to try and escape and then I think the reaction is to pull them out.

FGP2 - FG2: The CPI training.

FGP1 - FG2: Why are students acting out?

RESEARCHER: Right, what are they trying to say? What are they trying to communicate?

FGP2 - FG2: I enjoyed being trained in CPI in my previous county, which is the last point to be physical, but focus on everything leading up to that escalation.

RESEARCHER: Verbal de-escalation is so important.

FGP2 - FG2: I know the county offered it this summer but it was so full and there are so many employees that I didn't even get to get in so that I can get recertified. So I think that training in and of itself for every teacher...

RESEARCHER: I agree. Even if it was just a verbal de-escalation part. I totally agree with that.

FGP1 - FG2: I mean they would offer it but sadly they offered it on Martin Luther King holiday, the Friday before I think, and you had the choice to come in or not. You are probably not going to come in for that training.

RESEARCHER: No. You know pulling people from schools has become a huge barrier to training because we just don't want to pull teachers out of classrooms. We don't want students to lose instructional time but when else are you going to do it?

FGP1 - FG2: Maybe during preplanning or something.

RESEARCHER: Possibly. So you think there is a big behavior component?

FGP1 - FG2: To make out what is causing [behavior not conducive to learning]. What is the A of the ABC so you can prevent it.

FGP2 - FG2: You are the answer.

RESEARCHER: The next question is: To what extent does your organization promote inclusive practices? I guess that is part of the training piece. Do you feel that the organization is being overt in promoting the idea of approaching instructional design by considering all learners including students with disabilities? Do you feel that you are getting that message from the organization?

FGP1 - FG2: [refers to school district]?

RESEARCHER: Yes.

FGP1 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Do you? Where does it come from?

FGP1 - FG2: I had it through staffing so it is a bit hard for me because when I was in the staffing specialist position it was definitely pro inclusion. I was trying to decrease the minutes pulled out and increase the minutes staying in. That was the message I was hearing in staffing and the message I was passing on.

RESEARCHER: That is great. Do you feel like it came from the meetings?

FGP1 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: So how about you [FGP1]? You weren't a staffing specialist, so do you feel like that message...are teachers getting the message from the district, or are they getting the message from your administration because your culture is so inclusive?

FGP2 - FG2: I do believe that. I have only been at [current school], like I said, and I don't speak to many outside of the current school] unit but definitely what she was saying. I have a student who I am trying to reduce minutes because I do feel that he is higher functioning and so they gave me the process. OK, let's track this, do these things and we will drop his minutes and meet with. Any time I go and I say, look, I need them more and I think they would do well more. So it has been supported. They give me the process. This is what we need to accomplish in order to do that and so it has worked really well for those students so I would just assume that they are getting that from the county because otherwise we couldn't do that.

RESEARCHER: So it was your DSS [district staffing specialist] pretty much your DSS and then at the actual district staffing specialist meetings?

FGP1 - FG2: The meeting definitely. I mean there was a big push two years ago I think, that was the message I was getting for a least restrictive environment and only pull out when absolutely necessary or trying to do more facilitate to support, which is obviously restricted by the number of staff that can do it because if your children are spread all the way through the 4th grade, where are you going to put your one ESE teacher support for him. That was definitely in my years staffing, the push to do less resource and more in class.

RESEARCHER: With support following them to the gen. ed. setting?

FGP1 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: How do you counter resistance? So, in what ways do you promote inclusive practices? You said you look for opportunities for your students.

FGP2 - FG2: Definitely.

RESEARCHER: So how does that happen when you have a student you want to include? You kind of described the process but do you think about a teacher and who would be a good instructional match? How do you promote that?

FGP1 - FG2: This is a child you already had though, wasn't it? You are trying to increase...

FGP2 - FG2: Right. I have had him. I got him the 2nd week of school. I noticed that when he was with me he was on level and he was doing well and then when he would go with the other teacher and other ESE population with that grade level he would go with her and maybe fail a test or not do as well and require her to do more for him. So we had that conversation about how I thought his skill levels were more than what he was showing her and so she is like, let's take the documentation and we will take it to reduce his minutes. So that is what we did in class. I was like, you need to focus, and we need to show that you can do this because you can and you need to be more in the class. It was funny, because this is a student who was self-contained from a previous county and put into one of our self-contained and he begs to be let out because it is just I guess a different self-contained unit from his ____ school is and he would barricade himself in a K1 space. He was scared to come in school so they were like, OK well let's

introduce him to [person speaking, FGP2] and he came in for a little while and he did well. That is when I went ahead and made the move completely to keeping him in. He has done really well.

FGP1 - FG2: The placements are actually made by the administration. They accept him. We don't make the decision but that obviously saying yes it is working but it is kind of predetermined at the beginning of the year which student should get in based on their experience of how we handle our student and successful or not. I do think full inclusion of certain students you have to have a teacher who wants to do it.

RESEARCHER: Oh yes.

FGP1 - FG2: I mean, it is different. As I say, I see [a student who is] language impaired but if you are pushing an EBD [EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL DISORDER] child or an SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] child into a room where the teacher just feel they can't handle it, you are not going to have

RESEARCHER: Yes, success.

FGP1 - FG2: You could ask and say, you know, we can offer training and support.

RESEARCHER: So you feel there are some teachers who think that it is an option that they can...

FGP1 - FG2: For the behavioral student. I think that no one thinks it is an option for SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] and language impaired. We have done a different thing this year as well because he kind of set us up as ESE and ELL separate. You would kind of note it as the ESE teacher, it is kind the lines have fuzzed a bit because it is coming in but he was trying to establish that.

FGP2 - FG2: I think to provide more support so that our ELL's can be supported through that inner ESE population.

FGP1 - FG2: Both groups of students would grow in numbers from [current school] seven years ago so the population has changed.

RESEARCHER: The next question is: To what extent does your organization encourage educators to adopt an inclusive stance? That include stance relates to the philosophy behind MTSS, in rejecting a deficit perspective of disability. It's about thinking differently about the success and efficacy of labeling and leveling kids, looking for their limitations are and defining them by those limitations. To what extent does your organization encourage educators to adopt an inclusive stance? With MTSS being about having a multi-tiered system of support so that a student necessarily does not have to have a label to get a certain level of support. I know that MTSS is something that is definitely still evolving here in our district. To what extent do you think the organization encourages educators to adopt an inclusive stance?

FGP1 - FG2: You look at what you are teaching.

RESEARCHER: Right. So to what extent do you think the organization encourages educators to kind of adopt that stance?

FGP1 - FG2: They demand it. It is not encouraged. It is something we are expected to do.

RESEARCHER: OK. So you are expected at Rock Springs?

FGP2 - FG2: Well, we have an MTSS meeting once a month and we have a board this year, which has been beneficial, of all the grade levels and where the students are. Are they moving upward or down?

FGP1 - FG2: Are they a 3 or are they moving up? Are they getting a 5 or a 4?

FGP2 - FG2: It helps us stay focused on collecting the data and seeing if what we are doing effective. Is it not effective?

FGP1 - FG2: It is not 100% perfect as none of the assessment systems are. I think they are limited by the number of people who can do tier 3. Definitely tier 1 and tier 2's is occurring and discussions are happening.

RESEARCHER: OK, so you feel like there is a definite message out there that you know it is not about labeling these kids?

FGP2 - FG2: Yes, it is about providing the support that they need to be...

FGP1 - FG2: The preferred method is you go from tier 2 to tier 1. That is the ideal but obviously it does not always work that way and you may end up with a label so you know how to support them but it is not a label for the sake of a label.

FGP2 - FG2: I don't feel that [the school district] perfectly puts a student in MCTSS to label them. No, I definitely think that it is more towards like she said, to move them out and into tier 1 versus to label them. Get them the support to find out.

FGP1 - FG2: It seems to be really beneficial. It is not your cup of tea but it is for the ELL's who seem to make a lot of growth per the MTSS process because they do have the ability to learn. You know, obviously through MTSS. We are finding students who are having difficulties.

RESEARCHER: They are learning a second language.

FGP1 - FG2: Yes, so that enforced MTSS, we have time where we have 45 minutes to do our interventions and it showing growth, especially for our yellow population.

RESEARCHER: To what extent have you encountered any resistance to your stance personally, meaning you're wanting to include another student and looking more at their strengths as opposed to how they might be perceived as having behaviors or learning challenges?

FGP1 - FG2: From whom?

RESEARCHER: From anybody. From teachers or...

FGP1 - FG2: You know, it is funny when you are a classroom teacher because you are doing your own little battles and doing your own thing. It doesn't really matter as long as you believe you are supporting them to the best and you can pack it up with data.

RESEARCHER: So do you both teach a self-contained class currently?

W & FGP2 - FG2: Gen. ed.

RESEARCHER: So you are both gen. ed.

FGP2 - FG2: Gen. ed. inclusion.

RESEARCHER: So do you work in PLC's? Do you get in grade level teams?

FGP1 - FG2: Yes, both within our own 4th grade.

RESEARCHER: Is there a pretty equitable distribution of students with disabilities? I know sometimes schools cluster students so that you can provide more support.

FGP1 - FG2: Those that will get more. Those that are willing to get more. [Colleague, FGP2] and I tend to get the majority on our grade levels because I am 4th grade and she is 3rd grade. We have kind of stepped as hey, we are people who want to.

FGP2 - FG2: Last year was my first year because I explained to Brian that I came from [former school] where I had the students with disabilities there. I was not an ESE teacher at the time but I didn't mind working with those students. So last year he took me on for that one.

FGP1 - FG2: We are kind of known as the inclusion teachers. If you take on the children with autism, yes again SLD and language impaired are spread out a little more but if you have stepped up as the ASD inclusion teacher you get...

FGP2 - FG2: Depending on how high a population.

FGP1 - FG2: Last year we had 7 or 8 in 4th grade so there had to be another teacher who took them. I had 5 and she had 2. We are known as the inclusion teachers. A little different than inclusion for all.

RESEARCHER: It is a little different, OK. Are students sometimes moved from other teachers' classes into your class?

FGP2 - FG2: I had that happen this year and last year. My student that I got was moved from self-contained to me last year. I also had a kindergarten student who was moved from self-contained into my kindergarten class.

RESEARCHER: So moved from self-contained but not from another gen. ed. class from a teacher who did not feel that they were prepared or...?

FGP1 - FG2: It is establish pre-year.

FGP2 - FG2: I did not start the year that way.

FGP1 - FG2: There is an expectation. The teacher who took on autism for the first time last year she didn't say no because it is the expectation to take him on.

RESEARCHER: So you all are known as the inclusion teachers?

W & FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

FGP2 - FG2: A lot of times, like Louise said, at the beginning of the year administration knows that so they will place them already in our class to avoid changing.

FGP1 - FG2: We have said that one of the successes of an inclusion class is the peer buddy system so even children go with them to their next classes. I always ask my students but depending on the numbers. I only have one ASD student this year so it is very different from last year but I have a bunch of other disabilities. They are hard of hearing and SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] and all the rest of it. With our children with autism it really helps to have that peer buddy so the teacher who takes also takes that little group of people and is supposed to fit anywhere.

FGP2 - FG2: I typically pair mine with the closest person that they were with. So last year they went with the person that work really well with them. In the kindergarten level there is a difference between them helping and them trying to mother them. The mother versions of them I don't send with them because I have had to explain to them exactly that they are not a class pet. They may need assistance with this and this.

FGP1 - FG2: The true buddies.

FGP2 - FG2: You are not their mother.

FGP1 - FG2: It is to help guide the teachers to some extent because those children become experts and if you have questions ask so and so, the peer buddy, because they know if this kid is doing this. Nothing overbearing but truly in a buddy way.

RESEARCHER: So are either of you involved with the peer buddies or who runs that?

FGP1 - FG2: It is just within your own classroom.

RESEARCHER: Oh, it is just run in your own classroom? Got it.

FGP2 - FG2: It is not a school wide...

FGP1 - FG2: Not to get social skills or anything. It is an environment. You have to create an inclusion classroom where you have children who are supportive of the child who might need support. Otherwise, the teacher needs to be.

RESEARCHER: How do you teach them to be supportive? That is probably another study in itself.

FGP1 - FG2: Praise and smile and glorify.

FGP2 - FG2: I teach mine that we are a family unit. I mean, every year we are always a family unit.

FGP1 - FG2: Any time you do something helpful you get the big beaming smile and what a great thing you did.

RESEARCHER: Is that something that was in place when you came or kind of something that you all felt to cultivate?

FGP2 - FG2: That is something I have experienced since year one.

FGP1 - FG2: I think any successful teacher has to do that in any classroom so you are not mocking someone who does not know the answer.

FGP2 - FG2: You are encouraging them

FGP1 - FG2: Whether they have a disability or not.

RESEARCHER: And you feel the students help to promote those practices also?

FGP1 - FG2: Oh yes. Our school, I was there from the beginning. They are so accepting and so involved and supportive. I think it is so good for our gen. ed. kids. It has benefits for them too.

FGP2 - FG2: Oh yes. My first year here we used to play on the playground and this goes back to does everybody feel the same and sometimes they don't. We had playtime and then one of the ASD self-contained units would come out to play and you would see the rest of the teachers go, "let's go inside", and no, I kept my students on the playground because they needed to be exposed and around those students. Then they would ask questions, "well, what is wrong with them?". It is just a learning experience that you can share with them that not everybody is the

same and that we all need to learn to be together, work together and cohabitate. We are all a school family. So that was a really cool year for my kids because then they would see them in the hallway and, “hey”, instead of...

FGP1 - FG2: I think you know now we have the kids who have been with this inclusive school their whole lives and they don't know any different.

FGP2 - FG2: Right. They don't look at them like they are weird.

FGP1 - FG2: It wasn't like the first years like, “what is all the noise in the hallway”. They just go along with it.

FGP2 - FG2: At first, kindergarten students looked at them [students with autism] like, “what is going on?” but as the year progressed they would be saying hi to them in the hallway versus, “too loud or they making..”.

FGP1 - FG2: Like why are they getting away with that and I can't.

FGP2 - FG2: So it is definitely a school environment that is awesome.

RESEARCHER: So do you think having that inclusion class do you think that is something that is sustainable? I am just wondering what can the organization do to kind of

communicate the importance of not looking at students with that deficit perspective of disability? Is there two of you? You said you are 3rd grade and you are...?

FGP1 - FG2: 4th.

RESEARCHER: 4th grade. So other students with disabilities on other grade levels, what happens?

FGP2 - FG2: There is more in 3rd grade as well.

FGP1 - FG2: But there are different levels of disability. As I say, it is much easier to include an SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] student.

FGP2 - FG2: There is another teacher in the 3rd grade that also has an ESE population as well.

RESEARCHER: Another teacher in 3rd grade?

FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: So what about 1st and 2nd?

FGP1 - FG2: We are all throughout the school. There are several teachers like [FGP2] said that really take on the responsibility.

FGP2 - FG2: Specifically ASD. The inclusion of SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] is across the board. No one has a problem. There are specific behavioral supports you have to put in place throughout the ASD population and you have to be teachers willing to do that or at least take it on to try it.

RESEARCHER: So you feel it is voluntary?

FGP1 - FG2: I think it should be.

RESEARCHER: You think it should be?

FGP1 - FG2: Not voluntary, the fact you can say no if it is offered, but I think...

RESEARCHER: I understand what you are saying about the success factor. You have to have someone who is willing. So I guess that is what I am saying. What can the organization do to help teachers kind of adopt that stance and those values? And not perpetuate the thinking that there is someone else?

FGP1 - FG2: I wanted to do it so if you took my ASD kids away and then you gave it to someone else, I might be the sad person – you know what I mean? So, if [refers to self] want to do... it is not that they don't, it is like, well that is [refers to self] baby. Let her do it. If she is successful why not?

RESEARCHER: What if Bill Gates offers you a 6-figure salary somewhere? Would help if the district worked toward cultivating these values so that there will be someone else.

FGP1 - FG2: And someone else might say, “Hey, I wanted to [incomprehensible] Schultz” and I don’t tell them.

RESEARCHER: Well, it sounds like you all are doing a great job cultivating that culture.

FGP1 - FG2: In 4th grade we are switching for writing boot camp and we are switching from math intervention so the kids are moving all over the place and being accepted by every teacher who is taking them. It is not like, “oh no, I can’t do that kid – that is the kid who does *that*”.

FGP2 - FG2: As far as what can [the school district] do? I mean, it is just the training. I know it is not going away, but the teaching grading. When I speak with people, that is their number one concern is, I am not going to get a raise.

FGP1 - FG2: [Incomprehensible] you make great growth but [incomprehensible]

FGP2 - FG2: Nothing is going to happen and then I might be scored negatively and the whole system, I mean, to me it does not matter because I know what I do works and I know that in the end every child has made gains and I just look at that. I focus on that. A lot of other people it is hard for them to focus on that, especially when you get that score at the end of the year.

FGP1 - FG2: An example for me, and I am not going to criticize anyone and not going to name names, but I was observed in my formal last year and I have 5 children with autism. Everything was running smoothly. I did this on a desk just to get a kid's attention [taps table]. The person observing me said, "If you had not done that I would have given you an "innovating" on behavior. You don't know where this kid came from. That would have been a massive thing two months ago. So it is that kind of thing that even now we still experience to some extent. . You know, we are going to keep teaching. It is always something that is in my head.

FGP2 - FG2: The whole system is subjective. I know we are not here to talk about...

RESEARCHER: But it is a huge factor though.

FGP1 - FG2: That is a behavior intervention [non-verbal prompt – tapping table] that is actually part of his IEP so it was...

RESEARCHER: But didn't you get a chance to talk about that in the post conference?

FGP2 - FG2: Yes, you can but the score doesn't matter.

FGP1 - FG2: They have already put it in then.

FGP2 - FG2: Once it is there it is stuck and so you get the opportunity to go and express yourself and tell them.

FGP1 - FG2: They won't change the score.

FGP2 - FG2: But nothing can be changed at that point.

FGP1 - FG2: So that is preventative to some people. I took it on and say "whatever" because I thought, I got a "applying" but you know to me it was a miracle that we had that classroom running late by December or whatever. Not to be too pompous...

RESEARCHER: I hear you.

FGP2 - FG2: I know [school district] cannot change that because that is the rating scale that we use but that is probably one of the biggest complaints.

RESEARCHER: It is a huge variable in all of this. To what extent does your organization cultivate inclusive values, values that regard diversity as a strength. Do you feel that is a message that comes from the organization?

W & FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: In what ways does it come? How is it communicated?

FGP2 - FG2: Because we are inclusive. Every student is given their least restrictive environment and the minutes that they absolutely need in order to succeed and otherwise they are in the inclusive classroom learning.

FGP1 - FG2: And 5% subgroups anyway for all the points (laughter). It is the ones wanting the subgroups that have no [incomprehensible]

RESEARCHER: So when you encounter resistance to inclusive values to diversity in general...

FGP1 - FG2: There is no resistance. You were in a title one school?

FGP2 - FG2: No.

FGP1 - FG2: It is not a large ELL but it is larger than it has been so it is a growing ELL population.

FGP2 - FG2: We are considered low income because we do count towards the [state]...

FGP1 - FG2: Not title one. They are not to that level but our socioeconomic numbers have growth.

RESEARCHER: So you feel that there is a strong message in terms of valuing diversity?

FGP2 - FG2: Definitely.

RESEARCHER: So no resistance? You have never encountered any resistance?

FGP2 - FG2: No.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel that the organization communicates the importance of those values?

FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Because you are definitely getting that message at [current school].

FGP1 - FG2: It does because we celebrate all the different history months and we have our autism awareness month. We have it all going on.

RESEARCHER: So [current school] sounds like it definitely has an inclusive culture.

W & FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: By inclusive culture I also mean that there is definitely a movement of teachers who want to collaborate.

W & FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: It sounds like you definitely have students with disabilities who are really enmeshed in the school community. They are not in a separate wing. It is just a part of...

FGP1 - FG2: It is [current school].

FGP2 - FG2: Yes, I think it is our greatest value at [current school] .

RESEARCHER: Well, the survey data was telling because the two nominees from [current school] definitely scored very high. So no resistance? How about new teachers? They just kind of fall right into the...?

FGP2 - FG2: I think new teachers are easier to fall into the system.

FGP1 - FG2: It is discussed at interviews, isn't it? That the population...I don't know... you interviewed.

FGP2 - FG2: It was not a question that was asked of me. However, as a new teacher, like I said my first year there I didn't know that we had autistic units there and so I learned when we were

at the playground and was like, “where is everybody going”, you know. So when they were gone I was like, “I don’t understand”. I would tell other teachers that they can still play together. There is no problem with that.

FGP1 - FG2: I think they are different in kindergarten because in kindergarten that year was the first year they had children because it was a part to have kindergarten ASD students before that so that it kind of skipped kindergarten for a while, whereas the rest of the school had already been ASD inclusion for 4 or 5 years.

FGP2 - FG2: And the self-contained unit that came out, they were the older kids, and so if something happened... One of my kids did get hurt. You know what I mean, like, you have to teach the sense of family community, but the new teachers coming in [incomprehensible].

FGP1 - FG2: Literally everything so it is just another thing that is there. I think it is easier to be inclusive if everything is new.

RESEARCHER: True.

FGP1 - FG2: It is all behavioral management. It is hard in your first year and learning the paperwork and all that. So if you just right from day one you know how to track data and how to manage your classroom. It is not something you had to take on after 20 years of teaching and all of a sudden, “oh, I have to do this now?” kind of thing.

RESEARCHER: So have things changed then with PE sort of, is it viewed that way?

FGP2 - FG2: No, it is not the same anymore. It only took me about a couple of weeks that I would get one of my co-teachers. I was like just stay out here and watch. The interaction is fine. The things that they learn from each other is even significant, even on the playground the things that you can learn. So after a while more and more of them... I mean, timewise we are only allowed so much time so the first teachers that had first lunch they were required fully anyways but the other teachers that had more time left would stay and so that was a fun experience.

RESEARCHER: It seems that you've already got an inclusive culture established at your school...do you think there is anything the organization can do to further encourage that? Is there anything that organization can do to help cultivate that culture?

A1: I don't know what training the district has personally.

A: I think for me the reason why the [grant funded ASD endorsement program at local university] if I think back, was because I didn't feel I had enough training from the district. When I volunteered to be ASD inclusion, the training I was sent was very much aimed at self-contained, nonverbal students. It did not help me. Eventually there was a very high functioning Asperger's student who behaved really challenging and had no relationship at all. I actually went out and talked to our self-contained teacher, XXX XXXXXX, and she said, oh why didn't you try and do the SLD certification? So I did that and of course Dr. XXXXX said do the whole kitten caboodle if you are going to do it. So I guess on thinking, you know now because I am

doing it, I think well the other district does it but no they didn't. They offered training for self-contained but truly there isn't really training for gen. ed. teachers of how to work with the higher functioning students EBD [EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL DISORDER] students. All of those, they are not... I don't think so. I think it is up to the teacher to go out and find and do and ask other teachers. I don't know if it is necessarily the district that helps that much.

RESEARCHER: So what do you think? How can the district build that capacity? Do you think just some....

FGP1 - FG2: Build some kind of expert on the district level who can go out and train.

RESEARCHER: How often do people from the district come to [current school] for support? I know you mentioned [district behavior support].

FGP1 - FG2: She is there all the time. She is there pretty much all the time to support ASD. Nothing for gen. ed. The district comes to observe our classrooms.

RESEARCHER: Who comes to monitor classrooms?

FGP1 - FG2: [Area Superintendent]. Last year we had a lot of observations from district. This year we passed our first observations and we were told we did not have to be observed again. That is the view of district. It is to see...

RESEARCHER: They were looking for standards based instruction I think.

FGP1 - FG2: Yes, and we did well enough that we were not on the list.

FGP2 - FG2: I think I scared [Area Superintendent] when he came because I didn't know who he was. He suddenly walked into my room and I was like, "who are you?".

RESEARCHER: Did you say it was three times?

FGP1 - FG2: When he came into my classroom last visit I attended a round table with him...and then my son got an award at the [district office] on Tuesday so I saw him again. We are best friends now. (laughter).

FGP2 - FG2: [unidentified person] asked me, "so was he wearing his badge"? I couldn't see from the front of the room so I didn't know who he was.

FGP1 - FG2: I mean district training or it is an expectation to do it but it is an expectation you should just know how to do it. Do know what I mean?

FGP2 - FG2: I know that the county offers [training, you can] look up on the calendar what trainings are being held. Again, that takes you out of your classroom.

FGP1 - FG2: I think there is offered an Asperger's training in the summer I suppose. I only found out about that after attending [another] training. They said there was a great Asperger's training.

FGP2 - FG2: So it is not as popular.

RESEARCHER: Do you all think you have gotten enough training in the [teacher evaluation system]?

FGP2 - FG2: Oh yes, well I take the classes.

FGP1 - FG2: We have to do the summer things.

FGP2 - FG2: I was trained in my previous county before we came down. We used that up there as well so I feel like I know [the teacher evaluation system]but again, I believe it to be subjective and...

FGP1 - FG2: Not truly related to ESE inclusion.

RESEARCHER: I guess that's my next question, in terms cultivating inclusive culture and inclusive values, to have the professional development that all teachers are attending, have application to students with disabilities.

FGP1 - FG2: You have got the celebrating success and you have got the how you set up your room but it has to be specific to what we are doing. That is part of the training. I did it this summer preplanning right at the beginning of school was how you set your room up for success with a child with autism because all these busy, busy little students flying around are not very good for these children and a schedule is a mess. Many teachers don't know that so that is kind of the training I wanted to put into place to set them up for success at the beginning. I don't know. That doesn't come into [the teacher evaluation system]. He just says it is at those first elements, can you walk around the room, whatever the wording is....

FGP2 - FG2: The room placement.

FGP1 - FG2: But is it that certain things that are a must I think in inclusion classrooms. Where is that checklist?

RESEARCHER: So how do you promote your thinking? If we think about the need to encourage teachers to embrace inclusion, and yet we have teachers who don't feel prepared to teach students with disabilities, maybe it is a natural inclination for many people to resist something that they aren't prepared to do. While we want to kind of take into account learner variability when we are planning, there are some specific learner characteristics that are important to be aware of when teaching students with ASD.

FGP1 - FG2: Well, when is a teacher...here I am going to get on my little soapbox now but that is what it is. When is a teacher trained in how to read an IEP or they come to an IEP meeting

supposedly tracking goals. It shouldn't just be the ESE teacher. I now know how to read an IEP because I did a Master's in it but when is the regular teacher trained on all these label requirements. Say, "oh, we are going to come in for an order". How do they know what that meant and maybe they don't even know where those goals came from.

FGP2 - FG2: What an IEP meeting is. My first year they are like, "oh, IEP meeting". I had no idea what that meant.

FGP1 - FG2: I learned it by osmosis in my 11 years.

FGP2 - FG2: I had no idea what it meant and really still.

FGP1 - FG2: True training on IEP's and how to read them, how to reduce them, how to...

FGP2 - FG2: How to set up goals.

FGP1 - FG2: And 504s...because there are students with disabilities as well.

RESEARCHER: I think our model was based on an understanding that there was a "this sort of "second shift" of teachers who would come in and take care of the "other students"...

FGP1 - FG2: And gen. ed. is also responsible really for the IEP goals.

RESEARCHER: I agree. And I guess that is what I am asking. What can the organization do to kind of help cultivate that?

FGP1 - FG2: Teach and don't threaten (laughter). Train teachers on how to use that. What does SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] mean truly? What is the language of an impaired child? How did they get there? Rather than yes we can read the cum [cumulative file] and I now know how to read a psych evaluation, but I didn't before I took the Master's.

RESEARCHER: Psych evals. are one of the best resources you can ever have.

FGP1 - FG2: So much in there, but a regular teacher does not know what they are looking for and so just look at average high or low [IQ scores] and you can't piece everything together from there.

RESEARCHER: So are you saying that is a way that we might be able to build capacity, is to provide more training about IEPs, evaluations...

FGP1 - FG2: It will decrease the fear to some extent. I am going to say something else here but sadly average is not good enough now. A three isn't good [former state achievement test cut score]. So if our kiddos make it to three it is still not good enough. We are afraid of the [incomprehensible]. We were reflecting on that because one of my kids she is a C all the time and I am "how am I going to get her up?". I think a C is an average kid.

RESEARCHER: What do you all know about communities of practice? Have you ever heard the term community of practice or COPs?

FGP1 - FG2: I know the three words but I don't know...

RESEARCHER: It is a little bit different than a PLC. While a PLC is a very formal structure of looking at data and problem solving process, a community of practice is not as formally structured as a PLC, but teachers coming together to discuss different topics and problems of practice. We have one that we established for teachers of Gifted and teachers who provide support facilitation and teachers who are teaching learning strategies to give them a space where they can come together. We do it virtually. Specific subgroups of teachers come together to talk through challenges share success and discuss what is really working. Would a community of practice that is led by teaches who promote and support inclusion be of benefit?

FGP1 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Obviously, there are people who are taking the lead in cultivating inclusive culture. How might a community of practice that is led by people who are promoters and cultivators of inclusion in the public school system help to cultivate change? The degree of inclusion at different schools around the district differs, at [your school] you have a wonderfully inclusive culture but at some schools not so much. I've heard you say

we have challenges in providing professional development for teachers...would a community of practice supporting inclusive education be something that you would be willing to contribute to

FGP1 - FG2: Because when I took on inclusion, whatever 7 years ago I remember even going, they were from [former school], and we had an ASD coordinator in the school, I said, “can you find out what worked at the last school?”. And the response was, “well that is just [refers to specific person]”. I was like, “no, I really wanted to talk to someone who knew”. Yes, it would be good, especially for new teachers in inclusion.

FGP2 - FG2: You said it would be set up [virtually]?

RESEARCHER: Yes, it could be done virtually. This has been a successful method because teachers don't have to drive, they don't have to go anywhere, they don't have to get a sub.

FGP1 - FG2: Talk back and forth and ask questions and say, hey....

FGP2 - FG2: Like on the early day just set up for...

RESEARCHER: Usually there is a moderator, who facilitates, and we have a basic agenda. People can submit things for the agenda. For instance gifted, you know teachers really had a lot of questions about the gifted characteristics checklist and the descriptors.

When people have questions COPs have the flexibility to dive into whatever hot topic is going on. I think a great topic would be the evaluation system, really trying to figure out how to communicate with an administrator about what they are seeing in the classroom.

FGP1 - FG2: It is a failure or it's a success. They look at high scores because they don't know what they are doing. They really do. They get good scores in self-contained. Just the fact that you are teaching is a miracle kind of thing.

RESEARCHER: Yes, there is some of that going on.

FGP1 - FG2: It seems a little unfair to the rest of us but good for them.

FGP2 - FG2: I think the only thing that I see with that would be that you are not going to reach that population that is rejecting inclusion. You are only going to get the people who are into it and the people who are like, "mmm, I want to get my feet wet" type of thing, which would spread a little but I still fear that you are not going to reach the majority of the people that you want to reach.

RESEARCHER: So how could we reach them? Because look at you two. I mean, you two are great at coaching and mentoring other teachers so do you think having that community of practice might build the capacity of like-minded people to do more coaching and mentoring?

FGP1 - FG2: It has to be somebody who wants to ask though, like someone who is willing to say, “hey, I am struggling with this, how do I do it”.

FGP2 - FG2: In the sense that it would take... I am very bold and brash so I don't mind telling another teacher, “that is not correct – you know you need to switch your way of thinking” but some people don't like to stir the pot so it takes teachers like [FCP1] and I who are willing to call out another teacher and say this is the way things go, you need to look at this.

FGP1 - FG2: I noticed this and would you like to try this. I see that happening in the hallway.

FGP2 - FG2: She is a lot softer on her approaches (laughter).

FGP1 - FG2: That can go away, right?

RESEARCHER: You have to have those different roles...for this study I looked at a lot of the research on culture change and different types of organizations, healthcare, IT and etc., and they do talk about how people sometimes kind of act as double-agents. They take the temperature and they consider the climate and the need to strategize based on the situation. It depends on who they are working with that determines how they leverage...

FGP1 - FG2: [incomprehensible] what I need to be.

FGP2 - FG2: This morning you got me because I am sure [incomprehensible] (laughter).

RESEARCHER: That is a good point about the community of practice because what we want to do is we want to support the people who do have those values, because they do tend to coach and mentor and network and model.

FGP1 - FG2: I think if you put it out there with a, “hey, are you struggling with ASD or are you struggling with inclusion, try this” kind of thing and it might be that it might trigger someone to wean in and try it. If they not struggling or if you’ve got great ideas.

FGP2 - FG2: I think it be really good for the people who are not sure, like they want to wet their feet, I think it would be good for those people. It is obviously good for the people who are in it because of course if they have something to say they are going to get on, they are going to ask.

FGP1 - FG2: And every year we learn new things because every child is different so we are always looking for ideas even after this many years doing it.

FGP2 - FG2: So I think to the people who are trying to wet their feet and the people who are more headstrong in it, it would be beneficial to them.

RESEARCHER: So do you think that there are two pieces that have to be worked together...having people who coach and mentor and network, who can nurture teachers in real time on the campus and professional development where they go to learn? There is a

big focus now on job embedded professional development and coaching and mentoring is very big right now because it doesn't require somebody to be removed from the classroom.

FGP1 - FG2: And you don't want to go through all the goals and scales...you want to move away from for this type of thing. This is one of those. It should be an open discussion of what has worked for you and we tried this.

RESEARCHER: I also hear what you are saying about, what are doing for people who are struggling and who are resistant? So in what ways do you think we could reach those people?

FGP2 - FG2: Like I said, you would just to have...It has to be the administrator to some extent. This is expected of you. You need to get help. I have observed this happening and this is where you can help. Not in a threatening way but in a mentoring way. We are already an inclusive school. You need to be able to work with these people. These people know.

FGP2 - FG2: I definitely think the coaching, the mentoring, and being able to see somebody else at that skill is definitely important. We all go through it interning before we get in the classroom. If you went through the education programs, I spent almost two years interning and watching different teachers.

FGP1 - FG2: When you go ACP [alternative certification program] you don't. You don't get put in front of a classroom.

FGP2 - FG2: For the most part we have taught mostly with teachers and so that is how we learned how to become teachers and how we learned what to do. I know mine was what not to do from my experience. It happens and I definitely think it is beneficial to watch somebody at the craft and given that opportunity. It does not have to be spending the entire day but finding someone at your school who is willing to allow somebody else to come in to observe you is very beneficial.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel like you have that culture at [current school]?

W & FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: And administrators?

FGP1 - FG2: I will notice it tomorrow.

FGP2 - FG2: When I was in kindergarten in XXXX County we pushed really heavy with kids writing. So when I came here not many of them were writing and they were like, “how did you get your kids to do that?”. I said, “come into my room and bring your entire class”. They are like, “bring my class?”. I am like, “bring your class”. I buddied one of theirs with one of mine and my kids were teaching them how I had taught them. It depends on the teacher but you find somebody who you link up with and then definitely go and watch them and observe them for what works and what doesn’t work. The thing is to observe somebody who is close to your

teaching style. I am pretty sure [FCP1] and I have completely different teaching styles but they work for both of us and they both work for all of our kids so you have to pick somebody who is going to be close to your teaching style as well or else that is not going to work. It is definitely very powerful to be able to watch somebody at their craft and pick up ideas. So finding somebody at each of the schools for those nonresistant people and making them watch and having them go in and observe.

RESEARCHER: Yes, model classrooms...definitely important. All right, so we are getting close to the end of the questions. To what extent does your organization constrain and inhibit inclusive culture? I know we talked about the teacher evaluation system. Anything that you see as a barrier?

FGP 1 & FGP2 - FG2: No.

RESEARCHER: Any structures within the organization that perpetuate a culture of exclusion. It sounds like you definitely have an inclusive culture already in place at [current school]...is there anything the organization can do or do better in terms of supporting inclusive culture?

FGP1 - FG2: No, the district is giving [current school], I believe the freedom to do it the best way they possibly can so I don't think they are putting constraints on necessarily.

RESEARCHER: So no other recommendations for removing barriers?

FGP2 - FG2: That is what we have stated.

FGP1 - FG2: You know the self-contained teachers talk to the gen. ed. teachers, we communicate to try to increase inclusion or establish inclusion or start it.

RESEARCHER: So looking back on your experience and your current experience, is there any other additional recommendations that you would make in terms of establishing norms or values or practices or policies that could be more supportive?

FGP1 - FG2: I really think some of this stuff that seems like a no-brainer, either from a parent, because I am a parent and you are going to be soon, and from project ASD is the behavioral element of it. It is how you prevent the behavior occurring by looking at what caused it. I think that kind of training for all teachers, because all students will act up in some way at some point, whether it is just fidgeting or is throwing chairs. I think that is the thing that has had the highest effect on my ability to teach and...

FGP2 - FG2: Get there before it happens.

FGP1 - FG2: Preventing it and also differentiated behavior within your classroom. You have your global. Don't drill it down too low yet. When I take on an ASD student I don't go straight to whatever behaviors, controls or whatever we want to call it, behavior system worked for him last year. He is in my classroom behavior system until they start drilling down to make it

possible to do. I don't where I was going with that but preventing behaviors before they start on training on how to do that is probably the key to success, whether it is SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] or ASD. An SLD [SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY] child can learn, especially if you use certain strategies and keep their focus. That is all behavior training as well to some extent.

RESEARCHER: Exactly.

FGP2 - FG2: That is the focus now, learning disabilities, and learning how to pinpoint what the problem is.

FGP1 - FG2: What the deficit is and how you combat it and how you keep the child engaged to learn whatever method...

RESEARCHER: And finding out what the function of the behavior is.

W & FGP2 - FG2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Yes, because it is usually some trigger, some antecedent.

FGP2 - FG2: And it does not necessarily have to be one that happened in the classroom.

RESEARCHER: That is right.

FGP2 - FG2: I have a student personally that things happened prior to getting to school and it will set his entire day.

FGP1 - FG2: There is behavior training by parent. I finally trained the parent to give support at home. I have been doing my behavior interventions on the parent and lots of texts and e-mails and can you do this and can you do that. Finally, we are getting a child who is now aptitude to nine week sessions participating. I think he is going to do his homework for the first time tonight. It may or may not happen but it is part of intervention.

RESEARCHER: Will keep our fingers crossed.

FGP1 - FG2: Yes, there is going to be a big celebration tomorrow.

RESEARCHER: Oh yes.

FGP1 - FG2: But there is so much going on that you are not just going in and lecturing. You are differentiating your instruction and behavior management.

**RESEARCHER: Do you all have positive behavior support system at [current school],
PBS is what they call it?**

FGP1 - FG2: We have Champs.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel like that effective?

FGP1 - FG2: [shakes head, no] I think true our behavior success is happening in our own classrooms.

FGP2 - FG2: Whatever you set up.

FGP1 - FG2: The school support is....

FGP2 - FG2: Some people believe in Champs. Like I said, I have it set in my room. These are the rules and I always set my expectations high, even for my ESE students because I have found in the past the people who underestimate their abilities are the people that tend to get worse problems out of them. I had a visiting ESE student today, two of them, one did really well and the other one didn't because in their rooms there is maybe not as much expectation for him to succeed. When he came to visit me, I don't let you just slide by with throwing a temper tantrum or throwing a chair so I said when you are done we will work.

FGP1 - FG2: There is also a differentiation within that as well. You have your classroom rules but for this particular child I will give a little more or... You get those five questions then you get a break.

FGP2 - FG2: Right.

FGP1 - FG2: For my high performing 99th percentile student you don't get a break after five questions. You know you are going that and more.

FGP2 - FG2: I start with the high expectation and then from there I see what they are capable, like the one I was speaking of earlier, he didn't have high expectations. When he came to me they said he was reading at a 2nd grade level. I star tested him and I had him read to me. He topped out at a 4/4, not 2nd grade. Again, it is setting that expectation where this is what we are working on and it depends on how much support I need to give you to also complete that same activity. In reading I don't have to support him as much but in math I do. But I know that and so I offer that facilitation support so that he gets to where he needs to be. Like I said, I always set my expectations high and they work their way up the ladder to get there. So this depends on the different support you have to provide to them.

RESEARCHER: That is awesome. All right, well that is the end of our questions. I appreciate your input.

APPENDIX V: TRANSCRIPTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Interview Transcript: I1 – FCP2: (Interviewee 1 – Focus Group Participant 3)

RESEARCHER: The purpose behind this study is to explore the lived experience of teachers who identify as champions of inclusion; to answer questions such as what can we build into in-service professional development that might help them develop these dispositions, because we have to do something.

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: We are finding that we have to change teacher's belief systems on company time and that is probably one of the biggest challenges we face as a public school system. What can we do when teachers are resistant to inclusion, and how can we help move them? So the questions today will seek out what influenced you, looking at your personal experience, anything you would want to share...anything you would want to share about how leadership influenced you, or your teacher preparation program. What were your influences and if possible, how can we replicate the experiences that helped attain these dispositions? How can the organization replicate those experiences to invite teachers to change their belief system?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, of course. Also, if you ask a question and I kind of go off topic and don't answer it, of course feel free to refocus me to actually answer the question.

RESEARCHER: The first question, and there are several sub-questions, is how have your views and opinions on inclusion been influenced by personal experience? That is the overarching question. This could be educational experience, professional experience or your teacher preparation program...feel free to elaborate. The first question: How have your views and opinions on inclusion been influenced by personal experience?

I3 - FGP3: I would say the biggest influence on my views on inclusion is: I got my teacher's certification and Master's all in one in like an evening program at a small school in XXXXXXXX [northern-eastern state]. I didn't go to a traditional teacher preparatory program. So I got that and then I just basically went out and interviewed. It was very difficult to get jobs in [northern-eastern state] at that time and still is due to budgets and whatever. So I pretty much accepted the first job I could get.

RESEARCHER: So you were just interested in teaching in general?

I3 - FGP3: Yes. I was open to anything but I wasn't on a mission to land an ESE job or anything. It just so happened that the job I got offered was an 8:1:1 [ratio of students to adults, 8 students to 1 teacher, to 1 teaching assistant) working with students that labeled emotionally and behaviorally disturbed or whatever the label was in XXXXXXXX [northern-eastern state]. It is slightly different than what our XXXXXXXX [current state] label is. So anyway, I got in there and it was self-contained for the most part when I started and I mean a lot of aggressive behaviors, biting, kicking, spitting and all of these things. Since I was doing it I was looking for opportunities to get them out with their peers and I would find some. I really just noticed that the

same child that in my classroom, my 8:1:1 , would spit at me, kick me and throw things at me. He goes in a room with his same age peers and the behaviors go from 99% aggressive to 1% aggressive. It was really just that peer influence, not in every case, but just that really got me to think that it seemed that they knew they could do whatever they wanted in a small setting around a bunch of other kids that will do the same with no real consequence. Then when they went and they saw, wow, the kids in this class sit here and they take notes and they raise their hand and participate. A lot of them really show some great abilities that some people would never have believed that they could do.

RESEARCHER: What was it that prompted you to look for opportunities for them [students]? Was that something that leadership wanted?

I3 - FGP3: I wouldn't really say leadership.

RESEARCHER: Where did that come from?

I3 - FGP3: It seems how a lot of these separate class things kind of turn into their own program within a school and they are a separate entity within an entity.

RESEARCHER: Yes, right.

I3 - FGP3: So without tooting my horn too much, I guess I would say that I was definitely concerned about the academic component of this program because it was a K-5 and when I got

there I felt like it was just basically a daycare where as long as the kids weren't doing anything aggressive there were no expectations. Again, my theme is like...

RESEARCHER: So really kind of what generated it, was it your concern about the level of exposure to the grade level content?

I3 - FGP3: Right.

RESEARCHER: You had a multi-grade classroom.

I3 - FGP3: Right a multi-grade classroom and then what if they do get these behaviors under control and then they are ready to go back with their peers. Now they are going to have a 3-4 year in academics and there is no chance for success so we can't have them in a separate class and teach them anything and expect them to ever transition back into the general education setting. So I was concerned about that and looking for opportunities to maybe...

RESEARCHER: So how do you convince the administration? They were open to that?

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: The teachers were open to it?

I3 - FGP3: The teachers were open to it, usually with the caveat as long as another adult would always be with, which was appropriate for most of them anyways at the time. So they were open for small segments and then I think once people say it they really realized with a few exceptions that definitely couldn't handle it, most of them thrived and did well and eventually got more and more time as it went on. Again, that made me realize that just that positive peer pressure, even like unspoken peer pressure, just "this is what all the other kids are doing so I'm going to do it too". It works a lot better when the surrounding kids are doing things that we would want them to do in school rather than looking around and seeing kids doing things that we would not want them to do.

RESEARCHER: OK. So would it be fair to say that your concern about the level of access to grade appropriate curriculum is kind of what motivated you to want to have them go into the class they would otherwise attend if they didn't have a disability?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, absolutely.

RESEARCHER: Interesting. This was a public school?

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: With a self-contained, I know the labels sometimes differ, but an EBD...

I3 - FGP3: It was called an 8:1:1 most of the students.

RESEARCHER: How did the students get into an 8:1:1 generally?

I3 - FGP3: It was a small rural district so there were only two elementary schools in the district, both smaller than this school. They would have their IEP meeting and get staffed and if they ended up getting that label, whatever it was called there, but EBD, they would pretty much get put into that setting.

RESEARCHER: So remind me again, I know you said you went to a small college, right?

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: So you got a degree in teaching?

I3 - FGP3: It was Master's and certification all in one.

RESEARCHER: What was the Master's in specifically?

I3 - FGP3: Elementary education.

RESEARCHER: So it was in elementary education?

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Were you required to have ESE certification to teach that class?

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: So it came with it?

I3 - FGP3: Yes. It was not the best program, to be honest, but I didn't know.

RESEARCHER: So, what would you say was the primary influence in terms of your view of inclusion, that students needed to have access to the gen ed curriculum and not be in a self-contained setting?

I3 - FGP3: I guess it is just maybe my overarching thought. I keep in the forefront of my mind when working with students is that we are trying to prepare them for after schooling, whether that be college or a job. I look at a setting like that and there is no translation to the real world and any sort of successful outcome for being in a room where there are six kids having war all day long and not learning anything. What are we setting kids up for if this is what they do until they are 18 or 21? Then they leave and there is just not a successful out. So just really trying to focus on that and think of how can we help kids to actually find a way to be successful in the world and it is not being in a separate classroom. There are not jobs that are offered where you are not expected to do anything productive.

RESEARCHER: So it was just looking at the outcome, which would seem to be a logical thing to do.

I3 - FGP3: Like a broad perspective and then you narrow everything back down from that, like a reverse engineer or whatever they call that, where you look at the end and then you go backwards.

RESEARCHER: You begin with the end in mind, absolutely. Do you feel like your teacher preparation program had any influence on that? If it was like a dual, if you got your Master's and your certification in special education, was there any emphasis on that in that program? You were saying it was not the greatest.

I3 - FGP3: I would not really say so. I did work some jobs in business so maybe just thinking more of coming with a little bit more practical experience or business experience maybe than some people, maybe having more thinking of what the next step would be after school. I guess maybe some teachers that have never had jobs outside of the classroom maybe sometimes don't think about...

RESEARCHER: Did the degree that you obtained and the certification....some teacher preparation programs, whether they are Bachelor's or Master's level, some of them still take a view of general education and special education as separate systems. Was that the case or was it integrated?

I3 - FGP3: I believe there was only one class that was called Theory in Special Education or something like there so it really wasn't something...I would not say there was an inclusion emphasis of anything that we were doing. So I really think it just came about really as a byproduct as getting that first job, being put into that setting and realizing this is not right. Even just the way that the program existed when I got there was not right in many aspects of how quick the staff would be to go hands on with students and that whole thing was alarming.

RESEARCHER: Did you say you have been teaching for...?

I3 - FGP3: 10 or 11 years, 5 in XXXXXXXX [northern-eastern state] and this is like my 6th year.

RESEARCHER: Any influence from leaders or any particular principal? It sounds like certainly you came in and the sort of logical outcome this early is it going to be conducive to a positive outcome?

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: So any influence as far as your professional experience, meaning an influence of a leader or any other teachers along the way.

I3 - FGP3: I would say both of the principals that I had up there, they actually ended up getting married, but I had one at the one school.

RESEARCHER: They obviously must have been supportive of you doing this.

I3 - FGP3: Yes, XXXXX XXXXXX and XXXX XXXXXXXX [former administrators], now they are married and we actually became friends even though they are still in XXXXXXXX [northern-eastern state]. Yes, so if I went to them with an idea they very much gave me the freedom and empowered me to make whatever changes as long as I ran it by them and I had a rationale that was reasonable. They were not trying to keep the status quo. I don't think, quite honestly again from an administrators perspective, you got a whole school to run and that classroom that is down at the end of the hall with four kids in it does not always get a lot of time from the administrator's perspective. They were very open though to allowing me to change it.

RESEARCHER: So the special education course that you completed during your teacher preparation program, that was just sort of basic?

I3 - FGP3: Just a basic regular, emphasized, free appropriate public education.

RESEARCHER: So you didn't take a deep dive into strategies necessarily?

I3 - FGP3: No, I would not say so, no.

RESEARCHER: So federal law, FAPE and IDEA, just sort of more of a compliance sort of thing?

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Did they talk about IEP's?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, we talked about that as a legal document and just the basics of that.

RESEARCHER: So how about colleagues along the way? Is there anything from your personal life that you would be willing to share? It sounds like, like I said, you felt thought, logically, that this was not a model that was going to lead to a good outcome. Were there any other personal or social influences or influence of colleagues?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, I worked really closely there with a school social worker that was attached to the 8:1:1 in like an adjoining office. She and I really had some of the same philosophies so I definitely learned a lot from her because she was coming at it from more of the psychological or emotional perspective and then maybe I would be coming at it more from the educational side so I think it was a good combination. I definitely learned a lot from her just in terms of how to interact effectively with students because I was not ready on day one. I had no skills.

RESEARCHER: That is understandable.

I3 - FGP3: I had no skills and had like four aides that were in there that thought they had skills but most of their skills were inappropriate and then there was just a counsellor. So when we got

together and realized if she knew what she was doing and could not do it by herself then we were able to change some things.

RESEARCHER: So the 8:1:1, what is that eight students to one teacher and one para? Is that generally what that means?

I3 - FGP3: Yes. We ended up having more paras because the student would get on their IEP with one aide or one to two aides. We ended up usually having like three paras, a teacher and a counsellor.

RESEARCHER: All right. So let's dive into your personal experience in terms of the descriptors. So inclusive practices - that is re-engineering the classroom so that all students can be successful, by implementing differentiated instructional methods. If you had to put it in a nutshell, why do you support those practices? I know you touched on it being the logical thing to do in terms of preparing, but just put it in your own words, the reasons why you support inclusive practices in the classroom.

I3 - FGP3: I think, again classrooms are a microcosm of any sort of post school environment that you will be in, whether it is a business or anything. You are going to be working with people who are different than you, with different abilities and of course it is important to be able to get along and interact effectively with all different sorts of people, whatever the difference may be. If we only expose children to peers who are exactly like them, they are going to have a tough time when they gets to environments where people are not exactly like them. I can even

say I guess now that I'm thinking about it, maybe something on some level that would have triggered that. I grew up very middle to lower middle class in terms of income and I went to a school, Hobart and William Smith, which is a very upper crust school and even though I am a white male as you can see, the doors socially were not very open to me at that school because I didn't have the money. So I guess that maybe something it got me realizing how if you just had people that are all alike in one place it is usually not the best thing.

RESEARCHER: Very interesting perspective. Why do you maintain an inclusive stance? Stance meaning a belief in equity for all children. That stance that makes you tend to question the advantages and rationale for labeling and leveling, in terms of asking “what is that really about” and “is that really necessary”...from what you've said so far, it seems that you believe in inclusive practices in the classroom to kind of leveling the playing field. So why do you maintain that stance? In other words, a stance that rejects a focus on deficits in favor of looking at student's strengths.

I3 - FGP3: I guess it may go back to something that we touched upon when you were speaking before, maybe it has been my experience sometimes to oftentimes when we give an IEP to a student and then we start putting services in place, sometimes or oftentimes those services will actually increase the gap rather than decrease the gap. That is just something that really has always irked me. It is well intentioned and people think, OK so now so and so is going to get what they need but oftentimes it is not true. What they are going to get what they need is an over-remediation in a separate room by somebody that maybe does not know what is expected for the grade level expectation while they are being pulled away from their peers that are doing

stuff. They are still expected to come back into that room and do all the stuff they missed while they are leaving to do something that is two grade levels behind what they are then coming back and expected to do. I guess it never really made sense to me how we think that is supposed to help the student close a gap and not just make the gap bigger.

RESEARCHER: So it sounds like your first experience was a huge influence...where you kind of noticed that this was not really going to work for students, the whole labeling thing and putting students in a separate setting, although the idea behind it was that they are going to get more services and the fact that they didn't in your view, was sort of unintended consequence.

I3 - FGP3: Yes, and I really got that message more so once I flipped to the gen. ed. side even down here in [current state]. The other school I went to the first year, I had a few ESE students in my class and they were performing reasonably well in the class and with accommodations they were able to do what we were doing. Then when they would leave for their time with the ESE teacher I could kind of find out, ask or learn that they are shuffling around like letter tiles making one syllable words but yet in my class they are doing 4th grade level content so then why are they spending half an hour a day lining up THE and then taking away the E and adding IS to make THIS. Of course, I am thinking now from my perspective now they are missing a half of hour and we just did this, to go play with letter tiles, something that they don't need just because it is the assumption that I must do something below grade level with them because they are ESE I guess.

RESEARCHER: Very good points.

I3 - FGP3: Of course, that is not always the case but... I think some ESE teachers too are comfortable doing what they have always done, afraid to change that too.

RESEARCHER: It is tough to change. All right, so the next question is about inclusive values, meaning a value system that regards difference and diversity as a natural condition and a valued resource. Going back to the first thing you talked about, looking at that future outcome. What is it that influenced those values and what motivates you to look at inclusive education as an issue of civil rights and social justice issue...you touched on that when you talked about students not having access to learning experiences that are going to generate a beneficial outcome.

I3 - FGP3: Yes, I guess that would kind of come back to some of the push back that I got from my first job up in XXXXXXXX [northern-eastern state] at 8:1:1 just maybe surprising when I would go to a teacher and run by and say here is the student I have and here is my idea, I am thinking that he can come in for half an hour during this time and he will come with an adult. Then to have some teachers that would say no to that and give me their reasoning why. That really made me say wow, I didn't realize that there are actually people out there that aren't... If you are teacher I guess I kind of came in with a naïve assumption that you liked kids and that you wanted to help all kids. When I found out that there are some teachers that definitely don't like kids and certainly are not interesting in helping all kid...that was kind of a shock to my system. I didn't realize that. So I guess that then kind of put me on the warpath a little bit. If

you are going to shut me down when I went to you in a nice way, then I am going to try to find a way to come back and make it happen anyways. So I guess that kind of got me on the crusader mode.

RESEARCHER: So you did feel like it was a social justice issue?

I3 - FGP3: Right.

RESEARCHER: Or an equity issue? I don't want to put words in your mouth.

I3 - FGP3: Right. I thought that it was an equity non-issue because I couldn't imagine that anybody wouldn't be open to giving somebody a chance so I was not even prepared to think it was going to be an issue because I had this naïve assumption that everybody would be open to having a kid or at least giving a kid a chance. I mean, if a kid goes in there and it goes terribly and they are throwing pencils at you in whole group instruction, sure I can understand why you don't want that to continue. But to not be willing to give kids a chance, that really struck me and then I guess that is what motivated me to try to make changes and see if we can.

RESEARCHER: Got it, and stick with it because being a new teacher that couldn't have been easy to sort of...

I3 - FGP3: Right.

RESEARCHER: Do you think it is just that sense of equality and justice that made you not become more conforming to what you found as the status quo?

I3 - FGP3: I guess you could say that, yes. I am a little bit of a slave to logic too so when I think something as logical and reasonable, unless I am presented with something that I think was more logical or reasonable, I am not going to change my mind. So I guess, yes I would be a little stubborn if I know what is going to help this student to be included, I am not going to let somebody say no because they have always said no. Let's see if we can find a way to convince them or I guess force them even to at least give it a chance.

RESEARCHER: So why do you champion inclusion? What do you feel ultimately drives you to actively cultivate and promote that culture?

I3 - FGP3: Again, I really just...I don't want to be like the Stephen Colbert where I pretend I don't see differences. Of course, we all see them, but obviously we are all humans and they are all students and I don't quite get why we would ever get so focused or make our primary determination or judgment about a student based on a disability or based on a label. It should just be looking at it as, this is just another student who has this challenge, this challenge and this challenge compared to another student who is not ESE but has this this challenge, this challenge and this challenge. I guess I don't quite see why we need to worry about labeling the challenges and not just looking at each student as a student. Every student has needs, strengths and weaknesses. I understand the system is the way it is but from a human perspective I don't think

it is really helpful to think of a student as an IEP or think of a student as an ESE student. It is just Joey, Tammy or whatever.

RESEARCHER: Sure, as a label. Am I hearing that you think sometimes, that the label itself is just too limiting? You were saying, in the situation we were talking about before with the student whose parent thinks that they need all of these services, when in reality those services are really keeping the student from exposure to their peers without disabilities and exposure to the content. That the disability label doesn't necessarily guarantee that the student is going to get what they need.

I3 - FGP3: I think that label can mean... one thing that always drives me crazy that I have seen at most schools is if a child has a certain label and they are in a certain classroom, I mean oftentimes paras and even teachers will think then that when they move around the campus with these students that they have to always have a hand on them and hold their hands. I realize some students are runners and we know them but not all students. I feel like there are some labels that come with that kind of treatment where it is so obvious now that this student is walking around campus and an adult is hanging on to their wrist. I know these students and I have talked with them and they don't always need that sort of physical leash or human leash going around with them. I sometimes feel like that is then where the label or the placement is driving the way that they are being treated rather than the actual reality of what their abilities are. Also, again there are some parents that I think that want of course what is best for their kids but then I think maybe they think that the more labels and the more services you put on something is going to automatically mean a better outcome but I don't think that is always the case and when they say

they want more... There are only so many hours in a school day so if your kid is being pulled an hour for this and an hour for that and half an hour for this, they are missing something. They are not leaving a class that is doing a recess while they go and do that, they are leaving a class that they are not going to get whatever the content is while they are getting their other service.

RESEARCHER: Thank you for that. We talked a little bit about this in the focus group, but if you could speak with a little more specificity to how you respond when you encounter resistance to inclusive practices. I know you said you are sort of a slave to logic. You certainly can be a crusader but you seem to have a measure of success with what you do so you have got to have maybe, sort of, a menu of responses maybe that you use, so to speak. What are some of the ways that you respond when you encounter resistance? Is it dependent on the climate, the personality or the person you are dealing with?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, I think I definitely use some sales tactics I guess. It never hurts to start with a compliment or a statement of understanding, "I know that you have a lot on your plate and I know you have a challenging group of students already" so let me start with some of those and offer some solutions too or some ideas of how to make it work. "So there is a student I am thinking of that I think would work well in this class because of the way you create an atmosphere of blah, blah, blah" and then really just being able to listen to what their concerns might be. Usually once you listen to the concern then you can come back with some thoughts as to why it is at least worth a shot. I think usually people are willing to give it a shot. There is just the fear of not knowing or even the fear that they would have to drastically change what they have to do. I guess that is probably the biggest one, is that people that don't know would think,

“oh, if I have this student coming in that has this IEP, now I have to do this, this, this and this” and telling them no, you really don’t have to change that much of what you are doing. You keep teaching and just treat this as another student. Of course, you give him accommodations and check in, you know, in this manner but it is not like you need to reinvent your entire classroom design. I think sometimes that can help to allay some of the fears and hesitation.

RESEARCHER: Have you had any adamant resistance or do you find that those sort of sales tactics, strategies you have used, been fairly and consistently successful?

I3 - FGP3: They have been successful to give it a shot. I have definitely had some adamant resistance once it has been given a shot and the teacher determined that.

RESEARCHER: It wasn’t working?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, especially with student’s behavior. There are some teachers that just don’t have the capacity to allow for some things so once something happens, “sorry this door is now closed – this student did this and they are not getting another chance”. That was up in XXXXXXXX [northern-eastern state] with some extreme behaviors. I think there one step of being open to including kids in your classroom and saying, “yes, sure I am willing to include everybody”. A lot of teachers will say that but the second step is actually for teachers seeing if they are actually willing then to accommodate diversity in their classroom. There are certain students that you can’t just say sit down now. There are teachers that even though I would tell me this student is coming in and his label is ODD, oppositional defiant disorder, so if you want to get into a public

struggle so “sit down now”, that is literally the last thing that student will do is sit down now if you tell him that. There are some teachers that are just no, I am the adult and he is the student and if I say sit down now he is sitting down now. So I guess they would be open to the inclusion but not open to modifying their professional practice to give it any chance of success.

RESEARCHER: So you do still have those really tough nuts to crack at times?

I3 - FGP3: Certainly, I mean not so much here in [current state] because I am not working with that [emotional behavioral disorder] student population, so you know teachers seem to be much more accommodating to learning disabilities than they are to behavioral disabilities. Even the students here that I know have that label. Teachers will tell me, “I know he can do this and I know he can do that”, like they just won’t allow for the fact that maybe the student really has the issue, hence the diagnosis of whatever it is, but they just like to believe that they know it is intentional or they take it personally.

RESEARCHER: On the campus how do you actively sustain and promote those inclusive practices. Do you have time to plan with general education teachers? Are you ever involved in staff development in terms of, as I said, kind of sustaining and promoting those practices? The day could come when you are offered some 6-figure salary so in what ways do you work towards promoting and sustaining this culture?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, we do have some planning days where we can get together and plan but I mean how do I try to change people’s perspective so they get more open-minded about inclusion?

RESEARCHER: Sure.

I3 - FGP3: Yes, usually I guess it just has to mostly come as the byproduct of a successful outcome of actually having them experience students in their class who they may have thought weren't the right fit or an appropriate fit and then realizing that it does work out. I guess that has probably been the trial and succeed method of changing some minds.

RESEARCHER: I think that is one of the most powerful missions.

I3 - FGP3: Sure. Most teachers want to feel like a kid is theirs and in their classroom and then they are much more open because every teacher can be a little defensive about their own kids. It is just like parents. So a kid that they would have never thought they would want in their class or include, once they are in their class for a week, two weeks or three weeks, then they think of it as their kid and then they become a champion for a kid that they otherwise the previous years would have excluded. I certainly see that. If you are 5th grade teacher and there are these 4th graders and you know, "oh man, I don't want that kid, no please". Then that kid gets in your class and a month later you are the one defending him to everybody else, "oh no, he is actually a great kid". It is actually people experiencing all different sorts of students who will tend to get them on board.

RESEARCHER: So when you encounter sort of that resistance how do you generally respond? I know you mentioned certainly listening and you mentioned getting the foot in the door in terms of coming up with solutions and using sales tactics.

I3 - FGP3: Certainly making sure that teachers know that I am obviously there to teach as well and to help as well and I am not just putting a student who is on my case load or whatever we call it, not just...

RESEARCHER: Letting teachers know you are in it with them?

I3 - FGP3: Right, that I am in it with them and I am not just expecting you to deliver all of the reading instruction and math instruction and that I am there to help too and not just with that student. I am there to help the classroom. I like to think that some teachers view me as an asset to their entire class so now they are more accepting to including students and they want to have the ESE students next year because they want me to be attached to their classroom so I come in for an hour during math and can help all the students to some degree. I think the competency of the teacher that is going to be providing support facilitation services certainly could be a factor and the willingness of the gen. ed. teacher to enjoy the inclusion model.

RESEARCHER: Right. What I noted was your focus is on being viewed as an asset...

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: In order to kind of combat any resistance that you might feel.

I3 - FGP3: Right because certainly if they feel like yes, they are getting help and if the net results of having these students in their class in a positive, then they are more apt to be for round two the next year.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel word gets around about that?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, this is the first year at this school that I have been ESE but I definitely think...

RESEARCHER: Right, because you were a gen. ed. teacher.

I3 - FGP3: Right, I taught gen. ed. last year 4th and 5th but I definitely think that some people have noticed that maybe the effect that I can have not only the ESE students but also the entire class might be a little bit more significant than people that have held this position previously.

RESEARCHER: What made you want to take on this position or this role? Were you asked?

I3 - FGP3: No, I wasn't asked. I guess it was, quite honestly, there is a little bit more freedom in this role to make decisions about what I think is most effective to help the students I work with whereas in the gen ed, particularly here in the last couple of years, we have been like a district watch list or whatever you would call it. We were very much told that you must do exactly this

and exactly that. Sometimes I can be a little stubborn when I feel like I am being told to do something when I think I might have an idea that would work better but I am not allowed to do it so I felt it a little bit too rigid in a “you must do this” setting. If we walk in at 10:02 when you are still finishing a math lesson but at 10:00 the clock turned to reading you get in trouble type of deal, not that I went over by much, but just that over regulation I guess. I wanted something where I felt I had a little more control over what I was doing. So sorry to say, it was not necessarily a huge mission to get back into ESE for the great good necessarily.

RESEARCHER: OK, but just having more, how did you word it, you said more control over...

I3 - FGP3: More control and freedom to make decisions about lessons and being on a schedule and instructional materials. A lot of things that really I think with the focusing on reading and we have these students who are often labeled ESE that are say, you have a 5th grade student that is reading at a 2nd grade level, it seems that a lot of the focus is always on the benchmarks in terms of do a cause and effect lesson, do a main idea and details lesson, so it is always about these skills. If the student is not actually reading enough to start increasing their reading level, then they cannot access this text. So you can teach main idea and details and cause and effect all you want but when you give them a 5th grade text there is no chance they can apply all these great lessons. So I guess that is one of my things, is that yes you can still teach some of those lessons but the focus has to be on increasing their reading level to get them to the point where they have the possibility to access the text. So I guess....I don't know if that was really relevant to the question we were thinking about but that is something that I encounter a lot.

RESEARCHER: Definitely related to the questions, a relevant divergence. I was wondering what influenced you to take a position like this [ESE support]...did you say you felt it would give you more opportunity to be involved in influencing decisions about teaching and learning, rather than being in the classroom and sort of being the recipient of decisions that were made outside?

I3 - FGP3: Absolutely.

RESEARCHER: You obviously felt you had something to offer more globally and maybe more exponentially than just being in one classroom.

I3 - FGP3: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Because certainly you are touching a lot of people exponentially.

I3 - FGP3: Oh yes.

RESEARCHER: You are certainly having a broader reach.

I3 - FGP3: There was a certain level of, I guess I don't have any research so you won't care, but there was a person in this position last year who left and there was a certain level of disgust as to how this position was being utilized and I was like, I want to go there and show people how that

it can actually be a worthwhile position. Like this person would have a reading group of three every day at 10:30 and then if two of the students were absent but then one of the students was still here, she could come to my room and say, “OK while the other two are absent today so I am not taking Jason because it would just be a waste of time – it would just be him”. So one and one help with a kid is a waste of time where of course you can make a huge impact if you have half an hour to read with a kid, you would just cancel the group and not pick up... which of course I shouldn’t let happen but that is a so I guess that also does kind of motivate me to show people that this isn’t just like this break job that you hope you get because you can do nothing and cancel all your groups all the time and it can actually be something where you can impact...right, I mean a lot of kinds and not just three or two, you can actually help out a class or change the perspective of people.

RESEARCHER: So you had a feeling that you wanted to show people that it could work?

I3 - FGP3: Yes. Show people that it could work and show people that it could be a different way the job is done too I guess. I don’t know how to better phrase it. Not a glorified para and that you could actually be a real teacher, even though the kids don’t think I am a teacher. They love telling me, “are you going to be a teacher again next year?”. I don’t know, I hope so. Showing the teachers that it is actually a real teaching job too and it is not just a ...

RESEARCHER: What are your views and opinions on the success of inclusion in your public school system? Feel free to say whatever you want to say on that related to your views and opinions on the success of inclusion in your public school system.

I3 - FGP3: I think success is measured by the fact, you know, is inclusion happening? Is it coming down? Is it mandated or pushed or a reality that is happening? Yes, I would say it is successful that for the most part, at least here and the other school in [XXXXXX] County, most students are included to a pretty significant extent. Now from measuring the success of inclusion by the actual outcome and their level of success and the way they are treated and thought of in the general education setting, then I would say that we definitely still have some work to do. It is one thing to tell somebody yes, this child is going to be in your class at this time but it is another thing to actually make it a successful experience for the student and the teacher. I think that as an organization we are good at mandating or proclaiming that we are inclusive and getting those minutes right on the IEP so that so and so is with his peers 93% of the day, but I am not sure we are always good at actually making sure that 93% of the day is as effective as it could be, both academically and socioemotionally.

RESEARCHER: So to what do you attribute that success or lack thereof? So you said successful for the most part just in regard to the number of students who are being included but then you talked about the attitudes towards the student and measuring student outcome. To what do you attribute whatever success you see, or lack of success?

I3 - FGP3: Well, so success on the first part I guess about the inclusive model being used more is I think coming as a byproduct of the legal ramifications. I guess I am sure there have been legal challenges made to get students that have equal treatment and equal rights and equal services in the schools and also is a byproduct of administrators going to trainings or getting

advanced degrees where they actually learn that in fact it is the best system so that trickles down. I think in the same sense then that is also where it gets lost is that the people with the real knowledge that it has to happen can make the decision it has to happen but then that knowledge is not present in the people who are left to actually deliver the inclusive model to the students. So if they don't really believe or know it is the best system, then they can be forced to do it but they can't be forced to make it successful or encouraged to do it, not that anybody is really forced I guess.

RESEARCHER: So really, in terms of what is trickling down to the teachers, in terms of outcomes and attitudes towards students, you feel teachers are not really getting a message beyond inclusion as a legality? The current status of inclusion is “successful” due to basic compliance, given that it is “happening”, but then on the second hand attributing a lack of success to the fact that the philosophy and attitude part of it [inclusion] is not something that is nurtured or cultivated beyond compliance.

I3 - FGP3: Yes, I would say that is very true and then it is very easy to get into the group think of woe is me because I have six ESE kids and the next person, “oh, I have got nine, oh how do you do it?”, so just the whole paradigm of having an ESE kid is more work and a bad thing is pretty standard. Not too many people that are gen ed teachers would say that they are happy to be the one to have...

RESEARCHER: So although it is widely accepted that the expectation is for inclusion, the view as far as teachers embracing inclusion, their attitudes are definitely not favorable.

I3 - FGP3: Sure, I would say that they agree with the concept of it absolutely but their attitudes are not favorable because they feel as if it is either an impossible task or a task that will require a lot more work versus the alternative, without any sort of extra compensation.

RESEARCHER: Part of this question we touched on in the larger group and this is the last question: What could your organization do, or do better, to cultivate and strengthen that systemwide culture of inclusion?

I3 - FGP3: I definitely think more training and education and I think we mentioned before allowing people to see a successful model of conclusion, whether it be videos or whether it be trips, just that it doesn't have to be something so drastically different to include kids in your class and that it can still be an effective academically rigorous class. I think something there are some teachers that will have students in and they don't do anything different. They refuse to do anything different. It is every kid is exactly the same. They are getting that and then there are the other kinds that have the ESE students come in and they think that they helping but they won't even include them in some of the whole group task. They will just put them on, you know, go to the computer and do [a proprietary reading software program]. Go to the computer and do this. They won't even give them a chance to actually... and again, they are doing it with the thought that they are helping but not even... So I guess there are just people that don't have the knowledge to know how to do it. They know they have to do inclusion but they don't have the knowledge of how to make it effective.

RESEARCHER: How often do you use your logic to try to influence that? Do you think that is something that could be built in to professional development that is offered throughout the district?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, I think it could be and I definitely think too that economics are at play in terms of who gets drawn into the profession when you need an advanced degree. I don't know if too many other jobs like this, that we don't require an advanced degree in Florida, but I mean the pay versus the educational level attained does not always yield a work force that one would hope I guess. Not to sound too judgmental but I guess I did.

RESEARCHER: Are you saying the concern is about the quality of instruction and the quality of the teachers based on their preparedness?

I3 - FGP3: Yes, based on their preparedness and based on their...yes, their level of academic achievement in their own careers and they ability to actually teach 4th and 5th grade material. I don't know if you would be surprised but I have been surprised how many teachers in elementary schools that teach 4th and 5th grade actually can't do 4th and 5th grade work so I think the teacher preparedness there, the tests that we give to make sure people are ready to teach... I didn't take them in [current state] but sometimes it is shocking. So I guess from an inclusion perspective, it is difficult to think that somebody is going to be able effectively include somebody and accommodate that level of diversity in their class and then make decisions at a higher level of thinking about how best to help this kid. If they can't even do the lesson they are trying to teach, then how are they going to effectively...

RESEARCHER: Sure, I am following you 100%.

I3 - FGP3: I think that again just comes down to the economics of who becomes a teacher sometimes and if you are going to go to school for four years and make this amount or this amount, a lot of people or the higher achievers or the higher SAT scores, however you want to slice it, don't choose teaching.

RESEARCHER: Interesting. All right, any other parting words that you want to say? As I stated at the beginning, the purpose behind this study is to figure out what goes into the making of inclusion. It doesn't just happen. It is about things that you do in the classroom to engineer the environment for success, and it is part personal stance and value system, as well as culture. We could provide professional development for teachers all day long in terms of great strategies and scaffolding, but if that teacher does not really believe that a student with a disability "belongs" in their classroom and really should be someplace else, what will the fidelity of implementation of those strategies really going to look like? How do we help teachers when they are willing but maybe fearful because they don't feel prepared?

I3 - FGP3: Right and I guess again it is difficult for teachers. We tend to look at our class and our year. So a first period teacher you are looking at your group of 1st graders this year and the next year I mean you see the kids you had last year, "hey, how are you doing", but then your mind is all on this so you don't really have that longitudinal look whatever you would say, of a student as they go through their journey through school. We are always focused on the one year

that we are involved in so maybe if there was a way to have some more...I don't know if there are case studies on students who some more of a longitudinal look at this student that was in a successful inclusion model with the same sort of challenges as this student who wasn't, and then showing how the outcome at the end can be so drastically different.

RESEARCHER: So showing that trajectory.

I3 - FGP3: Yes, and getting the big picture of not just the one year but of their 12 or 13 years – this can be the outcome of this student in 2nd grade that had the same challenges as this one that wasn't given.

RESEARCHER: Right, so maybe looking at some case studies and building those experiences in. I think people do want to see it. I think that is why you have been successful is because you are willing to get in and just do it along with them, with them being able to see you model. Having another person doing it along with them is really important. I think many teachers are legitimately concerned that a student who has any kind of special need is going to be placed in their class and they [the teacher] are not going to know what to do and they [the students] are not going to get enough support.

I3 - FGP3: Yes, fear of the unknown. I think if they can see some successful outcomes and they can realize that they can be a part of that, maybe that would open some minds a little bit.

RESEARCHER: Well, that is our last question.

I3 - FGP3: OK, great. I hope I gave some satisfactory responses.

RESEARCHER: You have and it's been a pleasure to meet you and talk to you. I hope you stick around a while.

I3 - FGP3: I am definitely sticking around. I am going nowhere.

Interview Transcript: I1 – FCP1 (Interviewee 2 – Focus Group Participant 1)

RESEARCHER: The purpose of the study is to gain insight from teachers who are in the field, and are embracing and embodying inclusive dispositions for instance, inclusive practices, an inclusive stance, inclusive values and inclusive culture. Some of the questions will be similar to the focus group questions with a more personal look into what influenced your philosophy of inclusion, in the interest of replicating some of these experiences through professional learning opportunities, as well as other means, that might invite teachers to change their belief systems to be more inclusive.

I2 - FGP1: It is sad, and it is changing how we think.

RESEARCHER: We find ourselves having to change people's belief systems on company time and we really need teachers to come prepared with those values. The information that is gathered in this study could be used in teacher preparation programs and in-service programs too. The question is, other than stand here and admire the problem, what can we do to...

I2 - FGP1: Start the revolution.

RESEARCHER: You might say...let me pull up the questions. So the first question is: How have your views and opinions on inclusion been influenced by personal experience? This can be as much as you are willing to share about anything that has happened in your life outside of your professional experience, in your professional experience, your

educational experience, your teach preparation program, any courses you have had in special education, colleagues, social experience or whatever you feel open to sharing.

I2 - FGP1: You know I am an educational major. I have a degree in English Lit. I studied abroad. I took over mid-year and then I had to go back to get my educational certificate for XXX. I will be honest, those classes did absolutely nothing for me. All this stuff about “let me videotape you” and how to make you a good teacher, I didn’t think they were preparing me to be a teacher. Of course, I was already in the classroom. I already had issues. The good thing is that I knew my content and really I just drew a line in the sand and moved on. I am very straightforward person. My mother was a very moral person herself. She was a teacher. You know, we do things this way. There is no hinky business – nothing. I remember one of my ESE students dropped his pants and he goes, “what do you think of this?”. I said, “of what?”.

XXXXXX XXXXXXX was a dean at my school at XXXXXXXX [former school] and he took the call. The little pressing of the call button. “Mr. XXXXXXX I need you in my classroom”. “Why Miss XXXX?”. I was Miss XXXX then. I said someone has dropped their pants. And he goes, “XXXXX?”. I said, “Yes”. He goes, “Completely?”. “Completely”. I am on my way. His dad was a deputy. So that was fun. It was funny and you just move forward. No one is going to prepare you for that. He was having a bad day and we move on but I had some difficult kids. The classes at XXX [local university] did not talk about inclusion. They did talk about equality versus equity and that has stuck in my head. I believe it is not equality, it is the equity. Every student has to have equity. When I explained that to my seniors why some of my kids are doing certain things, because I don’t ostracize anyone, it is all equitable and then they learn that word. To them equitable now means fair. So that was an important thing. XXXXXXXXX [former

school] did prepare me. They had a lot of kids out. I remember getting kids who were brain injured and they would put them in me at that time. I was out of English and I was in to ESOL. It was really hard having ESOL kids who had the brain injuries. It was very difficult. I had a hearing impaired student and he signed in Spanish. I know a few phrases but they are in English. I didn't realize that the signing would be different. I did not understand that.

That was more part of my education. By the time I left XXXXXXXX to open up XXXXXXXX, when they asked, "you know, [refers to self by name] we have really good things about you, would you mind a few ESE students?". "Oh no, no problem". Really I didn't. I am always open. I was more resistant, I am leaving English to do ESOL, "what do I know about that?" because I had to get my ESOL endorsement too. For me it was an easy transition. It did not bother me at all because at least the kids spoke the same language.

RESEARCHER: What was your motivation to get the ESOL endorsement?

I2 - FGP1: Well, it was either get the ESOL endorsement or I lost my job.

RESEARCHER: Is that the 60 hours?

I2 - FGP1: No, it is the 360 hours.

RESEARCHER: So you had to have that because...

I2 - FGP1: It was the first RIF of my career and I had been four years in English, myself and XXXXXX XXXXX. We were low man on the totem pole. If we wanted our jobs we had to get the endorsement so that took 2 ½ years to do.

RESEARCHER: Yes, that is commitment.

I2 - FGP1: So we did that and it was very good. The county paid for it. I have no problems with that. They did a good job.

RESEARCHER: So that made you a more viable candidate for employment being that there was a reduction in force?

I2 - FGP1: I believe so. We didn't have any ESE classes but any time we had any in-service I would always take it. I always thought it was interesting. I noticed that some of the ESOL strategies, now ELL, they kind of go for ESE. Some of the ESE, your universal design, those strategies don't just apply to kids with special needs, it applies to anyone: an AP course, an honors class, regular class, agriculture. That is what people don't understand. I have been one of your greatest cheerleaders on campus and XXXXXX XXXXX laughs. She goes, "You know XXXX don't you?". I said, "I did but I didn't realize that was her course till I heard you speak". I said, "I know her". I think if we can get the teachers to buy into that they will be more amenable to the idea.

RESEARCHER: Yes, I think so too. I think if they learn what is in it for them, that there is a payoff in there in terms of better engagement from their students and better outcomes.

Did you say that you learned sign language?

I2 - FGP1: I know a little. Just a very little.

RESEARCHER: What motivated you to...?

I2 - FGP1: They offered the class at XXXXXXXX and I knew the teacher so she taught me all the curse words and a few nice things. (laughter). Isn't that the first thing we learn in a language? (laughter).

RESEARCHER: Yes, that is always the fun part. So you learned it when a course was offered?

I2 - FGP1: Yes, it was fun. Just a little. I certainly know the whole alphabet but it is really tedious to try to do the whole alphabet but at least I would surprise some of my kids. They would start going really fast...I said, "no I can't do that".

RESEARCHER: In your professional experience, any motivations or influences in particular, a teacher that had a big influence on you or...?

I2 - FGP1: In [former school] it was guidance. [former school] it was when [former colleague] left and came back and she was an ESE so I got really close to her. When I came over to [current school] under XXXXXXX [former administrator] we had one behavioral specialist but then I met XXXXXXX and got to know her. , she, was my co-teacher. I really got to know several of the ESE teachers and whenever they had problems word got around. I think XXXXXXX started it, “ya, put them in XXXXXXX’X class, she will do fine”. They did not have co-taught classes in the 11th and 12th grade because I was thrilled. I thought, “oh gosh, XXXXXXX and I are going to be together again” and XXXXXXX goes, “it doesn’t go above 10th grade”. I just went, “oh, I am not keeping 10th grade – not for that”.

RESEARCHER: So your teacher preparation; you said you didn’t feel like those courses really prepared you to be a teacher but...

I2 - FGP1: It [alternative certification] is like a minor. It is a minor in education. They give you the terminology but I was already doing it - all the best teaching practices. I really had really great teachers at XXXXXXX [former school]. It was different back then. They really took me under their wing. They showed me not only the length of lessons, how to write unit plans, the behavioral objectives that we used to have that were hideous and the student will. I mean, little things like how to do the mimeograph machine, how to make your own copies and how to go to the library and schedule time to do your research paper. Little nitty gritty stuff that some of the teachers now ask me to do, which I think is funny. So that doesn’t change but they were very open and they would go, “here XXXXXXX, here are lesson plans, take what you need and make it work for you”.

RESEARCHER: There was a team there. Was that where you first started?

I2 - FGP1: It was.

RESEARCHER: So that was a great place to start.

I2 - FGP1: It was the best kept little secret in XXXXXXXXX [former school]. I loved XXXXX
XXXXX [former administrator]. I loved XXXX XXXXXXX [former administrator].

RESEARCHER: There is always someone.

I2 - FGP1: Then I had a wonderful opportunity to continue to work with XXXX XXXXXXX
[former administrator] over at XXXXXXX [former school] . The only reason I left XXXXXXX
was it was too far from my house and it is an opportunity to work pretty much in my community.

RESEARCHER: Any special education courses in that teacher preparation at all?

I2 - FGP1: No, they didn't offer anything.

RESEARCHER: So not even the compliance or...?

I2 - FGP1: Nothing.

RESEARCHER: They didn't even give you a clue?

I2 - FGP1: No, nothing. The paperwork back then was different. For the brain injured kids, they were treated differently. They were in a special class, self-contained. They were ESOL – they were pulled out. I didn't have them all in one class. They were pulled out different periods depending on their level of need and sometimes they would have someone else come to them because it was not so much the language barrier, it was more their brain injury.

RESEARCHER: Anything else you would like to share from your personal life? Is there a person with a disability in your family...?

I2 - FGP1: No.

RESEARCHER: Or maybe a friend that you knew or...?

I2 - FGP1: No.

RESEARCHER: OK, just checking.

I2 - FGP1: I am one of those people when you see a person who is struggling, whether it is old, young or in a wheelchair, "can I help you with this?" or "you dropped your bag" – I was taught you help them.

RESEARCHER: You said your mother was a very moral person so that is probably where some of that influence came from...how about leadership? Any school principal or other leader that had a huge influence?

I2 - FGP1: Principal XXXX XXXXXX made me the teacher I am today. I will say that.

RESEARCHER: And he was at XXXXXXXX [former school]?

I2 - FGP1: Yes. He was there for 10 years. You don't have those too often.

RESEARCHER: Right, not any more.

I2 - FGP1: No.

RESEARCHER: What was it about him that...?

I2 - FGP1: He barked at a lot of people but at the end of the day he cared about the students and he wanted everybody to do their job. If you could just do your job everybody could get along. I have no issues doing my job.

RESEARCHER: The next question is about inclusive practices, and when we operationalize that definition, it is all about attitudes, accommodations, adaptations and

instructional practice that happen in the classroom to restructure the environment to meet the needs of all students. Why do you support those practices?

I2 - FGP1: It is for the student. It is not watering down your curriculum. You hear that from a lot of people that don't understand that inclusion actually is and they think, "I have to extra work and I have to change what I am teaching". No, actually you don't – you just have to make it comprehensible for that student. So if you know a student does not like to work in groups and it irritates them, try then not to put them in groups. My visually impaired student...I mean it is common sense.

RESEARCHER: Radical idea.

I2 - FGP1: I know really. Visually impaired – put them towards the front and use the larger font. Sometimes I see this little itty bitty thing, it is like I am standing at the back of the room and I can't see that, so come on, let's make it a little bit larger. Hearing impaired students – always make sure – before we had the rows - so they would always be facing me anyway. Now I am in pods and I have to be very cognizant of the fact that my hearing impaired students must be able to see my face most of the time. So when I am doing a test I make sure I turn to them and they can see my face and then I move around the room so that is OK. Little things that to me are second nature and I know for others aren't but that also comes with practice. It comes with reading and it comes with talking to ESE teachers and seeing what works for a kid. Sometimes a kid on his IEP he has extra time but they have to ask for it. I have a little girl who is so shy she never asks for anything. I go up to her, "sweetheart, do you need a little extra time?". "Yes,

Miss please”. She whispers. Hardly anyone can hear her in the class. Am I going to single her out? No. This is what is best for her. She is a good kid.

RESEARCHER: There are things that come very naturally to some, that don’t come naturally to other people...what we can learn or figure out from what motivates you and what motivates other people, to see how we can influence or help to motivate other people?

I2 - FGP1: I was appalled about what XXXXXXXX [focus group participant] said [in the focus group]. XXXXXXXX said that the teachers when they have the pullout program and they think that those kids aren’t theirs and that they are his and they don’t have ownership. I just don’t understand that. My daughter’s first job in XXXXXXXX County, she goes, “mom, I am the dumping ground – everybody dumps all their kids that can’t be managed and all the kids that can’t learn and I get them to read”. She is a reading teacher. Now she is in XXXXXXXX [another county]. She goes, “what is wrong with these people?”, because she has been brought up the same way. She had me as a mom and she had my mom as her gram and you include everyone. So if you are blind you can’t talk about how beautiful the day is, no you experience it through other means and so kids don’t always understand that. It does start with the children. I liked what XXX said [in the focus group]: the little ripple effect. What will these kids be like as adults and then their children and so forth? That is not to say that some old dogs can’t learn new tricks. I think part of being a good teacher is to be flexible. You learn. You roll with it. You might have a great lesson. All technology goes. What are you going to do? Take out paper and pencil and, “hey, this is what we are going to do today”.

RESEARCHER: The first thing you said was that it seemed like a no-brainer to you because it is for the students. It is for the students. It is why you are there. I hear you talking about XXXX XXXXXX [former Principal] and about how he just wanted people to do their job. The next question is about inclusive stance and that is a belief in equity for all students. You talked about equity versus equality. The belief in education for all children. A personal stance that tends to question disability labeling and ability leveling and not look on those practices as such a positive thing or a beneficial thing for students. What motivates you or what do you think influenced that viewpoint...that stance?

I2 - FGP1: I just don't like labels. I don't like saying "you are gifted". I don't like saying that "you are learning disabled". How are you learning disabled? You may have some challenges on how you process things but I don't think it is a disability. Now I understand you have the disabilities act. I know what some of these people have suffered through. People who continue to park in a handicapped space and they are able-bodied, all of that and I understand that. I think when we slap a label on someone we have already pigeonholed them and we have moved on. OK, he is ESE and that is a 504 and that is a gifted student. They are not looking at the whole student. What is your family like? What have you done in school? What do you like to do for fun? Everything that makes up that whole person. Maybe they have had a horrible childhood and then here is another person who is going to add to the horribleness of that experience. I don't want to be that teacher. I want to be the teacher that makes a difference – a positive impact – because teachers have a lot of power and we can do both good and harm. I don't like the harmful part.

RESEARCHER: Then that has been your experience...?

I2 - FGP1: That has.

RESEARCHER: That those labels are very limiting? We tend to think that those labels are going to mean that they get all kinds of services...but are you saying they can be more limiting than they are empowering?

I2 - FGP1: I believe so.

RESEARCHER: That has just been your experience?

I2 - FGP1: It has.

RESEARCHER: Did you think that at first?

I2 - FGP1: No I didn't. It is like, OK so they are telling me he is ESE for whatever reason and I have to do these certain things. The accommodations were a little bit different when I started doing this 28 years ago but you knew that there were certain steps you had to follow. For the brain injury you had a thing from the doctor and certain things that I had to follow first. An epileptic child who I had to make sure with the lights or if there is fire drill. I has Asperger child. I have to do the same thing with him now. I tell him to take off your hearing aid. As soon as I hear that first beep and he is in my class, take off your hearing aid. He knows. He will just

put it in my hand, I put it in my pocket and we walk out together. One of our clerks she is epileptic and when those lights go off someone has to help her because she has passed out and then had a seizure. It is not just kids. It is adults too. So everybody on staff knows about that. So we do that. No flashing things and when you are getting e-mails and what not on your phone, that can set some kids off, the lights.

RESEARCHER: I know. It is true. When you have epilepsy the world is a dangerous place.

I2 - FGP1: No, it is like some people don't like...I can hear the hum of the fluorescents. I have gotten used to it but at first like when they put in a new bulb it is annoying to me. The kids will be looking at me, "Miss, what do you hear with your bad ears?". It is like, "It is the light bulb". So I turn them off. It is always dimmer and so when it is a new one we will turn it off and then we will open up the blinds and what not and I will ask the kids, "Is this OK?". "Yes Miss". It is only for a day because it only takes about a day for it to acclimate and then we are good. It is annoying. It is like a mosquito buzzing in my ear.

RESEARCHER: I know the sound that you are talking about. So do you turn all the lights off?

I2 - FGP1: I do.

RESEARCHER: The next question is about inclusive values...having that a personal value system that regards difference and diversity as a natural part of the human condition and as a strength, and that situates access to a quality public education as a social justice and civil rights imperative. So why do you hold inclusive values? What or who has influenced you in that regard?

I2 - FGP1: It is the right thing to do. I am a migrant. I came from Cuba when I was 3 in 1967 and I tell my students that I didn't swim. I went first class TWA and I remember puking in the little flight bag and they laughed. They go, "Miss, you didn't come in a raft?". "No I didn't". I said, "I will tell you why", which brings up this whole thing with amnesty and what no. I said, "My grandparents had a Spanish passport so we were able to come on that". They just looked at me and I said, "When you start putting labels on people you make them less than what they are, like saying all Hispanics...that just means that you speak a language. We are not all the same people. We don't have the same ancestry". I know that African-Americans here are very proud of that but how far are they removed from that and that experience? Some of the experiences that my students from South America have had – when I met them in ESOL – that was rough. We thought Castro was bad. Some of the things that those people suffered are just unbelievable. I learned a lot about the problems in former Yugoslavia when I had Bosnian and Serbian students.

RESEARCHER: I know, it gives me goose bumps.

I2 - FGP1: Nobody told me.

RESEARCHER: Yes, it is unbelievable.

I2 - FGP1: I would have kids from the same village from different viewpoints. That was rough. The good thing is I had those kids for two years. After two years we understood each other. We were making gains in the classroom and gains on tests but that was rough.

RESEARCHER: That is amazing. Those differences, those disputes are ancient.

I2 - FGP1: I follow some of those kids. They follow me. They talk to me. One became a teacher. He teaches social studies at XXXXXXXX[another school] . The thing is that his wife is a math teacher. It was nice because I kept those e-mails. They are teachers because of me. They go, “We wanted to do what you did for us”. So that really meant a lot to me. That sense of all peoples, they have rights and we can’t step on everybody. There is room for everything and everyone and not everybody thinks that.

RESEARCHER: That is true.

I2 - FGP1: I am a Christian but I have been taught tolerance. There are many ways to look at things but at the end of the day we are human beings and we were all told to love one another and treat everybody the same with equity, kindness and compassion.

RESEARCHER: It is a good philosophy.

I2 - FGP1: Today one of my students in my honors class, XXX XXXXXXX [current student], she has had a lot of issues. She is a cheerleader. She is popular. She is a little brain. I don't know what I said. She goes, "Thanks mom". I didn't blink, "You are welcome, sweetie" and I moved on. She is black. Then one of her little friends goes, "Miss, she just called you mom". I said, "Yes, I can be y'all's mom as long as you are 28 and under you can be my child. If you are older than that – not so much". And they go, "We can call you mom?". "Sure, whatever rocks your boat". "It doesn't offend you?". "Absolutely not". When I was at XXXXXXXXXX [former school] I would have those kids hugging on me all the time. Back then there were still some facial tensions and I remember XXXX [former Assistant Principal] going, "Are you OK?". I said, "Yes, I am OK". "They are calling you mom". I said, "I have no problem with that – I love them all. You think that when I look in my classroom that I see color, that I see a country and that I see certain things – I don't because that was how I was raised". That is all my mom's influence, truly, that is how she was. I can't say that about every single member of my family. Some of her siblings were a little more what I would call racist, I mean they are, but not my mom. One of her first jobs was at XXXXXXXXXX [local school]. Her first job was at XXXXXXXXXX [local school] when she came here to this country and then she worked on her Master's, even though she had two other doctorates, and then she went to [local middle school] for many, many years. My mom was colorblind, truly. She practiced what she preached. My husband goes, "All these kids, they don't think they realize that you are white". And I said, "And I don't care". I am not a white teacher. I am a teacher that cares about them. Now, if we can just do that for others. Not everyone does.

RESEARCHER: What do you think influenced your mom?

I2 - FGP1: Probably my grandparents, her mom who was a teacher. She got her degree later. She got married at 16, started having babies at 18, had 5 of them and then she went back to school at that time to become a teacher with 5 little kids.

RESEARCHER: That is amazing. Thank you for sharing that. So the next question is about inclusive culture. What drives you to actively cultivate and promote inclusive culture? That is a climate that is collaborative and one that is both fostered by and optimal for you to act as an agent of change through educating, coaching, mentoring and helping other teachers. What do you think drives you to do that?

I2 - FGP1: When I started at XXXXXXXXX [former school] I was included in many things even though I was a new kid on the block. I didn't have special needs except I needed everybody's help to get me through the day until I got some experience. They all had kids in their classes – that was before ESOL's were pulled out – and they could share those experiences with me. I don't think I have ever had a colleague that I have respected {that is the key) that I have respected who has ever been non-inclusive. They have all shown me how you can include everyone regardless of gender, abilities and whether those abilities be physical or mental. I have not experienced that personally, but then I tend to surround myself with good people. If I find that I am in a group and all they do is complain about their students. Everybody is going to have a bad day. I complain myself to my husband, whatever. That is one or two days out of the whole 180. When you hear teachers just ranting and raving every single day at lunch – I stay in

my room now. XXXXX XXXXXXXXX [former colleague] and I were eating lunch together until she left. I stay with people that are like-minded. I want to be a positive change. Bitching about something is not going to fix it. I want – give me some solutions: What can I do? I help teachers. I am no longer doing ESOL but I help other teachers who ask me. I have taught the courses. I can help you. You also have to want to change and to want to be better for your students. Not everyone does.

RESEARCHER: You talked about your first experience where you came into a culture where the teachers just said “we are here to help you”. So did that become your exemplar for the culture?

I2 - FGP1: Pretty much. We didn't have that quite at XXXXXXXXX [former school] . I think it is because we were pulling for so many places. At XXXXXXXXX [former school] it was a very stable faculty until you either a) retired or ...we had [former colleague]...so really no one had really moved in about 15 years except for the retirements. It was difficult to get a job at XXXXXXXXX. People used to go, “You work at XXXXXXXXX?” and I would go, “Yes, and I love it”. They thought is “Is that all you can get?”. It is like, “No, you don't understand – this is where I want to be”. It was great and I would have happily retired from there but God works in mysterious ways. I loved XXXXXXXXX [former school]. I learned different things from XXXXXXXXX [former school]and I got to meet XXXXXXX, XXXXX and XXX [former colleagues]. It was a whole different other set of wonderful people. Then I brought that over to XXXX XXXXX [current school]. XXXX XXXXX [current school] has been a challenge. I don't know if you know, I am sure you do – you are in the district, we have a high turnover rate.

It used to be you would lose a few teachers, maybe 5-10 per year, and you were doing well because people get married, they go different places and they want to try new things but this is ridiculous. It is like jumping ship. No one wants to put in the hard work because it is hard work.

RESEARCHER: It is hard work.

I2 - FGP1: You know in that community specifically is difficult. If you don't understand them they get very frustrated. People look down when they say, "Oh, you are working at [derogatory name for local high school] High". I said, "No I am not, I am working at [current school] High". It is one thing when the kids themselves knock it and they go, "Oh, we are just a redneck". I said, "Yes, but you are a smart redneck". We tease back and forth and they allow me to say that because we have a rapport. I would never say that in front of their parents or what not. They think that because of their lifestyle and that they do ranching or they do farming that they are stupid. They are not. We need those people in our society. They grow our food. The agriculture program that Samantha Dodge has – it is magnificent. People think, "Oh, it is just cows in a barn". No it is not – it is so much more.

RESEARCHER: There is a whole science behind it.

I2 - FGP1: It is so much more. Now we have got construction and I am always thanking the new teacher. They have built beautiful walkways out in the back. Some of my honor students are there. I said, "Oh, I saw you really swinging that shovel – good job" and they are in band. They don't see us as a whole school. It is almost like we are a laughingstock of the district.

RESEARCHER: You think so?

I2 - FGP1: When I talk to some of my friends, “You are still at [current school]? Why don’t you go somewhere else? Why don’t you go to [another district high school] or why don’t you go...? I know they would take you [another district high school]”. It is like, “I don’t want to go there – I am happy where I am at”.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel like that culture is...I know you said there is a lot of turnover but...

I2 - FGP1: I think that part of that is some of the people that are there that came from either [another district high school] or [another district high school] because those were the feeder schools. They got first dibs. I get angry and the kids know it. They will wear a shirt from [another district high school] or something blue from [another district high school]. It is like, really you see me I wear [a school shirt] red all the time, every single Friday. If I can’t wear my school polo I wear red or I wear grey. They go, “Miss, we know – we do this to mess with you”. I said, “You have no school pride”. You can’t have the kids wanting to have school pride and spirit when the faculty members don’t either. You are not, as you say, buying in – they are opting out. I hate that opting out word, truly. So for little things like that – imagine for the bigger things.

RESEARCHER: So you say so you feel what drives you, is the culture you came into in your first job, so given that you have gone to XXXXXXXX and that culture was not a strong as it was at XXXXXXXX and it certainly is not at XXXX XXXXX [current school] , what drives you to keep sustaining or trying or reaching out to other people?

I2 - FGP1: I want to make it a good experience for everybody. I think at XXXXXXXX all the teachers we sat together for the football games and for the basketball games. We would have barbecues before the games. We tried to do a little bit of that at XXXXXXXX. It didn't quite work out I think how people wanted and I guess a lot of the teachers from XXXXXXXX XXXXX [another district high school] were very bonded and they had some interesting ideas but it just didn't click. XXX XXXXXXXX [former colleague] was at XXXXXXXX and he is with me now too.

I was one of his references. He just shakes his head sometimes. He goes it doesn't matter where I go. It is the same type of deal. Certain people who do everything so who is going to do the bake sale? Who is going to do this for the potluck? Do you want to have a potluck? It is only the same little people. It is not enough. At XXXXXXXX, even though you had a core group, everybody participated. You would be noted if you didn't participate.

RESEARCHER: By whom? By the leadership?

I2 - FGP1: XXXX [former Assistant Principal, yes. XXXX yes. It wasn't that they would single you out but they would pull you aside and say, "Hey, you are not going to the games" or "Hey, what can we do to get you more involved in school activities?". They dumped me into

coaching. I was the AFS sponsor and it is like I didn't even know I was going to sponsor it and XXXX XXXX [former school administrator] goes, "Yes, your name is on the list". "But, but...". "No, you can do this – I know you can do this – you played soccer in high school – you can do this". Oh my gosh, you know, I was in the middle of a divorce and I had a 2 ½-year-old. "You can do this". Was I going to tell him no? I had known him since I was 3.

RESEARCHER: Because you didn't think you could opt out?

I2 - FGP1: No. I didn't understand opting out. You know what – they didn't give you the option to opt out.

RESEARCHER: I am with you...I didn't know anybody who was allowed to push back until I saw people pushing back.

I2 - FGP1: Now the new teachers they are very entitled – "I don't want to be teaching them, then I want AP and I want this". It is like, really, you should be so thankful you have a job. You should be so thankful you have a job and that you can work with any child. I think it makes you a better teacher when you can work with anyone.

RESEARCHER: Yes, that is right.

I2 - FGP1: I go into all these classes because senior teachers we get pulled at the end to go, maybe not this year but last year, we pulled into subbing and the kids would be, "No, no, no you

are just a sub”. “Oh no, I am not just a sub – I am a teacher on staff here and you are not going to...”. “But my teacher...”. “I don’t care what your teacher does. This is what we are going to do. Open your books. You are going to do the lesson absolutely”. They were better for me than they were for them but you have got to set boundaries and people aren’t doing that and following through: It is great- ya do whatever you want, be on your phone and talk – no, that is a waste of time. I hate to be out but when I am out I leave stuff and my kids know you are accountable. I think too many of us don’t want to be accountable so if we don’t, how are we going to get our students to do that?

RESEARCHER: So the bottom line is you feel like that inclusive culture makes it good for everybody?

I2 - FGP1: I think so, yes, as long as it is very clear you should do this with a good heart, good intention and don’t look like you are getting a root canal at the dentist’s office. At the end of the day the kids all know and then you are not doing anybody any favors. I don’t like that. I don’t like, “I have to be here”, like the teachers when I was teaching the ESOL courses, “I have to be here – why am I here?”. Because the state said so and the **Meta** consent said so, so be quiet and let’s move on. That is when I figured out that I don’t want to teach adults.

RESEARCHER: Right, so the fact that you maintain this very positive outlook in the face of resistance, and despite there being people who don’t step up and are allowed to “opt out” as you said...where does this internal accountability come from...?

I2 - FGP1: Again, it goes back to how you were raised. You know not to steal. You know not to do this. I mean, it just would go against my grain not to help someone so when they ask, “Can we put in one more? – Sure why not”. What am I going to say? No? Then they are going to go somewhere else and they are not going to be welcomed.

RESEARCHER: Good motivation. The next question is how do you respond to resistance? We talked a little bit about it in the focus group but could you elaborate on how you respond when you encounter resistance to inclusion? This could be a specific experience or more general, but what are some of the things that you do to try to break through when you see resistance to inclusive practices?

I2 - FGP1: Well, I have shared with XXXXXX [staffing specialist at current school] and with small faculty because they didn't come to our in-service about how easy it really is to do stuff and how easy it is to fill out the 504's. I just keep them on my desk and check, check, check and that is it. Every now and then I will write a little note. XXXXX XXXXXXXXXX [colleague at current school] goes, “You are the only one that does that”. I said, “Yes, but that is to remind me what that student was doing”. Sometimes I put talkative and I will put he is absent, you know, great I can remember. Looking at the dates I will know what he did and what he didn't do and that is always in my progress book. That is simple enough to do. Part of that is organization. Teachers I think feel overwhelmed with everything because they are not organized. That is not just an adult thing. Kids have problems with organization. I know that they work very well in my classroom because I am very structured. We have a notebook in my class. I check it periodically. There are certain things that have to be in, in a certain order, and I can always tell a

kid turn to this page in your notebook and you should have it. “Are you sure?”. “I am sure if you have been filing like I told you to”. And sure enough, there it is. So a lot of my parents thank me for that because I am one of the few teachers that use notebooks in high school but it helps keep you organized. I am teaching you a skill. Maybe when you are in college you don’t necessarily need a binder notebook but you can create one on your computer and you learn this system of filing and putting things in their place. If you put things in their place they are easy to access, whether it is a study to pull out your notes or to write a paper, it is all there. Again, that is from my mom. Of course, I am way more organized than she ever was but still, she is the one that planted the seed, absolutely.

RESEARCHER: So showing people what is possible and then how it is possible?

I2 - FGP1: And how it is done because I like the modeling. When I do a good lesson I want to share that with someone. With my new teachers when I was department chair I had different binders to show them how it was done when we did B’s and you had to keep all those binders and portfolios. They would take mine and “Can we copy yours?” “Sure, why not”. I had little tabs so when an administrator would ask me something, let me flip, and they were all colored and coordinated but that is just me.

RESEARCHER: You are willing to share.

I2 - FGP1: I am willing to share and I have taught it and the thing is, once you teach it you can tweak it and make it your own. Then you will use it and then you can share it with someone else. You can pass that forward.

RESEARCHER: And it starts to cultivate that culture.

I2 - FGP1: That is correct.

RESEARCHER: How do you respond when you encounter resistance to your inclusive stance? Meaning your view that labels are maybe not beneficial and how you kind of work around them rather than focus on them.

I2 - FGP1: I have always said, you guys if you have never had an ESE student in your class then you don't know what you are missing. It makes you a better teacher. It really does. It also helps your students be better students because they get to see you working with everyone. It is real easy to say something or say that you do something but unless you are actually doing it... do you know what I mean? People who just have a lot of lip service for whatever cause they have but they don't actually do it. I believe in doing it, whether you are little or you are older. It can work for anyone. I know some of my colleagues don't agree with me and they just go, "Oh, [refers to self by name] is on her soap box – go the other way". I know that. I know [current school staffing specialist] sometimes feels that way. [former colleague] when she was in ESE, a lot of the gen ed. teachers would look down on her. It was like, "You do realize she has an English degree as well?" Not that should make a difference. It was like, "They went to college.

They actually probably have more education than some of you people have and they have to work really hard to make learning games with some of those students". People think, "Oh, they are in a self-contained classroom and it is just babysitting". No it is not. I have been in their classrooms. I know what is going on and they are fantastic but not everybody feels that way. It is bad enough that it is teachers but parents who think, well you need to change my son's diaper and XXXXXX [former colleague] had a real hard time with the parent. She wanted to make the student self-sufficient and she was working on it. The parents said no. At the end of the day it what the parents say but why would you want your child not to be self-sufficient? Because it is easier for you? Is that why some parents delay training the little kids to use the bathroom? It is easy to slap on a Pampers and OK, you change it but you can sit in that for a while. I was really shocked when XXXXXX [former colleague] heard that with me. That was last year. We have some Down syndrome kids. They are delivering mail - Ian Lindsay. I taught his brother so he is very good with me in recognizing my face. He is in band. He is pretty much in every gen ed. class. I think he has a learning strategies class. He is higher functioning but there is no issue. The only thing you have to watch him for is he has some sexual problems. To function in the classroom you have to monitor him. I have been in classrooms where I am watching the class because the teacher is out and he is in it and I know that. He will forget about all those bad habits he has because he knows I taught his brother. He will get right in my space but there is a desk here so I don't have to worry about that but I have him engaged. Then we will do his work and it is OK because I have a rapport with him but people go, "Why isn't he in a special classroom?". But why? He is functioning in a gen ed. class.

RESEARCHER: So I guess that is what I am asking...how do you actively influence others? It sounds like you do a lot of testimonials.

I2 - FGP1: I do and XXXXXX [current school staffing specialist] is always throwing me under the bus. Go to [refers to self by name] class. Go do this. Go do that. XXXXXX [interviewee] go help so and so. You have to want to be able to change. Some of the newer teachers are not ready for that change but some of the ones that maybe have been out of school for 5 or 6 years and have been teaching a little bit, they are more open to change. I don't think they have the sense of entitlement that the new grads have so I think ICF is breeding better teachers, I mean you have more endorsements, the inclusion piece is there, but at the same time these people are coming out thinking somehow they are better than others. I am not sure if that is the generation because we are quite removed from them, if it is that or if it is something that the school is doing. I am not going to throw my alma mater under the bus but I do see even among my students a sense of entitlement. "I am this and you need to let me do...". "No. I am sorry, you are in SGA – you are the same as all my other peons". I mean, these are 17 and 18-year-olds. Or "I am an AP". Well, "Bully for you but you are not an AP now so this is what we are doing" or "You can't make me. No you are absolutely right, I cannot make you, but I am going to notate it on progress book so your mom can see it and shoot them an e-mail". "No Miss, it is OK, I will do it". Very rarely have I said that, and they know I will follow through, because you can look at the progress book, you know did a great project, did this, absent, not handed in... I do follow up on that. I love [the grading system software] because it allows me to make comments and then I can reflect back on it and the parents appreciate that. Sometimes I will make a special note and kids who owe me a book or they have attendance issues; that is where I document it on there. So

and so is in danger of not graduating. They have 30 absences in quarter two. We have 103 seniors who may not graduate.

RESEARCHER: Oh my goodness.

I2 - FGP1: I have 10 of those.

RESEARCHER: It is a lot of pressure. I know schools are feeling it now because they are looking at the transcripts, they are doing credit reviews and people are getting concerned.

I2 - FGP1: Yes.

It sounds like many opportunities for you to cultivate inclusive culture are as a result of those who know you and are aware of your inclusive stance, recommending that teachers who are struggling or questioning seek you out. For instance, your current school staffing specialist telling people “you need to go to see [interviewee]”. That is awesome that you have an open door. So how do you respond when you encounter resistance to inclusive values? To those values and a value system that views education as a social justice issue, and through a civil rights perspective.

I2 - FGP1: I try not to be combative and more like Mahatma Gandhi.

RESEARCHER: Sure.

I2 - FGP1: Not Malcolm X. Trying to take that approach and try to talk about the benefits and not only am I talking about it, I am usually bringing up some stories that I have. Sometimes we have similar students, you know those types of experiences, and see if that is not better. I do know that when people preach at teachers that nobody likes it so it is like, "Here let me show you what I am doing and look how easy this is". Maybe I can help you model a lesson. This is what so and so does in my class and how I get him to work". Sometimes you do have to do a little bribing with a student. A little piece of candy. Hey, you did your homework, here is a little reward. Whatever the kid may want. Maybe he plays a sport and he wants you to go to the game. You have to buy in to helping all students so sometimes those with our labels have a little bit more work to do and you have to be willing to do that but the rewards are just amazing. My little Asperger kid, people are amazed that he hugs me when he comes in to class and he hugs me when he leaves. My students just go hey...what do you want me to do? Sometimes they will go to the bathroom and I am standing at the podium and he will come and he will hug me. What am I going to do? Not hug him back.

RESEARCHER: It is amazing what students will do when they feel safe.

I2 - FGP1: So he is happy and he knows we can have a conversation. We read a lot of the same books because he is a [high achiever] and he is way up here but you know, we are working on his some of his social skills. I put him next to me and he is in a really good pod. We have had some heavy discussions. We had a meeting with him mom because in other classes he is having some issues and it is like, well XXXXXXXXX [student] you have to do this and he is

willing. The mom was amazed because I sat next to him and he was going around to everybody else talking and he goes, “Well, aren’t you going to let Mrs.XXXXX [interviewee] go?”. He goes, “No, I want her to be last so she will stay longer”. (laughter). It was cute. He was affectionate and I don’t think she was expecting that.

RESEARCHER: That was his mother, right?

I2 - FGP1: That was his mom and there was a lady from XXX [local university] and she was just like this... I don’t think she has ever seen him. He also likes XXXX XXXXXXXXXX [current colleague] and XXXX and I are very similar in temperament. So it is why I always go back. It is a tough love. I need you to be in class on time. I need you to be prepared. I need you to do the work but know that I really care about you. I will so get you when you have been absent and you have not done your work. “Miss, my gosh, you are just...”. “No, no, no – you have got to do the work”. Whoever you are.

RESEARCHER: Yes exactly. So try to not be too preachy?

I2 - FGP1: Yes, not to be too preachy.

RESEARCHER: Model help. Sometimes, when a teacher is on the edge, the power of just saying ‘how can I help?’ can be very disarming.

I2 - FGP1: Yes, what can I do to make this easier for you?

RESEARCHER: How can I help? I am sorry this is happening to you – how can I help? It is an amazing thing. All right, so what are your views and opinions on the success of inclusion in your public school system? To what do you attribute that success or lack thereof?

I2 - FGP1: I think some kids are having more success in certain classrooms because the material is easier for collaboration. For example, I think in social studies and in English, the language arts or a reading class, it is real easy to have centers to have discussions. It is more difficult in a math class because in math you are kind of responsible for your own learning. That is what some of the math teachers expect. I have not seen a real shift to making it a group thing. You have to be able to solve the problem. You have to show the work. They might start off in a big group and work into smaller groups but at the end of the day you are going to be tested and you are on your own. In science the same thing with the experiments. Sometimes that doesn't go well if you are doing a lab. I know there have been some issues with anatomy when you are cutting. That is a difficult environment for anyone and chemistry with the labs as well. I would like to see maybe if the budget would allow a smaller class. Maybe if you are going to have 5 ESE and 5 regulars so you have more one on one and you can maybe pair them up. I think by pairing you get a better product in my opinion. Again, certain teachers in different disciplines, they just don't want to be bothered. This is too difficult so we are just not going to do it.

RESEARCHER: Again, there is that concept of 'opting out'.

I2 - FGP1: That whole opting out. I do think certain disciplines, I imagine in choir and PE, could be more inclusive. I do think the coaches have high expectations for all their students. I know coach [current PE teacher] works with the ESE. He has a special class for them and he is doing wonderful things and he is very patient. The kids, whether it is when they are learning basketball, you can actually see that they are working. It is not just OK it is recess, just do whatever. There is structure there. I think that is the other hurdle that you have to understand. This is not a free for all. You really do have to teach. It is hard work and you have to take small steps.

RESEARCHER: Something that you mentioned before is that teachers get dumped on when they are willing to teach a diverse range of students. So regarding the success of inclusion in our public school system, do you feel that the message about inclusion is out there?

I2 - FGP1: No, they [teachers] can opt out. They are not going to buy in because they can opt out. We had no choice. We knew digital was coming. Everybody was going to have a device and we were all going to have to change how we taught. I have changed. I do half traditional and half digital. It is the truth. My students are really happy about that because they are getting the best of both. Some of my ESE kids hate their devices. They don't want to do it. They want pencil and paper so I provide paper for them and they have their own pens and pencils but I do have that at the back of the classroom too. It is easier for them to take notes and to actually have the physical. People didn't think that through. They will play games on their device but to actually sit and read text – they don't like it. I don't like reading on the computer either. I like my books. I do have a Kindle and it is a great thing when everybody is sleeping and I don't have

to turn on a light, but at the end of the day by the time I go to make a notation, I have forgotten what I was going to say. It is not simple. It is the same thing. People go, “[interviewee], you are so old-fashioned”. The CPT, when we were giving that at school, paper and pencil. The kids had a certain percentage. The year we went digital they went backwards because it does not allow you to go back. You have to answer the question and move forward. Now, when you have a paper and pencil test you can go frontwards and backwards and you can put a little mark on the test booklet and know that you have to come back. By the time you do that on the computer and you highlight and you do this you time is up because these are timed tests. So if this difficult for a regular student, how is it for our ESE students? They just look at me and they go, “Oh”. I said, “Ya, oh”. They just think it is because I don’t like technology. No, I have a smartphone. I see the benefits of technology but not to the exclusion of not having a book in your hand. My kids go, “Miss, we love your library”. I have shelves and shelves of books and they can check them out so Harry Potter meets Dragon. Those are my thing. It is all throughout my room. The kids made shields. It is very inviting. Can we read a book? When you are done absolutely. Would you like to check that out and take it home? We can take it home? Yes. My only thing is please don’t damage it or you will have to buy me a new book. OK, Miss. They will go through a series because I have a lot of series that the kids like to read, young adult books. I will recommend a book and they will like it. Can we read the next one? Absolutely. That is how I get them. So I have my own mini library, which is not really so many, but it is feeling the text. They know when they will bring me a book from home. Would you like to read this? Absolutely, and I will read the book because then I will go back and tell them this is what I thought and what do you think? You just can’t beat that experience.

RESEARCHER: I agree, you can't.

I2 - FGP1: Libraries pretty soon are going to be obsolete and it saddens me.

RESEARCHER: Yes, I thought it was interesting how you were saying, I had a degree in English Literature and now the focus is all on informational text and not even the beautiful literature that probably drew you into that in the first place.

I2 - FGP1: I know. In 12th grade I have had some fun. We are doing Macbeth right now and I really get into it. If it is dark and dreary and witches, and I point it all out, they go, "Miss, you were right, we never knew". It is fun. Literature is fun. I want to create a sense of loving to read and loving to learn. I am sorry, reading and informational text is not going to do it. What did we like as children? Dr. Seuss, Winnie the Pooh, Olivia, whatever... Nancy Drew.

RESEARCHER: You have to teach them to love reading first.

I2 - FGP1: And that will follow them later.

RESEARCHER: Would you say the success of students who are included in general education classrooms are the result of beneficial collaborative structures? Like you said in ELA in social studies...or do you feel the "success" is because of that basic compliance? In other words, the students are in general education, because students do have to be in the

LRE for the most part. But it's basic compliance, not in a spirit of inclusion, with people still pushing for restrictive placements?

I2 - FGP1: I think so. I think you could open it up a little bit more. I don't think you have as much inclusion let's say in arts. I am looking at our art department and I know some of the teachers and it is a wonderful art department but there is really not any room there for inclusion, no. I say that from their point of view and not from mine because that would be a wonderful place to let kids develop their sense of art. Is it going to be maybe what everybody else is doing? No, but there is so much potential. Really there is so much potential.

RESEARCHER: What do you think about new course codes that will be introduced, that will enable students with significant cognitive disabilities to have meaningful, inclusionary experiences in general education, with standards and assessments that are matched to their level of cognitive functioning? Right now, some students are included, but it is a token attempt at inclusion, meaning they are not scheduled or they are scheduled in the gen ed. course code and they have to meet all those requirements in theory but really no or very low expectations for participation and progress.

I2 - FGP1: I think that is a fantastic thing. We do a little bit of that at our school with PE. Really that is not enough. We have many things, I mean depending on the level of the student, maybe they could get involved and act. I see so many opportunities and so much potential but not everyone agrees. XXXXXX [current school staffing specialist] and I can bounce ideas off of

each other all day but how much will admin buy into it? Will only district allow the schools to do? Will they provide any money?

RESEARCHER: So administrative buy-in, you feel like that is of...?

I2 - FGP1: Yes, I think that is important.

RESEARCHER: I think you are right about that.

I2 - FGP1: With that administrative buy-in, if we are going to take this risk, because it is a risk, will the district provide extra funds? We may need to hire an extra teacher because I don't think XXXXXXXX XXXXXX [current colleague], who already has 40 kids in a class, can take on more. Could she get an assistant? Can she get a co-teacher? Something. What can we do to help facilitate that to make it actually happen? I really do like the program that they have at XXXXXXXX XXXXXX [another district high school]. I think that is a wonderful opportunity and I think that it would go at our school.

RESEARCHER: You know, it really takes that person to spearhead it. Who do you think would be able to do that at your school?

I2 - FGP1: If it wasn't full time I would like to do it. If it wasn't full time. XXXXXXXX [current school staffing specialist] might be better qualified to label some people. I don't necessarily think it needs to be an ESE teacher.

RESEARCHER: It could be really powerful if it wasn't.

I2 - FGP1: I think somebody who is a go-getter and somebody who is planning on staying because we have a lot of movement that should be able to do this program that cares about the kids.

RESEARCHER: So, looking at that administrative buy-in, what do you think people see as the risks?

I2 - FGP1: What if we fail? What if this doesn't work? What if a kid gets hurt if they are out in the barn or with an animal? That is a risk to any student but I imagine that they are thinking, well lawsuit. Parents. Will the parents allow this? I have learned that some parents aren't likeminded like I am but then I don't have a special child. In our family we do now. I don't think of him as special needs but he is. XXXXXX [nephew] has Down syndrome. He was born that way. He is a year old. I am more worried about his heart valves and all the surgeries that he has already had and all the surgeries that he still has to have. He is the most loving baby. I adore being with XXXXXX. He is my nephew. He is our newest addition. I have not been around in my family or friends with Down syndrome. It has been a new experience. When [niece] found out what was going on, there were family members, and I wasn't one of them, but even her own mom said you know you might want to think about terminating the pregnancy. She stopped all contact with her parents. She said this is my decision and this is what I am going to do. It does involve the family because eventually if something happens to her we all have to chip in. It was

very courageous of her to make that decision. We showed her all the literature. This is what you are going to have to do and this is what you are up against. She made that choice. [My husband] and I applaud her for it. I am Catholic so the idea of getting rid of a child....

RESEARCHER: Thank you for sharing that. To what do you attribute the extent of success or lack of success to, in regard to inclusion? When you shared in the focus group, that you were not aware of the school district communicating an imperative for inclusion, would you attribute a lack of success to inclusion being implemented in name only. We are supposed to include them but are the proper attitudes there? Are the supports there?

I2 - FGP1: I don't think that they are. I think the district may have sent this message out, but some of the principals opted in and some opted out and along with that culture that is what happened at the school. I think if you can get admin to opt in, they can then talk to department chairs, they can opt in and then they can disseminate it even further. It is really hard for you to be the only teacher that does not want to do something when almost the entire school has bought in to the idea. It is called peer pressure. It works for students and it also works for adults. It works for ideas. That is how movements get started but it has to have a larger voice. I don't think that it has a strong enough voice.

RESEARCHER: The revolution?

I2 - FGP1: The revolution. I think that if we continue to make it so it is like a social injustice that we might get more traction because apparently it is not working about saying that it is

equitable education. I don't think that is enough. It is like you are treading on these people's rights. They have the right to an equitable education.

RESEARCHER: They certainly do.

I2 - FGP1: To be included. No one wants to be separate. Even if you are a loner, every now and then you want to be part of the group discussion because why? You want to share your ideas.

RESEARCHER: It is one thing if you are a loner it is because it is your decision and not because you are being excluded or ostracized.

I2 - FGP1: Yes, you are doing it on purpose. I still see teachers and I can see they set all their ESE kids all together. Now my 7th period class, even though we are in pods, pretty much they are all...someone would say well, she has congregated all of them, well I have one regular ed kid in three of the pods but I only have a class of 13. What do you want me to do? They are what they are but in my other classes where I only have maybe 4 or 5, they are all spread out. You would never know. They work really well. My 504's are spread out. My hearing impaired student is in the front but you would never know, not really, because they have a cochlear implant. I worked with XXX XXXXXXXX [former colleague] . I think she has a different name because she was
XXX XXXXXXXX [former colleague] at XXXXXXXX [former school]. Some of the best people all came out of XXXXXXXX [former school].

RESEARCHER: It sounds that way.

I2 - FGP1: They are great. They are all throughout the district.

RESEARCHER: That is great. Sometimes you have a place in time that it really is just transformative.

I2 - FGP1: I can put up with all this BS because I can remember my days at XXXXXXXXX [former school]. I have had good times. I have had good times at XXXX XXXXX [current school] and I had good times at XXXXXXXXX [former school] but that babying and that foundation that I got at XXXXXXXXX [former school] , I don't see that any more. Teachers don't share like those teachers shared. Even though it was mostly English, by the time I left, that is social studies so whoever was in the 800 building we were all...at one time it was just all English. We were all segregated and then we decided to integrate, which was good. We had math teachers eating lunch in there and social studies. It was just a riot.

RESEARCHER: It was an inclusive bunch.

I2 - FGP1: It was and we were saying, "Hey so and so is not doing this in my class. What do you do?". Every now and then you have some rantings but we had nice luncheons. How can we celebrate student's success? All these fun ideas – that is where I got them from. Really.

RESEARCHER: Looking at your view in terms of what contributes to a lack of success with inclusion...what could your organization do, or do better, to cultivate and strengthen a system-wide culture of inclusion?

I2 - FGP1: I think they need to do a better job of their directive. I want to call it that, about inclusion and about what it is and what it isn't. What would they like to see in the schools. What their expectations are. Then to see our principals, whether it is at the elementary, middle or high, take that and bring it to the faculty. Not all principals react the same way when you talk about inclusion. I imagine they think that they [students with disabilities] are a drain on society. They can be very productive but you have to help them and everybody is, "Oh gifted is so great". I was listening to what XXXXXXXX [focus group participant] had to say and I said, yes because you have not have had 10 gifted kids in your class that do absolutely nothing and they are brilliant but they do nothing. I would rather have the overachiever than necessarily the gifted student to be perfectly honest. It is like pulling teeth until you find the right click, whether it is absenteeism or whether it is a piece of literature or whether you are in ROTC, whatever. I have to find something that I can connect with, because if not, really it is hard. Not all gifted are the same. People thinkoh to label.

RESEARCHER: Gifted high achiever is one tiny subset of gifted learners.

I2 - FGP1: It is a spectrum.

RESEARCHER: It is absolutely a spectrum.

I2 - FGP1: So I think it is a mindset that we have to change. Once we change the mindset I think we can change the culture. I think they are going to be separate. I don't think until you change minds and really along with the minds but the hearts of people, that it is not going to gain traction.

RESEARCHER: Minds and hearts. Maybe that should be the focus of the school district?

I2 - FGP1: I agree.

Interview Transcript: I3 – FCP2: (Interviewee 3 – Focus Group Participant 2)

RESEARCHER: So, this is the individual interview phase and some of the questions might be sort of similar to the ones that were in the focus group but they are designed to kind of get more of your personal experience in regard to the things that influenced you about inclusion and just kind of influenced your whole philosophy. So let me just restate one more time: The purpose behind the study is to find out about the lived experience of teachers who identify as someone who believes in inclusion, supports inclusion, etc. The idea behind that is to find out what can we do for teachers who sort of don't have that believe system and what can we do to influence that belief system in the right direction while they are on company time because we just cannot afford to have this constant resistance. The themes that came up in the focus group study and in the two interviews that I have done with [FCP 1] and [FCP3], I have been really kind of consistent in terms of what you all see as the barriers and what you see as things that the organization, the district, could do to really be more of an agent of change itself. So that is sort of the overarching purpose of the study. First of all, do you have any questions at this point?

I3 - FGP2: No, I'm good.

RESEARCHER: The first question is how have your views and opinions on inclusion been influenced by your personal experience? Now this can go back as far as you are willing to go back. This can include your educational experience, any of your professional experience, your teacher preparation program, colleagues, social experience and influence

of leadership so how have they been influenced by any of these aspects of your personal experience?

I3 - FGP2: Well, I graduated from [local university] and I was part of the very first class. They had not gotten accredited yet for their exceptional ed. degree. I was the first class. I read an article and everything in my experiences at [local university] made me think that I would be in a separate room with these kids giving them skills and then sending them back to the mainstream. So most of my training I had this vision, whether it was resource room or a self-contained room, that is what I thought I would be doing. When I got my first job at [local middle school] it was like that. We did parallel curriculum. I remember my first year I had a math class. I had 6th, 7th and 8th graders in the same class and I was supposed to be teaching them the math that they were required for their grade level. As a new teacher within a month I was about ready to quit. I told them, “If you can’t at least divide it up by grade – I can’t do this”. I did an LLD. I worked with language learning disabled self-contained. We were separated. I was at [local high school] for three years and when I got ready to leave people didn’t know I taught there. So that was my early experience. This is about the time that co-teaching became available and they were talking about learning strategies. Because I had this experience with LLD and it was [local middle school] and then [local high school], when I got my job at [local middle school] that was about co-teaching and I was very intrigued. It was my first time in a general ed. classroom. I had been teaching seven years when that occurred and I thought I had gone to heaven.

RESEARCHER: In co-teaching?

I3 - FGP2: Yes, co-teaching because I knew how bad the kids felt having their special little work books. I taught science and we did not have any science equipment when I did the self-contained. We did not have regular books.. The kids knew that everything was different. When we co-taught I was in the room I could see master teachers teaching the content and it was wonderful. So starting at [local middle school] I did do some learning strategies still. I still had some pullout kind of things but a lot of my experience from that point on was co-teaching and later on when that shifted because of certification I was very interested in facilitation. So I absolutely see the benefits of keeping, I always say, “You have to keep the kids in the river if they are going to fish”. Take them out of the river and they ain’t gettin’ no fish. (laughter).

RESEARCHER: That is a good analogy. So what was it that intrigued you? It sounds like your teacher preparation program was sort of that separate model and you didn’t have any reason to believe that was unusual, right?

I3 - FGP2: Right.

RESEARCHER: OK. So what was it about co-teaching that intrigued you? Let me go back to what you said about you telling them I can’t do this. Was that because of the multi-grade level?

I3 - FGP2: It was the multi-grade level and the fact that my math teaching at that time, you know we are certified K through 12, it was like six weeks of math and so to teach from 7th to 9th grade, the 9th grade used to have pre-algebra and pre-algebra to 7th grade. I didn’t have that

intensive study in math number one and number two, I knew how the kids felt. I picked up on the fact that was typical. We were in portables in the back. They didn't want to come into my room on time because everybody would know you were going into that class. Here I am teaching science and I have got a resource book that is called "Science on a Shoestring" and I am bringing in activities that are like magic tricks practically trying to show the kids things and I had no microscopes. Are we going to dissect? I was in a portable with no water. I think what intrigued me was that I was feeling the kid's sense of isolation and the sense of not being part of the school from their curriculum, to their books to the location of their classroom. I thought that I don't want my students to feel that way. When I was in co-taught and my kids were struggling and my students that I was working with were having some of the same struggles, I was learning ways to help them, which were helping the other students. I would come up with shortcuts and there would be other kids and I thought now this is the way it should be. Everybody was happier. Well, maybe not the general ed. teachers at first but I was very lucky that I worked with good people that were very open to that idea. That was not always my experience but my first experience was.

RESEARCHER: So your teacher preparation program – it was a special education program, right?

I3 - FGP2: Yes. My degree at my time – it was so specialized that it was on my certificate it says specific learning disabilities. We were not only certified K through 12 but we were certified "in a label", which was kind of hilarious because they were so new [local university] only had had three professors at the time and they didn't have a lot of people to support us. My first

experience wasn't in an SLD classroom, it was in a classroom of mentally handicapped students at the time. So I didn't know any better and I learned all kinds of techniques in there that helped but I didn't get into a class specifically learning disabled until I was in my senior year of college.

RESEARCHER: That is what you were “trained” for so to speak, right?

I3 - FGP2: Right. You had options. You were going to be self-contained. You were going to be in a room with a para or... so all of our lesson planning was centers and kids coming in and you learning how to keep track of their work and then they would go back to their regular teachers. It was never, ever anything about interacting with the general curriculum until [former colleague]. It became [same colleague; married name] later but she was a ESE and that is when the Kansas (strategic instruction model – SIM) curriculum was starting to come around and they were doing learning strategies and then talking about co-teaching. [Principal] was opening [local middle school] and there was going to be co-teaching and I was all in.

RESEARCHER: So you went to [local middle school]?

I3 - FGP2: Yes. My early teaching I was at [local middle school] for three years middle school. That LLB unit we opened a second unit to follow the kids up. I then went with them to [local high school] High School. They had a unit. At [local high school] I worked two years part time because I was pregnant. That is when I was having children but I followed so a lot of the kids that I had in middle school were the same ones. It was a self-contained unit in that I followed them to high school and I had the same kids, let alone that we were separate on the campus.

When [new middle school] opened, because I live on that side of town and heard about co-teaching, I was a little nervous but I thought well I will give it a try and if I don't like it I will go back. I loved it and then I started recruiting teachers, "Who wants to co-teach with me next year". I would go find them before they could ask me.

RESEARCHER: Well, that is good. So do you feel that the whole preparation, even though you were kind of prepared to work with a specific label, did you feel like even though you definitely gravitated towards the more inclusive model, did you feel like that preparation prepared you? You talked about SIM and the stuff out of the [local high school] of Kansas. Was there anything that you brought away from that?

I3 - FGP2: That was all once I got into the public school system. Back then there was a lot of centralized training too from [school district]. We would go to ESE meetings. I remember once meeting in the PAC [performing arts center] or at [local high school] and it would be all the ESE teachers and they would do a presentation or talk about changes. We were smaller then. This was in 1984-85 on into the early 90's. I will say, I don't know if I am going off topic here, but the next change where I got another eye opening experience is when I became an inclusion coach. I realized that I had been in the general ed classroom so long that I had never set foot in our INB classroom so when I was inclusion coach I remember asking myself, "you really should know those children and what their needs are and what did they want". That is when I started having conversation and that is where we started trying to figure out how can we get students into art and how can we get students into other classes and from that around that time is when I saw the [peer inclusion team at high school work location] in action, the program in [neighboring

city], at the Y. That I saw at the end of our first year of inclusion coach and I was like, “I want to do that – let me do that”.

RESEARCHER: How were you recruited to do that? Were you one of the people that your principal – because I think they reached out to principals, right? – and then the principals sort of nominated people?

I3 - FGP2: To the inclusion coach or to see the program?

RESEARCHER: Inclusion coaches.

I3 - FGP2: Yes, at the time...

I3 - FGP2: Yes, and [former principal] was trying to talk me out of it. He was afraid that I would end up being a district person. It turned out that we were short, our FTE, we needed to cut a teacher and he called me into his office and he said, “If you become inclusion coach I don’t have to let anybody go in the department”.

RESEARCHER: See that destiny – fate intervened.

I3 - FGP2: I dreamed of that job before they created it.

RESEARCHER: I remember you saying that.

I3 - FGP2: I called the [state discretionary project supporting inclusion] and said, “Do you guys have a position like this?” because prior to that I told John that I will take over the consultation because I hoped that would free me up to get into classrooms and talked to general ed teachers but of course it meant being stuck at my desk a lot because of IEP.

RESEARCHER: That is an ongoing issue.

I3 - FGP2: Yes, that started another change for me.

RESEARCHER: No, that is not off topic at all. It is all a part of your professional experience. Things that happened during that time that was very influential in kind of shaping your personal philosophy. So anything in your personal experience? Like you said, co-teaching intrigued you and you were obviously very sensitive to the feeling of the student. You could feel how isolated they felt. You could feel that they were embarrassed to come to class on time. They didn't maybe want to be seen as those kids in a special classroom. Is there anything in your personal experience or social experience that you think makes you any more sensitive to those issues?

I3 - FGP2: Absolutely. There are two things. I was raised Catholic but then when I got married we started going to a protestant church but always part of my moral compass is that all people should be treated equally and that they should be respected, honored and given what they need and not what seems fair but what is needed. So I think that was an underlying idea that kind of

was part of who I was as a person and definitely spilled into my teaching but also through my church experience. In the different congregations I was a part of we had people who had disabilities and I got to see their parents. I got to see how much it meant to their families to see them included. I never really thought about what it was like for the parents of these kids, let alone the kids. In talking and having those relationships with some of the parents in our church shed another perspective like, wow, they want their kids to have a high school experience or middle school experience like to run track, to be in pictures with their friends and to get invited to sleepovers. That is an important piece of their family life. At one of the churches I attended there was a young man that had autism and I just remember because I was an ESE teacher that the parent would often come talk to me about the frustration with what was in place and that is when it was very much a self-contained kind of, “We can’t manage you out in the general curriculum”.

RESEARCHER: Excellent, that is definitely seeing it kind of from both sides there and it was obviously impactful.

I3 - FGP2: Yes. Just recently a couple of years ago one of the students at [high school work location] did a commercial for the announcements. It was during Black History Month. She was talking about Dr. Martin Luther King and his dream for equality but then she surprised me and she said, “and this is the new civil rights movement”, and she was talking about [peer inclusion team at high school work location]. It wasn’t even one of my [peer inclusion team at high school work location] students and I thought, “She is right – this is the new civil rights movement”. People are being mistreated and we need to do something about changing that.

RESEARCHER: That is amazing. How about any influence of leadership? I know you mentioned [former principal] before but any other leaders or maybe experience of leadership that maybe really was inclusive or encouraged it or, like you said, about some teachers they were open to it or anything like that?

I3 - FGP2: Well, at [high school work location] especially, and I think even throughout... [colleague] is our math department chair and she happens to have three children who are students with disabilities. She was one of the ones, I remember us talking because I was the case manager for one of her children's IEP's and she said, "Why aren't we co-teaching in math?". I think we hadn't started co-teaching at first. I said, "Well, I don't know – let's go to [principal]". So that was the best co-teaching I had because she was the math department chair. She was the leader. She would have her meetings and I would go to them. I had equipment. I had manipulatives. I had everything, I mean working with her, and had all these beautiful strategies. So she was then changing her perspective so of course then department meetings was addressing because we knew we didn't have all the students with disabilities in our class. Here is what we are doing. Have you tried this? Can you think about doing this? She was long before white boards were like a big deal. She was introducing me to white boards and let's put them in groups. So I think really good teachers and was she open to it because of her children? Maybe but she is a gifted teacher and she had that belief. You put the two of us together – that was by far the best teaching experience I have ever had co-teaching.

RESEARCHER: That must be powerful for her to be the department chair. The teacher leaders have a lot of power.

I3 - FGP2: Yes and she has been called on by the county. She has done things at the State level. She has helped write curriculum. Here is what happens. She is also a gifted mathematician so now she has AP this and calculus. She would like to take another class but not everybody is certified in those higher math's so she ends up now with a very heavy load of those classes and has little room. We have talked again about coming back to it and she would like to but often she is told well, we won't be able to do that because we need you here.

RESEARCHER: I know she is a valuable asset to the math world for sure.

I3 - FGP2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Excellent. So the next question is about inclusionary practices. Going back to our descriptors for each of those four sort of domains, practices, stance, values and culture, why do you support those practices that involve reengineering the classroom to help all students be successful? So those actual instructional practices and some of this may go back to kind of your moral compass but just in your own few words, why do you support inclusive practices?

I3 - FGP2: I just think every person has the right to a good education and those practices are good. Period. They are good for students who have a particular need but they are good for all

students. I spoke to our beginning teachers today after school and they ask a lot of questions about what do I do about my ESE students not paying attention and I just said, “what do you do about any student who is having a hard time paying attention?” You know, they are not lepers. There is nothing that makes them so different. They are not that different. I just feel the more I have done it the more I see that those practices that help students and maybe they were originated to help students with disabilities, they really help all students. It is just good teaching and it allows all the students to learn what they need to learn.

RESEARCHER: Why do you maintain an inclusive stance? Now this goes back to sort of rejecting that deficit perspective of disability and rejecting deficit and looking at strengths. It is about that kind of personal stance that makes you kind of question labeling and leveling of students, sort of “is that really necessary?” What do you think influenced you in terms of having that stance?

I3 - FGP2: I saw evidence of success. The more I worked with students and the more that I saw they could do it given the right environment, given the right instruction and given the right support. I was blown away. With the training that all that they can't, they can't and they can't and students would be placed in a class and sometimes they would come and they would have the top grade on the test. I would be, “Wow, I didn't expect that – now why didn't I expect that?” I think there has been prolonged evidence that you know my thinking is if a student is not successful we just haven't found the right strategy yet or we have not found the right 'something'. I now believe there is something out there and not that OK they can't do it. That is just from watching. When [colleague] and I taught we have kids in algebra 1A, then we have 1B

and then we had informal. We realized that they didn't always get all the algebra principles until we were kind of doing them in informal geometry. So it kind of was a 3-year process it is embedded in that curriculum. They kept building and scaffolding would happen and I could see they get it. They do it. What the biggest one was their fear and their belief from thinking they couldn't because of someone else telling them they couldn't. We had to fight that more than... I just saw evidence. I just saw, OK let's try this, and sure enough OK there it is. You learn this and now you are at this level. Let's try it again. I just kept seeing that it was working.

RESEARCHER: So those labels I guess in your experience weren't always accurate in terms of the traditional assumptions...

I3 - FGP2: No.

RESEARCHER: Maybe about those labels. Is that how you would count it?

I3 - FGP2: Yes. When I was working there was a young lady I worked with who had a learning disability. That is her label. She came to me and she had a difficult time with processing speed in all AP classes. She would come to me to take a test. She didn't receive assistance and didn't spend a lot of time with me. I didn't do anything but she just needed more time. She passed all of her AP classes. I saw her mother in the grocery store. She is a biomedical engineer and is supervising people now. There are people that didn't think she should have been in AP classes. There is evidence. It is working, it is working, it is working. This might be the non-example. Where my growling edge is when I look at our small little self-contained unit at [high school

work location] and I see some students that are medically fragile and not communicative – I am trying to image what it would look like for them to be in a class. What would happen if we had them interacting? I am still searching for what is going to be like. I can feel the limits around that but said, I bet if I saw evidence - I bet if we gave it a try and just saw what happened and started to cut it – it would not be as awful as I might think it might be. That is what keeps me in that stance. It is because we have tried and 9 times out of 10 some really wonderful positive things have happened and that one time it did not it had more to do with the adults involved than the student.

RESEARCHER: That is great. The overwhelming evidence over time supports that stance. Why do you hold inclusive values? The values have to do with viewing diversity 1) as a natural condition and 2) as a valued resource and then looking at inclusive education as a civil rights and social justice issue. What in your experience do you feel has influenced you in that regard?

I3 - FGP2: That is my spiritual values and my church upbringing. I know that does not necessarily foster that in every religion, but it did in mine. For whatever reason, diversity difference was supported and valued and it was important. It was important to meet people where they were. When I think of my Christianity, God was never this big judge and you had to be perfect, it was that idea of, “OK, here is where you are at and let me come alongside you”. That is what I knew. The only way I know to say this is just how much I loved my students and I didn’t want anybody to think less of them. I saw gifted, beautiful, wonderful and multi-talented. I just though just because this kid is not reading at grade level but do you know that he can put

together a motor in two seconds and he can walk into a classroom and tell you how to set up your room so you have a natural flow to the day. I would just say, “Why aren’t we celebrating the 10 things this kid is extremely wonderful at and we are focusing on this one?”, because I just love my kids. I hated to see someone not see their gifts. I think another small piece, and this probably I never thought of it before, but I was born in 1960. I was a product of [school district] schools. I remember when I was at [local elementary school] and they were going to integrate the schools and the neighborhood was like, “Oh, we are going to send them to private school – you have got to get them here”. I remember my parents just looking at us and saying no, we have taught our children that everybody is the same. This will be a great experience. Of course, [school district] then got all nervous so the first thing they did was integrate the teachers. For the first time I had African-American teachers and I had a great experience.

RESEARCHER: I remember.

I3 - FGP2: I think I grew up at a time and certainly had parents that weren’t teaching me that different was bad.

RESEARCHER: Yes, I remember that too. My first grade teacher.

I3 - FGP2: I remember even in 1978 when I graduated from [local high school] in the classes I was in, it wasn’t called AP then but it was advanced classes, and one of the young men I was good friends with, [former classmate], was African-American. I was going to have a birthday party. I asked that [former classmate] come because we were in the literary magazine together

and the girl's parents had a fit because they didn't want to invite him. I said then don't have the party. When he got a scholarship to Harvard I remember all my friends saying he got that because he was black and I was so angry. I think even then I was like this oddball.

RESEARCHER: I know what you mean. It was a big influence on me as well but not in the direction similar to the parents who wanted to send their children to private school. I had the same reaction you did and maybe not all my friends did but I did.

I3 - FGP2: Yes, I did too. Where all that came from but I do credit a lot of my church teaching I was brought up and my parents who stood firm with that and lived out the values that they talked about.

RESEARCHER: Exactly. So the next question is why do you champion inclusion? In other words, what drives you to actively promote an inclusive culture? It could be some of what you have already talked about. What is it that you feel that really propels you?

I3 - FGP2: How much more it means to the students. To not be isolated and to not be separate. How much more it means to the students when they are working in any class like anyone else and then making gains. As one student said to me, he said "Miss, I would rather have a C in a 'regular class' than an A in a special ed. class. I want to know that I am being challenged. I want to know that my work matters". So watching the kids - that is always my first thing. Then secondly the thing is that I am loving to watch these teachers who by fear or stereotypes don't think our students can succeed. The depth of what they are learning, the teacher is seeing and

what the kids bring to the classroom and what other kids learn from them and that the giftedness they have, I just think, “wow, isn’t it sad that class would have missed out on that if we were back 20 years ago and he was in a class by himself”. I think about Leo who is our young man who is blind and his spirit and how he is with people is so wonderful and at the end of the year the physics teacher was a nervous wreck and now he just can’t sing [student’s] praises loud enough or long enough.

RESEARCHER: That is great.

I3 - FGP2: I think about what the other students are learning from [student] as well as what [student] is learning from them, it does not happen when we are all in the back portable.

RESEARCHER: Right, I got you. So the students themselves, how they grow, how they interact and then watching the teachers and the students and watching their experience be transformed by the experience.

I3 - FGP2: Right and the [peer inclusion team at high school work location] students teach me because of their belief that the students can learn and will learn and they just have to find the right way. Like I said, when I started that program I never thought about them as adults. I think maybe the adults grew up in a system where just by the way it was constructed didn’t have exposure and did not know what was possible. Now with these young people when I think about a kindergarten class who might have someone in it who is using a wheelchair or is needing sign,

we are going to have grownup adults that are just going to think, “Well that is the way it is supposed to be” and not “What a concept”.

RESEARCHER: That is great. All right, so we talked about some of this in the focus group. How do you respond when you encounter resistance to inclusive practices? What are some of the ways? I know you all have come a long way there at [high school work location] but over time what are some of the strategies that you have used to kind of work around that resistance so to speak?

I3 - FGP2: One of the things that has helped me a lot is that I have been there since it opened and I have built a reputation where people know that I am approachable and that I am helpful. I always assume, right or wrong and probably sometimes wrong, that people are resistant because they are afraid. So when I think when I am afraid to do something, what helps me, it is not force. If I am afraid of heights, someone pulling me out does not make me... So I think about what I need. I need companionship. I need encouragement. I need someone to point out the evidence of success. So I am OK with someone saying no, that won't work. Like I said, I believe that too and then I say let's try it and then we will look at the evidence and if you still feel that way we will have another conversation. I never say then we won't do it because... (laughter).

RESEARCHER: Right, we will have another conversation.

I3 - FGP2: Yes, we will revisit it. So 9 times out of 10 something amazing happens because that is the way it is supposed to be and the less fearful people get the more open they are. I am gentle

at the beginning. I am true leader. I tell them I am going to be right there with you. I never ever say any more, “You know, the IEP is a legal document and if you don’t do this...”. I don’t get good results with that.

RESEARCHER: Right, that is only one tactic and not always successful.

I3 - FGP2: No. I think that might need to be said after 20 other things have been tried but really, I think that is the biggest thing. I think people are afraid. People do not want to look incompetent and they don’t know what to do so they are afraid to do anything. If I can show them and if I can come alongside them and said this is doable, let’s do this together, most of the time people will do it.

RESEARCHER: Got it. Good strategy. So how do you respond when you encounter or have encountered in the past resistance to your inclusive stance?

I3 - FGP2: Cry. (laughter).

RESEARCHER: Really?

I3 - FGP2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Because that can be. That is an effective strategy.

I3 - FGP2: There are times when the frustration of it, and when I say cry (in private) because it is a sad emotion to see it but I might retreat a little bit and kind of regroup. I might go be with the students in the [peer inclusion team at high school work location] who get it and remind me that it is possible. I might go hang out with some friends who are likeminded and then I get back in there. I just refuse to give up because I know how much it means to the kids.

RESEARCHER: So you regroup. Do you maybe sometimes re-strategize?

I3 - FGP2: Yes. I think I am a big one on face-to-face communication. If it is a situation like this and fraught with fear and uncertainty, just face-to-face conversation. I was very lucky when I was a teenager to have gone through a very intensive communication process. It was actually part of our church ministry. It was this idea like you really can't support people unless you can talk with them and hear them and then I have training as a spiritual director, which is all about listening, really listening. A lot of times I will go back and just say, "Help me understand why this is hard for you". If they spout some philosophy or dogma I say, "No, help me understand why this is hard for you to do". When we can get to that, then I can figure out usually a way to help with that. A lot of talking and a lot of listening.

RESEARCHER: That is awesome. Have there been some kind of tough nuts to crack that you made headway with?

I3 - FGP2: Yes. I would say that the facilitation classes I am in right now. I think I was chosen or volunteered for a reason but one of the people has just been really resistant and it is showed.

That is the other thing, I don't think people realize how long it takes when you are dealing with an adult who is 50-something years old and you are trying to change basic philosophies. It takes a while and so that is why I was always a proponent if you are going to co-teach let the people be together a couple of years before you pair them up. So the person that I am working with, one of the people I am working with now, I think she is in a different stance than she was at the beginning of the year. Is she as far along as I would have hoped? No, but we are doing some things now in the classroom that we didn't do at the beginning. If I get to work with her next year, which I am going to say I will, I bet we do a lot more different than we did even at this point.

RESEARCHER: You are in it for the long game.

I3 - FGP2: Yes. In this particular teacher there is a cultural difference. She didn't come to the United States until she was 22. I have asked her some questions about how they dealt with people with disabilities where you grew up? It is vastly different. Now she is here. OK, well come on people I hope you don't expect big changes in a year because we are talking about a fundamental shift in her perspective.

RESEARCHER: Right. The belief system that she was raised with.

I3 - FGP2: Right and so any brand I make I feel happy about. The kids now can take a test and if they don't do well she won't let them test with me because she thinks I am going to cheat. If

they take the test and they don't do well then they can make corrections and they can get at least a C. We weren't doing that at the beginning of the year.

RESEARCHER: Right. So for you, in terms of how you have actively influenced someone who has been sort of that tough to penetrate, has it just been kind of a gentle relentless effort? Do the [peer inclusion team at high school work location] students go in the class? Has there kind of been like different fronts sort of?

I3 - FGP2: Yes. There have been all kinds of assaults. Mostly I have to establish a personal relationship with that person when they place me in the class with the hopes of interchanging some of the dynamics. The first year to me it is like being invited into someone's home. The very first time I come into another teacher's classroom I can't just open the refrigerator and serve myself. We have to have a mutual trust. They have to know that I have their back. They have to know that we are presenting a united front. It is a lot of personal stuff of asking about their family and learning about what is important to them. There is a situation we are dealing with right now. There is the group of kids that has kind of turned into good cop/bad cop. The kids like me or they like my approach. They don't like hers. They have been really disrespectful to her. We stood together today and said that is not allowed and we are a team. To one you do to both. The kids saw that and I think that helped her realize that I am here for you as much as I have here for the kids.

RESEARCHER: That was an opportunity to kind of establish a camaraderie.

I3 - FGP2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: That is going to be of benefit. You are like a Trojan horse.

I3 - FGP2: (laughter). That is it. That has what I have always aspired to be. It is crazy. In a way it is just like working with a student who says I can't do this, I can't do this, and then the minute they do it you make such as, "Oh, look at that – you thought you couldn't do it". So it is kind of giving in to that.

RESEARCHER: Reinforcer.

I3 - FGP2: This is not going to work. It is not going to happen... So I am at a point now so now, you remember this was our percentage of failure at the beginning and now look at what we have got". Now, when this student was about to drop out and we are hanging on to him and that is a good thing. We are doing that together. So I think if we were to work together next year I think we could move even further but it is just really being kind and being patient and believing just like the kids, that she can do it.

RESEARCHER: Exactly, convincing her. All right, excellent. Did I ask you about civil rights? I think I asked you why you did... I asked you about it.

I3 - FGP2: Yes, I think so. We touched on it.

RESEARCHER: My questions got out of order. The other one was resistance to inclusive values. We talked about inclusive values. Do you have anybody that sort of resists look at

it not sort of as, I don't know as I don't want to put words in your mouth, but maybe like just sort of this thing that is unique to you or the [peer inclusion team at high school work location] at [high school work location], but do you find anyone kind of resisting the idea that it is a civil rights issue or a social justice issue? I know you said the students mention it but do you ever encounter resistance to that?

I3 - FGP2: From adults, yes. I think that is the point. I don't ever give up but especially when I am dealing with the older teachers that are in the job that are a few years out from retirement, I may not be on that level ground as hard as I am with the teacher that is maybe 5 years in or 10 years. I don't ever not help or not work with someone but I have limited energy and limited time so it is one of the reasons like today I was asked to develop a relationship with our beginning teachers. I asked to meet the interns. I try to make myself visible to anyone that is any age range or some of the older ones who grew up and never saw anybody with a disability at their school. They never went to church or lived in a neighborhood and if they did, they didn't go in that house. I will continue to interact and work with and talk to them but I have limited time and energy. If they are only going to be here 4 or 5 more years, I will do something like, "OK can we not schedule any of the kids in their class".

RESEARCHER: Yes, I see you are looking for maximum impact with the resources that you have.

I3 - FGP2: Yes, I own that hill. For most people that at some point are fairly new, there are very few. I have got to say, there are very few young teachers that are adamant that they are not going to do it. The few that I have come across, it has to do with the vision that they kind of envision

themselves teaching AP or they really want to be college professors. What the reality is it is a little bit different and so again, it is just a matter of OK, well this what you have got and what can I do to help you with that.

RESEARCHER: Got it. All right, so getting down to the final questions here. So what are your views and opinions on the success of inclusion in your public school system? So what do you attribute whatever success you have had or a lack thereof?

I3 - FGP2: In the public school system?

RESEARCHER: Yes, in your public school system in general, at [school district] Public Schools, what are your views and opinions on the success of inclusion? Again, this could be any actual success that you have perceived or lack of success.

I3 - FGP2: Well certainly a success has been the support we have received from the [peer inclusion team at high school work location] and whether that came from the support to allow me out of the classroom as an inclusion coach to get that built up and a principal who is supporting that now and being able to work with those kids and teachers seeing the results. That evidence – that is certainly a success. I think we are in a limbo time, let’s describe it that way, where I believe the role of the special ed. teacher is changing. We have a lot of folks who are used to the very traditional working from the label and working from the IEP and not so much the needs and then from what I am hearing there is a new group coming to the colleges where it is a different perspective, intervention specialist versus what I got was we are now teaching and help students

who have learning disabilities. So I think that role, as that is more and more supported, I think the not successes...there is just a lot of demands for the exceptional ed teacher's job that rightfully so, have to do with documentation and the legal things with the IEP that take way or difficult to form a bond in relationships with other teachers and be that encourager when... You know, I am lucky right now in that I have 11 IEP's – I don't have 80. I think the dynamic changes when we don't have enough people spreading out that paperwork so that there is somebody that is doing 80 or 100 and the time factors to do that well. You can do it but to do it well, it limits your ability to be out in the trenches and having those conversations. I don't know if I have answered the questions but...

RESEARCHER: I think so. Let me read you back what I have here. So, what you said is you definitely kind of think that maybe the state of inclusion is in limbo. There is sort of a changing model. There is that new intervention specialist certificate that is coming out of [local university] and it is a changing model. I think we talked about this in the focus group – some of that disequilibrium as a result of kind of increased accountability. There is a push from a lot of parents to include students in general education. We don't have the E classrooms any more where students are taught that parallel curriculum but at the same time we don't have this huge message from the district that inclusion is sort of our way of doing things. There is the idea that some teachers can opt out, that it is kind of maybe sort of voluntary. I know [peer inclusion team at high school work location] has just been a huge success in kind of influencing that culture at [high school work location]. You were saying that you feel that inclusion has been successful based on the extent that maybe the district support of your position as an inclusion coach exposed you to opportunities that allowed you to build what is definitely a standout among the district for sure in creating

that culture of inclusion at [high school work location]. So that aspect, that sort of support during that time of the inclusion coach position allowed you to have exposure to that program. Because of who you are, you really embraced it and took it back to [high school work location] and ran with it and had the right people in the right places to support it and make it what it is.

I3 - FGP2: Something as you talking and I don't know how this would be done in an organization but because the roles are shifting, I don't want to say a new job description, it is not that simple but analysis of what is the time investment to write a good IEP? What is the time investment to monitor, to document and to get data? How many people does it take? So it is not even that magic formula but realistically what can one person do, even a little above and beyond? Are we just way off the mark now? You and I have talked about those IEP's that you checked off versus what people are writing now and the data that needs to be collected prior. So maybe looking at if we are in a change, what is it we are expecting those exceptional ed teachers to be really doing effectively and what is the time investment? Is one planning enough? Does there need to be more flexibility in a schedule to do that? I know I am very lucky in that the reason I am able to do that is because there is so much flexibility in my day.

RESEARCHER: Right. There is no substitute for that. Actually being able to allocate the time properly. So the sub question was: To what do you attribute the success or lack thereof? So what I am hearing is that you would attribute the success of inclusion in our public school system to the effort that the district did make in sort of having that inclusion

coach position. I mean, that was the time that they invested in furthering inclusive models by allocating a position.

I3 - FGP2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: And giving someone that role.

I3 - FGP2: I think that one of the reasons, it is kind of like it was new and when it didn't work out, I think that because they didn't have a clear vision or it was so new it was unfocused and so then it kind of fell apart. Why did we have to throw out the baby with the bath water?

RESEARCHER: I know.

I3 - FGP2: Was it time to just say maybe it is time to revisit that again. OK, so as we are learning more about what we really want from someone, do we need to spend a whole day in there learning about differentiated instruction or how much time? What do people really need? I think it is a very good thing.

I3 - FGP2: It was like if we were given this thing and then no real direction as to what were we hoping to get out of it sometimes. I think that it is a good thing. It needs to be more focused and a little revamped but yes that absolutely made a huge difference. I would never, ever have thought about doing [peer inclusion team at high school work location] if it had not been for that. I could not have done it in a classroom where the grade takers and meet with kids and give feedback. They were IEP's and... that kind of program came about because I got to be able to be

out and about, talk to the teachers and see kids. I consider it my best thing but it wouldn't have happened had I been in the classroom.

RESEARCHER: Right, exactly. So allocating that position and giving someone that role was really key and then some of the other constraints that are placed on people who might feel that their time can be well spent actively promoting are sort of taken up with the compliance piece. That does take a lot of sort of wind out of your sails so to speak. Not that it is obviously not very important because there are the legalities and that compliance piece has to be there. We have a whole other set of problems without it.

I3 - FGP2: You know what, there are times when I think...I watch some of the teachers at our school and they are so gifted. I said something [to one of them] about the number of IEP's and she said, "I don't want to give up my IEP's – that is my favorite part". And I thought wow, what if we had people that liked that part, that were there to do the compliance piece, kind of like our staffing specialist. I can't even imagine wanting to have that job, whereas somebody would not want my job where I am walking into teacher's classrooms, people I don't know and dealing with frustration. I am wondering, is there a role that I am the IEP teacher? I am doing the IEP's, I am monitoring and I am keeping track of all that. It is kind of what we have moved to with our consultation teachers. I know there are people that love that and they do a phenomenal job keeping track of everything but they are also not full time in classes. They may be facilitating a couple of periods now. I don't know...

RESEARCHER: That is an interesting aspect because you know that IEP is supposed to serve as a roadmap for instruction so ...

I3 - FGP2: I still say there would be like a team. If I didn't have to write the IEP and I didn't have to collect all the data, but I am in conversation, whether it is weekly meetings or whatever, that we are talking about the kids in a meaningful way, but then I am the person that goes then and talks to the teacher. I don't expect that it is just a farfetched dream or we need more people to divide up that caseload so it is not overwhelming in a high school. I just know that there are some people that they eat, breathe and thrive on that IEP and IEP meeting. I have always enjoyed meeting the parents. There is a need of just how can we partner better and maybe there is a different way to look at that.

RESEARCHER: Right, because it is the whole design of the IEP and then the implementation and then having that be a team approach. Design and implementation. People may have different strengths when it comes to designing and implementing IEP's.

I3 - FGP2: Yes and I know I watch some of the people they have asked to facilitate. They feel uncomfortable going in to someone else's classroom. I love it. Why make them do it? We have to and they have to say in the interview if they will but really, I think they would be happy at their desk writing the IEP's, talking with the kids and meeting the parents. It is just a little noticing after all these years.

RESEARCHER: Last question is sort of a global question: What could your organization do or do better to cultivate and strengthen a systemwide culture of inclusion?

I3 - FGP2: I think just going back to look at that inclusion coach position, I think that what [district chief high school administrator] is doing by bring API's in to look at a program that is working where you have programs....I have asked to have [local high school] and [local high school] come when they are there because even though we are doing well each of these other programs is having success so let's look at what is working, the kinds of systems and sharing that information across the board. In the course of our needing when it was the three of us, and I can't remember who brought up the question or who mentioned this, but I am wondering is [school district] making a point to hire people with disabilities? Are we looking at ourselves as a transition site? Are we looking within the organization to be actively pursuing what we believe about inclusion? What are our percentages? That part of the conversation, I left our meeting and I thought, wow I have never thought about that.

RESEARCHER: That is a great point.

I3 - FGP2: What would you say when occupational specialist comes out or a speech therapist who happens to also be using assistive technology or using a wheelchair, whatever...I just think we have got all these sites that kids could do...so that is a visible belief system or living that out. Differences are good.

RESEARCHER: Sure, because that is a huge point. Are we open as an organization? I remember talking about that in the focus group and that is actually something that has come up in our digital curriculum meetings because we are doing procurement when we

meet and talk about procurement of any new instructional program, instructional material and software programs. I have sort of been able to have a little bit of influence in that regard and just kind of pointing out how our digital curriculum initiative kind of has a little bit of toilet paper on its shoe because there is this whole Americans With Disabilities Act that applies to the private sector and accessibility to technology and to whatever. It has not been in place to a great extent in our public school system. We do receive federal funds and digital curriculum kind of went off and running without any even thinking about Section 508 guidelines or asking, universal design and now we are bring that in. now they have kind of opened their eyes a little bit and we are making some inroads. I said to them the other day that a huge concern is for students and their ability to access all of our instructional materials programs, etc. but have you thought about, what if we have an educator with a disability? An educator that is visually impaired. An educator that is hearing impaired. An educator that is physically impaired. How will they be able to access? Are we ensuring that our instructional materials are not only accessible to the students but accessible to an educator who may be teaching the students? I think that kind of really pushed things forward a little bit because they are sort of starting to see how they might not be in compliance with the law and this is just disadvantaging a population of people. They want to be innovative so it kind of helped appeal to their wanting to be a leader, wanting to be progressive and wanting to be innovative because that team very much does and it was not that there was any malice, they just hadn't thought of it.

I3 - FGP2: Yes, that is what I am saying, I think there is part of that cutting edge new horizons, things happening that I want to see from the organization and to think that through on their own

and not just in the schools but as a business. They are a business. What do we do? How do we approach things? Who are we recruiting? Where do we need to go? Do we send out the same interest to start a school for the deaf and blind? I don't know. Then the other thing too is that you do a very good job and I have noticed from Facebook the things you post, the organizations that have the inclusive mindset and the things to consider. I as a teacher would like more of that and I feel like I get it from certain people like you but I think some of the general ed and when they go to their county meetings or the county instructors come out.... it is not so much....someone said, "Oh we need to go to more school visits". It is not bad. I mean, that is always lovely and there are things to learn there but it is having that be an integral piece of the training too so it is not just coming from one voice on a campus. I am not saying this because you created it, but I have been fighting for years about why doesn't someone have to do 20 hours or 60 hours of ESP? You know, have the ELL and I am like, what about ESE? So that change is important to move forward. I thought that was huge. I love that.

RESEARCHER: It is almost like all we really have I feel like in [school district] Public Schools is e-mail and it is so static and not every teacher I guess is on Facebook but I guess I kind of want that. Facebook calls it your newsfeed. I want for teachers to have this constant newsfeed when you can kind of join it when you want to but how do we get that sort of scrolling message? I am just trying to think of how but I agree, I think if there could just be more of a consistent sort of campaign and I think you are right, I mean it could absolutely through every opportunity for professional learning that we have out there. There needs to be sort of an obvious connection how this connects to our broad population of students.

I3 - FGP2: The teachers that are going to AP training that go to the AP Institutes I want to say, “What has helped you there about the students with disabilities you will have in your class?” I have talked with a few AP teachers and they are like, “What are you talking about?”. I am like, “That is not an integral part and have it?”. They have got their own message but are they addressing avid trainings and avid schools, is there is a piece? Again, I don’t want to say students with disabilities but the kids that are not going to fit the mold. It doesn’t even have to be a student to fit a label. How are you going to address that when your 8th grade AP student can’t sit still for that hour lecture?

RESEARCHER: Any student who sort of doesn’t have that teacher pleasing behavior but is extremely bright and extremely capable. Look at the student who is a biomedical engineer or whatever. They didn’t fit the mold of that high achieving teacher pleaser, just the one that is easy to teach. There are students who are extremely gifted but they just don’t fit the mold of that mythical average student or that mythical perfect student.

I3 - FGP2: They make the assumption that student is going to be everywhere. The upper ends, the lower ends, the middle, the art classes, the drama, everything...so whatever the training is, that is the standard OP’s. What are some strategies? How do you do this? Where are your resources? Here is this news feed. I will honestly say that many of the things that you put on Facebook, and I actually read the articles, have changed my perspective and helped me look at something new to teach in [peer inclusion team at high school work location].

RESEARCHER: That is good. I hope so then I have...

I3 - FGP2: You have done well.

RESEARCHER: That is good then the intended purpose of it has come to fruition so that is a good thing. So what can we do or do better, rethink the inclusion code's position in terms of having a person that is in a position where they can make connections, lead the conversation and that kind of thing, because in my opinion I think that you do have to have that sort of person spearheading. Even if you had a leader that was spearheading, you have got to have a soldier.

I3 - FGP2: Yes and I think you have alluded in our talk about your research that there from experience and from whatever there is someone that has got that bug so instead of just appointing someone, who is it that is the, "Ya, I will go have that conversation for the 10th time". I like it.

RESEARCHER: Right. The flag. The torch. Someone who is willing to roll in there like the Trojan horse like a gift and then as time goes on, when the time is right, sort of unleash your weaponry.

I3 - FGP2: Yes.

RESEARCHER: The right moment.

I3 - FGP2: I have a favor to ask.

RESEARCHER: Yes. What is it?

I3 - FGP2: It is always in mind. You know how I covered the class for you the other day, “Oh, by the way...”.

RESEARCHER: Yes, exactly. Leveraging those opportunities. All right, so the other thing you said was, what is the organization doing to recruit persons with disabilities to kind of have people who are different and people who are ‘other’ out there and sort of desensitizing people.

I3 - FGP2: Again, raiders of the program and the organization, not just out there. People that are part of the leadership.

RESEARCHER: Yes. Anything else? That is our last question and then better at communicating that consistent message about the broad range of learners, whether they are students with disabilities, English language learners or students who just learn differently. Getting that message out there in all of our investments and professional development.

I3 - FGP2: Yes. That is just a given.

RESEARCHER: Thank you.

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